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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. HOOLEY).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DARLENE HOOLEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Alan Keiran, Office of the Chaplain, United States Senate, offered the following prayer:

God of grace and glory, we pray this day for our distinguished Representatives and the Nation they so ably serve. Equip them with the wisdom, strength and perseverance needed to bring important issues to closure. Bless those they love in their times of separation from family and friends. Bless their staff members as they labor to support the honorable men and women they so gallantly serve. For military men and women deployed in harm's way and their families, we pray Your Providential protection, comfort and peace.

O Lord, our precious Savior and eternal King, equip leaders across this great land with the wisdom and endurance to meet the challenges ahead.

In Your holy Name we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. MCNULTY. Madam Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MCNULTY. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to five 1-minutes on each side.

H.R. 1234 IS THE VEHICLE FOR PEACE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Four years ago, Congress was told we had no alternative but to go to war; that was wrong. Now Congress is telling the American people we have no alternative but to continue the war, and that by continuing the war for just another year or two we will then be able to end the war. War equals peace. I don't think so.

This war has achieved a momentum that has swept up into its tragic hold people of otherwise good will who would vote to continue a war when they really want peace and when the American people want peace.

I believe you cannot say you are for peace and vote to keep this war going. You cannot say you are for peace and facilitate the theft of Iraqi oil. You cannot say you are for peace and give the President enough money not just to keep this war going, but to attack Iran if he so chooses. If you want peace, vote for peace now. If you want peace, stop funding this war. If you want peace, stand for the truth.

What America must do and what Congress has the power to do is to stop the war now, use the money in the pipeline to bring the troops home, set in motion a diplomatic process that would involve the world community in moving into Iraq as our troops move out. We need to stand for peace. H.R. 1234 is the vehicle to do that.

WE WILL NOT RUN FROM DUTY

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, today we vote on the ''Iraq surrender bill.'' Approval of it means we vote to abandon Iraq at an arbitrary time, no matter the situation. We vote to retreat even if it means defeat. We vote to quit while our troops are in the field. And we vote for peace at any price.

This bill will put American troops at risk. And for some odd reason, this emergency Iraqi bill is loaded with squealing pork that has nothing to do with our troops or the war. One provision is to give $3 billion to farmers hurt by bad weather, like my rice farmers in southeast Texas that were

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devastated by Hurricane Rita. But I will not barter my position. I will not betray our troops for 30 pieces of silver or $3 billion of squealing pork.

The troops in Iraq need our total commitment, not total defeatism. Ronald Reagan put it best, ''Men cry 'peace, peace,' but there can be no peace as long as there is one American somewhere dying for the rest of us.''

And that's just the way it is.

DEMOCRATS ADDRESS VETERANS' HEALTH CARE IN IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

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

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, we owe our Nation's freedom and quality of life to America's veterans. These brave men and women left their families behind and risk their lives for us and their country. Our government promised to take care of them when they returned home; this is a promise we simply must not break.

Today, the House has an opportunity to live up to these promises. The emergency supplemental bill provides $1.7 billion more than the President's request to fund veterans' health care needs. The bill provides $550 million to address the maintenance backlog at VA health care facilities, preventing situations like the one at Walter Reed. $250 million for medical administration to ensure sufficient personnel to maintain a high level of service for the rising number of veterans. $100 million to allow the VA to contract with private mental health care providers to offer veterans timely mental health care. And $62 million to speed up claims processing for returning veterans.

Mr. Speaker, those who put their lives on the line for our country deserve not only our respect, but also the best medical care we can provide. This bill will ensure that they receive just that, while beginning a process to bring our troops home.

DEMOCRATIC SUPPLEMENTAL IS DANGEROUS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the supplemental bill is dangerous for our troops and dangerous for America.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates restated yesterday to the bipartisan Army Caucus that timetables will stop the military from completing its mission. The Washington Post has criticized the proposal, saying it could lead to massive civilian casualties, to al Qaeda establishing bases to attack America and our allies, and to a regional war of disastrous consequences.

Al Qaeda spokesman Zawahiri has identified Iraq and Afghanistan as the central fronts in the global war on terrorism. Bin Laden has specifically referred to Iraq as the ''Third World War.''

As a 31-year veteran with four sons in the military, including one Iraq veteran, I understand the importance of supporting our troops in combat. I hope my colleagues of both parties will join me to support former Vietnam POW SAM JOHNSON'S bill to fully support and fund our men and women in uniform.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

TODAY CONGRESS WILL END THE WAR IN IRAQ

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today we will demonstrate that this Nation is not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Forty years ago we were in another war. We had lost just about as many soldiers, about 3,000 young men, at this point in the Vietnam War. Our President urged the Congress to stay the course so that he could save face, and the Congress did, as the President demanded, until we had lost another 55,000 soldiers before we eventually accepted the fact that it, too, was an inconceivable war.

Today, the Congress is going to end this war, this fiasco that we never should have begun. It is going to focus on our priorities of strengthening our military, going after the people who actually did attack us in 2001 and reinvesting in our nation's true priorities.

We will bring our troops home as soon and as safely as possible. We will not repeat history. This is an important vote, and all of the American people should be proud of their Congress.

THE BUDGET IS WRONG FOR OUR NATION

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this week, the Budget Committee marked up the budget for fiscal year 2008. Unfortunately, instead of a commonsense balanced budget that lowers spending, reforms unsustainable entitlement programs and encourages economic growth without raising taxes, it is full of a lot of empty promises, with the exception of two, higher taxes and more spending.

My Republican colleagues and I believe that government should limit its taxing and spending, ease the burden on the economy and let the country grow. This Democratic budget trusts government more than it trusts the people. Those are the guys paying the bills.

As a result of Republican support of tax policies passed in 2001 through 2005, every taxpayer who paid income taxes will get tax relief this year. If these tax policies are eliminated, as the Democratic budget calls for, these taxpayers will see a tax hike.

Mr. Speaker, for these and many other reasons, the budget put forth this week is just plain wrong for our Nation.

SUPPORT THE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION BILL

(Mr. SARBANES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, let this be the day that, respectful of the sacrifice of our men and women overseas, inspired and emboldened by the clarion call of the American people on November 7, 2006, and determined to show a decent respect for the opinions of thoughtful and caring people the world over, this Congress says to an administration that has been arrogant in its bearing and incompetent in its execution, no longer shall you turn a blind eye to the readiness of our troops. No longer shall you ignore the needs of our veterans. At long last, you are being called to account for a failed policy in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the supplemental appropriation bill, which marks the return of sanity and wisdom in the conduct of American foreign policy.

SONG TITLES FOR 110TH CONGRESS

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. You know, Mr. Speaker, Alan Jackson lives in my district, a great country singer, and I was thinking of some songs for him. One of them was ''I Would Rather Be in New York Raising Money Than Funding the War in Iraq.'' The other one was ''How I Turned the Blue Dogs Yellow.''

Then there is also an author in my district, Ferrell Sams; he writes a lot of books; you may have read some of them, but a good book is ''How to Lose a War and Store Peanuts.''

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker, for Alan Jackson to look at the rules. And he could do a whole album on the rules here. ''We Only Change Them When We Have To'' would make a great title for that rules album. ''We Only Leave the Vote Open When We Are Losing, When the Time is Up,'' would be another good one. And the last one would be, ''We Only Change Them When We Have To.''

IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, in any endeavor, one must set achievable goals

and benchmarks. As a teacher, I found that it was critical to provide guidance to students whose reports were not proceeding on schedule.

President Bush definitely needs some help in his work in Iraq. His initial research was terribly flawed and cut corners in disturbing ways. He ignored the advice of learned experts in his stubborn pursuit of a flawed hypothesis. When he brainstormed an outline for pursuing the war, he never planned for how it would end. His incoherent strategy in Iraq rambles on and on without any movement towards a successful conclusion. I personally would have failed this student long ago.

The question we face today, however, is on whether we should set a strategy for redeploying our troops out of Iraq or continue giving the President a blank check to continue an open-ended war in Iraq. I voted against the war and I want our troops out now.

Now that Democrats have been voted in as the majority in the House and Senate, we have responsibilities to our constituents to exercise constitutional and congressional oversight in Iraq. To fulfill that responsibility, I stand in support of the Iraq Accountability Act, which would establish a definite date to end this awful war.

□ 0915

FUNDING PORK

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. $120 million for shrimp, how does that help our men and women in harm's way? $100 million for citrus growers, what does that do to help our fighting men and women? $74 million for peanut storage. That may be grand for some Washington politicians and peanut growers, but how does that help and protect our American way of life and our men and women in harm's way? $25 million for spinach. Even kids don't like spinach, but Washington politicians do, so they can take that pork-barrel project home.

But here is the kicker in this supplemental appropriations bill: Billions for livestock. That is the kicker because livestock is literally pork for pork.

It is the most hypocritical bill we have seen in decades here on the House floor. It is wrong for our troops in battle, but it is a great gift for Washington Democrat politicians.

All the while we debate here on the floor, the Speaker of the House goes to raise money with fat cats in New York City. That is wrong for America, and the American people should know it, Mr. Speaker.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 263, nays 146, answered ''present'' 2, not voting 22, as follows:

[Roll No. 185]

YEAS—263

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Burgess
Butterfield
Cannon
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hunter
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Kucinich
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sestak
Shadegg
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Stark
Stearns
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—146

Akin
Altmire
Bachmann
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Boozman
Brady (TX)
Buchanan
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cantor
Carter
Chandler
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Courtney
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Donnelly
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gingrey
Goode
Granger
Hastert
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hulshof
Inglis (SC)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCotter
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Saxton
Schmidt
Sessions
Shays
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stupak
Sullivan
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Wu

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—2

Gohmert
Tancredo

NOT VOTING—22

Berkley
Carson
Clarke
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Lincoln
Engel
Harman
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Lampson
LaTourette
Linder
Marchant
McCaul (TX)
McCrery
Millender-McDonald
Nadler
Pitts
Spratt
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

□ 0942

Messrs. SHUSTER, GINGREY and CULBERSON changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1591.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution

261, proceedings will now resume on the bill (H.R. 1591) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed on Thursday, March 22, 2007, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) had 59½ minutes remaining and the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) had 51 minutes remaining.

Who yields time?

□ 0945

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 minutes.

Yesterday, a number of Members on the Republican side of the aisle sought to belittle the legislation before us because, in addition to funding the needs of the troops in Iraq, it contains money to address a number of domestic priorities. To ridicule that legislation, they tried to belittle items such as funding for levees in New Orleans, and agriculture disaster payments. In that they have been joined by editorial writers at papers such as the Washington Post.

Like the Post, the Republican speakers of yesterday indicated that their main objection to this legislation is the way it tries to create pressure to end our military involvement in an Iraq civil war. Those speakers and the Washington Post editorial writers make no effort to understand why these additional items are there. They simply ridicule them for their own purposes. This bill has my name on it, and I take full responsibility for each and every item in the bill.

Despite the comments of my good friend from California suggesting that if I could have written this bill, it would have been quite different, this is not a bill that was imposed from NANCY PELOSI's Speaker's Office. Oh, yes, she was consulted. But every last provision in this bill was not included until I personally approved of it, and I take full responsibility for it.

I want to be very clear about some of the items that the editorial writers and certain Members of this House have been criticizing.

Let's start with agriculture. I haven't voted for a farm bill in the last 10 years because I believe that existing farm programs provide way too much funding for large farmers and way too little funding for family farmers. But the fact is that over the past 2 years, over 70 percent of the counties in this country were declared disaster areas, not by me, but by the President of the United States. That entitles farmers who have suffered that weather-related disaster to certain forms of compensation.

The previous Congress tried to work its way through that problem for well over a year and failed. We at one time this year were looking at a bill in the Senate costing $6 billion. Thanks to the efforts of Chairman PETERSON on this side of the Capitol, the cost of those agriculture disaster programs have been cut by one-third, by tightening up eligibility requirements.

I applaud him for making those changes.

There is a second criticism being made about the fact that there is some money in here for dairy. You bet there is. Because under the Republican stewardship, during the last Congress, or two Congresses ago, actually, in order to use an accounting gimmick, the then majority on the Agriculture Committee arranged to have the dairy program expire one month before every other farm program. That was done only for budget fiction purposes, to hide the true cost of the farm bill 5 years ago. You bet, in this legislation there is a 1-month fix so that when we go into writing the next farm bill, dairy will have a chance to compete with other farm programs.

I find the Washington Post criticism of this especially interesting, since they often squawk about the fact that farm programs give too much to large farmers. The MILC Program happens to focus on small farmers, which is why so many big farmers don't like the program. I make no apology for recognizing that is an inequity that needs to be fixed.

Then we have a squawk about spinach. Let me tell you why spinach is in here. You can laugh about it now, but people were dying last year because of an E. coli outbreak.

Now, the FDA did not have the authority to require mandatory recalls of spinach. What some of these companies did, despite the fact that their product was clean, they voluntarily withdrew their product from the market. That cost them a bundle and brought a lot of people to near bankruptcy.

I have heard a lot of conservatives on this floor talk about how outrageous it is when the government engages in an unconstitutional taking. They usually are talking in terms of land or environment. Doesn't the government that required or that asked these people to participate in the withdrawal in order to protect public health, doesn't that government have an obligation to people who exercise their patriotic duty and did what they were asked? I think they do. That is why this is in here.

Then they are squawking about aquaculture. Well, let me explain why that item is in the bill. In eight States in the union, fish farmers woke up one morning and discovered that the Federal Government had issued an edict which prevented them from transferring their product across State lines because lake trout, in the Great Lakes region, had been discovered to have viral hemorrhagic septicemia, a highly virulent fish disease. If it was allowed to get into lakes, in the Great Lakes, it could have ruined the entire fish supply. So, the government said you can't sell your fish across State lines.

Again, the problem was that the fish that they were prohibited from shipping across State lines was all healthy. In a catch-22 situation, if their fish had been diseased, they could have collected under disaster programs. But because they were healthy, they couldn't collect. So the government put those people out of business.

Does the government have an obligation to correct that problem? You better bet you they do. That is why it is in this bill.

There are some other items in the bill as well that people don't like. But the main frustration on the part of the opponents of this bill is because people don't like the way that we are going about trying to end our military participation in an Iraqi civil war.

Let me submit to you the problem we have today is not that we didn't listen enough to people like the Washington Post, it is that we listened too much. They endorsed going to war in the first place. They helped drive the drumbeat that drove almost two-thirds of the people in this Chamber to vote for that misbegotten, stupid, ill-advised war that has destroyed our influence over a third of the world. So I make no apology if the moral sensibilities of some people on this floor, or the editorial writers of the Washington Post, are offended because they don't like the specific language contained in our benchmarks or in our timelines.

What matters in the end is not what the specific language is. What matters is whether or not we produce a product today that puts pressure on this administration and sends a message to Iraq, to the Iraqi politicians, that we are going to end the permanent, long-term babysitting service. That is what we are trying to do.

If the Washington Post is offended about the way we do it, that is just too bad. But we are in the arena, they are not. This is the best we can do, given the tools we have, and I make absolutely no apology for it.

I would say one thing, those of us who voted against the war in the first place wouldn't have nearly as hard a time getting us out of the war if people like the Washington Post and those who criticized us on the floor yesterday hadn't supported going into that stupid war in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would not want the gentleman from Wisconsin to think, since I don't have an opening statement, that I don't feel as passionately about this issue as he does. We just happen to disagree about how we support the troops, whether we make an effort to support them by providing adequate and flexible funding for the commanders, or have a mandatory withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) a member of the committee, for 2 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thought freedom was worth fighting for. I thought, when we saw all those Iraqis risk their lives to go and

vote and establish a government and establish a Constitution and to have, possibly, freedom of speech, that was something worth our level of effort. If you actually go over there and talk to those people, you find out that it is a minority that is trying to break the will of this body. That is what is going on.

What I object to in this bill is the way you have brought this to the floor. You have got subsidies for spinach. You know, my constituents are asking, who put that in the bill, Popeye? Why don't you let us have a vote on whether or not we want to attach funding for peanut farmers and funding for spinach farmers to a war supplemental?

Yes, why don't we have a vote on the Murtha language? Why are you denying us an opportunity, this body, a Democratic institution, the ability to say collectively as a majority, we think this kind of language is what we want to have?

I don't deny the gentleman from Pennsylvania, as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense, to put forward his plan. Even though he is not the Commander in Chief, the way I read the Constitution, he can do that. But the way I also read the Constitution and the Federalist papers, we are supposed to have some kind of a vote, and you are just bringing this thing forward under a closed rule.

I personally think that is a disgrace, what is going on here. I am going to vote against this bill. I hope, as we move forward in this process, democracy, which the Iraqis are willing to risk their lives for, will someday be reinstituted in this body here.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, 4 years ago President Bush sent our troops to war without a plan for success in Iraq, and without a plan to care for our wounded soldiers returning home.

During those 4 years, the old Congress rubber-stamped the failed policies of the Bush administration. The American people know well that when you ignore failure and bad decisions, you simply get more of them.

Today, we are demanding accountability for a change, accountability to ensure that our troops get the training and equipment they need, accountability to ensure that our wounded soldiers returning home are treated with a dignity that they deserve. We hold the Iraqi government accountable for taking the steps toward political reconciliation which they, themselves, have said are necessary to achieve stability.

The accountability measures in this bill track the recommendations made by the independent bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission. The President chose to reject those recommendations and, instead, to escalate the war in Iraq.

At the same time, the President has not paid adequate attention to those who were responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001, al Qaeda, operating out of Afghanistan.

This bill provides additional resources for completing that mission and for holding those responsible who did attack us on September 11. Al Qaeda is still plotting against us. It demands accountability, it supports our troops, and it strengthens our national security.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change and direction in Iraq. It is time to bring some accountability to the history of failed decisions we have made so we don't continue to make the same bad decisions going forward. The American people asked for and deserve a change in direction. That is what this bill does.

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Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield for a unanimous consent request to the gentleman from Texas.

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, thanking both Congressman MURTHA and Congressman OBEY for their work.

It has now been 4 years since this war started, over 3 years since we heard the phrase "mission accomplished," and almost a year and half since the Iraqi elections for a permanent government—it is time for the Iraqi government to police, govern, and run its country. This bill also provides more support for our veterans and military healthcare.

This legislation will provide funding for our troops, but it will also force the Iraqis to take control of their own country, and bring our troops home within the next 18 months—possibly sooner, if the Iraqis do not meet benchmarks that demonstrate they are making progress.

Our commitment in Iraq, which grew under the President's surge plan last month, has strained our military, cost thousands of U.S. and Iraqi lives, and has created serious readiness problems in the Army and Marine Corps.

I don't like the idea of setting a timeline, but for 4 years we have had an open-ended commitment, and after those 4 years, we are still seeing some of the bloodiest attacks, and highest casualty numbers to date. We need to set benchmarks to force the Iraqis to take over their own country, and this bill does that. It is not pulling our troops out immediately—if Iraqis rise to this responsibility, we will have troops there for another 18 months, but if they don't, we will begin redeployment this year.

After 4 years, it is time Congress exercise authority over the way this war is being run. Congress is not 535 commanders in chief, but we must provide guidance on what we will ask the American taxpayers to fund. We have held dozens of hearings this year, and passed a non-binding resolution opposing the escalation or surge in U.S. troops. Our vote on this Supplemental will be another step in bringing a resolution to this conflict and will let the Iraqis know our commitment is not open-ended.

I applaud the leadership and Appropriations committee on bringing this bill to the floor, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield time to my Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois, DENNIS HASTERT, 3 minutes.

Mr. HASTERT. I thank the chairman, and I rise today in strong opposition to 1591.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to my friend from Wisconsin, I have a great deal of respect for the fights that he has fought on this floor for over 30 years, but we do disagree.

Supplemental spendings are intended to provide additional funding for programs and activities that are too urgent and pressing to wait for the regular appropriations process. To be clear, only emergency funds should be included in this supplemental. Period. So if Democrats are looking for an avenue to send money back to their districts, they should look to regular order.

Last year when the Senate tried to include over $14 billion in nonemergency funds in the supplemental, House Republicans demanded a clean bill. And when the House sat down with the other body to negotiate a final bill, we accepted nothing less than a supplemental free of unrelated and nonemergency funding.

Why did we do that? Because we wanted to pledge the faithful support of this Congress to the members of the armed services serving in harm's way. This legislation should remain focused on the needs of the troops and not become a vehicle for extraneous spending and policy proposals.

In yet another show of a different way, the same Members who screamed for a straight up or down vote on minimum wage legislation just 1 year ago are today trying to attach that legislation to a wartime supplemental. And the very Members who voted to reinstitute PAYGO rules just 2 months ago are here today casting fiscal responsibility to the wind.

This bill should be limited to necessary funding for our troops serving bravely in Iraq and around the world in the war on terror. I ask my honorable Democratic friends how the Democrats can on the one hand say they support our troops by providing them with money, but on the other undermine them by telegraphing a date for their withdrawal from Iraq.

Congress should under no circumstances micromanage the war and have politicians making decisions that should be left to our Commander in Chief and generals on the ground. Even The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, hardly supporters of this administration, have editorialized that this legislation oversteps the bounds of Congress and both support a Presidential veto of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation and think long and hard about its consequences. This bill is fiscally irresponsible; it holds our troops hostage to nonemergency

spending and policy proposals, and it signals to the insurgents and terrorists around the world a lack of American will to do what is necessary to win the war on terror.

Vote ''no'' on H.R. 1591.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that we could do as the distinguished speaker has indicated and simply rubber-stamp what the administration asks for and do nothing else. But the fact is, what we are doing is exercising our responsibilities to provide checks and balances; Congress has every right to limit the terms and conditions under which appropriations are made, especially in wartime.

I would also point out that lest there be any doubt for the support of the troops, in addition to all of the funding that Mr. MURTHA has put in his section of the bill to meet the everyday combat and readiness needs of the troops, we have $1.7 billion above the President's request for veterans health care; we have another $1.7 billion above the President's request for defense health care. I think that makes quite clear that if you are concerned about the troops and concerned about the veterans, you will vote for this bill.

I will now yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, we have a moral obligation to support our troops while they are in combat and when they come home. That is why we fully fund our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and why we commit $3.1 billion in this bill to build better barracks, housing, and training facilities here at home for our troops returning from war.

We also believe that supporting our veterans is a real cost of war, just as real as guns, tanks, and bullets. That is why we had $1.7 billion in high-priority health care and benefits programs for our veterans, with a special focus on taking care of those who need us the most, those suffering from traumatic brain injury, PTSD, or loss of arms and legs. Our veterans' sacrifices don't end after they return home, and neither should our commitment to them.

For members of the Guard and Reserves in rural areas, we provide $100 million for contracting out mental health care services so these brave citizen soldiers don't have to suffer even more by waiting weeks or months for health care they desperately need and deserve. For some, that timely care could mean the difference between health and depression; for other, the difference between life and death.

To prevent a Walter Reed Annex 18 tragedy from occurring in VA hospitals, we commit $550 million to address serious maintenance and repair needs at those hospitals. Not one soldier, not one veteran, not one, should ever again have to endure the indignity of living in rat-infested, moldy housing.

The needs addressed in this bill are real, and our troops and veterans deserve no less. A vote for this bill is a vote for better health care and housing for America's heroes. By voting for this bill, we can honor and respect our troops, our veterans, and their families, not just with our words, but with our deeds.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) for 1 minute.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I understand my Democrat colleagues have the votes. I guess there was a lot of arm twisting last night. So congratulations on getting the votes necessary to pass this. But I am sad because this bill spends $31 billion more than the President requested. It is a budget buster. And also I am kind of sad because I think a little bit about history.

You know, if George Washington had a Congress with the attitude of this Congress, we might very well have lost the Revolutionary War. If Abraham Lincoln had a Congress with the attitude of this Congress, we might very well have lost the Civil War. And I am sad for our valiant troops who you are going to jerk out of Iraq. It is a withdrawal bill. That is what you want to do, withdraw. And I am sad for our troops, our valiant troops, who want to win. Who want to win. And you are not going to let them if you have your way.

So I would just like to say, if I were talking to the President of the United States today, Mr. President, hang tough. Hang tough.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA).

Mr. MURTHA. Let me just say that the Revolutionary War, my great-great-grandfather fought in it. We fought our own war. In the Civil War, I have my great-grandfather's hat in my office. He fought against the South in the Civil War. We fought our own war. What we are trying to do in this legislation is force the Iraqis to fight their own war. That's what it's all about. Sixty-two Americans have died this month. We want to force the Iraqis to fight their own war.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, is it true that House Rule XXI, clause 9(d) defines an earmark as report language included primarily at the request of a Member recommending a specific amount of spending authority for an entity or targeted to a specific State, locality, or congressional district?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, does the language in the committee report directing $35 million to risk mitigation project at NASA's Stennis facility constitute an earmark, as defined in rule XXI, clause 9(d)?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair discerns no question of order with respect to the statement that is included in the report. Questions concerning the content of that statement may be addressed by Members by engaging in debate.

Mr. FLAKE. So I can understand this, if the chairman of the committee simply says there are no earmarks, then the Chair is obligated to say there are no earmarks for the purpose of the rule?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is not a proper parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FLAKE. Is it accurate to say that a Member could request an earmark through the chairman of the committee and have that earmark funded, and then the report come to the floor claiming that there are no earmarks in fact in the bill?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has stated a hypothetical question. The Chair does not respond to such questions.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, we have passed some good rules with regard to earmark reform and transparency, but we have found a way around them already, because when a report comes to the floor the rule states that it has to state if there is an earmark there, which Member requested it, and what it is for. Yet here we have something that is clearly an earmark for the Stennis facility and not an emergency by any definition. And my office actually called NASA, called the administration, asked was this requested. No, it wasn't; the request came from Congress. Clearly, an earmark request.

Yet the report comes to the floor; and because it says there are no earmarks, we have to take it for the purpose of the rule that there are no earmarks.

I am just wondering if this is how the appropriations cycle is going to go this year? Do the earmark rules mean anything? Or simply, can we get around them this way? What is to stop every Member from going to the chairman and saying, I have a request for this for my district. Will you simply put it in the overall request? Therefore, my name won't be attached to it.

We need to clean up these rules. If the chairman of the Appropriations Committee would clarify this, I would be most appreciative.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

The fact is that an earmark is something that is requested by an individual Member. This item was not requested by any individual Member; it was put in the bill by me. And it is there because we are simply doing the same thing with this facility that we are doing throughout the gulf coast, which is to make investments that mitigate against risk because of hurricanes.

This is a valuable Federal facility, and it certainly does not pass any definition of earmark that I know. I know the gentleman wants to see earmarks in every closet that he can find, but the fact is it is not an earmark. It was not asked for by any Members of Congress.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I can count on one hand the number of times I voted with this gentleman. He is on the other side of the aisle, but he couldn't get any time on that side. So I am pleased to recognize that all of us have the right to speak regardless of whether we agree with one or not.

I recognize Mr. KUCINICH of Ohio for 1 minute.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I rise in opposition to the bill.

Four years ago, Congress was told we had no alternative but to go to war. That was wrong. Now Congress is telling the American people, we have no alternative but to continue the war for just another year or two, and then we will be able to end the war. So war equals peace. I don't think so.

This war now has a momentum of its own, which has captured even people of good will who say they want peace but are going to vote to keep us at war. The same false logic that trapped Members into voting for the war is trapping Members into voting to continue the war.

I believe you cannot say you are for peace and vote to keep this war going. You cannot say you are for peace and facilitate the theft of Iraqi oil. You cannot say you are for peace and give the President money not just to keep this war going but to attack Iran if he so chooses.

If you want peace, vote for peace now. If you want peace, stop funding the war. If you want peace, stand for the truth.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind visitors in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House, and any manifestation whatsoever of approval or disapproval of these proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds. Mr. Speaker, the characterization just placed on the previous speaker is flat out wrong.

Last night we had plenty of time for a lot of Members who didn't show up before the session expired. We called the gentleman from Ohio's office twice to inform him he had time available last night even though he was opposed to our position. He wasn't in a position to take it last night. So I would suggest that we have a different set of speakers today. We called on four Members of the caucus last night who were opposed to our position. And if the gentleman is suggesting that we have not called on Members who are opposed to our position, he is just flat out wrong.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. I want the gentleman to know that my office did make an attempt to get me time, that we were told that he didn't think there was any time, and that I came down here this morning seeking the opportunity.

Mr. OBEY. With all due respect, we called your office twice last night, and we were informed that you had already gone home.

Mr. KUCINICH. Actually, I was there until very late.

I want to thank my friend from California for yielding 1 minute and thank the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

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Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, I rise in very strong support of this bill, and I want to thank Chairman OBEY and Chairman MURTHA for all of their hard work to put this legislation together.

I believe it is time to bring our troops home, to come home from Iraq, and I believe it is time for this Congress to support this legislation.

As the American soldiers begin their fifth year in this war of choice in Iraq, we confront the tragic fact that the Bush administration's preparation, planning and execution of this war has not kept faith with the enormous sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their families have made.

More than 3,200 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and close to 25,000 more have been seriously wounded. And Iraq is mired in a civil war, with tens of thousands of civilians killed, or even more internally displaced. Hundreds of billions of taxpayers dollars have been squandered in this war that has left our military readiness in jeopardy, the All-Volunteer Army is at a breaking point, and the world's faith in America's leadership is gravely shaken.

The American people recognize President Bush's approach in Iraq for what it is, a failure. That is why we sent a message to Washington this past November to change the course, to end this war, to get out of Iraq. That is what the American people said in November.

Instead, this President, in all of his arrogance and all of his lying, chose to choose a surge.

Well, the time is now for the Congress to do something about that because the American people do not support a war in Iraq, and has no end in sight, and continues the tragic, unnecessary loss of life. And given the President's unwillingness to change course, it is incumbent upon the Congress to act. With this bill the Democrats in Congress are taking a stand against the President on behalf of the soldiers in this country and the American people.

The bill before the House would protect our troops on the battlefield and at home, and require accountability from the Bush administration and the Iraqi Government, and set a responsible timeline for the phased redeployment of U.S. troops with a date certain by September 2008 at the latest. We must support this legislation. And again, I thank the authors of this legislation.

I rise in strong support of this bill and I encourage all of my colleagues who believe it is time for our troops to come home from Iraq to support it.

As American soldiers begin their fifth year of this war of choice in Iraq, we confront the tragic fact that the Bush Administration's preparation, planning, and execution of this war has not kept faith with the enormous sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their families have made.

More than 3,200 American soldiers have died in Iraq and close to 25,000 more have been seriously injured. Iraq is mired in a civil war, with tens of thousands of civilians killed and even more internally displaced. Hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars have been squandered in this war that has left our military readiness in jeopardy, the all-volunteer Army at the breaking point, and the world's faith in America's world leadership gravely shaken.

The American people recognize President Bush's approach in Iraq for what it is—a failure. That's why they sent a message to Washington this past November to change course.

Americans do not support a war in Iraq that has no end in sight and continues the tragic and unnecessary loss of life. Given the President's unwillingness to change course, it is incumbent on Congress to act. With this bill, Democrats in Congress are taking a stand against the President but on behalf of our soldiers and the American people.

The bill before the House would protect our troops on the battlefield and at home, require accountability from the Bush Administration and the Iraqi government, and set a responsible timeline for a phased redeployment of U.S. troops—with a date certain, by September 2008 at the latest, for U.S. combat troops to be redeployed from Iraq.

Adoption of our plan is the answer to America's plea to bring this war to an end and turn away from the President's bottomless commitment to U.S. participation in the Iraqi civil war. Our plan provides a responsible, phased plan for requiring the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. And voting yes on this bill will clearly show to the American people that a majority in Congress clearly stand with them in their desire to bring an end to the tragic U.S. occupation of Iraq.

My colleagues must understand that if they oppose the war, if they oppose spending more money on the war, if they oppose continuing the tragic loss of life in Iraq, then they must support this bill.

The only alternative to this bill that could garner enough votes to pass would be a supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war with no accountability, no timetables, and no end. That is the reality.

I know that the majority of the House opposes the continuation of the war. There are differences over strategy, on how best to achieve our goal on behalf of the country, on behalf of the soldiers, and on behalf of their families.

Defeating this bill would prolong the war. Defeating this bill would enable the President to continue to his irresponsible and deadly failures. Defeating this bill would send a message to the American people that Congress is not listening to them.

The President has run out of excuses for his failures in Iraq.

The American people have correctly run out of patience waiting for him to change course.

And America's soldiers have done everything asked of them and everything that could be expected of them.

It is time for a new direction.

The bill before the House provides a new direction for America. And it is the only bill that can take us in that direction.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, how is it in order to continue to consider H.R. 1591 when rule XXI, clause 9 of the House clearly states that, and I quote, ''it shall not be in order to consider a bill or joint resolution reported by a committee unless the report includes a list of congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits and limited tariff benefits in the bill or in the report, and the name of any Member, Delegate or Resident Commissioner who submitted a request to the committee for each respective item included in such list, or a statement that the proposition contains no congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits or tariff benefits''?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. No Member rose to a point of order at the appropriate point in time.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I make a point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, is there a list of congressional earmarks with this?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman stating a point of order?

Mr. MCHENRY. Point of order. House rule XXI, clause 9 states, and if I shall repeat, or if the gentleman would, if the Speaker would look at House rule XXI, clause 9, is there not cause for action?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's point of order is not timely.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, at what time would it be timely for consideration?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It would be timely at the outset of consideration of the matter.

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Am I correct to interpret the Chair's statement to mean that even if an earmark is clearly present in the bill under consideration today, that the mere inclusion of a statement certifying that there are no earmarks within the provision effectively neuters the rule?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has posed a hypothetical question. The Chair does not respond to such questions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, it is a fact, not a hypothetical. This bill contains earmarks. And the rule under the House is that——

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, it simply takes a waiver submitted by the chairman to make this rule, this no earmark rule, in fact, noneffective; is that not correct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is reminded again he is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. How does the Chair understand the definition term of ''earmark'' as it relates to rule XXI, clause 9?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does not provide advisory opinions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Under the rules of the House, what is an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does not respond to requests for advisory opinions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman shall state his point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark, as I interpret it, because the Chair won't provide a definition, how does section 2101 of the legislation before us today——

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry. The gentleman is no longer recognized.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL).

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today this Congress, the 110th Congress, faces an historic vote, a vote to truly change the direction of the Iraqi conflict.

Let us review the cost America has borne in 4 years: 3,200 lives have been lost, 25,000 of our citizens have been injured, and nearly a half a trillion dollars have been spent, and America's reputation around the world has been sullied.

And under the President's leadership, his Iraqi policy comes down to something very simple: more troops, more money, more time, more of the same. That is it.

Now, there is a lot of rhetoric going around. We fund our troops. You fund the troops. There is one fundamental difference: We require the Iraqis to bear responsibility for Iraq, and you provide them and the President another blank check for another year. And that is the fundamental difference, whether you will bring accountability and responsibility to the Iraqis to stand up for Iraq.

Now, some bemoan and say we are micromanaging. I would say to you, you rubber-stamped 4 years of mismanagement. Not enough troops, not a plan for the occupation and elimination of the Iraqi Army has brought us in from in search of WMD to policing a sectarian civil war.

And when you talk, as the President said on January 10, that he wants the Iraqis to meet his benchmarks, but you don't have any benchmarks or any accountability for Iraq, I can only say one thing, as we say in Chicago, ''You're all hat and no cattle.''

It is time, after 4 years and an unbelievable cost across America, borne mostly by our troops and their families and our military, that we ask the Iraqis to do for Iraq what they have asked us to do for them for 4 years, and that is to be accountable for their own future.

And I am proud that we have finally done something. We will fund the troops, and we will also demand that Iraq stand up for Iraq's future and stop leaning on America alone.

And we have done something that is so important that has been missing in this policy, and that is not only a new direction, but fundamentally bringing the responsibility and accountability to the Iraqis, which is why many in the Armed Forces are happy we are forcing Iraqis to do for Iraq's future what they have asked us to do, which is stop policing their civil war, but demand accountability, bring a new direction to this, because after 4 years, more troops, more money, more time is only rubber-stamping more of the same.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, could I request the amount of time on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 42½ minutes. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 40 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) for 1 minute.

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is truly incomprehensible that there are those who believe that the best course of action in the face of a determined enemy is to tell them that we are less determined. Yet that is exactly what this Iraq supplemental financing bill does.

What message do we send our brave military men and women when we won't guarantee them the resources and the equipment that they need without including a litany of restrictive and arbitrary timetables?

What will our soldiers on the front lines of this war think when they hear they have been sold for salmon fisheries and spinach growers, money used to buy votes?

This Iraq supplemental bill is just one more step in what has become a long list of unprecedented attempts by this majority to accept defeat at any cost.

For those of us in Washington, we get to face this moment in the warmth and the comfort of our homes and offices. For so many Americans, they will face this moment in the harsh reality of a war zone. We must not forget what is at stake. Our military will not, and the American people will not.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS).

(Mr. DICKS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to commend my colleagues, Mr. OBEY and Mr. MURTHA, for the excellent work on the supplemental appropriations bill that they have brought to the House floor. The House leadership has worked hard to put together the votes to pass this legislation.

This bill funds the troops. We have given them extra funds to deal with the critical issues of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. We need to clean up the mess at Walter Reed and the other hospitals around the country, including the VA hospitals. There is money in this bill to provide extra staff, nurses and to clean up these facilities.

It is critical that we put pressure on the Iraqi Government to end the civil war. The Maliki government must get the message that the American people do not have unlimited patience. General Petraeus has said that we cannot end this war with only a military solution. We need the Iraqis to resolve the conflict amongst themselves. We need them to fix their Constitution, pass necessary oil legislation, and end the sectarian violence. The benchmarks in this bill will help them to accomplish these objectives.

I hope that General Petraeus is successful in reducing the violence in Baghdad and the surrounding area. I hope that U.S. forces embedded with Iraqi forces can stop the sectarian killing. Without political reconciliation, we cannot stop the sectarian violence and the al Qaeda-led terrorist attacks. We also need an economic recovery program across Iraq to create badly needed jobs.

This bill sets a timetable. It puts pressure on the Maliki government, and I think it is the right bill at the right time to change our Iraq policy and to bring the troops home in a reasonable period of time.

I hope we can stabilize Iraq, but we can only do it with the effort of the Iraqi Government and their people.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 22, 2007]

CONGRESS'S CHALLENGE ON IRAQ

The House of Representatives now has a chance to lead the nation toward a wiser, more responsible Iraq policy. It is scheduled to vote this week on whether to impose benchmarks for much-needed political progress on the Iraqi government—and link them to the continued presence of American combat forces. The bill also seeks to lessen the intolerable strains on American forces, requiring President Bush to certify that units are fit for battle before sending any troops to Iraq. Both of these requirements are long overdue. The House should vote yes, by an overwhelming, bipartisan margin.

It is normally the president who provides the leadership for American foreign policy and decides when there needs to be a change of course. But Mr. Bush stubbornly refuses to do either, and the country cannot afford to wait out the rest of his term. Given Mr. Bush's failure, Congress has a responsibility to do all it can to use Washington's remaining leverage to try to lessen the chaos that will likely follow an American withdrawal—no matter when it happens—and to ensure that the credibility and readiness of the United States military is preserved.

House Democrats have wisely moved beyond their earlier infatuation with mere deadlines. The benchmarks spelled out in this legislation, which also provides the next round of money for the war, require that the Iraqi government stop shielding and encouraging the Shiite militias that are helping drive the killing. United States and Iraqi security forces must be allowed to pursue all extremists, Shiite and Sunni, disarm sectarian militias and provide ''evenhanded security for all Iraqis.''

The benchmarks also require the Iraqi government to take measurable steps toward national reconciliation: equitably distributing oil revenues, opening up more political and economic opportunities to the Sunni minority and amending the constitution to discourage further fragmentation.

The legislation does not settle for more empty promises—from Mr. Bush and the Iraqis. It would require the president to provide Congress, by July, with an initial detailed report on Iraq's efforts to meet these benchmarks. By October, the Iraqi government would have to complete a specific set of legislative and constitutional steps. Failure to meet these deadlines would trigger the withdrawal of all American combat forces—but not those training Iraqis or fighting Al Qaeda—to be concluded in April 2008. If the benchmarks were met, American combat forces would remain until the fall of 2008.

The measure would also bar sending any unit to Iraq that cannot be certified as fully ready. It sets a reasonable 365-day limit on combat tours for the Army and a shorter 210-day combat tour limit for the Marines. As for how many troops can remain in Iraq—until the House's deadlines for withdrawal—the legislation imposes no reduction on the level of roughly 132,000 in place at the start of this year.

Critics will complain that the House is doing the Pentagon's planning. But the Pentagon and Mr. Bush have clearly failed to protect America's ground forces from the ever more costly effects of extended, accelerated and repeated deployments.

If Iraq's leaders were truly committed to national reconciliation and reining in their civil war, there would be no need for benchmarks or deadlines. But they are not. If Mr. Bush were willing to grasp Iraq's horrifying reality, he would be the one imposing benchmarks, timetables and readiness rules. He will not, so Congress must. American troops should not be trapped in the middle of a blood bath that neither Mr. Bush nor Iraq's leaders have the vision or the will to halt.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 21, 2007]

THE TROIKA AND THE SURGE

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

President Bush's Iraq surge policy is about a month old now, and there is only one thing you can say about it for certain: no matter what anyone in Congress, the military or the public has to say, it's going ahead. The president has the authority to do it and the veto power to prevent anyone from stopping him. Therefore, there's only one position to have on the surge anymore: hope that it works.

Does this mean that Democrats in Congress who are trying to shut down the war and force a deadline should take the advice of critics and shut up and let the surge play out?

No, just the opposite. I would argue that for the first time we have—by accident—the sort of balanced policy trio that had we had it in place four years ago might have spared us the mess of today. It's the Pelosi-Petraeus-Bush troika.

I hope the Democrats, under Speaker Nancy Pelosi, keep pushing to set a deadline for withdrawal from Iraq, because they are providing two patriotic services that the Republicans failed to offer in the previous four years: The first is policy discipline. Had Republicans spent the previous four years regularly questioning Don Rumsfeld's ignorant bromides and demanding that the White House account for failures in Iraq, we might have had the surge in 2003—when it was obvious we did not have enough troops on the ground—rather than in 2007, when the chances of success are much diminished.

Because the Republicans controlled the House and Senate, and because many conservatives sat in mute silence the last four years, the administration could too easily ignore its critics and drag out policies in Iraq that were not working. With the Democrats back in Congressional control, that is no longer possible.

The other useful function Speaker Pelosi and her colleagues are performing is to give the president and Gen. David Petraeus, our commander in Iraq, the leverage of a deadline without a formal deadline. How so? The surge can't work without political reconciliation among Iraqi factions, which means Sunni-Shiite negotiations—and such negotiations are unlikely to work without America having the ''leverage'' of telling the parties that if they don't compromise, we will leave. (Deadlines matter. At some point, Iraqis have to figure this out themselves.)

Since Mr. Bush refuses to set a deadline, Speaker Pelosi is the next best thing. Do not underestimate how useful it is for General Petraeus to be able to say to Iraqi politicians: ''Look guys, Pelosi's mad as hell— and

she has a big following! I don't want to quit, but Americans won't stick with this forever. I only have a few months.''

Speaker Pelosi: Keep the heat on.

As for General Petraeus, I have no idea whether his military strategy is right, but at least he has one—and he has stated that by ''late summer'' we should know if it's working. As General Petraeus told the BBC last week, ''I have an obligation to the young men and women in uniform out here, that if I think it's not going to happen, to tell them that it's not going to happen, and there needs to be a change.''

We need to root for General Petraeus to succeed, and hold him to those words if he doesn't—not only for the sake of the soldiers on the ground, but also so that Mr. Bush is not allowed to drag the war out until the end of his term, and then leave it for his successor to unwind.

But how will General Petraeus or Congress judge if the surge is working? It may be obvious, but it may not be. It will likely require looking beneath the surface calm of any Iraqi neighborhood—where violence has been smothered by the surge of U.S. troops—and trying to figure out: what will happen here when those U.S. troops leave? Remember, enough U.S. troops can quiet any neighborhood for a while. The real test is whether a self-sustaining Iraqi army and political consensus are being put in place that can hold after we leave.

It will also likely require asking: Are the Shiite neighborhoods quieting down as a result of reconciliation or because their forces are just lying low so the U.S. will focus on whacking the Sunnis—in effect, carrying out the civil war on the Shiites' behalf, so that when we leave they can dominate more easily?

When you're sitting on a volcano, it is never easy to tell exactly what is happening underneath—or what will happen if you move. But those are the judgments we may soon have to make. In the meantime, since Bush is going to be Bush, let Pelosi be Pelosi and Petraeus be Petraeus—and hope for the best. For now, we don't have much choice.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1¼ minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER).

(Mr. NEUGEBAUER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I hope today, as we take this vote, that people will understand really what is at stake here.

I have heard a lot of discussion today, and some Members are going to go back home and say, well, I voted for this bill and against the troops because I brought home some things for the people in my district.

But today this vote is not about bringing home bacon for the people in your district. It is about American security.

My family was in New York on 9/11, and my daughter-in-law and her mother were supposed to be at the World Trade Center on 9/11. So when I take this vote this afternoon or at noon, whenever we have this, let me tell you the reason why RANDY NEUGEBAUER is going to be voting ''no.'' Because I am looking forward, not at what we are doing today and what is going to, who is going to be able to take what projects home, but I am looking forward to the security of America. I am looking into the eyes of my grandsons Nathan and Noah and saying, Nathan and Noah, I didn't leave America safe and secure for you.

This is about security. 9/11 is a real event. America was attacked. We have been attacked before. We know this enemy is going to come back and attack us again.

This bill, this vote, is about keeping America safe. So when Members go home and brag about their vote on this, I hope that they go home and brag about the fact that they cast a vote that will ensure a safe and secure America because, you see, if you take all of these projects home, and there is no security in America, there is no America.

I urge my colleagues not to vote for this bill.

I rise today in strong support of our troops and their mission in Iraq.

Ten days ago, I returned from my third trip to Iraq. From the generals to the privates, the message I heard from our troops in Iraq was ''let us do our job so we can win.'' And that is precisely what we should be doing here today.

Today, we should be working to provide our military with the tools and resources needed to attain victory . . .

Today, we should be showing our troops that we are behind them 100 percent . . . And today, we should be showing the world that America has the resolve to stand up to terrorist threats even when the going gets tough.

Instead, this ill-advised legislation does just the opposite. By putting restrictions on our military commanders and the President . . . and setting a firm timeline and final date for withdrawal, this bill undermines the war effort, sends the wrong message to our troops, and telegraphs our war strategy to the enemy.

Our Constitution is clear in that it places the responsibility for conducting the war in the hands of a single Commander-in-Chief, not Congress. Our Founding Fathers wisely understood that having 535 politicians in Washington attempt to micromanage a war is a recipe for disaster.

I am further disappointed that the majority has jeopardized the success of the drought relief package for farmers and ranchers.

I strongly support drought relief and have been calling for federal assistance since last summer. However, as much as I know producers in my district support disaster assistance, I cannot in good conscience support this supplemental because of the flawed military strategy that the majority is pursuing in this bill.

□ 1030

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), the subcommittee Chair on Foreign Operations.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1591 and commend Chairman OBEY, Chairman MURTHA, and our Speaker for putting together a bill that protects our troops, responds to the will of the American people, and preserves our Nation's interests.

Our men and women in uniform have served with honor and courage, but we are not doing our part. Our Armed Forces are not battle-ready, nor is their mission clear and achievable. There is no definition of victory. The nature of the battle has changed, and our troops now find themselves policing a bloody civil war. It is well past time to set clear parameters for this war.

Since the beginning, this war and reconstruction efforts have been ill-managed. Just yesterday the Iraq IG reported yet again on how unprepared the administration was for the task of reconstruction. The Defense Department had no strategy for restoring government institutions, establishing security, or rebuilding infrastructure, and the State Department was cut completely out of the work.

There continues to be a lack of coordination and strategy to achieve our objectives. Putting billions of dollars more into this war without any parameters and risking the lives of more of our brave men and women is not only foolish; it is immoral. As the New York Times editorial noted on Thursday, if the President won't step up to the task of setting benchmarks and ensuring the safety of our troops, then it falls to us, this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does just that. We are stepping up to our responsibilities. This legislation does not micromanage the war, as many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim. It is a very carefully considered approach to bringing accountability to the execution of the war and to the reconstruction efforts. Moreover, it sets a date certain for the end of this war so we can bring our troops home.

No amount of American blood or treasure can help Iraq if the Iraqis don't help themselves. The Maliki government must exhibit the political will to confront extremists on both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide, to give all segments of society a stake in Iraq's future, and to put Iraqi revenues towards the hard task of reconstruction. Congress didn't pull these benchmarks from the air. They were put forth by the Iraqis and by President Bush in his January 10 speech.

Mr. Speaker, we are already into the fifth year of this war. The bill provides the funding the President requested, but it does not do so unconditionally. This bill sets benchmarks, provides a date certain for withdrawal.

The days of open-ended commitment and unilateral check-writing privileges are over. This bill deals with Iraq responsibly, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. MCHENRY. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, is a point of order in order against page 87, the subsection appropriating $35 million to NASA, which I believe to be an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time for making a point of order on this issue has passed. The Chair does not provide advisory opinions.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. MCHENRY. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9, the section 3103 of this legislation which appropriates $35 million to spinach growers, does this not qualify as an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has not stated a point of order.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9, which the Chair recognizes from the House rules, how does section 3104, which appropriates $20 million to a particular agricultural interest in a particular district, not qualify as an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has not stated a parliamentary inquiry. The gentleman may engage in debate on that subject if yielded to, but the Chair will not recognize a Member for debate under the guise of a parliamentary inquiry.

The gentleman is no longer recognized.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on Monday I spoke on this floor about a conflict I had in supporting this measure because I want peace in our world and I want our troops to come home. I asked for my constituents to let me know how they felt.

Hundreds of people responded with e-mails and phone calls, and I appreciate each of them. They want us to support our troops. They want to bring our troops home from Iraq, and they want to take care of our veterans.

The most effective way to accomplish those things is to vote for this bill. This will be the first step in ending the war in Iraq, taking care of our veterans, but at the same time, supporting our troops.

I am proud to be a Member of this Congress and to vote ''aye'' today on this bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, first let me compliment my friend from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the chairman of the Appropriations Committee; and the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), for the excellent work that they have done. And we thank our minority for working with us on this bill.

The purpose of the Members of Congress front and center is to provide for the common defense of our country. I must tell you how concerned and worried I am about the readiness and state of readiness of the United States Army based upon testimony and briefings that we have had within the Armed Services Committee.

Readiness is based upon equipment and based upon people able to do their job as defenders in uniform. This is a serious situation in which we find ourselves. This bill is a major step toward helping our readiness.

It is our job not just to appropriate money for today's concerns, whether it be in the Middle East or elsewhere. It is our job to make sure that those in uniform can protect the interests of America in the days and years ahead.

In the last 30 years, we have had 12 military conflicts in which our military associates have been involved. What does the future hold? We don't know. But as sure as God made little green apples, there will be threats that we need to deter or challenges that we need to fight in the days and years ahead. We must have a ready force in all services and my deep concern for the United States Army causes that to come into question in our capability.

In this we provide money for the real war in Afghanistan, the Strategic Reserve Fund, which supports training, not just operations but repair of equipment, purchase of equipment, and expenses to improve the readiness of the nondeployed military forces.

I am deeply concerned about the readiness of our forces in the days and years ahead. This bill will help immeasurably in that first step toward restoring readiness for our United States Army. And this is no small thing. A vote against this is a vote against those uncertainties of the future as well as where we are today involved in conflict.

Military health care is very important, and we look at that in this bill solidly. Veterans' health care, military housing allowances. We do so many good things in this bill for our military.

Let us not let the readiness of our United States Army suffer as a result of not passing this all-important legislation.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY).

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. LEWIS for yielding me this time.

In my almost 19 years in the United States House of Representatives, I have cast many difficult votes. And I have often spoken to groups of constituents over the years, and in the course of their asking me questions, inevitably one of the questions will be, What is the most difficult vote you have taken as a Member of the House?

And I am always quick to respond, even though there have been many difficult votes, clearly the most difficult vote I have had to make as a Member of the House is to vote to send our troops into war.

And certainly the vote that this House made to authorize the President to send our troops to Iraq this most recent time was a very difficult vote for all of us. Some of us, it seems, have changed our minds and wish we hadn't cast that vote. But the fact is we did cast that vote. We voted in the majority to start this war.

I believe, based on my reading of history, my studies of past engagements, military engagements, it would be a tremendous mistake for the Congress of the United States to attempt to micromanage this war and bring it to a conclusion through artificially constraining decisions on the battlefield.

I have spoken face to face with the President of the United States about this war. I know he is trying his best to bring this war to a conclusion. He is trying his best to make sure that the interests of the United States, as well as the interests of the people of Iraq, are served as he plans strategy and works with our military leaders to plot the best course for ending this war and preserving and serving the interests of the United States.

He has a new strategy in play. It seems to be working. We are getting favorable reports from the commanders in the field.

Let us give this Commander in Chief and his military leaders a chance to serve this country, to serve Iraq, and end this in the best possible way for the United States. Let us not try to micromanage from the Congress, with 435 in the House and 100 in the Senate, telling our leaders how to conduct this war and when to end it. That is the wrong course of action for this country.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California has quite a bit more time remaining. I suggest he run some off the clock.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, may we hear what the time left is on both sides, please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 38 minutes, and the gentleman from Wisconsin has 31½ minutes.

□ 1045

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from California.

Mr. Speaker, we have an interesting bill before us here today. It appropriates $100 million for shrimp, it appropriates $100 million for citrus growers, it appropriates $74 million for a particular type of peanut storage and

$25 million for spinach. It even appropriates $50 million for a Capitol Hill power plant. And they do this in the name of funding the troops. I think this is, again, Washington hypocrisy at work.

The most egregious part of this bill, I find, is that there are billions of dollars in this bill for livestock, which the American people, Mr. Speaker, should know is literally pork for pork.

And it is all about getting votes together to fund the troops in harm's way, but instead of funding the troops in harm's way, they are funding pork-barrel projects here in the United States.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, this is wrong for our troops in battle, but it is a great gift for Washington Democrat politicians who are in power here in the House today.

This is a failure to understand what ''emergency'' means, what ''war'' means and the fight we have going in Iraq.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for his hard work on this and other work that we do here.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the debate on this emergency spending bill has provided the service of reminding Americans exactly what is at stake in Iraq, the prospects of victory, the consequences of defeat, and a better appreciation of how it is we do everything we possibly can to secure and support our men and women in harm's way.

House Republicans, Mr. Speaker, asked the Speaker and her colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to produce a clean and straightforward supplemental emergency bill, a package worthy of our troops' hard work and dedication, with help we could deploy to the front lines as quickly as possible.

What we got instead was a poorly assembled wish-list of nonemergency spending requests wrapped in a date-certain declaration of defeat, a confirmation to our enemies that if they hang on just a bit longer, we will be out of their way soon.

I happen to believe the stakes in Iraq are too high and the sacrifices made by our military personnel and their families too great to be content with anything but success. But the bill brought before us today isn't written with victory in mind. Its prevailing tone is one of defeat, and its abiding premise is that America's mission in Iraq is over and our troops' continued status there is without merit. And just to drive the point home, it forces on General Petraeus and his commanders on the ground constant status and reporting requirements, designed not only to undermine their basic operational authority, but to hasten a withdrawal of troop support from the region.

When the leaders of the majority were offered the opportunity for a secure briefing from General Petraeus a few days ago, they said no. When the majority was offered a briefing from Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice and Secretary Pace in the last few days, they said no again.

Does anyone think that demoting our best generals to administrative assistants represents our best chance of achieving our goals in this region? Does anyone believe our commanders in the field have been given too much authority and too much flexibility to get the job done?

Ultimate victory in Iraq is a proposition that is far from guaranteed, Mr. Speaker, but ultimate failure in Iraq is, if this attempt to co-opt the essential command-and-control responsibilities of our commanders in the field ever actually becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, this emergency supplemental includes billions of dollars in nonemergency spending, offered as an excuse to vote for a bill that guarantees our defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I urge a ''no'' vote on this bill and ask my colleagues to join me in sending a message of strength and resolve to our friends and our enemies and, most importantly, to our troops in the field.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE).

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill as chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, advocating for the bill's acceleration of programs critical to the integrity of our borders and the safety of the American people. These are carefully crafted, legitimate emergency security measures, and there is no good reason to wait further to make this country more secure.

Today, however, I want to address the broader bill, speaking colleague to colleague, mindful and respectful of the struggles with conscience so evident among us in recent days.

I did not support originally giving the authority to the President to wage war in Iraq. I have introduced legislation calling for an end to that authorization. But I understand there is a wide range of opinion on where we should go from here, and there are many who believe that this bill, which takes a major step towards changing our course in Iraq, either goes too far or not far enough.

Our discussions on this issue have brought to mind lessons from my days in divinity school and as a teacher of ethics, lessons I believe are helpful in sorting out what it means and should mean to follow one's conscience on a matter such as this.

On the first day of Ethics 101, we learn that we often face two kinds of moral choice in life. One has to do with the morality of an act itself, which is what many colleagues are referring to when they say they are ''voting their conscience'' on what we know is an imperfect bill.

The second kind of moral choice requires us to consider the consequences of our acts. That is also an exercise of conscience, perhaps an even more demanding one.

Think about the consequences. What if the consequence of voting ''no'' is to let slip away the best chance we may have for a long time to compel a change of course in Iraq? What if a consequence is the further crippling of this House's influence in this country's foreign and defense policy? What if the consequence of a ''no'' vote is to allow the President to continue on the same failed policy course? Are those not matters of conscience?

Some talk as though we should simply square the contents of this bill against an ideal and vote accordingly. No, I am afraid moral choice and our obligations as public servants run deeper than that.

Please, don't sell short a vote in favor of this bill as though it were a mere practical or political accommodation. By all means, treat this vote as an act of conscience, but an act based on a searching consideration of the full range of consequences that may result.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HOBSON), a member of the Defense Subcommittee.

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591, the Fiscal Year 2007 U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, because, in my opinion, it sends the wrong message to our troops, our allies and the Iraqi people, who really want to take care of and control of their own country.

In my opinion, this bill will tie the hands of the commanders in the field by micromanaging from Washington the military decisions that those commanders ought to be making on the ground. Further, by setting a date-certain timeline requirement for withdrawing our troops, in my opinion it will endanger U.S. personnel and give our enemies a date to wait us out.

Mr. Speaker, this bill not only sends the wrong message to our troops about their efforts to bring stability to Iraq, it sends the wrong one to our allies throughout the world. In my opinion, it says that if you bloody us enough, we are going to walk away.

If we walk away, our credibility is gone in the world. We will be abandoning the thousands of Iraqis who risked their lives and voted for freedom, and risk bringing dishonor to the men and women who have fought and died in this war.

One thing that strikes me about the debate of this bill and the recent one on H. Res. 63, the Iraqi war resolution, is that there is little or no discussion on what the Iraqis are willing to do to bring themselves closer to taking control of their own country.

Earlier this year I went on a bipartisan congressional delegation trip to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. While we met with U.S. troops and commanders, we also had a chance to meet with the leaders of those countries, including Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki. He told us if his country had the command and control, equipment and our backing, the Iraqis could begin to take over their own security in 3 to 6 months and that we could be able to redeploy 50,000 U.S. troops at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that President Maliki has the tools and resources to be successful. For those who are looking for a timely withdrawal of troops, why shouldn't we be focusing on giving him and his plan a chance, rather than setting arbitrary withdrawal deadlines? The quicker that the Iraqi people take control of their country, the quicker U.S. troops can begin to withdraw with dignity. This bill, I don't believe, moves us further in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to send our own message to the leadership of this body that our troops and commanders in the field deserve a bill that will support them in their efforts to bring stability to Iraq.

Finally, I am troubled by the way the new majority has restricted the debate, for even while we are encouraging the Iraqi people and their leaders to become more democratic, the House of Representatives, in my opinion, is moving in the opposite direction.

During the last elections, much was made about maintaining a fair and open process in the people's House, and I shared that. Frankly, I don't think we did when we were in the majority enough on that. This bill, however, is back to even worse than that because it is being considered under conditions that are neither fair nor open. Specifically, no amendments are allowed, and no alternatives can be considered on this most important bill.

Mr. Speaker, a bill with such historical importance needs to have open and fair debate. That is the way this type of bill has always been considered, I thought, before. That is what the American people were promised last fall. I, frankly, deeply regret that this is not now occurring today.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

(Mr. MURTHA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing people say that we have got to give this a chance. For 4 years we have given this a chance. For 4 years we have had our troops overseas.

Here is the problem that we face. Every time that we give them a chance, they disappear. For instance, they said that the Iraqis are going to lead this surge. Let me tell you, 50 percent of the Iraqis in the units aren't showing up. So the Americans have to take over. We have to pay the bill.

The Europeans, this is just as important to the Europeans as it is to us, and the Europeans benefit from the oil that comes from Iraq, yet they are not really participating to any significant amount, versus the first war where they participated significantly. George Bush I got a coalition together.

The problem we have with what is going on, this is not General Petraeus' war, this is the administration's war. This administration has put us in a position where the military has to actually violate their own guidelines in order to get troops to Iraq.

I knew over an a year ago we didn't have the numbers of troops we needed to sustain this deployment, and the surge makes it worse. The worst thing we can do is send troops, and if you vote against this, you are going to vote for sending troops into war without being fully mission-capable, without the training and equipment they need, and that is absolutely unacceptable.

I note to the Congress and I note to the people sitting on that side who worked so hard to fund the military, we put $70 billion in last time that the administration did not even ask for.

We have 36,000 additional troops in here for the overall picture. So if you vote against this, you are voting against those 36,000 troops, for the total number of troops that need to be not deployed, but need to be available to be deployed.

Our reserves are in desperate shape. Our Strategic Reserve, when we started this war with C–1, they are now in the lowest state of readiness. They couldn't be deployed. Only two divisions would be deployed. So we have a lot of work to do.

And I say to the Members, you are voting against supporting the troops if you vote against the money that goes to the troops and the money that has already been sent or is going to be sent. They are going to run out in April, and we need to get this bill through.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members on both sides of the aisle to vote for this legislation.

□ 1100

Mr. LEWIS OF California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT).

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I don't know what to say. I will say this, H.R. 1591, when it comes up in 1 hour or 45 minutes, I'm going to vote against it. But I want to say two things to two groups out there. Number one, to the American people, I want to say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I can't stop runaway fiscal spending. I can't stop a House that is out of control. I'm sorry for that. But more importantly, I want to say I'm sorry to my soldiers, because I cannot do enough to protect you.

Men and women halfway across this world laying their life on the line for me and my family and my children and my country and everything I believe in, I can't do enough to help you, and I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

I will fight today, I will fight tomorrow, I will fight every day I am a United States Congressman for my soldiers and my people and my country. I will not give up. All I ask is don't give up on them; don't give up on me; and don't give up on us.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 1 minute to the distinguished majority leader, Mr. HOYER.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I share the previous speaker's sorrow. I'm sorry that the policies pursued by this administration have not done what he wanted to do, support our troops. We sent too few, we equipped them too little, and we have left them too long and trained them for too short a time. Yes, I'm sorry.

The American public expects us, the Congress of the United States, to do something, not simply to say yes to failed policies, but to, on their behalf, speak out and try to take us in a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a Member of this body on either side of the aisle who does not pray for our success in Iraq and who does not pray for the safe return of our brave service men and women. However, after the loss of more than 3,200 American soldiers and more than 24,000 injured and after the expenditure of more than $400 billion on a war now entering its fifth year that Secretary Rumsfeld told us would take just a few months. With open arms and cheering in the streets, this war would be over and the mission would have been accomplished almost 4 years ago, said the President of the United States, who now asks us to rubber-stamp, no strings attached. Do it, as Mr. PUTNAM said, before supper. That is not what the American public expects of us. They expect better. They expect a new direction. They expect us to think, not simply say, amen, Mr. President.

The Defense Department says: ''Some elements of the situation in Iraq are properly described as a civil war.'' None of us who voted for the original authorization voted to put our troops in the middle of a civil war, not one of us.

The Iraq Government has failed to meet political goals. It is our responsibility to ask them to do so because we want to support our troops. And if the Iraqis do not meet their responsibilities, our troops will not be supported. A National Intelligence Estimate concludes that this war is increasing, this is the National Intelligence Estimate, increasing the global war on terror. The Army Chief of Staff has issued strong warnings about the effect of the war on America's overall military readiness. Mr. MURTHA has talked about that for at least the last 2 years.

My friend, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, with whom I served for a quarter of a century on that committee, he must share

the concern about military readiness that all of us share and know that we are eroding our military readiness every day. Thus, the question before the Members today is this: Will we change direction in Iraq, or will we continue to stay the course with a failing policy?

Mr. Speaker, I believe the answer is clear. It is long past time that this Congress assert itself and assist on accountability and a new direction in Iraq. More blank checks from this Congress would constitute an abdication of our responsibility and our duty. Four years of abdication is enough. It is time, my fellow Members, for Congress to assert its support of our troops by adopting policies that will keep them safe and enhance their success.

This legislation, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, will protect our troops, requiring deployments to adhere to existing Defense Department standards, not our standards, Defense Department standards, standards for training, equipment and armor, while allowing the President to waive these standards, which are his own, the administration's standards, if he believes it necessary. That is the right thing for us to do.

The bill also holds the Iraqi Government accountable, measuring its performance by the standards President Bush outlined in his January 10 speech, not our standards for Iraq, but the benchmarks that the President of the United States has set. But if they are only rhetorical benchmarks with nothing behind them to require that action, then we are wasting our time in supporting our troops because that will not do it.

The bill provides a responsible strategy for a phased redeployment of U.S. forces and refocusing our efforts on fighting al Qaeda. That is who attacked us, not the Sunni or Shia, but al Qaeda.

Some claim that this legislation will micromanage the war. That assertion is absolutely false and without ground. Our Commander in Chief, General Petraeus and our military commanders on the ground will retain all the flexibility they need to succeed. This legislation in no way undercuts their discretion on the ground. The only strings attached concerning troop readiness and the Iraq Government's progress have been endorsed by President Bush. Others assert that inclusion of a timeline for responsible redeployment is tantamount to capitulation. Mr. HOBSON spoke on this floor just a few minutes ago. He voted to set a time line in Bosnia. Mr. LEWIS sits as the ranking member of this committee; he voted on June 24, 1997, to set a timeline. Mr. HASTERT, Speaker of the House, set a timeline. Mr. Delay voted for a timeline. Mr. BLUNT voted for a timeline. Mr. BOEHNER voted for a timeline.

Every one of them voted for a timeline, and what were the circumstances? We hadn't lost a single troop, not one. We had spent $7 billion, not $379 billion. We had brought genocide to a stop, ethnic cleansing to a stop, and we were not losing people and we had a stable environment, yet they voted for a timeline.

Here, Secretary Gates says in testimony at his confirmation hearing: ''We are not winning.'' If that is the case, it is time for us to have a new strategy, a new direction, a new paradigm, if you will. That is what this bill does.

Mr. BOEHNER said just a few weeks ago, in terms of timelines, he said, ''I think it will be rather clear in the next 60 to 90 days as to whether this plan, the current escalation, is going to work.'' ''We need to know,'' Mr. BOEHNER said, ''as we are moving through these benchmarks that the Iraqis are doing what they have to do.'' Nothing in this bill will undermine that 60- or 90-day expectation that the minority leader, the Republican leader, has articulated. Under this legislation, if the Iraqis meet their benchmarks for progress, the redeployment of American forces will not begin until a year from now. This is not any precipitous withdrawal. And, indeed, if there is total success, it will be more than a year from now.

Finally, let me point out, as I have said earlier, that timelines were supported in July of 1997, 220–2. Only two Republicans voted against setting a timeline. I voted against that timeline. And I said ''at this time.'' Why did I say that? Because we were succeeding. We were not losing troops. We had stopped genocide. We had stopped ethnic cleansing. We had a stable government in Serbia. We were winning and our strategy was succeeding. And under those circumstances, I thought timelines were not appropriate. But there is not a military general I have talked to who has said that we are succeeding. Today, this very day, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq lies deeply wounded, life at risk. If a Member of Congress goes to Baghdad, they will not drive you from the airport to the Green Zone. Why? Because they do not believe it is safe, almost 50 months after we started this operation.

My friends, it is time for a new direction. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle support the troops, represent America, represent your people who want to win but do not want to leave our troops in the middle of a civil war. Support this well-thought-out crafted piece of legislation, which in no way undermines the ability of our troops to manage this war, but says to them, we will expect the Iraqis to perform and we will give you a time frame in which the world will know that they must themselves take responsibility.

Mr. LEWIS OF California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize my colleague from California (Mr. ROYCE) for 2 minutes.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as The Washington Post says today: ''Altogether, the House Democratic leadership has come up with more than $20 billion of new spending, much of it wasted subsidies. And it makes us wonder how $74 million to extend peanut storage payments or $250 million for MILC subsidies will aid our troops.''

Perhaps my colleagues believe that these agricultural subsidies are necessary, but I don't see how they are going to help us defeat Islamist terrorists. Is this really what General Petraeus needs? Is this what he asked for? No, it is not. And it is bad policy to start, and it is worse by mixing it without backing of our forces in the field.

It is not just the language that gives us pause here. If it is our mission to win in Iraq, then we should not be making it more difficult for our troops to succeed. Cutting off funding and micromanaging a war does that, according to our commanders in the field. And as The Post adds: ''The bill excludes the judgment of General Petraeus, excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat that the bill mandates.''

And as The Post goes on to say: ''Democrats should not seek to use pork to buy a majority for an unconditional retreat that the majority does not support.''

□ 1115

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) for a unanimous consent request.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1591. It will bring our troops home, take care of our veterans, and begin to address critical needs here at home.

I applaud the leadership of the House—our Democratic leadership team—for bringing this important and far reaching bill before us today.

I, like many of my colleagues, would have preferred to have a bill before us that would get our troops out of Iraq tomorrow, or even in 3 months. I most certainly would like not to have to send the 100 members of the V.I. National Guard out to Iraq next month. But that is not doable, it is not realistic.

What is realistic is setting some benchmarks—actually the president's benchmarks as goals and legally holding him to them, while planning for the complete re-deployment by summer of next year!

More than that though, it provides what the soldiers and their families have been crying for, for the past 5 years. Equipment, training, protective gear and armor and all that adds up to troop readiness. It is negligent to send our men and women into the middle of a civil war where they become targets without the proper preparation and equipment.

H.R. 1591 sets guidelines for length of deployment, and it does something that I think will go a long way to reducing the violence against our troops, and that is it establishes that there will be no permanent bases in Iraq. It further restores our values and principles in combat by prohibiting torture.

More funding is also channeled to Afghanistan where the war needs to be brought back on track and we need to make up lost ground in the real war on terrorism.

But this bill goes further. For all these 5 long years we have also complained that funds needed here at home were not only being spent but wasted in Iraq—there is still over 9 billion that is unaccounted for and we are losing.

Well what we do in H.R. 1591 is begin to take better care of our soldiers when they return home. The stories about conditions at Walter Reed, and of persons in need of mental health care being turned away are not only heartbreaking, they border on criminal.

And we also begin to take care of some long overdue issues here at home:

Agriculture disaster assistance, State Children's Health insurance payments for rural schools, better homeland security preparedness, improving oversight and accountability and finally doing what we ought to have done 2 years ago for the victims we left behind in Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

And we help some countries with whom we have close ties and who need our help—Jordan, Afghanistan, Liberia and several other African nations.

This bill sends funding to our defense needs on the two major fronts at which our troops need us, takes care of critical needs at home, and begins to rebuild our reputation for leadership and our moral authority in the world.

I support it, the people of the Virgin Islands support it, and I urge my colleagues to support and pass H.R. 1591.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, so much has been said, and I think we are very clear on the purpose of this bill and the importance of it as far as the war in Iraq is concerned.

But there is another aspect to this bill. There are literally 2 million children who are without health care. I want to at this point recognize and give due thanks and appreciation to Congressman JOHN MURTHA. No State has suffered because of the CHIP program as the children of Georgia's 273,000 children who would be without their health insurance if it were not for this war supplemental.

When the issue was taken to the White House, he said no. All hope was gone. I went to JOHN MURTHA, and JOHN MURTHA said, we will help you, and we will attach it to the Iraqi war supplemental. And he took it to Mr. OBEY and to the Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, I make this plea to you, as the Scripture says clearly, suffer not the little children. This is the only hope for getting our insurance for our children in the SCHIP program. I urge you to not let the children of the United States of America go down the drain. Vote for the children of this Nation and for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. MURTHA.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS).

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, before we vote on this bill, we need to remind ourselves one more time, the jihadist terrorism is what this debate is all about.

Brink Lindsey put it in such succinct terms when he said, ''Here is the grim truth: We are only one act of madness away from a social cataclysm unlike anything our country has ever known. After a handful of such acts, who knows what kind of civilization breakdown might be in store?''

Mr. Speaker, as we anticipate future actions of jihadists and our place in Iraq, we would do well to consider their words very carefully. Al Qaeda's al-Zawahiri said this: ''The jihad movement is growing and rising. It reached its peak with the two blessed raids on New York and Washington. And now it is waging a great heroic battle in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and even within the crusaders' own homes.''

Osama bin Laden himself said: ''The most important and serious issue today for the whole world is this third world war. It is raging in the land of the two rivers,'' Iraq. ''The world's millstone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate.''

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats are correct that the struggle in Iraq is not crucial to winning the war against jihadism, then for God's sake, I wish they would explain that to the terrorists. Instead, we hear the most senior Democrat in this House quoted as saying, ''I don't take sides for or against Hezbollah, or for or against Israel.''

Mr. Speaker, a blind relativism that deliberatively ignores all truth and equates merciless terrorism with free nations defending themselves and their innocent citizens is more dangerous to humanity than terrorism itself, and it is proof that liberals completely misunderstand the enemy that we face.

Because of this kind of relativist neutrality, jihadists now believe they have a crucial advantage over the free world and its people. They believe their will is far stronger than ours, and that they need only to persevere to prevail.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this bill will only encourage them in that belief. And if liberals in this body are willing to see freedom defeated in Iraq, they must also be willing to take responsibility for almost certainly what will follow.

Mr. Speaker, finally, we can have peace with jihadists tomorrow if we are willing to surrender today. And that kind of surrender will be on their terms, and it will ultimately bring a nuclear jihad to our children. Future American generations will despise this one.

Mr. Speaker, there is still time to defeat this bill. Let us not take this ominous step in this direction.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that at the end of the debate the closing speech on the Republican side will be given by our good friend from Texas Mr. JOHNSON. I think everyone in this place respects him and loves him.

I must say that having gone through this for the last 3 weeks trying to talk to each and every person who I could reach about this measure has given me a profound respect for a good many Members of this institution whom I had not known before, especially the newcomers.

The caucus that we had this morning was one of the most moving experiences that I have ever felt in my 38 years in the Congress. I heard Member after Member stand up and discuss this issue as a matter of high principle; but they also discussed it in terms of what the impact of their votes would be, not on themselves, but on the people of this country, on the soldiers who are fighting in the field, on the people in Iraq, and on our country's ability to influence the world.

This is a very tough issue. There are many considerations that each of us brings to this judgment, but in the end, I think we have a choice. As I said earlier today, we have a choice in determining what kind of Congress this is going to be. We can continue the practices of the past which rubberstamped virtually everything the President wanted on Iraqi policy. We can continue to do what he wants and only what he wants and only when he wants to do it and only in the way he wants to do it; or we can do what our Founding Fathers envisioned when they created the Congress. We can exercise checks and balances in order to try to move policy into a more constructive direction for this country.

If you oppose this bill today, and if you take the position that all it should contain is what the President sent down, then you would be saying that you wanted to finance BRAC, the base-closing program, by gutting key education programs as the President recommends. You would be opposed to additional border security, additional port security and additional cargo security.

You would be opposed to finally, after all of the horrendous pictures and all of the horrendous human suffering, you would be opposed to finally meeting our total obligations to the victims of Katrina.

You would be opposed to asking for the money which the President himself asked that we provide in 2005 on an emergency basis to prepare this country to meet the pandemic flu epidemic which will surely at some time come.

You would be opposing the additional $3.5 million that we have provided in this bill for veterans' health care and defense health care, and you would be opposing the timelines and the benchmarks which we place in this legislation, not because they are so perfect, but because they are the instrument by which we communicate to the Iraqi politicians that they must begin to resolve their differences, they must step up, because we are not going to run our baby-sitting service forever.

It is imperative that we finally send that signal. The President cannot send

that signal, but we can help General Petraeus. We can help our own government by sending the signal that this Congress is going to play bad cop until the Iraqis get the message.

That is what Mr. MURTHA's efforts have been about, that is what mine have been about, that's what the Speaker's efforts have been about, and that's what the efforts have been about by virtually every person in this caucus and this House who has had a say in what this bill was going to contain.

I strongly urge an ''aye'' vote.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the chief deputy whip, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) for 2 minutes.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, some 6,000 miles from here a new plan is underway to secure Baghdad and stabilize an Iraq that 2 months ago was sliding into chaos. Indeed, we should be encouraged by declining levels of violence in Baghdad as well as the beginning of a restoration of trust between ordinary Iraqis and coalition and Iraqi forces.

Unlike the gentleman before me, I disagree that this sends the right message. This supplemental undermines General Petraeus' plan before our troops have an opportunity to achieve success.

Instead of reaffirming our commitment to victory, this bill concedes defeat while piling on billions in unrelated pork. So while tropical fish get $5 million, our troops get a steady Democratic diet of limitations and pull-out deadlines. We should have few doubts that, if passed, this bill will be a rallying cry for terrorists recently dismayed by our resolve.

Our troops march to the order of one Commander in Chief, not 535. While the current Commander in Chief has a plan for victory, it is apparent that the majority party in this House has already thrown in the towel.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

The gentleman is entitled to his own opinions; he is not entitled to his own facts.

There is nothing in this bill whatsoever that has anything to do with tropical fish, unless he thinks that Lake Erie is in the Tropics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), the chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

Mr. MURTHA. Let me tell you what is in this bill and what you are voting against. There is $1.7 billion of this bill request for military health care. If you vote against this bill, you are denying our troops $1.7 billion.

There is $450 million for post-traumatic stress. There is $450 million for brain injury care. It is insufficient, but that is the money we put in the bill; $62 million for amputee care at Walter Reed, $20 million to fix up Walter Reed. That is what is in this bill for health care.

If you vote against this bill, the military families will be denied $17 million to help prevent child-spouse abuse.

The bill increases accountability over contractors. When I was in Iraq a month and a half ago, the contractors were falling all over each other. GAO and the inspector general of Iraq said to us, help us get this under control. I asked or one of the Members in the subcommittee asked the GAO what we could do to help. And I asked the Under Secretary of Defense: How many contractors do you have in Iraq? He couldn't tell me. He said, we will tell you within a week. We still haven't heard, and that has been over a month ago. We have had 11 hearings, and we are going to have 35 more hearings before this year is over. We are going to hold the Department of Defense accountable for the money that they are spending and the strategy that they are using.

This bill bans permanent bases in Iraq. This bill bans torture in Iraq. We have sent troops to Iraq that were not trained in their specific MOSs, and that is exactly why Abu Ghraib happened. We had people that were untrained, National Guard members who were untrained who went into that prison, didn't know how to handle it, and it caused a natural disaster, a public relations disaster.

The way the military is doing the job, and there is nobody that regards the military higher than I do. Nobody is more inspired by the troops that I have talked to and I have seen. But let me tell you something. With the type of tactics that they have to use, by knocking down doors and by using overwhelming force, it makes enemies. That is the problem we have, and we are not winning the hearts and minds of the people when we do that.

□ 1130

Let me talk about the readiness of our troops. Every unit in the United States, except two National Guard units, went into this war with the highest state of readiness. Now, there are only two units in the United States that are at the highest state of readiness.

This provides money to take care of that. If you vote against that, you are voting against money to take care of readiness for our strategic reserve.

Let me tell you what General Craddock says. General Craddock is the European commander, the NATO commander, American commander. Listen to what I am saying. This is what General Craddock says: ''We have very little capacity left after we source the global force pool, if you will, for these ongoing European Command missions. Our ability to do that now is limited because we don't have the forces available since they are in the rotation to the other missions.''

He is saying what I have been saying for a year and a half. This is a failed policy wrapped in illusion. We do not have the troops. We do not have a strategic reserve to be able to react to a future national threat to this great country. The troops can only do so much.

This bill includes $1.4 billion for new armored vehicles. If you vote against this, you are voting against the new armored vehicles which we need so badly. We put an extra $313 million above what the Defense Department requested for those vehicles. That is the V-shaped vehicles which resist the IEDs. If you vote against this bill, you will be denying the troops better protection and better equipment.

The bill also includes billions to reset the forces. What I have been saying is the equipment, somebody said the other day, well, they train on old equipment. Well, why does that mean anything? Those of you who have been in the military knows what it means. It means when you go into combat, you do not have the type of equipment you need. You are risking the lives of these people by training on inadequate equipment. We have two units that will not go to the desert because they have to rush them out over to Iraq.

It is not the military's fault. The administration has forced the military to break their own guidelines in order to send troops over to supply this surge and to sustain this deployment.

Finally, we are saying in this bill, you cannot send troops back into battle unless they have the appropriate training, they are fully trained, mission capable. Is there anybody that is going to vote against that? If you vote against this bill, you vote against that. If you vote against this bill, you vote against sending troops back in less than a year at home. That is unacceptable.

You can sit here and say we are fighting this war, oh, yes, you can sit here in Washington and say you are fighting this war. But let me tell you something, those young people sometimes went back three and four times; their families are suffering. These are not 140,000 people. These are each individuals with families and relatives that are bearing the brunt of this fighting that are sent back.

This bill forces the administration to live up to the guidelines they have set for their military and not to extend them. A psychologist told us in a hearing that if you spend 3 months in combat that there is a good chance you will start to develop PTSD three months in this intensive combat in Baghdad.

Now, you can sit here and talk about us fighting this war on terrorism. We put an extra billion dollars for Afghanistan in this bill so we could fight terrorism where it started in Afghanistan. That is where it started.

Let me tell you something. We set benchmarks. We set benchmarks because it has not worked. Every time something happens over there, what he says is, well, we will send American troops; we will send American troops

back before they have their time at home. We will extend American troops. The Iraqis have to start to bear this responsibility for themselves, and that is why we are putting it in the bill.

The American people in the last election sent a message. They said we want the Iraqis to solve their own problems in Iraq. The Americans have borne the brunt. We are spending $8.4 billion a month, $2 billion to get people and equipment and supplies over to Iraq, $2 billion a month, 8,000 miles away.

I will tell you what hurts the troops; I will tell you what hurts them. It hurts them when they extend it beyond 13 months or the marines, beyond 7 months. What hurts the troops, if you send the troops back before they have a year at home. That is what hurts the morale of the troops. I am the person that found the 44,000 shortage of body armor in the initial invasion of Iraq. We had troops in danger because they did not have the equipment they needed. We cannot send troops back into combat without equipment and fully being trained.

Let me just say this in the end. My grandfather's Civil War hat is in my office. He lost his arm in the Civil War fighting for the North, some of you Southerners here. My great-grandmother lived to be 96. I was 6-years-old when she died. She said you are on this Earth to make a difference. We are going to make a difference with this bill. We are going to bring those troops home. We are going to start changing the direction of this great country.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished Members of this body, the United States currently has 145,000 troops on the ground in Iraq and over half a trillion dollars has been expended in the war. More than 3,200 of our sons and daughters have lost their lives and close to 25,000 have been wounded; hundreds with amputated limbs and thousands with traumatic brain injuries.

The Pentagon reports that the Iraqi Security Forces have grown in number, reaching their goal of 325,000 trained and equipped. The Iraqis have a Constitution and have held national elections. These milestones have been met, yet lack of security and stability continues. The war in Iraq has been plagued by mischaracterization based on unrealistic optimism instead of realism. Reality dictates that conditions on the ground are simply moving in the wrong direction.

There are limits to military power. There is no U.S. military solution to Iraq's civil war. It is up to the Iraqis.

Beginning in May 2005, after two years of mischaracterizations and misrepresentations by this Administration, the Defense Appropriations subcommittee required the Department of Defense to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the facts necessary to measure stability and security in Iraq. Since July 2005, we have received these reports. They are dismal and demonstrate a clear lack of progress in vital areas of concern. Electricity, oil production, employment and potable water remain at woeful levels.

The average weekly attacks have grown from 430 in July 2005 to well over 1000 today. In fact, attacks throughout the country have increased 10 percent over the last 4 months. Iraqi casualties have increased from 63 per day in October 2005 to over 125 per day.

Recent polls show that more than six in 10 Iraqis now say their lives are going badly, double the percentage who said so in late 2005. Sixty-nine percent of the Iraqis surveyed said the presence of U.S. forces in the country makes the overall security situation worse. In January 2006, 47 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces. When the same polling question was asked just 8 months later, 61 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S-led forces.

The support of the American public continues to erode and there is little confidence in the current strategy. Today less than 30 percent of Americans approve of the way the President is handling the war, and only 11 percent support the President's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq. A February 2006 poll showed that 72 percent of American troops serving in Iraq believed the U.S. should exit Iraq within the year and 42 percent said their mission was unclear.

Wars cannot be won with slogans. There must be a clear and reachable plan and a defined way to measure the success of that plan. The President says he has a new plan for a way forward in Iraq. General Peter Schoomaker, Chief of the United States Army, said in a recent hearing that in order for a plan to be effective we ''have to be able to measure the purpose.'' But the President sets forth a plan with no defined matrices for measuring progress and no consequences if progress is not made. This new plan is simply more of the same open ended commitment in Iraq that has not worked.

A new strategy that is based on redeployment rather than further U.S. military engagement, and one that is centered on handing Iraq back to the Iraqis, is what is needed. I do not believe that Iraq will make the political progress necessary for its security and stability until U.S. forces redeploy.

In order to achieve stability in Iraq and the Region, I recommend:

(1) The redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq

(2) The execution of a robust diplomatic effort and the restoration of our international credibility

(3) The repairing of our military readiness and the rebuilding of our strategic reserve to face future threats.

REDEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES FROM IRAQ

To achieve stability and security in Iraq, I believe we first must have a responsible phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. General William Odom (U.S. Army, Retired) recently testified, ''We are pursuing the wrong war.''

Stability and security in the Region should be our overarching strategy, not a ''victory in Iraq.'' I agree with General Odom and believe that Regional Stability can only be accomplished through the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.

Who wants us to stay in Iraq? In my opinion, Iran and Al Qaeda, because we intensify the very radical extremism we claim to be fighting against, while at the same time depleting our financial and human resources.

As long as the U.S. military continues to occupy Iraq, there will be no real security. Maintaining U.S. troop strength in Iraq or adding to the strength in specified areas, has not proven effective in the past nor do I believe it will work in the future. The Iraq war cannot be won by the U.S. military, predominantly because of the way our military operates. They use overwhelming force, which I advocate to save American lives, but it is counter to winning the hearts and minds of the people.

HOW TO RE-DEPLOY

I recommend the phased redeployment of U.S. forces, first from Saddam's palaces, then from the green zone. Next, from the prime real estate of Iraq's major cities, out of the factories and universities, and finally out of the country all together. We need to give communities back to the Iraqis so they can begin to self govern, begin economic recovery and return to some type of normality. I recommend the adoption of a U.S. policy that encourages and rewards reconstruction and regional investment and one that is dictated and administered not by the United States, but by the Iraqis themselves.

RESTORATION OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY

I believe that a responsible redeployment from Iraq is the first step necessary in restoring our tarnished international credibility. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, our international credibility, even among allies, has plummeted. Stability in Iraq is important not only to the United States, but it is important to the Region and to the entire world. The BBC recently released a poll showing that nearly three-quarters of those polled in 25 countries disapprove of U.S. policies toward Iraq. More than two-thirds said the U.S. military presence in the Middle East does more harm than good. Just 29 percent of respondents said the United States has a general positive influence in the world, down from 40 percent two years ago.

HOW DO WE RESTORE OUR INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY

In order to restore international credibility, I believe it is necessary for the U.S. to completely denounce any aspirations of building permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq; I believe we should shut down the Guantanamo detention facility; and we must bulldoze the Abu Ghraib prison. We must clearly articulate and demonstrate a policy of ''no torture, no exceptions'' and directly engage countries in the region with dialogue instead of directives. This includes allies as well as our perceived adversaries.

REPAIRING OF OUR MILITARY READINESS AND REBUILDING OUR STRATEGIC RESERVE TO FACE FUTURE THREATS

Our annual Defense spending budget is currently in excess of $450 billion. Above this amount, we are spending $8.4 billion dollars a month in the war in Iraq and yet our strategic reserve is in desperate shape. While we are fighting an asymmetric threat in the short term, we have weakened our ability to respond to what I believe is a grave long term conventional and nuclear threat.

At the beginning of the Iraq war, 80 percent of ALL Army units and almost 100 percent of active combat units were rated at the highest state of readiness. Today, virtually all of our active-duty combat units at home and ALL of our guard units are at the lowest state of readiness, primarily due to equipment shortages resulting from repeated and extended deployments to Iraq. In recent testimony given by a high ranking Pentagon official it was reported that our country is threatened because we lack readiness at home.

Our Army has no strategic reserve, and while it is true that the U.S. Navy and the U.S.

Air Force can be used to project power, there is a limit to what they can achieve. Overall, our military remains capable of projecting power, but we must also be able to sustain that projection, and in this regard there is no replacement for boots on the ground.

HOW DO WE REPAIR READINESS AND REBUILD OUR STRATEGIC RESERVE

We must make it a national priority to re-strengthen our military and to repair readiness. I advocate an increase in overall troop strength. The current authorized level is below what I believe is needed to maintain an optimal military. In recent testimony to the Defense Subcommittee that I chair, the Army and Marine Corps Commanders testified that they could not continue to sustain the current deployment practices without an adverse effect on the health and well-being of service members and their families.

For decades, the Army operated on a deployment policy that for every one year of deployment, two years were spent at home. This was considered optimal for re-training, re-equipping and re-constituting. Without relief, the Army will be forced to extend deployments to Iraq to over one year in country and will be forced to send troops back with less than one year at home. The Army reported that a 9-month deployment was preferable. Medical experts testified that in intensive combat, deployments of over 3 months increased the likelihood for service members to develop post traumatic stress disorders. A recent report by the Harvard University School of Government put the total cost of providing medical care and disability benefits to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan at $350 to $700 billion.

We must invest in the health and well being of our service members by providing for the right amount of troops and for appropriate deployment and rotation cycles. Our military equipment inventories are unacceptably low. The Services report that at least $100 billion more is needed to get them back to ready state. In doing so, we must not neglect investment in military technologies of the future. While we remain bogged down in Iraq, the size and sophistication of other militaries are growing. We must not lose our capability to deter future threats.

Let me conclude by saying historically, whether it was India, Algeria or Afghanistan, foreign occupations do not work, and in fact incite civil unrest. Our military remains the greatest military in the world, but there are limits to its ability to control a population that considers them occupiers.

I have said this before and I continue to say that there are essentially only two plans. One is to continue an occupation that has not worked and that has shown no progress toward stabilization. The other, which I advocate, is to end the occupation of Iraq, redeploy and re-strengthen our military and turn Iraq over to the Iraqis.

THE WATERS-BOEHNER COALITION

(By Scott Lilly, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress)

The U.S. House of Representatives is an unusual place and politics makes strange bedfellows. But the coalition to block funding for U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and improve the deplorable state of medical care for our returning veterans is one for the record books.

Led by House Minority Leader John Boehner on the right and Los Angeles Congresswoman Maxine Waters on the left, the coalition is striving to put together enough votes to block passage of the $124 billion spending package expected to go to the House Floor on Friday. Boehner, hoping to get nearly all House Republicans to vote against the measure, contends:

. . . there is only one way to do the right thing: fully-fund the troops without strings attached . . . Setting timelines is no different than handing the enemy our war plan itself. It serves as a road map for the terrorists to plot maneuvers against American men and women in uniform. Micromanaging the war from Capitol is, by any standard or definition, a recipe for disaster.

Boehner also opposes ''incomprehensible spending'' on ''unrelated, non-emergency'' items not requested by the White House. This includes among other things, $2.8 billion to address the health care problems confronting returning veterans—funds to address the problems at Walter Reed; improve treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury; speed the processing of veteran requests for entry into the VA medical system and clean up the $550 million maintenance backlog at VA health facilities. Boehner also objects to more than $3 billion in unrequested funds to cope with other military needs, primarily correcting the shortfall in the readiness of military units being sent into combat.

Waters reaches the same conclusion as Boehner based on an entirely different assessment of the facts:

Not only did the American public speak loudly and clearly last Nov. 7, but poll after poll reinforces the message that Americans want their troops home now. The president's supplemental request is just what the word ''supplemental'' implies—additional funds to expand and continue this war. I believe that there is enough money available in the pipeline to fund a planned exit. I will vote against the supplemental unless the additional funds are used to fully fund the safe, secure and timely withdrawal of our troops by Dec. 31

Boehner wants no strings attached and Waters not only wants strings, but shorter and stronger strings. Boehner does not like the pressure that the bill places on the President to bring an end to the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Waters does not want to end U.S. presence through pressure but rather mandate it by law. As a result both want to defeat money needed for fuel, ammunition, spare parts and medical care for those presently in harms way.

Both also in my judgment misread the mood of the American people and are wrong on the best course for the country. The American people overwhelmingly oppose the war but they even more overwhelmingly oppose anything that would put the brave men and women we have called into service at greater risk. No war in American history has ended as the result of a legislative fiat. Even Vietnam, which is the closest parallel, was ended because of political pressure rather than legislative direction. The right way to end our presence in Iraq is for the Executive and Legislative branches of our government to reach an accommodation on Iraq policy.

The Bush Administration needs Congress to support its military and foreign policy objectives and the language in the Supplemental now pending sends a clear message that such support will be contingent upon a plan for an ordered withdrawal—a withdrawal that protects our troops and American interests in the region.

But what Waters and her supporters seem to fail to recognize is that the Congress needs the White House. That may be hard for some to accept but extracting U.S. forces from the violence now besieging much of Iraq will be a complex and hazardous process. It will take the best planners that the Defense Department can find; it will take strong leadership on the part of commanders and hard choices in terms of both military and political priorities. Equally important it will take extensive diplomatic consultation on both a regional and global basis. None of those things can be accomplished by the Congress. It is not the way our government was designed and it is not the way it works. If the two branches cannot reach accommodation there will be hell to pay and those who have already been asked to pay the most will be forced to pay again.

The language contained in the supplemental demands that the Iraqi government meet certain bench marks and provided those benchmarks are achieved, begins redeployment of American forces in March of next year. It also requires that if the White House believes that it must violate long standing Pentagon policies on the readiness of military units sent into combat, the length of deployments into combat zones and the length of time between deployments the President must fully explain why he is ordering a violation of those policies.

This is very strong pressure on a President that is very strong willed. It is the beginning of a process which will either bring the two powerful branches of our government together in mutual accommodation or push the country closer to a Constitutional crisis. It is the first step in a process that will either fortunately or unfortunately continue all year.

Following the Friday House vote on the Supplemental, that legislation will come before the Senate and the final version will be crafted in a conference committee in April and presented to both houses for final approval by the end of that month. Within weeks the House will begin deliberation on the Fiscal 2008 Defense Appropriation which will remain under various stages of consideration until September. There will be numerous opportunities for Congress to strengthen its demands with respect to Iraq and for the Administration to respond. What opponents of the War cannot do at this juncture is overplay their hand and slow the growth of public sentiment and political pressure against the current Iraq policy and its supporters.

Boehner is also playing a high risk game. He is putting the Congressional wing of his party on record as opposing measures to require that the troops are well trained and well equipped before they are sent into deadly conflict. He is opposing funds his own President says the troops need now and he is opposing medical care for the troops once they return. Simultaneously, he is saying that the Congress should not apply pressure to the White House for a new strategy to pull us out of Iraq. That is a position that is not only opposed by nearly all Democrats but by an overwhelming majority of independents and a substantial share of Republicans. It is not a particularly smart way to redefine the Republican Party in the wake of the drubbing his part took in last fall's elections.

The supplemental is not perfect. There is probably no one who supports every provision. But there is much that is good in the bill and begins the process by which the Congress and the White House can come together on a solution that is best for the country. It is not as simple or straight forward as many would like but it is the process that our founding fathers bestowed on us and it is the only approach that can bring an ordered end to this catastrophic engagement.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, you all know that I have worked over the years very, very

closely with Mr. MURTHA and our chairman Mr. OBEY. I think most would agree that some of us make a significant effort to reach out on both sides of the aisle to solve problems where that is possible.

In this case, we have a major, major disagreement. I do not presume others to be insincere in their disagreement, but I feel very strongly that we must make absolutely certain that we do nothing to undermine the mission of our troops by way of this debate.

There is absolutely no doubt that the message that we will be sending as this bill passes today, in part, will say to the terrorists of the world, including Iraq, that America is not willing to stay and complete the mission.

I rarely refer to newspaper items in addressing the House, but I cannot help but note that the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Atlanta Journal, et cetera, those newspapers all have expressed grave concerns about combining this supplemental funding for a war with huge amounts of pork.

As a result of that, I am going to use an item several times mentioned today as a part of my own close. The item is entitled: ''Retreat and Butter. Are Democrats in the House Voting for Farm Subsidies or Withdrawal from Iraq?''

''Today, the House of Representatives is due to vote on a bill that would grant $25 million to spinach farmers in California. The legislation would also appropriate $75 million for peanut storage in Georgia and $15 million to protect Louisiana rice fields from saltwater. More substantially, there is $120 million for shrimp and menhaden fishermen, $250 million for milk subsidies, $500 million for wildfire suppression and $1.3 billion to build levees in New Orleans.

''Altogether the House Democratic leadership has come up with more than $20 billion in new spending, much of it wasteful subsidies to agriculture or pork barrel projects aimed at individual Members of Congress. At the tail of all this log rolling,'' and by the way I would not use this next phrase so that Mr. OBEY knows that, ''log rolling and political bribery lies this stinger: Representatives who support the bill, for whatever reason, will be voting to require that all U.S. combat troops leave Iraq by August 2008, regardless of what happens during the next 17 months or whether U.S. commanders believe a pullout at that moment protects or endangers U.S. national security, not to mention the thousands of American trainers and Special Forces troops who would remain behind.

''The Democrats claim to have a mandate from voters to reverse the Bush administration's policy in Iraq. Yet the leadership is ready to piece together the votes necessary to force a fateful turn in the war by using tactics usually dedicated to highway bills or the Army Corps of Engineers budget. The legislation pays more heed to a handful of peanut farmers than to the 24 million Iraqis who are living through a maelstrom initiated by the United States, the outcome of which could shape the future of the Middle East for decades.

''Congress can and should play a major role in determining how and when the war ends. Political benchmarks for the Iraqi Government are important, provided they are not unrealistic or inflexible. Even dates for troop withdrawals might be helpful, if they are cast as goals rather than requirements, and if the timing derives from the needs of Iraq, not the U.S. election cycle. The Senate's version of the supplemental spending bill for Iraq and Afghanistan contains nonbinding benchmarks and a withdrawal date that is a goal; that approach is more likely to win broad support and avoid a White House veto.

''As it is, House Democrats are pressing a bill that has the endorsement of MoveOn.org but excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat the bill mandates. It would heap money on unneedy dairy farmers while provoking a constitutional fight with the White House that could block the funding to equip troops in the field. Democrats who want to force a withdrawal should vote against war appropriations. They should not seek to use pork to buy a majority for an unconditional retreat that the majority does not support.''

At this point, I include for the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY, H.R. 1591—U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

(Sponsor: Obey (D), Wisconsin)

The Administration strongly opposes the ''U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act.'' The Administration seeks prompt enactment of the President's request to support our armed forces and diplomatic corps as they implement the new strategy to achieve America's strategic objective of a democratic Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself and be an ally in the war on terror.

This legislation would substitute the mandates of Congress for the considered judgment of our military commanders. This bill assumes and forces the failure of the new strategy even before American commanders in the field are able to fully implement their plans. Regardless of the success our troops are achieving in the field, this bill would require their withdrawal. In addition, the bill could withhold resources needed to enable Iraqi Security Forces to take over missions currently conducted by American troops. Many policy makers agree that the Iraqi Security Forces must assume responsibility in defending Iraqi democracy, and it is unconscionable that funds for the Iraqi Security Forces be subject to conditions that may threaten our full support. These Congressional mandates would place freedom and democracy in Iraq at grave risk, embolden our enemies, and undercut the Administration's plan to develop the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi economy. This bill would impose inappropriate, operationally unsound, and arbitrary constraints on how the Department of Defense should prepare units to deploy. Prohibiting the deployment of units to combat unless a Chief of Service certifies the units as fully mission-capable 15 days prior to deployment is unnecessary, since the Department of Defense will not send into battle troops that are not fully capable of performing their assigned missions. It is unwise to codify in law specific deployment and dwell times, since this would artificially limit the flexibility of our commanders to conduct operations in the field and infringe on the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief to manage the readiness and availability of the Armed Forces. If this legislation were presented to the President, he would veto the bill.

The war supplemental should remain focused on the needs of the troops and should not be used as a vehicle for added non-emergency spending and policy proposals, especially domestic proposals, that should be fully vetted and considered on their own merits, such as minimum wage, various tax proposals, and changes in contracting policy. This bill adds billions in unrequested spending that is largely unjustified and non-emergency. Because of the excessive and extraneous non-emergency spending it contains, if this legislation were presented to the President, he would veto the bill.

Congress should reject this legislation, and promptly send the President a responsible bill that provides the funding and flexibility our troops need, without holding funding for the troops hostage to unrelated spending.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding the Committee's version of the bill.

Title I—Global war on terror

Base Realignment and Closure. The Administration submitted a budget amendment on March 9, 2007, that would fully offset the $3.1 billion shortfall needed to implement the recommendations of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Including this funding as an emergency request without offsets is inappropriate and unnecessary. The Administration urges passage of its request instead.

Additionally, the Administration opposes any amendment to the bill that would alter the approved recommendations of the 2005 BRAC Commission. The BRAC process, as authorized by Congress, requires that both the President and Congress approve or disapprove the Commission's recommendations in their entirety to allow the process to remain apolitical. Legislating a specific change to a BRAC Commission recommendation would adversely affect the integrity of the BRAC 2005 process.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M). The Administration objects to cuts of almost $1.9 billion for priority O&M activities while increasing areas less critical to the war effort. Such reductions (including reductions for contracting) could damage the military's ability to execute wartime operations and the readiness of U.S. forces as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Administration urges Congress to support the President's amended request.

In addition, the bill does not fund the President's $350 million request for training, equipping, transporting, and sustaining our partners in the Global War on Terror. Our allies are critical to our success in combating extremists across the globe and providing this support reduces the burden on U.S. forces. We strongly urge the House to restore these funds.

General Transfer Authority (GTA). The Administration appreciates the Committee's approval of the requested $3.5 billion in GTA for this bill, but urges that GTA for the FY 2007 DOD Appropriations Act be increased from $4.5 billion to $8.0 billion, as included in the March 9 revised request. This increase is essential for the Department of Defense to

reallocate funds to sustain critical operations and to address the needs of our field commanders.

International Affairs Programs. The Administration commends the Committee for providing the President's request for important international affairs funding for avian influenza, assistance to Afghanistan and Lebanon, peacekeeping in Somalia, Chad, and East Timor, and unanticipated needs to help relieve human suffering, including in Sudan and other parts of Africa.

While the Administration appreciates the House's support of the request for Iraq-related funding, it objects to the reductions to Iraq assistance programs and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) expansion. The bill reduces funding for democracy programs, building national capacity, strengthening local governing capacity and delivery of essential services, creating jobs to help stabilize the country, and supporting Iraqi rule of law programs—the very things that must be done for Iraq to become self-reliant and assume responsibilities from the United States. The reduction in funding for PRT expansion will also impede our ability to get civilians into PRTs to support Iraqis at the local level. The Administration also opposes the reductions to the request for Kosovo which could inhibit our effort to support economic growth, security, and political stability during and after the resolution of its status. Given the reductions to Iraq and Kosovo, the Administration is especially concerned that the House bill provides over $600 million in unrequested international programs. The House is urged to redirect funds from unrequested programs to fully fund the Iraq and Kosovo requests.

The Administration also does not support section 1905 of the bill, which establishes a Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed position to oversee Iraq assistance programs. This position is not necessary since the Secretary of State has already appointed a coordinator for reconstruction.

The Administration also opposes the $2.5 billion in unrequested emergency funding provided to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This funding does not meet the standard for emergency funding and should be considered within the regular annual appropriations process.

Title II—Hurricane recovery

Department of Homeland Security. The bill provides the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Texas with a 100–percent Federal match for FEMA public and individual assistance related to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and Dennis and would eliminate the prohibition on forgiving Community Disaster Loans. The bill also extends utility assistance for an additional 12 months. The Administration opposes a waiver of the State match requirement. The Administration also notes that the Administration is funding, at the President's direction, 90 percent of Gulf Coast rebuilding costs for public infrastructure and that the Federal Government has provided—following negotiations with the State governments of Louisiana and Mississippi—sufficient Community Development Block Grant funding to meet the Federal match requirements for Louisiana and Mississippi, in essence federally funding 100 percent of such costs.

Corps of Engineers. The Administration opposes the $1.3 billion in unrequested funding the bill provides to address increased costs for certain ongoing levee restoration projects that were provided supplemental funding in P.L. 109–234. These funds are unnecessary because the Administration proposed FY 2007 supplemental language to allow the Corps to reallocate $1.3 billion of previously appropriated emergency funding to address these needs. The Administration plans to consider the need for additional funding once the Corps completes its revised cost estimates for all planned work this summer.

Constitutional concerns

The Administration urges the House of Representatives to strike provisions of the bill that infringe upon the President's constitutional authorities, interfere with the President's ability to conduct diplomatic, military, and intelligence activities or supervise the unitary executive branch effectively, or violate the constitutional principle of separation of powers, such as sections 1311, 1314(c)(1), 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 4403(c), and 5004(b) and language in title I relating to committee approval under the headings in chapter 7 for ''Military Construction, Army'' and ''Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps'' and in chapter 8 under the heading ''Diplomatic and Consular Programs.'' The Administration notes that, while the legislation includes authority to waive restrictions relating to readiness and deployment periods (sections 1901, 1902, and 1903), it does not include authority to waive the all-or-nothing restrictions relating to benchmarks for performance of the Iraqi government. Moreover, several provisions of the bill purport to require approval of the Committees prior to the obligation of funds. These provisions should be changed to require only notification of Congress, since any other interpretation would contradict the Supreme Court's ruling in INS v. Chadha.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) has 11½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the Republican leader.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I think the moment is here, a moment that we have been debating over the last 2½ months and an issue that I think the American people care deeply about.

It is an historic moment, and I thought to myself this morning how will history judge what it is that we are doing on the floor of the House today. What will they write 50 years from now about the decisions that we are making here today?

When I handed Ms. PELOSI, our new Speaker, the gavel back in January, I said that the battle of ideas should be fought on the floor of the House, but as we do it, we should respect each other's opinion. We can disagree without being disagreeable.

I have great respect for Mr. MURTHA and Mr. OBEY, those that have brought this bill to the floor today, along with Mr. YOUNG and Mr. LEWIS, and we should respect all of our opinions and each other's opinions when we get into this difficult decision.

All of us wish that Iraq had gone better. We all wish that the mistakes had not been made and that the terrorists would not have shown up and made this a central front in our war with them.

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The fact is, we are in Iraq. We are in the midst of a fight with an enemy that is just not in Iraq, that is all over the world, and we are there. You begin to think about the bill that we have before us to pay for the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq. Somehow we have room for $10 billion worth of nonmilitary spending.

I don't need to go through all the details for the money for spinach, the money for the Capitol Hill power plant. That is a real emergency, things that don't belong in this bill.

But I think all of us know what the greater issue is here, and the bigger issue. That is that the ideas of our friend from Pennsylvania, to put his benchmarks in there, which are very different than the benchmarks that I proposed. The benchmarks I proposed were to measure progress, for trying to help ensure that we win. The benchmarks I see in this bill are intended to bring about failure, to bring about stumbles.

If you look at all of the handcuffs, all of the hoops and hurdles that are in here, I believe there is only one outcome, only one outcome if we support all this brings and the handcuffs, and that outcome is failure. I don't believe that failure in Iraq is an option. There is a lot riding on this.

Just think for a moment what signal, what signal this sends to our enemies. What does it say to them, we are not willing to stand behind our troops, that there is a hard deadline out there, that we are going to withdraw our troops; what signal does it send to them?

Our enemies understand what happened in Vietnam. When this Congress voted to cut off funding, we left Vietnam. We left chaos and genocide in the streets of Vietnam because we pulled the troops out and didn't have the will to win.

Our enemies know what happened in 1983 after the Marine barracks were bombed in Lebanon, and we pulled out. What did we see? Chaos and genocide all through Lebanon, and continuing to this day. Then in 1993, we decided to pull out of Somalia; left chaos and genocide in our wake that continues to this day.

Who doesn't believe, who doesn't believe that if we go down this path, we are going to leave chaos and genocide in Iraq, and we are going to tell our enemies all around the world that you can take on the United States, you can push them to the edge? At the end of the day, they will just go home.

The spread of radical Islamic terrorism is a threat to our Nation and is a threat to the free world, not just in the Middle East. They are in Asia, they are in Europe, they are in Africa. Cells are growing right here in America, people dedicated to killing Americans, killing our allies, and ending freedom and wanting to impose some radical Islamic law on the entire world.

I ask you, what are we to do, just walk away from the fight? What message does this action that we take

today, what does it send, what kind of message does it send to our allies, to people who have worked with us over the course of the last 50 years, 100 years, to bring freedom around the world, to end tyranny around the world? What message do we send to them, that we are there as long as it doesn't get too tough?

Think about what Franklin Roosevelt must have felt like in the midst of World War II when things weren't going so well either in Europe or over in the South Pacific. I am sure there was a big debate here in Congress, the same way, same time. But Franklin Roosevelt knew that the world had no choice but to stop Imperial Japan and to stop Hitler's Germany, because he knew that the consequences of failure in World War II were going to lead to more tyranny and less freedom all around the world. He didn't shrink from that challenge.

But more importantly, think about what this message sends to our troops. Our troops are on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan doing their duty to protect freedom and to end tyranny. They are there watching this debate that we are having in the House today and wondering, will Congress do its duty? Will Congress stand up and support the mission that I am in?

Think about the soldiers right this moment who are on a mission somewhere in Baghdad trying to bring safety and security to those people while this debate goes on and this vote is about to occur as to whether we are going to support what they are doing. This is an important moment.

Our forefathers, our forefathers had this moment many times before. Whether it was George Washington or Abraham Lincoln in the middle of the Civil War, when it wasn't going very well, they had a decision to make. Was failure an option for any of them? No, it wasn't.

I know this is difficult, and I know there are deeply held opinions on both sides of the aisle and amongst both sides of the aisle, but I would ask all of my colleagues, is failure an option? Do we want to give victory a chance?

We sent General Petraeus over there, 84–0, was confirmed by the Senate. The plan is under way. What this bill will do will be to undercut his opportunity at success.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to say to you that we have no choice but to win, because if we fail in Iraq, you will see the rise even further and faster of radical Islamic terrorism all around the world. We will see chaos in Baghdad. We will see genocide there. We will provide safe haven for our enemies. We will destabilize the moderate Arab countries in the Middle East. If anybody doesn't believe that this won't end Israel as I know it, you are kidding yourself. If you don't believe that these terrorists won't come here and fight us on the streets of America instead of the streets of Baghdad, I think you are kidding yourself.

So we have our moment of truth. We have our opportunity to do what our forefathers have done, and that is to stand up, support our troops and to win, because the outcome of failure is actually too ominous to even think about.

So I ask my colleagues today, let's not vote for spinach, let's not vote for more money for the power plant and all the other silly things in here. We all know what this bill is about, and it is about whether we have got the courage to give victory a chance, or whether we are just going to bring our troops home and give up.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, I regret that the minority leader has chosen to trivialize one item in this bill, which represents our direct responsibility to people who work in the most outrageous conditions on Capitol Hill. Roll Call itself, in describing the funding that we have in this bill on the Capitol heating plant, which the majority leader just trivialized, wrote that ''what we have on our hands is a 'horrific scandal'. The working environment for the 10-member Capitol tunnel shop team resembles that of hell.''

One of our own Republican colleagues in this House is mentioned in the editorial as describing the conditions in that heating plant as, quote, ''inhumane and unprofessional,'' and said of the tunnel workers, that they are ''probably going to end up dying because of their exposure to asbestos.''

The money in this bill is for cleaning up the asbestos problem, which people in that tunnel have to work in every day. I make no apology whatsoever for providing that funds. The minority leader ought to be standing side by side with us to meet our obligations to clean up that mess. I am surprised he doesn't recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thank you to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. Speaker, there are 435 Members of Congress, and I know there are many people on the other side of the aisle who don't know who I am. I am PATRICK MURPHY, and I am from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Back home, my wife and my daughter Maggie are watching, probably on C–SPAN right now.

Over 13 years ago, I wore the United States Army uniform for the first time. I was able to live the American dream. I was able to rise through the ranks and become a captain and a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division. We had a saying in the Army: Lead, follow or get out of the way.

Well, in the past 4 years, the Republican-led Congress followed. They had their chance, and they followed lockstep as this President led our country into an open-ended commitment refereeing a religious civil war.

For the last 4 years, this Republican Congress followed lockstep as my fellow soldiers continued to die in Iraq without a clear mission, without benchmarks to determine success, without a clear timeline for coming home. In the last 4 years, the Republican Congress followed this President as thousands of brave American soldiers returned home in coffins with our American flag. Nineteen of those coffins had soldiers that I served with in Iraq, 19 paratroopers.

Mr. Speaker, with this bill, with this vote, we mark the end of that error.

Many of the 49 new freshmen, both Democrats and Republicans, were elected a few months ago on the promise of new leadership, and that is what this bill does. It leads our way out of Iraq. It leads the way to rebuild our overextended Army, and leads the way to win the war on terror.

To those on the other side of the aisle who are opposed, I want to ask you the same questions that my gunner asked me when I was leading a convoy up and down Ambush Alley one day. He said, ''Sir, what are we doing over here? What's our mission? When are these Iraqis going to come off the sidelines and stand up for their own country?''

So to my colleagues across the aisle, your taunts about supporting our troops ring hollow if you are still unable to answer those questions now 4 years later.

Mr. Speaker, to vote ''no'' on this bill is to stand idly by, to let our commitment to Iraq remain open-ended and to let countless more American soldiers be killed in the sands of al-Anbar and the streets of Baghdad.

Short-term political peril may sidestep those who cast their vote for the status quo, but our children's history books will not treat them kindly, nor should they.

Mr. Speaker, the 110th Congress will be judged whether we have the political courage to put forth a plan to restore accountability and oversight, to bring our troops home from Iraq and, most importantly, to win the war on terror.

This is our opportunity. This is our chance to lead. For too long, the American people have been craving leadership, craving accountability and craving a new direction in Iraq. Let's give that to them today.

□ 1200

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield the balance of my time to my hero of the United States Congress, SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Thank you, Members. NANCY, JOHN, DAVID, I appreciate you all.

I rise today in support of a clean emergency spending bill for our troops, but this one is all smoke and mirrors. We must give our men and women in uniform everything they need to thwart the insurgency in Iraq and come home safely and soon.

You know, we can't tie the hands of the guys on the ground with time lines or benchmarks. And, worse, we shouldn't be using the emergency troop spending bill as the way to finance the political gimmickry of special interest projects. It is just exasperating that the Democrat leaders have turned the emergency troop spending bill into a pork barrel project giveaway.

This bill gives piles of money to shrimpers, spinach farmers, and peanut storage. You know, what does throwing money at Bubba Gump, Popeye the Sailorman, and Mr. Peanut have to do with winning a war? Nothing.

The special interest projects added to increase the likelihood of this bill passing are really an insult to the troops who want, need, and deserve our full support. The Democrats are trying to buy the majority vote today one pork project at a time, perhaps because the majority does not support their slow bleed surrender strategy.

Since the President announced his new plan for Iraq in January, there has been measured, steady progress. He changed the rules of engagement and removed political protections. Coalition forces nabbed more than 50 suspects and dismantled a bomb factory in Iraq over the past few days. Coalition forces in Iraq detained seven suspects with reported ties to foreign fighter groups. In Ramadi, troops nabbed four other suspects with alleged ties to al Qaeda. In Mosul, coalition forces captured a former paramilitary leader who allegedly is responsible for setting up al Qaeda terrorist training camps in Iraq and Syria. During another operation, troops captured a suspected terrorist with alleged ties to al Qaeda car bomb and assassination cells.

We must seize this opportunity to move forward and not stifle future success and harm troop morale.

More importantly, I want to know, how many of you have ever asked your constituents, Do you want to lose in Iraq? I think if you ask that question, do you want to lose in Iraq, Americans will wholeheartedly say no.

We have smart, strong men and women serving in Iraq, and they need our help, and they need the full support of their country and their Congress.

Our troops don't need 435 generals in Washington declaring, we will send you money for bullets, but we won't send you bulletproof vests. Our troops don't need folks in suits sitting in wood paneled rooms on Capitol Hill saying, we will send you armored tanks, but we won't send you gas.

Literally, this bill forces our guys on the ground to fight a war with one arm tied behind their backs. That just smacks of defeat.

Most of you in the Chamber know that I spent nearly 7 years as a prisoner in Vietnam, more than half of that time in solitary. Well, that was during my second tour in Vietnam. During my first tour, I worked for General Westmoreland at MAC-V Headquarters, that is the Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

While working late at night, we had a bunch of men involved in the first real hand-to-hand combat using bayonets. You may remember that, JOHN. That was war. It turns out someone sent back footage to Washington that would match the opening scene of ''Saving Private Ryan.'' In the middle of the night, the red phone rang and I answered it. I heard an earful that is not fit for this House Chamber, something like, This is the White House. What the heck is going on over there? I replied, I'll wake up General Westmoreland. They slammed the phone down and hung up. That was the control they had over our guys.

Starting in 1965, we had folks in Washington trying to tell the generals how to run things on the ground in Vietnam. A generation ago, we saw what happens when you stop the funding and America stiffs its friends. As a matter of fact, we all know just this morning Iran captured 15 British sailors. This bill prevents us from responding from Kuwait to help our strong allies of British in an emergency. We show weakness, and the world knows it.

Just think back to the dark day in history when we saw visions of American marines airlifting Vietnamese out of the U.S. embassy. You remember that. That is what happens when America makes a commitment; Congress cuts the funding, and we go home with our tails between our legs.

The brave marines who died on that day in 1975 while innocent people desperately clung to life on a rope tied to a helicopter are a testimony to what happens when Congress cuts the funding and we leave without finishing the job.

We can't let that happen again. And I don't think any of you on either side in this Chamber wants that to happen. Frankly, we all want our troops to come home, when the job is done. We want to win. Internationally announcing our timelines for withdrawal literally hands the enemy our war plan and gives them hope that they will win if they just wait it out. What world superpower would do such a thing?

We are the United States of America. We are the premier military force on the globe. We are the land of the free and the home of the brave. Surely we do not go around announcing to the world how we will conduct and win a war. Surrendering is not an option, and neither do I think abandoning our troops is an option.

Look around you. We are all America. Do you want to lose in Iraq? Voting to set a hard exit date for U.S. troops in Iraq and imposing strict standards for deploying forces gives hope to the enemy, and it is a prescription for failure. Worse, forcing Members of Congress to decide on this issue when the bill is cluttered with excess money for spinach and peanuts is abhorrent, infuriating, and ill-advised.

My dear colleagues, if you really want to debate the merits of a time withdrawal, give each Member in Congress an up or down vote so we can vote our conscience. The sweeteners in this bill are political bribery, and our troops deserve more than this.

Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot abandon our men and women in uniform for politically charged benchmarks wrapped up in fat-cat constituent projects. If we learned anything from the brave Marines who died trying to save innocent people that day at the embassy in Vietnam, and JOHN, you know this, it is that the marines never quit. Neither should we.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, to close the debate I yield the remainder of our time to the distinguished Speaker of the House.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of Mr. DAVID OBEY, who understands that the strength of our country is indeed measured in our military might but also in the health and well-being of the American people.

Thank you for bringing this important legislation to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, today is indeed an historic day. Today, this new Congress will take the first step: it will vote to end the war in Iraq.

Any statement on the war in Iraq must begin with a tribute to our troops. Today and every day we thank our troops for their courage, for their patriotism, for the sacrifice that they and their families are willing to make.

For 4 years and under the most demanding and dangerous conditions imaginable, they have worked together to do everything that was asked of them. As Members of Congress, our first responsibility under the Constitution, the preamble to the Constitution to which we take an oath of office, is to provide for the common defense. We here in this body have an obligation to work together to do that for the American people.

Mr. JOHNSON, our colleague, you, PATRICK MURPHY, and everyone in between who has served our country have helped make it the home of the brave and the land of the free. I salute you both.

I would like to also acknowledge two people who have been the champions of our troops and experts on our national security in this body. The two of them are the leading proponents on the legislation that is on the floor today: the Chair of the Armed Services Committee, IKE SKELTON; and the Chair of the Defense Appropriations Committee, JACK MURTHA. The two of them care deeply about the well-being of our troops, the readiness of our troops and its importance to our national security, and they are proposing that we pass this legislation today.

I have said from the beginning of this war, this war is a grotesque mistake. Last year's bipartisan Iraq Study Group said: ''The situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating.'' They called for action.

The facts on the ground are these: after 4 years, Iraq is in chaos and the

government is not being held accountable. The administration is sending troops into the battle who are not mission-ready.

□ 1215

And when they come home, our veterans are not being honored as the heroes they are. The revelation of appalling conditions at Walter Reed Hospital and VA facilities across the Nation remind us, once again, that our troops are being sent into a war without the right preparation to welcome them home when they return. What kind of message does that send to our troops?

In terms of the chaos in Iraq, our Commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, recently said, ''There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq.'' General Petraeus. Yet, the President's response to escalating levels of violence is to deploy more troops, a strategy that has been tried and failed, tried and without success three times already.

In the short time since the escalation began, disturbing facts have come to light.

The admission by General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that he is, ''not comfortable'' with the readiness of Army units in the United States.

The declaration whereby the Department of Defense has finally admitted that elements of a civil war do exist in Iraq; in fact, it is even worse than that.

Yesterday, in terms of reconstruction, the conclusion of the Special Inspector General that the failure of the reconstruction effort in Iraq was caused by a lack of planning, coordination and oversight. In fact, more than $10 billion has disappeared, with no accountability. Waste, fraud and abuse are rampant in the reconstruction in Iraq.

How are we going to win the hearts and minds if the money is disappearing in thin air? We must address those and other facts about the war in Iraq.

The bill we debate today, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, does that by rebuilding our military, honoring our promises to our veterans, holding the Iraqi Government accountable, and enabling us to bring our troops home.

Rather than sending more troops into the chaos that is the Iraqi civil war, we must be focused on bringing the war to an end. We can do that by passing this bill that transforms the performance benchmarks that have already been endorsed by President Bush and the Iraqi Government into requirements.

When those benchmarks are met, or when it becomes clear, after a reasonable amount of time, that they will not be met, the bill requires that our troops leave Iraq on a schedule that our former colleague, Lee Hamilton, a cochair of the Iraq Study Group, called responsible, not precipitate.

Benchmarks without deadlines are just words. And after 4 years of this war, words are not enough.

As Former National Security Advisor Brzezinski wrote in a letter endorsing this bill, ''It is clear that a different approach is needed if the Iraqis are to be encouraged to make the political accommodations necessary to promote stability and national reconciliation.'' That should have been happening a long, long time ago.

Bring the troops home too soon? It is too late for that, 4 years into a war, a war in which we have been engaged longer than we were in World War II.

This bill, in its wisdom, calls upon the Defense Department to adhere to its own readiness standards. The benchmarks were endorsed by the President and the Iraqi Government. The guidelines for the readiness standards are the Defense Department's own. Those standards are intended to assure that before our troops are sent into harm's way, they have the training and the equipment they need to enable them to perform their missions successfully. That simply is not happening.

The war in Iraq has produced a national security crisis, well described by Mr. MURTHA and Mr. SKELTON and others in the course of the day. Our readiness is at its lowest level since the Vietnam war. By addressing that crisis, the bill supports the troops, supports the troops, and protects the American people.

How do we support the troops by sending them into harm's way without the proper training and equipment, without the proper dwell time at home, and taking them there and overextending their stays and redeploying them over and over again? This bill says, adhere to your own guidelines.

Over and over again, Senator REID, the Democratic leader in the Senate, and I have appealed to the President to have a new direction in Iraq, change the mission from combat to training, enabling us to redeploy our troops for limited purpose in Iraq. Engage in diplomacy, encourage the Iraqis to engage in the regional diplomacy so necessary to bring stability to the region. Have real reconstruction. Real reconstruction, reform it; reconstruction, not corruption. And have the political change that is necessary, amend the Constitution to relieve the civil unrest and strife that has produced so much violence.

When we do that, we can bring our troops home. We can redeploy them out of Iraq, and we can turn our attention to the real war on terror in Afghanistan.

A matter of weeks ago I was in Afghanistan with some of our colleagues, and the commander of the coalition forces there told us, flat out, that if we had not taken our attention away from Afghanistan, if we had stayed focused there, the al Qaeda and the Taliban would not have the opportunity that they have there now to make a comeback. That is where the war on terror is. The war in Iraq is a separate war from the war on terror. It is a separate war.

Again, the American people have lost faith in the President's conduct of this war. The American people see the reality of this war. The President does not.

Today, the Congress has an historic opportunity to vote to end the war in Iraq. Each Member of Congress will make a choice. The world is watching for our decision. The choice is clear. Will we renew the President's blank check for an open-ended war without end, or will we take a giant step to end the war and responsibly redeploy our troops out of Iraq?

The American people want a new direction in Iraq. Today the Congress will provide it. The American people do not support a war without end, and neither should this Congress. I urge an ''aye'' vote.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to begin the end of American military involvement in Iraq.

I am so troubled by the war that I'm tempted to vote no on the supplemental spending bill (H.R. 1591) and claim a moral victory.

But our actions have consequences. If the war's opponents side with its proponents to defeat this bill, we will have won a moral victory at an unacceptable cost. It will give the President and our Republican colleagues the result they're hoping for. They know if the bill fails, the House will pass legislation to give the President a blank check to do whatever he wants in Iraq.

H.R. 1591 contains legally binding language that will force the President to begin redeploying troops by March 2008 and to completely withdraw them by September 2008. It is the only legislation with a realistic chance of passing that will extract us from the war.

H.R. 1591 makes sure that we give our troops and veterans support they desperately need. It includes significant increases in funding for healthcare services, troop readiness and protection, and military housing. It will fix the scandalous situation at Walter Reed Hospital. And, it requires overdue reforms in Iraq contracting.

The Bush Administration is pursuing a failed, delusional policy. We cannot stabilize Iraq alone and we cannot do so militarily. We must find a diplomatic solution with Iraq's neighbors and the international community. H.R. 1591 puts us on that path, and I urge Members to vote for it.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Health and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

There is no doubt that the conflict in Iraq is now a civil war marked primarily by sectarian violence, pitting Sunnis against Shias, with our troops caught in between. This bill is in fact the most responsible means to get our men and women out of this quagmire.

This legislation does not call for an immediate withdrawal. Instead, the legislation gives Iraq's government a timeline to achieve political and military progress, a timeline already set by President Bush and Iraqi leaders. If Iraq's government fails to meet the benchmarks outlined in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by March 2008. If the benchmarks are met by the deadlines established in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by September 2008. In doing this,

the legislation creates leverage that the U.S. can use to hold Iraq's government accountable and make it ultimately responsible for creating a political solution to this conflict that will result in American troops coming home.

I acknowledge that Congress should generally avoid trying to micro-manage a war. When decisions need to be made, there is no time for committee hearings or floor votes; the Commander-in-Chief may need to act immediately. However, this Administration, contrary to the facts of the situation on the ground, continues to claim that success is around the corner. The then-Republican Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee stated that "in two or three months if this thing hasn't come to fruition and this level of violence is not under control" then we would need to rethink our policy—he made that statement six months ago.

Some have suggested that any deadline is problematic. However, the Administration's original time estimate for the war was 'six days, six weeks, no more than six months,' so a firm deadline 18 months from now, after four years of this open ended conflict, cannot create any more problems than we already have and in fact sets a date that we can begin to bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, today's legislation, for the first time in the four year history of this conflict, finally puts real pressure on the President and Iraq's leaders to bring this war to an end. This bill will begin a responsible process to remove our forces from Iraq.

Foreign Policy Experts Support H.R. 1591. Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has stated that "only a political solution will end this war," and that the plan approved by the House today provides "a means to hold the Iraqi government accountable for its performance by conditioning U.S. support to the meeting of benchmarks already endorsed by President Bush and Iraqi leaders."

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright recently stated, "the bottom line is that there must be a political settlement in Iraq that will end the civil war and reduce the level of insecurity to something that can be managed. With a settlement, we could withdraw gradually, with mission accomplished. Without a settlement, our troops can do little good and might as well come home sooner rather than later."

In a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chairman DAVID OBEY, former Congressman, 9/11 Commissioner and co-chair of the Iraq Study Group, Lee Hamilton said that "a strategy of sustained pressure on the Iraqi government to meet benchmarks on national reconciliation, security, and improving the lives of the Iraqi people—backed by clear conditionality of U.S. support—has the best chance of advancing stability in Iraq." Congressman Hamilton added under the House proposal, "the President retains his flexibility and authority as commander-in-chief."

High Ranking Military Officials have questioned our current policy in Iraq.

Former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Gen. Wesley Clark (Ret.), former President of the National Defense University Lt Gen. Robert G. Gard, Jr. (Ret.), former Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, current Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, and First Head of Training of Troops in Iraq Maj. Gen Paul Eaton (Ret.), have all pointed out that the solution in Iraq is primarily political, diplomatic and economic.

In an open letter to Congress, several retired generals and other high ranking military officials stated that the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating" and that top military officials have "consistently acknowledged that the repeated and lengthy deployments are straining" the U.S. military.

General David Petraeus, the new Commander of Multinational Force Iraq, recently declared that "there is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq."

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, today, I voted for the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act because it provides our Nation's returning troops and veterans with the care they need and deserve, and makes our country more secure by setting forth a new, responsible course in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The people of my District have told me that after four years and thousands of lives lost, they are looking to Congress to ensure that our commitment in Iraq is not open-ended, that there is not a blank check on American lives, and that the Iraqi government will be held accountable.

While I have serious concerns about some aspects of this legislation, and, in general, do not support an absolute, Congressionally-mandated timetable in Iraq, I believe that, on balance, this legislation does more good than harm. Ideally, I would have preferred a more bipartisan approach, especially on an issue of this magnitude.

I am deeply disappointed in my Party's leadership for insisting on a timetable instead of working with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I am also disappointed that leadership saw fit to include millions of dollars for unrelated spending projects for shrimp farmers and peanut storage facilities. I will be working with my colleagues to remove these provisions as this bill goes to conference.

Our sons and daughters are in harm's way, however, and I cannot in good conscience withhold the resources they need while we continue what is likely to be a lengthy debate in Washington.

I also believe that as the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, I have a unique responsibility to our veterans.

I am working hard to make caring for our veterans a national priority, and this legislation is a good start. It secures a much-needed $1.7 billion for veterans' health care, including $550 million to get rid of the maintenance backlog that will help ensure veterans' facilities are clean and well-maintained.

This bill provides $20 million to clean up the mess at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. These funds, combined with the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act of 2007—which I introduced last month—are an important first step.

By voting this emergency supplemental down, Congress would send a distressing and insulting message to our injured soldiers, veterans and their loved ones that its years of neglectful under-funding and failed oversight of Walter Reed would go on and on.

This bill also makes our country more secure. It provides our troops with the resources they need to fight al Qaeda and other terrorists in an increasingly hostile situation in Afghanistan. For too long, the situation in Afghanistan has gone under the radar while al Qaeda and elements of the Taliban have grown stronger.

In Iraq, we are setting forth a new, responsible course that demands that the Iraqis take responsibility for their own security and stability. That requires the Iraqi government to meet its own benchmarks.

This is precisely the type of plan the bipartisan Iraq Study Group outlined just a few months ago. The distinguished members of that panel, including James Baker, Lee Hamilton and Arizona's own Sandra Day O'Connor, believed, as I do, that benchmarks are an appropriate way to chart the Iraqi government's progress, or lack thereof.

Among these benchmarks are quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis. Holding the Iraqi government accountable is imperative because they have not always lived up to their promises.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, this week we lost another four soldiers from Fort Bliss to an IED attack in Iraq. That makes a total of 35 troops from El Paso who went to Iraq and didn't come home.

Remember, 35 is not just a number. It's not an abstract concept. Thirty-five is the number of families suffering—aunts and uncles, grandparents, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, children. There are friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, fellow soldiers, colleagues, and so many others who are connected to the lives of our lost heroes.

The cost of this war has been too high not just in terms of lives lost and warriors wounded. We have poured taxpayers' money into Iraq. We have spent 500 billion—half a trillion!—dollars to that country. And as we have increased our investment in Iraq, we have less and less to show for it. Rather than progress, our billions of dollars have produced civil war.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Iraq War, my colleagues know two things about me. One, I opposed this war from the beginning. It was a mistake. Two, since the Iraq War began, I have been committed to our troops and to supporting the best possible outcome.

As a Vietnam veteran I know what combat is about. I have visited Iraq seven times. I have been to Afghanistan many times. I know what our troops require. I have worked out of the spotlight behind the closed doors of the Intelligence Committee and in the Armed Services Committee. My focus has been providing our soldiers with the tools they need to complete their mission and return home safely—body and vehicle armor, IED jammers, and timely, accurate intelligence.

And I'm proud of that work. I'm saddened that our troops didn't have the protection they needed right off the bat, and I'm ashamed we went to war with bad intelligence, but I'm proud of the work we've done in committee to set things right when we could.

But today we send a strong message, that it is long overdue for the Iraqis to stand up for their country, for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their security and for their political decisions.

If Iraq is to become a democracy—and we're willing to stay and help them with training, other support functions—but after four years it's time that they accept responsibility for their own future. And that's what this legislation is about.

More importantly, this bill takes care of our troops. It brings them home. And once our troops are home, this bill commits our government to caring for our troops and veterans in

a fashion that reflects the sacrifices they have made for our country.

Mr. Speaker, I've been listening to the arguments of my colleagues on the other side. One thing I'm struck by is how similar the arguments I'm hearing today are to what they've been saying for the past four years. Every step of the way, my colleagues on the other side have been wrong on our policy in Iraq. Yet they pony up the same rhetoric, the same rationale for the same policies that have gotten us nowhere but into the middle of a civil war.

For four long years, our troops have made immeasurable sacrifices in Iraq, and now it is time for the Iraqis to step up and take responsibility for their own security.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit this letter from Connecticut Governor Rell for the RECORD. This letter to Chairman SKELTON echoes the sentiment that has been debated in this Chamber and reaffirms why the bill before us today is so important. As we move forward with a new direction in Iraq, we must address the readiness of our military; we must provide the necessary support and equipment to our troops—this includes the National Guard in Connecticut and across the country.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT,
March 21, 2007.

Hon. IKE SKELTON,
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC,
Hon. DUNCAN HUNTER,
Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SKELTON AND RANKING MEMBER HUNTER: I am writing to express my concern regarding the consequences of continued, long-term equipment shortages facing the Connecticut Army National Guard. This issue impacts Connecticut's ability to respond to domestic emergencies as well as meet the requirements of the Global War on Terrorism.

At this time the Connecticut Army National Guard only has 48 percent of its authorized equipment, with 10 percent of that in the possession of Soldiers deployed overseas to Afghanistan and Iraq. Connecticut's shortfall is unfortunately representative of the equipment shortages facing Governors and their Guard units across this Nation. Currently the national average stands at 40 percent of authorized National Guard equipment on-hand within the 54 states and territories.

The equipment shortages in the Connecticut Army National Guard exceed $200 million. The specific shortages include the following:

Over 200 High-Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV).

One CH–47D Chinook cargo helicopter.

21 Large Support Vehicles (wreckers, tankers, heavy cargo vehicles).

Over 600 Weapons (rifles, pistols, and crew-served weapons).

Over 1,500 Night Vision Goggles.

The Secretary of Defense's new mobilization policy now requires that units of the Army National Guard meet training requirements and certification prior to mobilization. The certification of these units is now the responsibility of the State Adjutant General. To fully implement this policy, the Army National Guard needs a reasonable density of equipment in order to adequately train and certify Soldiers and their units for war. With the current lack of equipment making this task nearly impossible, this long-awaited policy change is sure to fail.

It is foreseeable that units with less than 40% of their authorized equipment will experience significant difficulties and delays in certification and validation for deployment. This delay could extend the length of mobilization of units and the redeployment of units in theater, thus disrupting the deployment cycle. The shortage of equipment on-hand not only impacts the Army National Guard's ability to train for deployment, but also directly impacts its ability to respond to state emergencies and disasters.

The Army National Guard is a proven, cost-effective, capable combat force in the Global War on Terrorism and an essential state force provider when called to respond at times of domestic disaster and emergency. It is for these reasons, I respectfully request that you consider the urgent need to fully fund and equip our Army National Guard. When the next natural disaster or terrorist act hits, the Nation will be counting on us all to get the response and recovery right. We could make no better investment toward delivering against that expectation than to ensure our National Guard's capabilities are appropriately resourced and robust.

Sincerely,

M. JODI RELL,
Governor.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I rise in opposition to the Fiscal Year 2007 Emergency Supplemental Spending bill.

Earlier this year, our military submitted a request to Congress for emergency funding to protect our brave soldiers, and it is our duty to respond to this important request in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, the legislation before us today includes billions of dollars in non-emergency spending and numerous provisions relating to troop withdrawal not requested by the Administration, which have the potential to delay passage of this vital emergency funding.

Much of the extra spending included in this bill will go to wasteful pork barrel projects and non-emergency subsidy programs, including millions of dollars for spinach farmers in California and peanut storage in Georgia. While I have strongly supported some of the policy provisions added to this bill, such as the minimum wage increase and expanded funding for homeland security, I am concerned that the Democratic leadership is attempting to hold critical resources for our soldiers in limbo in order to force political votes.

Our military leaders on the ground in Iraq have warned that disruptive changes in day-to-day operations will occur without immediate supplemental funding. In fact, the acting Secretary of the Army recently stated that if it does not receive additional funding by the end of April, the military will be forced to start making difficult decisions, such as postponing repairs on equipment. Sadly, rather than providing our military with the tools it has requested, the Democratic leadership is forcing a political agenda, which is certain to lead to an impasse with the Administration and further delay this important funding.

I have disagreed with many aspects of our strategy in Iraq, and I have worked hard to convince our government to change its course in the region and begin pursuing robust diplomacy to end the conflict. Indeed, I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the Administration to begin engaging in an intense diplomatic initiative to establish peace and stability, so that our troops may return home to their families. However, when it comes to funding for our soldiers who are serving in harm's way, it is not appropriate for Congress to set arbitrary timelines for withdrawal or condition military resources based on partisan objectives. It is important that our strategy in Iraq include goals for bringing the troops home, but excluding the judgment of U.S. commanders and mandating an exact deadline for withdrawal—regardless of the situation on the ground—would endanger our brave soldiers.

Mr. Speaker, the President has pledged to veto this legislation due to the inclusion of non-emergency spending and policy provisions. We can not afford to waste precious time arguing over disingenuous political proposals and extraneous pork barrel spending projects. I intend to vote against this bill and I will adamantly oppose any attempts to play politics with funding for our soldiers.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, the matter before us today, the Iraq Supplemental, is before us for the first time. However, this is not the last time that we will vote on this bill. This bill will go to the Senate and from the Senate to a Conference Committee and from there back to the floor of this house. If the President exercises his veto power, we may ultimately vote on this matter as many as three or four times.

Today, I make no commitments about what I will do or how I will vote when this matter comes back to this house. How could I? I don't know what this bill will look like when it comes back . . . I don't know what it will say. Rather, I rise to explain how I will vote today, as this bill comes before this house for the first time.

It is clear to me that today, we have only two options. We can send to the Senate the bill before us, with binding language to end the war or, should this bill fail, we will send a bill that gives the President unchecked power to continue his misguided, mismanaged war without end.

That is the choice today. And my vote will be "yes" to advance the bill which begins to end the war. Reaching this decision has been difficult. My deliberation has been long and thoughtful. The difficulty of the decision may seem somewhat surprising given the rather stark description I just provided of the choice before us. However, there are several reasons why this decision has been hard.

First, the bill before us, despite its binding language to end the war, is far from perfect. It does not end the war soon enough. It mishandles the issue of Iraqi oil. It fails to address necessary safeguards to prevent this President from taking military action in Iran without Congressional authorization. The bill's shortcomings are reason enough for a no vote.

Second, until today . . . until this vote . . . I have played a different role. My job yesterday, and the day before (like so many war opponents) was to fight to make the language in this bill stronger and to make this legislation better. And having failed to accomplish all I sought to achieve provides me with another reason to vote no.

Third, until this day I have voted against all of the Iraqi war spending bills. I strongly favor using the power of the purse to end the war. That this binding language to end the war is attached to a war funding bill provided me with yet another reason to vote no.

Many on the left have invoked the words of Saul Alinsky in describing today's vote: ". . . I start from where the world is, as it is, not as I would like it to be," he says in his book Rules for Radicals. "That we accept the world

as it is does not in any sense weaken our desire to change it into what we believe it should be—it is necessary to begin where the world is if we are going to change it to what we think it should be," Alinsky continues. So today we start where this congressional world is, with this imperfect bill as the vehicle to begin to end the war.

The choice is clear, today we can begin to end the war, or we can stand in the way of doing so. I will vote to end the war.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today's vote is very difficult for me.

I support the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act is a significant improvement over the President's failed Iraq policies. For years, Bush has sent our troops into harms way without the proper equipment. Today's legislation aims to hold the Administration accountable for its own readiness standards—and for the benchmarks President Bush himself proposed for Iraqi government performance. This bill also goes farther toward providing an actual end date for this war than any other legislation that has reached the House floor.

I applaud Speaker PELOSI, JACK MURTHA, and DAVE OBEY for this significant achievement. I wish I could support my Speaker today and vote with the overwhelming majority of my Democratic colleagues. But, I can't vote "yes."

I ran for Congress because of my strong opposition to our government's unyielding commitment to the Vietnam War. I didn't think it made sense for American men and women to die for the half-truths of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations. Today, I don't think it makes any more sense for lives to be lost for the outright lies of the Bush regime.

I voted against the original resolution authorizing the President to take military action against Iraq. At the time, I said I didn't trust this president and his advisors.

During the war's four long years, nothing has happened to convince me otherwise. On the contrary, the Bush Administration has repeatedly misled the American people about Iraq. They lied to Congress about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, about the cost and length of the war, and about meeting arbitrary benchmarks.

Their goalposts keep moving. The amount of money they requested for this supplemental alone is nearly twice the amount they initially projected the war would cost in its entirety.

Throughout my career in Congress, I've voted against defense spending and against war. Building new weapons systems and waging war doesn't solve problems. If the last four years are any indication, it actually makes them worse.

The longer we stay in Iraq, the higher the cost of this senseless war. Unless we withdraw immediately, the Shiite-Sunni civil war will continue taking the lives of additional American troops and Iraqi civilians. Education, health care, and other domestic needs will go under-funded in America while additional billions are spent in Iraq. And our international allies will further doubt our actions and intentions around the world.

Despite my utmost respect for my colleagues who crafted this bill, I can't in good conscience vote to continue this war. Nor, however, can I vote "no" and join those who think today's legislation goes too far toward withdrawal.

That's why I'm making the difficult decision to vote "present." My vote should be interpreted as opposing the war's continuation while permitting this Congress—under Speaker PELOSI's leadership—to deliver a strong message to President Bush that his blank check to wage war has been canceled.

I urge my colleagues to vote their consciences and help end the war in Iraq.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, no votes in Congress are more wrenching or difficult than those involving war; whether that vote involves initiating combat, or in this instance, steps to bring about the end. The consequences are profound, uncertainty about the right course is great, and there are strong feelings on all sides.

Every member of Congress is committed to the security of this Nation and to supporting our troops and their families. There are legitimate differences about how best to achieve those goals, but the core commitment to security and to support of our troops should not be doubted or questioned, regardless of where one stands on this matter.

Before the first vote authorizing force in Iraq in 2002, I asked fundamental questions of the President: 'What will the cost be in human casualties on all sides? What are the international and potential regional scenarios that might be developed? What is our long term strategy for the region?' I also asked about the economic costs to our Nation and the world, and about the likelihood of religious conflicts leaving our soldiers caught between warring religious factions with grievances that are centuries old. I asked what provisions had been made to care for the wounded and their families when they return? I called for greater commitment to resolving the Israeli/Palestinian issues and for reducing our Nation's dependence on petroleum. Finally, knowing well the history of the region, I asked how long our commitment was expected to last if hostilities were initiated.

Not one of these questions was answered by President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld or any member of the administration. That is why I voted "no" on that initial resolution. Sadly, the same questions remain today and they have still not been answered by the President, which is why I will vote "yes" on the bill before the House today.

For the sake of our Nation's security, for the safety or our troops, for the sake of our economy at home, for the sake of our international standing, we must say to the Iraqi leaders and to the world, 'We have removed a dictator from power, we have disarmed a tyrant, elections have been held, and a constitution is in place. We have shed the blood of our finest, we have indebted our children, we have tried to help rebuild infrastructure and put in place the basis of a democratic republic. Now, it is up to the Iraqi people themselves to find a political solution that is in everyone's interest and will lead to an end to the bloodshed.' Our Nation cannot and should not attempt to impose that solution indefinitely; it must come from the Iraqis themselves.

Today's bill says just that. It provides the necessary funds to continue to support our soldiers in the field. It adds much needed resources to ensure they receive care when they come home. It addresses needed priorities within our own Nation. And, most importantly, it says affirmatively, there will be an end to our role in combat in Iraq and it is time for our Nation, for the Iraqis, and for the world, to begin to prepare for that time. This cannot go on forever.

Those who talk about staying the course without end, as well as those who would call for opposing this bill because they want the war to end tomorrow, must all recognize that in the process of this conflict, our overall military readiness has been profoundly impaired and our Nation is now vulnerable should other, more severe, threats emerge elsewhere in the world. At the same time, our local preparedness of the National Guard is in tatters. Our Guard lacks key resources, equipment, and manpower to respond to fires, floods, or other disasters or to join in serious conflicts elsewhere if called upon to do so. This bill, quite rightly, seeks to correct these deficits.

The reality before us today is that we cannot immediately stop funding for our forces or neglect the readiness deficits that now endanger our Nation. That would be irresponsible and would leave our soldiers on the ground and our citizens at home and abroad in greater danger. It would also endanger the lives and hopes of the Iraqi people themselves and leave them vulnerable to extremists and chaos.

At the same time, however, it would be equally irresponsible to allow this hemorrhaging of blood and money, this neglect of our own Nation's needs here at home, to continue unchecked. This legislation changes the direction for our Nation and says the Iraqi's must change the direction of their Nation. They must take responsibility for their own security, share their oil wealth equitably with their own citizens, arid establish fundamental constitutional reforms. This bill requires that our President must certify that such things are being done.

Far from 'tying the hands' of the President, this legislation gives him much needed direction. If it becomes law, President Bush must at long last say that his own people, the American people, in the constitutional democratic republic that is our Nation, and that he is sworn to defend, have spoken through their representatives and have said it is time for change. It will soon be up to the Iraqi's themselves to determine the fate of their own Nation so that we can, at long last, may again determine the fate of ours.

If you care about the security of this Nation, vote "yes" to restore our military readiness. If you care about our soldiers, vote "yes" to give them the equipment they need while deployed and the care they need when they return home. If you want to see an end to this conflict, vote "yes" to begin the process that will at last bring that about.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

I voted against this war 5 years ago and believe we should never have gone into Iraq.

But as a veteran, I stand by our troops and have always committed to providing for them regardless of politics.

And H.R. 1591 supports our troops before, during, and after service. It mandates proper training and equipment, it requires that our troops get the rest they need between deployments to stay sharp, and provides for our wounded as they return from battle.

This bill also sets deadlines for the Iraqi government so that we can start shifting responsibility to the Iraqi people and bring our troops home by 2008 at the very latest.

Mr. Speaker, we have 160,000 American troops on the ground in Iraq right now, many of which lack proper equipment and training.

We also have 32,000 wounded soldiers from the Iraq conflict who need medical attention and assistance to get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, we have a veteran healthcare system that is failing. Report after report indicates under funding, neglect, improper conduct, and almost no accountability.

If the tragedies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center have taught us anything, it is that wartime spending shouldn't just stop with tanks and guns.

It needs to extend to taking care of our wounded heroes and their families after they return from the battlefield.

Mr. Speaker, I recently visited our returning veterans at Walter Reed Medical Center. And what I saw there just broke my heart.

Some of our wounded told me their doctors weren't giving them the attention they needed and that they even had to prove to the medical staff that they were injured!

One man in particular really touched my heart. I met a wounded soldier from my home State of California who told me about his father who had dropped everything, closed his business, and flew to Washington so that he could take care of his son full time.

This young man's family not only had to risk their son for this war, they're now sacrificing their livelihood to help him recuperate.

And yet sadly, he's one of the lucky ones.

What about the majority of military families who simply can't afford to quit their jobs, move cross-country and take care of their husbands, wives, and children?

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the American people shouldn't have to put up with these hardships.

They shouldn't have to worry that their family members in uniform are getting the best care possible.

How poorly does it reflect on us as a Nation when we don't adequately take care of our veterans when they come back home?

Veterans healthcare is one of the most neglected and underfunded programs in this country.

This isn't just embarrassing, it is unconscionable.

We have a duty to minimize the risk to our troops and their families by making sure they have the very best training, the finest equipment, and stay deployed only as long as absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, we have a moral obligation to take care of each and every soldier who has been injured in the line of duty in defense of our great Nation.

H.R. 1591 addresses these responsibilities and that's why I will vote in favor of this bill today.

The American people have already paid too high a price for this war.

3,233 soldiers have died in Iraq, including 10 men from my own district.

We owe it to these heroes to set a deadline for withdrawal and let our soldiers move on with their lives.

We owe it to our families who are praying for the safety of their loved ones to take care of our troops every step of the way.

That's why I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, 9 years ago on this floor, Congressman Floyd Spence, the Republican Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, had this to say about the bill withdrawing American forces from Bosnia: "The time is long overdue for Congress to express its will on behalf of the American people."

I couldn't say it better myself. In this place, the People's House, the will of the people must mean something. Elections must mean something. And if the 2006 election represented anything, it was that the American people were tired of the lack of oversight and accountability from this Congress, and they were tired of a war with growing numbers of casualties, and mounting costs with no end in sight. They asked for a new direction from this Congress, and The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, is the answer to their call.

There are many of us who feel uncomfortable giving this President another dime to spend to perpetuate this misguided and shortsighted strategy in Iraq. But I come here to support this legislation because for the first time since the start of this disastrous engagement, Congress is making sure that any further spending on this war comes with unprecedented support for our troops and veterans, and a real plan to redeploy our forces and resources to fights that we can still win.

This Administration has been wrong on just about everything about Iraq—there were no weapons of mass destruction, we were not welcome as liberators, the country has plunged into a civil war, and we have no exit strategy.

The days of issuing a blank check to this Administration with no questions asked are over. As we enter the fifth year of this war, people in Connecticut and across the country demand a change in our policy in Iraq. This bill is the change that they asked for.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

This legislation will support our troops and veterans, hold the Bush Administration and Iraqi government accountable and bring our soldiers home by August 2008 or sooner. It will also provide emergency funding for critical programs that have suffered from years of neglect.

This supplemental appropriations bill provides emergency funding for critical programs that have long been underfunded by the Republicans. It includes $750 million to correct the funding shortfall in the State Children's Health Insurance program so that hundreds of thousands of children will not lose their health care. It provides $2.9 billion for Katrina relief and recovery. The bill also includes $2.6 billion for homeland security needs left unaddressed by Congressional Republicans, as well as $1.7 billion to remedy the unconscionable state of our military and veterans' health care systems. All of these issues are emergencies in their own right and rise to the level of inclusion in this emergency supplemental spending bill.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act requires the Iraqi government to meet the security, political and economic benchmarks established by the President in his address of January 10th, including improvements in the performance of the Iraqi security forces, a greater commitment by the Iraqi government to national reconciliation, and reductions in the levels of sectarian violence in Iraq.

If the Iraqi government is unable to meet these benchmarks by July 7 of this year, redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq would begin immediately and must be completed by January of 2008. If the benchmarks are met, the latest possible starting date for redeployment would be March 1 of next year, with complete withdrawal by August 31.

The bill ensures that our troops have the tools and resources they need to do the job they have been asked to do. It prohibits the deployment of troops who are not fully trained, equipped and protected according to current Department of Defense standards. The President can only deploy unprepared troops if he certifies, in writing, to Congress, that deploying those troops in the national interest. The bill also provides funding so the Veterans Administration can meet the obligations of a new generation of veterans, particularly by ensuring that they will have the medical care they need.

I have been an outspoken opponent of military action against Iraq since the day the administration started beating the war drums. My preference would have been to vote for a stronger bill that would bring our troops home even sooner than this one. I am disappointed that the bill includes waivers to allow the President to send less than fully-equipped troops into battle. I am also unhappy that the provision requiring the president to get Congressional approval for an attack on Iran was removed from the bill. I have additional concerns about the section of the bill that allows an unspecified number of U.S. troops to remain in Iraq after the August 2008 deadline to train Iraqis and fight terrorism.

However, I support this legislation in spite of these deficiencies because I believe it is an affirmative step towards our ultimate goal of ending the war. This bill is not everything that I would have liked, but it represents a critical turning point. No longer will this body uncritically hand over billions of dollars for the President to wage endless war. For the first time, Congress is considering binding legislation that sets a date certain for the end of the Iraq war. I will not help the Republicans defeat it.

The President and most Congressional Republicans ask that we continue to fund this war with "no strings attached." But the United States cannot afford an open-ended commitment to a war without end. It is the responsibility of this Congress to devise a means to end the U.S. combat role in Iraq so that we can reclaim our position of leadership in the world and direct our resources back towards urgent needs here at home. I believe that this bill moves us towards these goals in an effective and responsible way.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, today marks an historic vote, one that will go down in history and signal a turning pointing in the war in Iraq. Much like the vote authorizing the President to go to war in 2002, this vote will be a defining moment, and one that will be discussed and debated for years to come.

While I do not believe this is a perfect bill, I personally would vote to bring our troops home today if that was an option, in fact this bill is the best compromise that could be adopted. Finally, there is an end in sight to this ill-conceived war, and Congress is sending a message to the Iraqis, that our sons and

daughters will not continue to shed blood to defend their country indefinitely.

We are sending the Iraqi government a message, that the time to step up their own efforts to bring peace and stability to their own land is fast approaching.

Mr. Speaker, this vote is one of conscience and the decision to vote for or against it is deeply personal. But let us make no mistake, the consequences of our actions here today will be widely felt and the impact will be broad and far-ranging. The American people are watching closely, and the eyes of the world are on us as well.

Today's vote is an example of what makes America great and what makes our democracy so strong. The fact that we, as elected Members of Congress, can express the will of the American people and compel the Administration to alter its misguided policies of war, demonstrates the essence of American society.

After years of having a free reign, with no accountability, consultation, or oversight from Congress, the President will now be compelled to listen to the will of Congress, and therefore the will of the American people.

Winning the war in Iraq will require a political and diplomatic offensive, not sending more of our men and women into harm's way to facilitate a civil war. With a clear conscience, but a heavy heart I cast my vote for the Iraq supplemental. My only solace is that we finally can see an end to this ill-fated war.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, legislation that would chart a new course for the United States in Iraq. I commend the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. OBEY, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, for their leadership and for drafting a measure that answers Americans' calls for real change.

Four years after our nation initiated military operations in Iraq, America demands a new approach to this open-ended conflict that has resulted in the deaths of more than 3,200 service members, including at least 25 with strong ties to Rhode Island. Our operations in Iraq have endangered the ability of our armed forces to respond to other crises, distracted from efforts to fight al Qaeda and the Taliban, and damaged our international reputation. Our military now finds itself in the middle of a civil war, and it is time to bring our troops home.

Despite calls by the Iraq Study Group for a new approach to the ''grave and deteriorating'' situation in Iraq, President Bush has proposed escalating military operations, sending more troops to prosecute a war mismanaged from the start by the civilian leadership. Fortunately, we have another choice. The House of Representatives will vote today on an emergency spending bill that would, for the first time, set a clear deadline to end U.S. combat operations in Iraq. As one who originally voted against giving the President authority to invade Iraq, I will proudly support this Democratic measure as the first real step to end the war.

Last November, an American public dissatisfied with President Bush's Iraq policy elected a Democratic Congress that promised a new direction. Having heard frustration from so many Rhode Islanders, I have worked with the Democratic leadership to develop a better strategy. I spoke of my conversations with military families and advocacy groups to underscore the sincerity and passion of Rhode Islanders' call for change. Meanwhile, Democratic leaders consulted with an array of current and former military commanders, foreign policy experts and advocates, with committees holding more than 100 hearings on operations in Iraq.

The bill before us is the direct result of those efforts and reflects the will of the American people. Not only does it demand accountability by establishing clear benchmarks for Iraqis to take control of their own security, but it also sets a deadline to bring our troops home—no later than August 2008. This measure sends a clear signal to the President and the world that we do not intend to remain an occupying force in Iraq.

The bill also addresses other serious problems facing our military andf their families. President Bush has recommended sending more troops into harm's way, but has not provided the resources they need upon their return home, as demonstrated by reports of substandard care at facilities such as Walter Reed Medical Center. With nearly 25,000 American troops—among them 93 Rhode Islanders—injured in Iraq thus far, the House spending bill provides an additional $2.8 billion for military health care and $1.7 billion for veterans' health care to ensure that those who have sacrificed for our nation get the support and treatment they deserve.

Furthermore, the bill adds critical funds to restore our military readiness and re-equip National Guard and Reserve forces, which face major shortages as a result of operations in Iraq. Lt. General H. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, has stated that 88 percent of Army Guard units and 45 percent of Air Guard units are unprepared for deployment as a result of equipment shortages. We depend on our National Guard to protect us in the event of catastrophes or natural disasters, and we must ensure they are fully prepared to defend the Nation they serve.

In Congress, I have constantly strived to protect our national security and to support our military, which has served valiantly in some incredibly challenging missions. At this point, though, the Iraqis' problems no longer require a U.S. military solution. The underlying causes of violence are primarily political and must be addressed as such. Unlike the President's plan, which promises more of the same failed policy, the Democratic approach will support the political process to end sectarian divisions in Iraq, help rebuild the economy and infrastructure, and promote maximum diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the violence.

Some have argued that the bill does not go far enough. Like them, I support an even earlier exit for our troops and have co-sponsored legislation to redeploy them out of Iraq by December 31, 2007. However, there is no question that the Democratic measure being offered marks a major turning point and answers Rhode Islanders' pleas by setting a firm deadline for withdrawal. This is a tremendous step—one which serves our troops, our constituents, and our conscience—and I will wholeheartedly support it.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

Is this the perfect solution? No. But how can there be a perfect solution to a war so imperfectly devised, so catastrophically planned, so horribly managed by the Bush administration?

This resolution turns in a better direction. It provides health care to our veterans.

It provides support to our warfighters.

It demands accountability from our President.

And it creates the process to redeploy our troops.

I voted for the use of force in Iraq, Mr. Speaker. I believed then, as I believe now, that the Middle East is an exceedingly dangerous region on the brink of an eruption that threatens global security.

But the war in Iraq did not stabilize the Middle East. It has destabilized it.

Before the war in Iraq, Iran was concerned about Israel. Today, Israel is concerned about Iran.

Before the war in Iraq, there was no such thing as ''Al Queda in Iraq''. Today, there is.

Before the war in Iraq, our military was capable of swiftly and decisively responding to multiple threats, foreign and domestic. Just yesterday, the New York National Guard reported to my office that it has only 37 percent of the mission critical transportation it needs to respond to a homeland security emergency in my state: whether it's a terrorist attack or a severe hurricane.

This resolution reinvests in the priorities we need. And it says to both the Iraqi government and the Bush Administration:

''No more blank checks. No more endless commitments.''

Many are troubled with the inclusion of a strategic withdrawal of our troops between December of this year and August of next. Mr. Speaker.

And I must be honest. I have struggled with this as well. The decision should be hard. It should be contentious. It should torment us all. Because no matter what we do, the stakes are high. The consequences are great.

If you lean to the right, an August 2008 redeployment is way too soon.

If you lean to the left, an August 2008 redeployment is way too long.

I reached my own judgment a few months ago. Based not on polls, not on politics, not on the convenience of sound-bytes on either side of the aisle and not on righteous absolutism that can only be formulated in a vacuum. I formed it after listening to the Commanding General of CENTCOM testify to the Armed Services Committee that we had until the middle of this year before Baghdad spins out of control. Shortly after that, the Iraq Study Group, after months of non-partisan work and study, reached the judgment that: ''By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq.''

The middle of this year to the middle of next year.

Those are the benchmarks, Mr. Speaker. Those are the nonpartisan, nonpolitical, balanced and reasoned benchmarks.

And those benchmarks are contained in this resolution.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say this: Today Republicans and Democrats will disagree. Fair enough. But it's time to stop thinking about our disagreements and begin working together on our agreements.

Last week, several members of the House Center Aisle Caucus, which I have the privilege of co-chairing, met to discuss cooperating on several Iraq initiatives. This week. I introduced the first of these bipartisan measures with the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CARNEY), the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr.

BOUSTANY). Our resolution requires the President to submit a Status Of Forces Agreement to the Iraq government, just as we have with other governments where we have a military presence. This will send the message that we are not occupiers of Iraq. And we follow the rule of law.

I mention this now, Mr. Speaker, in the hopes that my colleagues who wish to join us in constructive ways forward will join us. That the debate will turn from left and right to forward.

That is what our troops want. That is what our constituents want. That is our obligation.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1591, a pork-laden $124.3 billion war supplemental that would force U.S. troops to withdraw from Iraq.

I strongly support benchmarks and high accountability for military and political progress in Iraq, but not in a manner that hurts our chances of accomplishing those goals. Under this legislation, U.S. troops would be withdrawn from Iraq unless the President's benchmarks for progress are met by July. This unreasonable requirement would not give General Petraeus enough time to show if the new ''troop surge'' is effective.

In addition, this bill would force U.S. troops to withdraw by August 2008 regardless of whether the benchmarks are met. Members of Congress should not be dictating strategy to our generals in the field.

The authors of this bill are talking out of both sides of their mouths. In attempting to reach a compromise, they would fund the troop surge while dooming it to failure by not allowing enough time to see if it works. It is clear that a forthright and honest vote on withdrawing U.S. troops would fail. The Majority Party's Leadership has instead chosen to entice Members of Congress with pork-barrel spending in exchange for their vote on this bill.

The Washington Post reported: ''House Democratic leaders are offering billions in federal funds for lawmakers'' pet projects large and small to secure enough votes this week to pass an Iraq funding bill that would end the war next year.''

This so-called ''emergency'' war supplemental includes non-defense spending such as $283 million in milk subsidies, $474 million in peanut subsidies, and $25 million in spinach subsidies.

This legislation abandons the Majority Party's supposed leadership on fiscal discipline. It is a hypocritical and blatant attempt to gain votes from Members of Congress through special interest spending. The bill includes non-military items such as an increase in the minimum wage, tax relief for small businesses, drought aid, hurricane relief, agricultural subsidies and funds for child health insurance. Each of these items should be debated under regular order in the House.

I strongly support the defense-related spending items in this legislation, including critical equipment for our troops and health care improvements for our veterans such as funding for Walter Reed Army Medical Center. I was also proud to sign the discharge petition to vote on Congressman SAM JOHNSON's legislation to ensure full funding of our troops.

We must demand meaningful progress in Iraq to curb sectarian violence, disarm militias, train security forces and strengthen the arm of the new Iraqi government until Iraq can govern itself. However, H.R. 1591 is clearly not the answer. Immediately withdrawing U.S. troops would be an irresponsible display of politics that would endanger future generations of Americans.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting against this legislation, and to demand a ''clean'' war supplemental that meets the needs of our troops without pork-barrel politics.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important legislation.

This supplemental appropriations bill contains vitally important funding for critical priorities and unmet needs. For example, this bill includes $1.7 billion more than the President requested for military health care, including funds to correct the scandalous conditions at Walter Reed and other military hospitals. It includes another $1.7 billion for veterans' health care, $2.5 billion for improving the readiness of our stateside troops and $1.4 billion for military housing allowances. A nation at war simply must provide necessary funds to support our troops.

In addition, this legislation includes $3.1 billion for military construction to implement the BRAC mandates that impact Fort Bragg in my Congressional District and military communities all across the country. It is important to note that the former Republican Congressional Majority failed to pass the military construction appropriations and imperiled these priority projects. This legislation corrects that failure.

Mr. Speaker, the standards and benchmarks in this legislation will assert some measure of oversight and accountability to a war policy that has been tragically mismanaged by this administration for too long. I have resisted supporting date certain language for troop redeployment because it is preferable that the executive branch have the lead in foreign policy in partnership with the legislature. Unfortunately, this Administration has mistakenly interpreted that deference as a blank check for its go-it-alone approach. No more.

The President's speech this week calling for ''courage and resolve'' demonstrated a continued state of denial. The American people do not need more lectures from this President about resolve. Our troops do not need more lectures about courage. What we need is a new direction to rebuild our military and refocus on the true threat to America from al Qaeda and the Islamic jihadists who attacked us on 9/11. We must deploy our military might to Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere to eliminate Osama bin Laden and the true ''grave and gathering threat'' to America.

We must pass this legislation to send a wake-up call to the President that ''Stay The Course'' is no longer an option. Denial is no longer an acceptable policy. I urge my colleagues to support a new direction and vote for this bill.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this Defense Supplemental appropriations bill.

Whatever some may say, I think it would be grossly irresponsible to vote against it. That would be to vote against providing America's men and women in uniform with the equipment and resources they need and against providing them the best health care they may require when they come home.

I understand why some are urging a vote against the bill. Many Americans are frustrated and angry because we are four years into a war the Bush Administration assured us would be short and decisive. The Administration's misjudgments, lack of planning and poor leadership have made a bad situation worse. So there are many who do not trust the Bush Administration to find a way to end this war, and who believe Congress should simply act to cut off additional funds.

But whatever may be said about the wisdom of invading Iraq four years ago—and I am one who believed it was a mistake to do so—the fact is that we are still deeply engaged in Iraq. We also must finish the job of securing Afghanistan and defeating the Taliban and al-Qaeda. So long as our troops are in the field, we must provide them what they need even as we move to change the mistaken policies of the Administration in Iraq.

This bill begins that change. It includes important language to hold the president accountable to the benchmarks set by his own administration and the Iraqi government.

Those benchmarks were outlined in January, when President Bush announced that the Iraqi government had agreed to pursue all extremists, Shiite and Sunni alike; to deliver Iraqi Security Forces to Baghdad to join in the ''surge''; and to establish a strong militia disarmament program. President Bush also announced that Prime Minister Maliki and his government agreed to pursue reconciliation initiatives, including enactment of a hydro-carbon law; conducting of provincial and local elections; reform of current laws governing the de-Baathification process; amendment of the Constitution of Iraq; and allocation of Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects.

By holding the president and the Iraqi government accountable for achieving these benchmarks, this bill will provide General Petraeus and the Administration with the leverage necessary to help the Iraqi government forge a political solution. And we all know that it will take a political solution—not a military one—to end this war.

The bill is an important step toward what I think must be our goal—a responsible end to the war in Iraq, based on a strategy of phased withdrawal of troops, accelerated diplomacy and redeployment that is based on Iraqi stability and not arbitrary deadlines.

It is true that this legislation includes a date certain for withdrawing U.S. combat troops from Iraq. I do not believe this language is wise and were it up to me, this provision would not be included in the bill. As a matter of national security policy, we should steer clear of arbitrary public deadlines and focus instead on realistic goals. Our military needs flexibility to be able to link movements of U.S. troops to the realities of the situation on the ground.

The deadline established in this bill—August of 2008—is far enough away that I believe we may be able to revisit it if need be, and while I find its inclusion troubling, I do not believe in letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. And the bill's language does give the president flexibility to protect U.S. interests, since it allows sufficient troops to remain to protect U.S. military and civilians in Iraq, conduct counterterrorism operations, and train Iraqi Security Forces.

The bill also protects our troops by limiting deployment schedules and setting minimum readiness standards—based on current Defense Department standards—for U.S. troops deploying to the region. The president could

waive these requirements but only by certifying in writing to Congress that waiving them would be in the interest of national security.

The bill also includes many provisions important to our troops, such as funds for military personnel for imminent danger pay, family separation allowances, and basic allowances for housing; funds for recruiting and retention in the Army Reserve and National Guard; and funds to develop countermeasures to prevent attacks from improvised explosive devices. The bill recommends the creation of a new Strategic Readiness Reserve fund, and provides $2.5 billion for the program, which is intended to improve readiness, training and equipping of U.S. forces not already deployed.

Given the recent revelations about problems with the defense health system at Walter Reed and other facilities across the system, I am very pleased that the bill provides $2.8 billion for military health care costs and $1.7 billion for initiatives to address the health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, particularly those suffering from traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder. Funding is also included to address facility deficiencies so the Department of Veterans Affairs does not have to defer facility maintenance and upkeep in order to provide quality health care services.

The bill also provides $52.5 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and funds the $5.9 billion request for the Afghan Security Forces and the $3.8 billion request for Iraq Security Forces.

And the bill includes $3.1 billion to fully fund the Pentagon's FY07 request for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations, which is vitally important for Ft. Carson as it prepares to expand and for other military installations in Colorado.

On the non-military side, the bill includes critically important funding for farmers and ranchers in southeastern Colorado who were recently hit hard by winter storms. Thousands of cattle were killed in storms worse than the October 1997 storm that killed approximately 30,000 cattle and cost farmers and ranchers an estimated $28 million. The struggles that family agriculture producers and small counties face are significant and are having a negative impact on the livelihood of hundreds of farmers and ranchers and their communities. So I am pleased that the Colorado delegation was successful in persuading the House leadership to include financial assistance for farmers and ranchers, including for those affected by Colorado's recent blizzards, and I am hopeful that the funding will be included in the final conference report.

Mr. Speaker, we have entered the 5th year of the war in Iraq. Already, more than 3,200 of our men and women in uniform have made the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duty. More than 24,000 others have been wounded. The Iraqi death toll is at least 60,000, with more than 650,000 other Iraqis displaced and at least one million who have fled to Syria and Jordan and other countries.

Even these heavy costs are not the whole story, because nation-building in Iraq has degraded our ability to counter other threats to our national security around the globe. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am all too aware of the pressures on our active duty and National Guard and reserve soldiers, including a lack of equipment and training, multiple or extended deployments, and limited time at home between deployments. To be successful, U.S. forces must be trained, equipped, and ready to quickly deploy worldwide. Shortfalls in personnel, equipment, or training increase the risk to our troops and to their mission.

Mr. Speaker, many of us who voted against authorizing the President to rush to war in Iraq were worried that while it would be easy to eliminate the Saddam Hussein regime, the aftermath would be neither easy nor quick. Sadly, our fears have proven to be justified. And now, as the Pentagon has finally admitted in its most recent quarterly report, the situation in Iraq is ''properly descriptive of a civil war.''

Insisting on keeping our troops in the middle of that kind of internecine war is not a recipe for victory; it is only a prescription for quagmire. And as a new Foreign Relations Council report notes, we bear responsibility for developments within Iraq, but are increasingly without the ability to shape those developments in a positive direction.

We need to be scaling back our military mission in Iraq. We need to make the U.S. military footprint lighter—not in order to hasten defeat or failure in Iraq, but to salvage a critical measure of security and stability in a region of the world that we can ill afford to abandon.

But as we do so, we must work to avoid a collapse in the region—not only because we have a moral obligation to the people of Iraq, but also because our national security has been so badly compromised by the Bush administration's failures there. The President's decision to take the nation to war has made our country less safe. We need to change course and chart a path that enhances our national security and sets the right priorities for the war on terrorism and struggle against extremists.

This bill begins to chart this path, and I will support it.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I support our men and women serving in harm's way, I support America's veterans, and I support of establishing clear benchmarks for progress in Iraq.

Our men and women in Iraq are in the middle of what is becoming an increasingly dangerous civil war. Despite their best efforts to provide security, train Iraqi forces, and pursue terrorists, the violence in Iraq ultimately must be ended by the Iraqi people. The Iraqis must step up, once and for all, and take responsibility for their future.

The Iraq war funding bill is the only proposal on the table that sets enforceable benchmarks for the Iraqi government and makes clear to the Iraqi government that we will not have our soldiers in the middle of a religious civil war indefinitely. Distinguished Hoosier and co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, Lee Hamilton, has said that tying continued U.S. support, including the presence of our troops, to benchmarks is the strongest leverage we have to force the Iraqis to act. He, too, has said that this supplemental—despite its imperfections—should move forward.

In an ideal situation, the President, and not the Congress, would hold the Iraqi government accountable for improving the political and security conditions in its country. However, the Bush Administration has not held the Iraqi government accountable even while the security situation has steadily deteriorated to the point of open civil war between rival religious sects.

In early January, I wrote the President. I asked him what the consequences would be if the Iraqi government failed to meet the benchmarks the President articulated, benchmarks the Iraqi government has agreed to meet, in a nationally televised speech. To this day, I have received no response from the Bush Administration.

In addition to forcing Iraqi accountability, the Iraq war funding bill provides desperately needed funds to ensure that current and future veterans and wounded military personnel receive the care and attention their service and sacrifice deserve. H.R. 1591 includes $1.3 billion in new funding for veterans' health care. This bill also improves our ability to care for our wounded warriors, with an additional $2.8 billion for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic-brain injuries, and burns and amputee rehabilitation. Finally, the Iraq war funding bill provides $20 million to fix Walter Reed Army Medical Center so that the embarrassingly substandard living conditions can be quickly remedied.

This legislation also reaffirms our commitment to fighting terrorism in Iraq and around the globe. Even if the Iraqis fail to meet our benchmarks for progress in Iraq, American forces can still fight and pursue terror groups operating in Iraq while continuing to help train Iraqi security and counter-terrorism forces. The Iraq war funding bill also provides crucial funds to fight a resurgent Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and it provides much-needed money for FBI counter-terrorism initiatives, secures at-risk nuclear materials in other countries and provides money to install radiation detection equipment at overseas ports that are shipping to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I said numerous times during the campaign that Congress must continue providing full funding for our troops in the field—this bill does that by investing $95.5 billion in our military, including almost $900 million for new Humvees and $2.4 billion to improve protections against Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Though I do not like the idea of setting a timeline for the redeployment of our troops, I will not vote against our troops on the field, period. This bill moves us in the right direction by sending a message to the President—and to the Iraqi government—that the situation in Iraq is unacceptable and must change.

The President has previously stated that he hoped Iraqi troops would be serving on the front line and that U.S. troops would primarily be in a training role before the end of this year. This funding bill extends our offensive mission almost one year past the President's own date. We are essentially asking the Iraqis to take ownership of their own country again. That is critical for both Iraq and the United States.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the Progressive and the Out of Iraq Caucuses, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, the ''U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act.'' I commend the leadership of the Speaker and her team and Chairman OBEY and Defense Subcommittee Chairman MURTHA for their patient and careful crafting of the bill.

I stand in strong support of our troops who have performed magnificently in battle with a grace under pressure that is distinctively American. I stand with the American people, who have placed their trust in the President,

the Vice-President, and the former Secretary of Defense, each of whom abused the public trust and patience.

I stand with the American taxpayers who have paid nearly $400 billion to finance the misadventure in Iraq. I stand with the 3,222 fallen heroes who stand even taller in death because they gave the last full measure of devotion to their country.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I stand fully, strongly, and unabashedly in support of H.R. 1591, which for the first time puts the Congress on record against an open-ended war whose goal line is always moving.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the 2002 Iraq War Resolution. I am proud of that vote. I have consistently voted against the Administration's practice of submitting a request for war funding through an emergency supplemental rather than the regular appropriations process which would subject the funding request to more rigorous scrutiny and require it to be balanced against other pressing national priorities.

The vote today will put the House on record squarely against the Bush Administration's policy of looking the other way while the Iraqi government fails to govern a country worthy of a free people with as much commitment and dedication to the security and happiness of its citizens as has been shown by the heroic American servicemen and women who risked their lives and, in the case of over 3,000 fallen heroes, lost their lives to win for the Iraqi people the chance to draft their own constitution, hold their own free elections, establish their own government, and build a future of peace and prosperity for themselves and their posterity.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important issue facing the Congress, the President, and the American people than the war in Iraq. It is a subject upon which no one is indifferent, least of all members of Congress. Many good ideas have been advanced by members of Congress to bring to a successful conclusion the American military engagement in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, nearly every decision reached by a legislative body is a product of compromise. The bill before us is no different. If it was left solely to us, any of us could no doubt add or subtract provisions which we think would improve the bill. Indeed, more than fifty amendments were offered to H.R. 1591, including four submitted by me. In fact, the only amendments voted on by the Rules Committee were two of the amendments I offered, although neither was made in order this time.

The first of these amendments, Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1, would terminate the authority granted by Congress to the President in the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Iraq because the objectives for which the authorization was granted have all been achieved. Specifically, Congress authorized the President to use military force against Iraq to achieve the following objectives:

1. To disarm Iraq of any weapons of mass destruction that could threaten the security of the United States and international peace in the Persian Gulf region;

2. To change the Iraqi regime so that Saddam Hussein and his Baathist party no longer posed a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors;

3. To bring to justice any members of al Qaeda known or found to be in Iraq bearing responsibility for the attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001;

4. To ensure that the regime of Saddam Hussein would not provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists, including al Qaeda; and

5. To enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Thanks to the skill and valor of the Armed Forces of the United States we now know for certain that Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to the tenacity and heroism of American troops, Saddam Hussein was deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people in such a way that neither he nor his Baathist Party will ever again pose a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors in the region. Nor will the regime ever acquire and provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists. Also, the American military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in Iraq remotely responsible for the 9/11 attack on our country. Last, all relevant U.N. resolutions relating to Iraq have been enforced.

In other words, every objective for which the use of force in Iraq was authorized by the 2002 resolution has been achieved, most with spectacular success thanks to the professionalism and superior skill of our service men and women. The point of my amendment was to recognize, acknowledge, and honor this fact.

My second amendment, Jackson Lee Amendment No. 4, would change the troop reference date for redeployment set forth in section 1904 from March 1, 2008, to December 31, 2007. What this means is that the Government of Iraq will have had more than 3 years since the United States turned over sovereignty to establish a sustainable government with secure borders that can protect its people. I believe that if the Allied Forces could win World War III in less than 4 years, certainly that is enough time for the Government of Iraq to provide for the security of its people, with the substantial assistance of the United States.

While there are many good proposals that have been advanced which are not included in the bill, we ought not to let the perfect become the enemy of the good. This emergency supplemental may not be perfect but it is better—far better—than any legislation relating to the war in Iraq that has ever been brought to the floor far a vote. Let me count the ways.

First, H.R. 1591 ensures that U.S. forces in the field have all of the resources they require. Second, the bill directs more resources to the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Third it improves healthcare for returning service members and veterans. Fourth, it establishes a timeline for ending the United States participation in Iraq's civil war. Last, it demands accountability by conditioning continued American military involvement in Iraq upon certification by the President that the Iraq Government is making meaningful and substantial progress in meeting political and military benchmarks, including a militia disarmament program and a plan that equitably shares oil revenues among all Iraqis.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to discuss why the American people believe so strongly that the time has come to an end the policy of not placing any demands or conditions on American military assistance to the Government of Iraq.

As Kenneth M. Pollack of the Brookings Institution, and a former senior member of the NSC, brilliantly describes in his essay, ''The Seven Deadly Sins Of Failure In Iraq: A Retrospective Analysis Of The Reconstruction,'' in Middle East Review of International Affairs (December 2006), our trust and patience has been repaid by a record of incompetence unmatched in the annals of American foreign policy.

The Bush administration disregarded the advice of experts on Iraq, on nation-building, and on military operations. It staged both the invasion and the reconstruction on the cheap. It did not learn from its mistakes and did not commit the resources necessary to accomplish its original lofty goals or later pedestrian objectives. It ignored intelligence that contradicted its own views.

It is clear now that the Administration simply never believed in the necessity of a major reconstruction in Iraq. To exacerbate matters the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the White House Office of the Vice President (OVP) worked together to ensure that the State Department was excluded from any meaningful involvement in the reconstruction of Iraq.

The Administration's chief Iraq hawks shared a deeply naive view that the fall of Saddam and his top henchmen would have relatively little impact on the overall Iraqi governmental structure. They assumed that Iraq's bureaucracy would remain intact and would therefore be capable of running the country and providing Iraqis with basic services. They likewise assumed that the Iraqi armed forces would largely remain cohesive and would surrender whole to U.S. forces. The result of all this was a fundamental lack of attention to realistic planning for the postwar environment.

As it was assumed that the Iraqis would be delighted to be liberated little thought was given to security requirements after Saddam's fall. The dearth of planning for the provision of security and basic services stemmed from the mistaken belief that Iraqi political institutions would remain largely intact and therefore able to handle those responsibilities.

But there were too few Coalition troops, which meant that long supply lines were vulnerable to attack by Iraqi irregulars, and the need to mask entire cities at times took so much combat power that it brought the entire offensive to a halt.

It was not long before these naive assumptions and inadequate planning conjoined to sow the seeds of the chaos we have witnessed in Iraq.

The lack of sufficient troops to secure the country led to the immediate outbreak of lawlessness resulting in massive looting and destruction dealt a stunning psychological blow to Iraqi confidence in the United States, from which the country has yet to recover. We removed Saddam Hussein's regime but we did not move to fill the military, political, and economic vacuum. The unintended consequence was the birth of a failing state, which provided the opportunity for the insurgency to flourish and prevented the development of governmental institutions capable of providing Iraqis with the most basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and a minimally functioning economy capable of generating basic employment.

Making matters worse, the Administration arrogantly denied the United Nations overall

authority for the reconstruction even though the U.N. had far more expertise and experience in nation building.

The looting and anarchy, the persistent insurgent attacks, the lack of real progress in restoring basic services, and the failure to find the promised weapons of mass destruction undercut the Administration's claim that things were going well in Iraq and led it to make the next set of serious blunders, which was the disbanding of the Iraqi military and security services.

Mr. Speaker, counterinsurgency experts will tell you that to pacify an occupied country it is essential to disarm, demobilize, and retrain (DDR) the local army. The idea behind a DDR program is to entice, cajole, or even coerce soldiers back to their own barracks or to other facilities where they can be fed, clothed, watched, retrained, and prevented from joining an insurgency movement, organized crime, or an outlaw militia.

By disbanding the military and security services without a DDR program, as many as one million Iraqi men were set at large with no money, no means to support their families, and no skills other than how to use a gun. Not surprisingly, many of these humiliated Sunni officers went home and joined the burgeoning Sunni insurgency.

The next major mistake made in the summer of 2003 was the decision to create an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which laid the foundation for many of Iraq's current political woes. Many of the IGC leaders were horribly corrupt, and they stole from the public treasury and encouraged their subordinates to do the same. The IGC set the tone for later Iraqi governments, particularly the transitional governments of Ayad Allawi and Ibrahim Jaafari that followed.

Finally, by insisting that all of the problems of the country were caused by the insurgency rather than recognizing the problems of the country were helping to fuel the insurgency, the Bush administration set about concentrating its efforts in all the wrong places and on the wrong problems.

This explains why for nearly all of 2004 and 2005, our troops were disproportionately deployed in the Sunni triangle trying to catch and kill insurgents. Although our troops caught and killed insurgents by the hundreds and thousands, these missions were not significantly advancing our strategic objectives. Indeed, they had little long-term impact because insurgents are always willing to flee temporarily rather than fight a leviathan. Second, because so many coalition forces were playing ''whack-a-mole'' with insurgents in the sparsely populated areas of western Iraq, the rest of the country was left vulnerable to take-over by militias.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a cruel irony is that because the Iraqi Government brought exiles and militia leaders into the government and gave them positions of power, it is now virtually impossible to get them out, and even more difficult to convince them to make compromises because the militia leaders have learned they can use their government positions to maintain and expand their personal power, at the expense both of their rivals who are not in the government and of the central government itself.

All of this was avoidable and the blame for the lack of foresight falls squarely on the White House and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, the American people spoke loudly and clearly last November when they tossed out the Rubber-Stamp Republican Congress. They voted for a New Direction in Iraq and for change in America. They voted to disentangle American troops from the carnage, chaos, and civil war in Iraq. They voted for accountability and oversight, which we Democrats have begun to deliver on; already the new majority has held more than 100 congressional hearings related to the Iraq War, investigating everything from the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse of Iraq reconstruction funding to troop readiness to the Iraq Study Group Report to the shameful mistreatment of wounded soldiers recuperating at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act provides real benchmarks and consequences if the Iraqi Government fails to live up to its commitments. First, it requires the President to certify and report to Congress on July 1, 2007 that real progress is underway on key benchmarks for the Iraqi government. If the President cannot so certify, redeployment of U.S. troops must begin immediately and be completed within 180 days. If the President fails to certify that Iraq has met the benchmarks on October 1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops would begin immediately at that time and must be completed within 180 days. In any case, at the latest, a redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq must begin by March 1, 2008, and must be completed by August 31, 2008.

Since the benchmarks the Iraqi Government must meet are those established pursuant to President Bush's policies, it is passing strange indeed that he would threaten to veto the bill since it necessarily means he would veto his own benchmarks for the performance of the Iraqi government. He would veto his own readiness standards for U.S. troops. The President demands this Congress send him an Iraq war bill with ''no strings.'' But the only ''strings'' attached, Mr. Speaker, are the benchmarks and standards imposed by the President himself.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the enormous financial cost, the human cost to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces has also been high but they have willingly paid it. Operation Iraqi Freedom has exacerbated the Veterans' Administration health care facility maintenance backlog; placed an undue strain on the delivery of medical treatment and rehabilitative services for current and new veterans; and exacted a heavy toll on the equipment, training and readiness requirements, and the families of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

The emergency supplemental acknowledges the sacrifices made by, and the debt of gratitude, we and the Iraqi people owe to Armed Forces of the United States. But more than that, it makes a substantial down payment on that debt by providing substantial increases in funding for our troops.

The supplemental includes a total appropriation of $2.8 billion for Defense Health Care, which is $1.7 billion above the President's request. The additional funding supports new initiatives to enhance medical services for active duty forces and mobilized personnel, and their family members. Included in this new funding is $450 million for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Counseling; $450 million for Traumatic Brain Injury care and research; $730 million to prevent health care fee increases for our troops; $20 million to address the problems at Walter Reed; and $14.8 million for burn care.

Unlike the Republican leadership of the 109th Congress and the Bush administration, the new Democratic majority is committed to America's veterans. What's more, we back up that commitment by investing in their well-being. For example, the bill includes $1.7 billion above the President's request for initiatives to address the health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities, including $550 million to address the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities so as to prevent the VA from experiencing a situation similar to that found at Walter Reed Medical Center.

The bill includes an additional $250 million for medical administration to ensure there are sufficient personnel to support the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and to maintain a high level of services for all veterans; $229 million for treating the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans; $100 million for contract mental health care, which will allow the VA to contract with private mental health care providers to ensure that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seen in the most timely and least disruptive fashion, including members of the Guard and Reserve; and $62 million to speed up the processing of claims of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, when American troops are sent into harm's way, America has an obligation to do all it can to minimize the risk of harm to the troops. That is why I am pleased the supplemental includes additional funding above the President's request to support our troops. We are providing $2.5 billion more to address the current readiness crisis of our stateside troops, including ensuring that they are better equipped and trained. We include $1.4 billion more for military housing allowances and $311 million more for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for troops in Iraq. And there is included in the supplemental $222 million more for infrared countermeasures for Air Force aircraft to address the growing threat against U.S. air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, the supplemental contains language directing the President to adhere to current military guidelines for unit readiness, deployments, and time between deployments.

The supplemental requires the Defense Department to abide by its current Unit Readiness policy, requiring the chief of the military department concerned to determine that a unit is ''fully mission capable'' before it is deployed to Iraq. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit's deployment is in the interests of national security despite the assessment that the unit is not fully mission capable.

The Defense Department is also required to abide by its current policy and avoid extending the deployment of units in Iraq in excess of 365 days for the Army and 210 days for the Marines. The provision may be waived by the President only by submitting a report to Congress detailing the particular reason or reasons why the unit's extended deployment is in the interests of national security.

Mr. Speaker, to reduce the incidence of combat fatigue and enhance readiness, it is

important that our troops have sufficient time out of the combat zone and training between deployments. The supplemental requires the Defense Department to abide by its current policy and avoid sending units back into Iraq before troops get the required time away from the war theater. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit's early redeployment to Iraq is in the interests of national security.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that the cost of the war in Iraq to the United States has also been high regarding the new and neglected needs of the American people. Americans have been exceedingly tolerant and patient with this Administration's handling of the situation in Iraq. We have postponed, foregone, or neglected needed investments in education, infrastructure, housing, homeland security.

That is why I am very pleased that the supplemental includes the following $4.3 billion for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery grants, including $910 million to cover the cost of waiving the matching fund requirements in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5174 (Public Law 93–288) (Stafford Act) for state and local government meaning the Federal government will finance 100 percent of the grants.

Waiving the Stafford Act's matching fund requirement is critically important to the Gulf Coast states devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Based on my multiple listening trips to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, and my numerous meetings and discussions with government officials at all levels in the affected states and with survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many of whom now are relocated to my Houston congressional district, the most important lesson I have learned is that the Stafford Act is in its present form is simply inadequate to address the scale of devastation and human suffering wrought by a disaster the magnitude of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. I thank Mr. OBEY and Mr. MURTHA for responding to concerns I expressed to President Bush about the need to modernize the Stafford Act so that it remains relevant to the 21st Century.

I believe the Stafford Act must be amended to grant the federal government explicit authority and flexibility to provide long-term recovery assistance to communities devastated by disasters of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Such authority currently does not exist and the Stafford Act's emphasis on temporary assistance to affected individuals and communities is simply inadequate to address the scope of human suffering we witnessed last August and which is still with us today. I will continue my efforts to modernize the Stafford Act. But I very strongly approve of the nearly $1 billion included in the bill to waive the matching fund requirements for hard-pressed state and local governments coping with emergencies of the scale of Hurricane Katrina.

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding has been extended to September 30, 2010. SSBG funding provides critically needed social services, including programs for mental health, child welfare, and the treatment of addictive disorders.

Also allocated is $1.3 billion for east and west bank levee protection and coastal restoration systems in New Orleans and surrounding parishes.

There is included $25 million for Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans and $80 million for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) tenant-based rental assistance. The supplemental also adds $400 million to restore partial cuts to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This funding will bring much needed relief to many States that are running out of LIHEAP funds just as many utility shut-off moratoriums are set to expire.

The supplemental adds $750 million to the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to ensure continued healthcare coverage for children in 14 States that face a budget shortfall in the program. By taking prompt action now, these States will not be forced to stop enrolling new beneficiaries or begin curtailing benefits.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the supplemental provides $30 million for K–12 education recruitment assistance; $30 million for higher education assistance; and $40 million in security assistance for Liberia. It also includes an additional $1 billion to purchase vaccines needed to protect Americans from a global pandemic. Development of production capacity for a pandemic vaccine must be accelerated so that manufacturers can quickly produce enough quantities to protect the population.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that although the bill may not be the best I might have hoped for, I have concluded that it is the best that can be achieved at this time, this moment in history. I support the bill because I believe it represents a change of course and a new direction in our policy on Iraq. This bill will place us on the road that will reunite our troops with their families and bring them home with honor and success.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before is not asking us to expand or extend the war in Iraq. I would not and will not do that. On the contrary, this bill offers us the first real chance to vote to end the war. This bill puts us on the glide path to the day when our troops come home where we can "care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan." This bill helps to repair the damage to America's international reputation and prestige. This bill brings long overdue oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and reconstruction contracting and procurement.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, this bill offers us the first real chance to vote to end the war. We should take advantage of this opportunity. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591, the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act."

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act. Today, Madam Speaker, we have a chance to take our country in a new direction to bring coherence and accountability to America's Iraq war policy.

As we enter our fifth year in the Iraq war, Americans have paid a high price for our involvement. Over 3,200 U.S. troops have died, approximately 25,000 U.S. troops have been wounded, and President Bush has squandered more than $350 billion of taxpayer dollars with his misadventure. Our troops have been fighting and dying in Iraq longer than American soldiers did in World War II, World War I, the Korean war, or the Civil War. This important legislation imposes long overdue accountability on the administration's war policy and will bring an end to President Bush's commitment to an open-ended war.

Specifically, the benchmarks and timelines contained in this legislation will hold both the president and the Iraqi Government accountable in how they conduct the war and the transition to a self-sufficient, democratic Iraq. This bill has taken into account both the administration's and experts' advice on how to proceed in Iraq. Many of the benchmarks are similar to provisions that President Bush has publicly supported. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommended many of the goals and target dates in H.R. 1591.

Importantly, this bill protects our troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and the troops and veterans returning home. H.R. 1591 provides sufficient funding to ensure that our troops have the equipment to protect themselves from harm while they defend many of the innocent citizens of Iraq. We should all agree that never again will America send its troops into battle without the best equipment to accomplish their mission.

For our troops returning home, this legislation reverses years of neglect and moves us toward a comprehensive effort to address their needs. There is an extra $1.7 billion for military health care to be spent on military hospitals and a provision that prevents the closing of Walter Reed hospital—the first stop for so many of our wounded troops returning home. The bill also appropriates $1.7 billion additional funding for veterans' health care, $2.5 billion for improving the readiness of our stateside troops and $1.4 billion more for military housing allowances.

Mr. Speaker, when an Iraqi Shiite soldier is ready to defend an Iraqi Sunni civilian and an Iraqi Sunni soldier is ready to defend an Iraqi Shiite civilian, then perhaps we will know that the people of Iraq are ready to live in peace with security. But until such time, our troops have no business sitting in the crosshairs of a bloody civil war. By creating benchmarks and timelines for U.S. troop involvement in Iraq, this bill sends a message to Iraqis that they need to resolve their conflicts at the negotiation table and not through violence. We can help, but they must first prove that they are willing and prepared to help themselves.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591 and start the process of bringing our troops home. Our men and women in uniform have done all we have asked of them. They won the war against Saddam Hussein and fought valiantly and timelessly to secure the peace in Iraq. Now, it is time for us to do our job: remove our soldiers from the insanity of the Iraq civil war and return them home. Only then can we rededicate ourselves and refocus our efforts to fight against the threat of terrorism.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the legislation before the House, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. This measure supports our troops in the field. It provides more resources to ensure that our wounded service members and veterans receive the health care and support they need. And it sets a responsible timeline for the phased redeployment of our troops.

Our Nation continues to pay a high price for the administration's reckless invasion of Iraq and the President's open-ended commitment of U.S. military forces in that country. Our troops are entering their fifth year in Iraq, and there is no end in sight. The situation is deteriorating. Iraq is descending into a civil war.

For the last 4 years, the former Republican majority in the Congress sat on its hands and followed the President's policy like robots. The American people elected a new majority in the House and Senate so that Congress would stand up and stop being a rubber stamp for the President.

The President's open-ended policies of committing U.S. troops in Iraq for as long as it takes is not working. We need a new way forward. The only chance to salvage the situation in Iraq is to put real pressure on the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future.

Last January 10, President Bush addressed the Nation and admitted that the situation in Iraq was descending into a vicious cycle of sectarian violence. He laid out a series of actions that the Iraqi Government would have to take; benchmarks that the Iraqis would have to follow through on or lose the support of the American people. The President said that Iraq would approve legislation to share oil revenue among the Iraq people; that Iraq would spend $10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects; that Iraq would reform the laws governing de-Baathification and allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's political life; that Iraq would establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq's constitution; and that Iraq would set a schedule to conduct provincial and local elections. The President said, ''America will hold the Iraqi Government to the benchmarks it has announced.''

Since President Bush made that speech two months ago, 217 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq. More than 3,200 American soldiers have died since the war began. More than 23,000 have been wounded. Until the Iraqis step up to the plate and make the difficult political decisions that need to be made, the sectarian violence will continue and American military men and women will continue to be killed and wounded. Either the factions in Iraq are going to come together and make these decisions, or they are not. We should not leave our troops in harm's way indefinitely and just hand the President another blank check to continue an open-ended policy with no end in sight.

The legislation before the House supports the troops, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. It holds the Iraqi Government to the benchmarks for progress that the President outlined in his January 10 speech. Under this bill, if the President cannot certify that Iraq has achieved these benchmarks by October 1 of this year, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days. Absent this pressure, the Iraqi Government will continue to postpone action on achieving the benchmarks. If the Iraqi Government does, indeed, meet the benchmarks by October 1, redeployment of U.S. forces would begin next March and be completed within 180 days.

After more than 4 years, this legislation would end the open-ended commitment to this war. It would set a clear timeline for the phased redeployment of U.S. troops. Without this pressure, there is little chance that the Iraqi leaders will make the decisions necessary to end civil war and build one nation. Our country cannot make these decisions for them. I urge passage of this legislation by the House.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, which sends the message to the Iraqis that we will not commit open-endedly our blood and tax dollars if they are not willing to step up and take control of their own country.

We have lost more than 3,200 of our best men and women over the last 4 years and 4 days we have been in Iraq, and more than 24,000 others have come home wounded. We are spending about $200,000 a minute in Iraq. The Iraqi people need to know that we will not continue to do all the work if they are unable or unwilling to put aside their religious differences and come together to build a civil society.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that this legislation has been mischaracterized as a timeline on our troops. The true intention of this measure, as I see it, is to put a timeline on the Iraqi people to meet the benchmarks that have already been established by the President. The bill we will vote on today will not withhold a single dollar from our men and women on the ground in Iraq, and it will not tie our commanders' hands but simply holds the Iraqis accountable for taking command of their own country.

As chairman of the U.S. delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I have talked at length with our allies who are helping us fight the war on terror in Afghanistan, where we are in a very critical year, with the Taliban planning a new series of attacks on U.S. and NATO troops there. I fear we are threatening our work on that very important effort if we continue to focus most of our resources to a deteriorating sectarian conflict that General Petraeus has said cannot be won with military might alone if there is not timely political and diplomatic progress.

I served 4 years in the United States Navy and 26 years in the Tennessee Army National Guard. During that time, it was my duty to carry out the orders handed me by the civilian leadership. Now that you and our colleagues and I are part of that civilian leadership, it is our responsibility to help shape military policy and hold the civilian leadership at the Pentagon and elsewhere accountable for the way they have managed—or mismanaged—operations in Iraq.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I am not willing to keep asking our military families and the American taxpayers to commit their lives and tax dollars forever. The only alternative to this bill is an open-ended bleeding of our blood and tax dollars with no end in sight and no pressure on the Iraqi government to make the changes necessary.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

It is time for a new direction in Iraq. We cannot continue to ask our troops to baby-sit a civil war. With our help, the Iraqis have established a coalition government, and we have trained more than 250,000 Iraqi security forces. We must now send a message to them that the patience of the American people is not endless, and that the Iraqi people must take control of their future by making the tough political compromises essential to living in peace. In short, it is time to take the training wheels off.

The bill before us today achieves the goal of redeployment of U.S. forces by setting specific benchmarks of progress using for the Iraqis and President's own benchmarks for success. If these benchmarks cannot be met, then the bill provides for a systematic approach for withdrawal of our troops.

Although I have had concerns about setting a date certain for withdrawal, a responsible timeline will work to hold the Iraqi Government accountable for much-needed and overdue progress. Essentially, this is a timeline on the Iraqis to come together and take control of their country.

The proposals included in this bill are truly a new direction, rather than just more of the same. By calling for a responsible, phased redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, this bill allows us to re-focus our military efforts in Afghanistan.

I am increasingly concerned that the main threat against the United States, al Qaeda, is still a global threat with global reach, and that the person who was directly responsible for 9/11, Osama Bin Laden, is still at large. The President has taken his eye off the ball in Afghanistan and is not doing everything in his power to bring those responsible for 9/11 to justice. It sends a terrible message to would-be terrorists who may be interested in striking us that all they have to do is go in hiding and lie low until we get distracted on another adventure. I am hopeful that this supplemental appropriations bill sends a signal to the President that he needs to reassess his priorities.

Our men and women in the Armed Forces are to be commended for the terrific job they do for us across the globe each and every day, often in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. They deserve a clearer mission, they deserve to have the training and equipment they need to complete that mission, and they deserve the best care when they return home with physical and emotional wounds. The supplemental provides for all these needs.

During my three visits to Iraq, I met with our military command, troops in the field, and numerous Iraqi leaders and civilians. I can honestly say that nothing has made me prouder to be an American than seeing the performance of our troops in the field. They are well-trained, well-motivated and an inspiration to us all. They are, in short, the best America has to offer.

In particular, active military, Guard, and Reserve forces from western Wisconsin have answered the call to service. I have been to many deployment ceremonies and witnessed the anguish in the hearts and faces of family and friends as they say goodbye to their loved ones being sent abroad for lengthy stays. I have also been to several welcome home ceremonies to honor their service and to thank them for their sacrifice.

Sadly, I have also had 18 military funerals in my congressional district alone, most of which I have personally attended. If I don't have to attend another military funeral, if I don't have to pick up the phone to call another grieving family, I will be one of the happiest people in the world. They are a constant reminder of the human toll this war is having, not only with our troops but also with their families and our communities. There is not a day that goes by when I am not concerned about the safety and welfare of our troops.

A new direction, not an escalation, is what is needed in Iraq. We have now been in Iraq longer than the entire Second World War. The supplemental provides that new direction—one where the Iraqis assume responsibility for their future, and the U.S. starts to redeploy our

troops and strengthen our military that is stretched too thin and on the verge of breaking. ''More of the same,'' or ''staying the course,'' is not an option.

Once again I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks and undying admiration for our men and women in uniform for their service to our country. May God bless them and their families during this difficult time. May God provide his special blessings and care for those who fell in the line of duty. And may God continue to bless these United States of America.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Democrats' so-called emergency supplemental. This cynical bill uses our troops as a political bargaining chip for additional billions in unrelated, pork barrel spending, which has nothing to do with winning the global war on terrorism. This bill has become a Christmas tree of pork.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, what does $25 million for spinach growers, $74 million for peanut storage, and $50 for the Capitol Power Plant have to do with winning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the list of unrelated spending goes on longer than I have time.

Spinach producers and peanut farmers may very well need and deserve the money. And I am sure the Capitol Power Plant needs improvements, but why in this bill? Why is this money not being considered through regular order or subjected to normal budgetary rules, like PAYGO? And most importantly, why at the expense of our troops?

This important spending bill is being used as a vehicle to micromanage the war and score political points. Our troops deserve better. We need to focus on getting the equipment to our troops on the front lines and get away from political posturing.

However, this bill is not about the troops. It is about politics. It is about tying the hands of the commander-in-chief because some in this body do not agree with his policies.

People on both sides of the aisle can certainly agree that mistakes have been made in Iraq and a change of strategy is long overdue. However, what should this change of strategy be? Should the U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leave the terrorists emboldened and potentially put more Americans at risk? Or do we need a new strategy to win the war and finish the job?

While no proposal guarantees success, a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. support would guarantee failure. The stakes are too high to fail in Iraq. It remains in America's strategic interests to ensure regional stability in the Middle East and to deny terrorists a safe haven in Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill. Furthermore, I hope that the House leadership will bring up a clean bill that focuses solely on supporting our troops and not one filled up with pork and unrelated spending.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I will vote today for a resolution that would finally draw the war in Iraq to a close, and that would for the first time put conditions of self-determination on the Iraqi government that has benefited from our country's generosity. While I was not yet in Congress at the time of the original authorization debate in 2002, I have concluded that the authorization decision was wrong and that too many American lives have been sacrificed for the dubious cause of advancing the interests of one side of an Iraqi civil war over the other.

It is also my belief that Congress has the unmistakable authority to put time limits on the commitment of American forces and to attach strings to the manner in which military funds are spent: Congress has used this power before in Lebanon, Vietnam, and Somalia, and most recently, during the second term of the Clinton Administration, when Republican congressional majorities imposed restrictions on the use of ground forces and on the duration of the force commitment made during the Balkan conflict.

Some of my colleagues who share my opposition to the war have suggested that this resolution has the defect of not going far enough in that it does not require an immediate withdrawal of American forces. I disagree: for the sake of regional stability, any withdrawal should be more orderly and more measured than the haphazard way American forces were deployed in the first place.

Other anti-war critics argue that a Democratic Congress has a moral imperative to take a bolder course, such as repeal of the 2002 authorization or a pledge to impound funding for additional deployments. While I agree that the test of Democratic legislation cannot be whether it would attract a Presidential veto (if that is the standard, Democrats would be immobilized this next 2 years), it is reasonable for the Democratic leadership to pursue a bill that can win overwhelming Democratic support, including those members from more conservative districts whose opposition to the war comes at some political cost.

Finally, I respect the concern of some Alabamians that any withdrawal from Iraq is a loss of prestige that will embolden our enemies. While this is not a trivial argument, the reality is that radical Islamic fundamentalism has exploded into a civil war in Iraq and that Al Queda will be a generation-long threat. These conflicts will rage on regardless of whether we are in combat in Iraq because they are rooted not in an assessment of our strength but in a permanent disdain for our values.

We need to engage Islamic terrorism on a different ground, such as Afghanistan, where Al Queda is resurgent, and we should use the leverage from a withdrawal from Iraq to cement international resistance to the Iranian nuclear program. Lines should be drawn in the sand around Israel's security, and the steady work of cultivating Arab moderates and isolating Arab radicals should continue. But it is time to end our active engagement in the disaster that is Iraq.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, simply put, I strongly oppose this war and have done so since its inception.

I stand ready to do whatever needs to be done to bring this conflict to a responsible end—and I have been working toward that goal since the first day I stepped onto this floor.

As a Progressive, my first inclination was to vote against this supplemental.

I still believe it's important to loudly proclaim that this war should end, but I've come to the conclusion that a vote against this bill is not the most effective way to make that statement.

Even though this supplemental does not push for an immediate end, it is our best hope in the Progressive struggle to bring our troops home and finally allow the Iraqis to determine their own future.

I am also strongly supportive of the funds provided in this bill to fund the S–CHIP shortfall.

Georgia's PeachCare program needs immediate relief and this bill will ensure children in need in my state continue to receive the health insurance we promised them, at least for the short term.

Make no mistake, I do not consider this bill to be the final statement on the war in Iraq—or the PeachCare program for that matter. But it is a good start and I will support it today.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I want to voice my support for this supplemental, not because I agree with everything in it, but because I agree with the most important thing in it: a binding deadline to redeploy our troops from Iraq.

We need to redeploy our troops from Iraq, first and foremost, because it is in our national security interest.

As someone who voted for the original resolution, I am particularly pained by the suffering of the thousands of our servicemembers killed and tens of thousands wounded. I'm glad this bill begins to put the appropriate resources into caring for those coming home with traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, and beginning to fix the problems at Walter Reed Medical Center and other facilities. It is outrageous that this Administration has allowed our uniformed men and women to be treated so shabbily.

I also have enormous sympathy for the families of servicemembers killed and injured in Iraq. I agonize about those on the home front who worry every day about getting that horrible visit, and who struggle to raise children, pay bills, and lead some semblance of normal life with family members in a combat zone. I want our troops to come home.

Yet the hardships they and their families endure are not the reason to bring our troops home. I know that the men and women in uniform, and the families behind them, are willing to make the sacrifices they do if that is what it takes to make America more secure.

But the truth is, this war is not making us more secure.

By manipulating the intelligence and rushing to war, ignoring our allies, grossly mismanaging the occupation, and basing this entire war on ideology and hope rather than expertise and pragmatism, the Administration has torn our national security fabric.

Staying in Iraq, policing their civil war, does not bring us closer to defeating the global network of extremists who wish to harm us. To the contrary, in order to improve national security and best address our other strategic interests around the world and here at home, we must dramatically change our current direction in Iraq.

Redeployment from Iraq will enhance our security by allowing us to properly address other potential challenges around the world, from Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iran to the Western Pacific, the Horn of Africa, and the greater Middle East. In particular, it will allow us to put our attention back on Afghanistan and Pakistan and the fight against a resurgent al Qaeda and Taliban, the enemies who actually engineered 9/11.

Bringing troops home also allows us to resolve the concerns about the readiness of our Armed Forces, which have been strained to the breaking point because of this Administration's careless management of the war in Iraq.

Perhaps most importantly, only by extricating ourselves from the mess of Iraq can we begin moving our country back to a commonsense policy of strength through leadership. Every day our military is in Iraq our standing in the international community erodes further.

Already we've seen respect for the United States plunge from record highs after 9/11 to record lows now. This loss of moral authority compromises our ability to lead multinational efforts to fight national security threats from terrorism and nuclear proliferation to global wanning and drug trafficking.

We cannot begin rebuilding our international credibility and leadership until we have redeployed from Iraq. We cannot restore the flexibility to meet the real, potentially existential threats of nuclear terrorism that were used to justify the invasion of Iraq until we exit Iraq.

We hear dire warnings about the awful results if we leave Iraq. It is true that bad things may happen when our Armed Forces leave if the Iraqis cannot or will not choose reconciliation over conflict. But that will be true if we leave at the end of this year, the end of next year, or in 2015. Delaying redeployment only delays the Iraqis' moment of responsibility.

The sooner we begin redeployment, the sooner we begin unraveling the tremendous damage that this war and its mismanagement have wrought on our national security. Given the Administration's history of manipulation and deceit, the interim deadlines of December 2007 and March 2008 may not prove binding, since the President can make certifications that waive those deadlines. I will support this supplemental, however, because it does set a binding deadline on withdrawal no later than August of next year. I would like the deadline to be sooner, but most important is that we bring finality to this war.

Our men and women in uniform have served our country courageously and performed brilliantly—just as they always do. But asking them to stand between warring factions is not only unfair, it's counterproductive.

I believe in a strong U.S. engagement around the world, including using military force when necessary. I also believe, as did Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, that America's greatest strength comes from its values and its ability to lead. We need to restore America's leadership. We need to strengthen America's security. We need to pass this supplemental and begin the redeployment from Iraq.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591. This is not an Emergency War Supplemental; it is the Partisan Repayment Act. Indeed, this legislation is less about supplying the troops than feeding the base.

There is desperate need for a new Iraq policy, and we should be using this opportunity to have a serious discussion. It is unseemly, even embarrassing, to use pork to buy support for bad policy on a bill as important as this one. It makes us look as trifling and greedy as our enemies claim. The well-being of our men and women in uniform is in the balance, as is the future of the Middle East. If ever there was a time to win on the strength of one's ideas, this is it.

I share the concerns of my colleagues regarding the progress of the war, and I believe there is value in setting benchmarks. Ours should not be an open-ended, unquestioning commitment to the Iraqis. They do need to assume more responsibility for their own affairs. It is not the job of our troops to referee partisan quarrels, nor is it our job to baby-sit the Iraqi government.

It is foolish, however, to make such milestones public. It is even more foolish to announce a date for withdrawal. Doing so gives the enemy too much information and too many options.

It is also foolish to codify deadlines. Who's to say the Iraqi government won't make a good faith effort to accomplish the tasks required of them? It would be wise to allow them flexibility, not give them a drop-dead date. We ourselves are working under a continuing resolution because we could not pass more than two appropriations bills last year. Our 5-day workweeks are often 4 days long—who are we to set a deadline in statute?

There is a pressing need to formulate a new policy for Iraq. I am disappointed the Democrats have yet to allow a serious debate on this, the most important issue facing the Congress today. Rather, we have wasted time with a non-binding resolution regarding tactics—not even strategy. Now we send the Iraqis a laundry list of errands and a pre-determined result.

Success in Iraq will require a broad based policy shift. The Iraq Study Group report includes 79 recommendations covering all facets of public policy—military, diplomatic, economic, and social. This report should form the basis of a productive discussion. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership has opted for a hodge-podge of sound bites masquerading as serious legislation. They have stifled debate rather than encouraged it by refusing to allow any amendments.

Mr. Speaker, this is but the first act in the play. Our own servicemen and women do need the funding this bill would provide. I am confident once we get beyond this charade we will be able to craft responsible legislation to give it to them.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, we began this week by solemnly marking the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq, the more than 3,200 brave soldiers who have been killed there, and the 378 billion dollars that have been appropriated thus far. But we end the week with the historic opportunity to bring about an end to this catastrophe.

Over the last 4 years, the President not only failed to provide a plan to win in Iraq, he failed to offer our troops concrete and attainable objectives. Where he has let down our forces and the American people, Congress has a Constitutional obligation to step in, and this, "The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act," is our chance. It is our only real chance, to see this war end, to comply with the stated will of the American people, and to bring our troops home.

It is important to remember that this bill does more than set benchmarks and a timeline; it also provides much needed funding to protect our troops abroad and care for our veterans at home. A vote against this bill is a vote for the President but against our soldiers; it supports the war but abandons our young men and women in uniform.

That being said, whether we authorize it or not, the President will find the funding to prolong this war, even if it is at the expense of our soldiers, our veterans, and other crucial programs. This country cannot afford another Walter Reed, nor can it afford to send the President another blank check to indefinitely extend this occupation.

The President has asked for a bill without strings attached. He doesn't deserve a bill without strings. In 4 years of acting without strings, this war has never had an end in sight. We have before us today the opportunity to bring finality into view, and I urge my colleagues, members of the Senate, and President Bush not to squander this opportunity. I ask that we unite in support of Iraqi independence, U.S. troops, and H.R. 1591.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, 4 years that have been difficult for our country, we have had to watch the administration bungle the war in Iraq in just about every way imaginable. As war became civil war in Iraq, we watched our colleagues on the other side of the aisle act as a rubber stamp for this misguided war while refusing to ask the pertinent questions, the questions we were asking, the questions the American people were asking. And we watched as 3,200 of our brave troops lost their lives in another country's civil war, while 24,000 came home with permanent injuries and billions upon billions of our taxpayers' dollars have been sunk into the quicksand Iraq has become.

This will be the case no more.

With the scores of oversight hearings our leadership has already conducted this year and now with this legislation, we are, for the first time, bringing accountability, timelines and end to the mismanaged war in Iraq.

Congress is no longer a rubber stamp.

The President has asked us time and again for money for this war without any strings. This, despite the fact that they let many of our troops go to battle without the proper equipment, and that they can't even account for $12 billion of taxpayer money for reconstruction.

With this bill, we will bring accountability as well as money for our injured soldiers who have been neglected. We are adding a total of $3.4 billion for the military health care system, including money to address the problems at Walter Reed and money for head injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder.

For 4 years, the administration's war policies have been risking lives and spending this country's treasure without any accountability.

This legislation will end the free ride and it will end the war.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, but with some reservations. While I appreciate the care with which Speaker PELOSI, Chairman OBEY and the Democratic leadership have approached this supplemental appropriations bill, we are left, as we often are, with a flawed product. But I do believe, in regard to Iraq, that it is the best we are able to do right now.

The legislation for the first time establishes performance benchmarks for the Iraqi military and government, and firmly states that it is time to bring the troops home sooner rather than later. I did not vote to authorize the Iraq war, and I do not support President Bush's troop surge, but if this bill does not pass we will be forced to pass a funding bill that does not have these benchmarks, and that would be nothing more than the status quo, which is a blank check for President Bush. I say again, I do not support everything in this legislation, but it is the best alternative available to us at the present time.

I am particularly troubled by the non-military and non-veteran spending in this bill. While I

support more funding for some of the important needs addressed here, particularly domestic spending priorities that have been severely neglected by the Bush administration over the last 6 years, they would be better considered elsewhere. The bill does address serious deficiencies in our veterans' health care system, and I whole-heartedly support this funding. We have a great deal more work to do to ensure that the brave men and women who defend this country are fully supported upon their return home, but this is a good start.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, like the war itself, presents us with tough choices. I will support the bill, and by doing so send a signal that it is time for the Iraqis to also make tough political decisions and take control of their own destiny. My thoughts and prayers are with our troops and their families, and I will continue to work for their speedy return.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act. I concede that the legislation we are voting on today is by no means perfect, but I do believe it is a step in the right direction and deserves the support of those Americans who want to bring this misguided and mismanaged war to a responsible and timely conclusion.

In an ideal world, we would bring our troops home today, but that doesn't match the reality of our struggle in Iraq. We have an even smaller chance of accomplishing that goal in the Senate. The bill before us represents the best opportunity to affect the conduct of this war.

The benchmarks established within the supplemental are the same as those proposed by the President in January, the Iraq Study Group, and endorsed by Iraqi leaders. They include real consequences for the Iraqi government and a definite timeline for a phased and deliberate redeployment of American combat forces from Iraq by no later than August 2008. The bill provides what is currently missing in the President's policies—a plan to redeploy our troops from a situation that cannot be improved by their continued presence.

It's unmistakable that our presence in Iraq has weakened our Armed Forces and jeopardized our standing in the world. It has also diverted valuable resources away from fighting al Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America. The supplemental not only provides a new direction in Iraq, but also redirects resources to fight the real global war on terrorism.

To all of those who argue that passage of this legislation would mean conceding defeat to the terrorists, I would say both that they are wrong, and that the alternative they endorse is unacceptable. For what they propose is simply ''stay the course,'' more of the same—more deaths, more life altering injuries, more destruction, more squandered opportunity, more debt, and more diminished standing in the world. This legislation is about sending a message to the President that he cannot pursue the same failed strategy of the past 4 years and receive a blank check from this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this war. I believe the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our Nation has ever made. I will vote for the supplemental because I believe it is the best course available to us at this time to bring our involvement in this misguided tragedy to an end.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. This legislation would make emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

H.R. 1591 would provide funding for many purposes. This funding would support our military personnel who are fighting our country's enemies. This funding also would support our civilian personnel who are trying to establish a lasting peace for beleaguered citizens of some of the world's most troubled countries. Of particular note, this legislation includes much needed funding for healthcare for wounded warriors who have returned home, having given all but their lives in service to our country.

Debate with respect to this legislation will focus on the war in Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue and it is also one of the most divisive and complex ones before this Congress. The choices we make regarding Iraq will establish a legacy for the United States that will define our policy toward the Middle East region for a generation or longer. For that reason, it is my hope that we, as an institution and, indeed, as a country can agree upon a policy that protects our national interests and those of our allies and supports those servicemembers and civilians—and their families—who so bravely serve our country today in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

It is true the government of Iraq must work to better fulfill its obligation to govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with regard to the rule of law. On January 31, 2007, I introduced H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act. H.R. 744 would take a different approach to the challenge of setting metrics to measure progress in Iraq and to define the terms for completion of the mission in that country than what is called for in H.R. 1591, the legislation that is currently before this body.

I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services and I have traveled to Iraq eight times since taking office in 2003. These trips have allowed me to observe our operations in Iraq and to personally speak with our commanders, servicemembers, and civilian personnel in the field. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Iraqi leaders during these visits. As a result, I have learned a great deal about the accomplishments made in Iraq to date. I have also learned of the many challenges that remain there.

I believe that an honest and open exchange of views on the substance of what our country and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom is needed. Finding an achievable, expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In doing so, we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy future generations of Americans will inherit and the one that we will have to defend to history. Like it or not, the United States assumed a moral obligation to bring order to Iraq when we, in a pre-emptive manner, attacked that country four years ago this month. History will judge us harshly if we act in a way that would abandon this obligation.

It is for this reason and others that I strongly support the funding called for by this legislation that supports our wounded warriors who are embarking on their long but hopeful roads to recovery, that supports our servicemembers who continue to pursue our enemies worldwide, and that supports our civilian personnel who work to stabilize and reconstruct countries that are now home to disturbing violence and heartbreaking loss of life. I urge my colleagues to support the funding called for by this legislation.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, our country has just begun the fifth year of war in Iraq. By overwhelming numbers, the American people want a new direction and I believe this bill contains the policy and the plan to help bring an end to the misguided policies of the Administration.

Military leaders, Generals Abizaid, Odom and Powell, as well as former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, have all come forward to observe that the Administration's war-without-end policy is not a strategy for success.

Today's legislation directs itself to important change. It sets a new course for ending the war.

The bill requires accountability: It puts the Iraqis in charge of Iraq. If they cannot or will not bring their country under control, if conditions continue to worsen and political and military benchmarks are not met, beginning in July 2007 (less than four months from today), our troops will begin an immediate redeployment.

The bill begins a redeployment: It sets a firm timeline to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq and in legally-binding terms declares that all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq by August 31, 2008, if not sooner.

It requires the Iraqis—not our soldiers—to reign in the militias, aggressively pursue the insurgents and provide ''evenhanded security for all Iraqis.''

The bill prohibits the establishment of any permanent military bases. It bans the use of torture. It redirects resources back to the fight against terrorism and Al-Qaeda, and recommits us to creating a stable state in Afghanistan.

The bill takes care of our troops. It provides over $3 billion more than the President's request to meet the neglected needs of our returning soldiers and veterans around the country.

The following are quotes from respected national leaders:

Retired General William Odom, former Director of the National Security Agency under President Reagan and member of the National Security Council under President Carter stated recently: ''Getting out of Iraq is the pre-condition for creating new strategic options.''

According to former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski:

''The United States cannot afford an open-ended commitment to a war without end. A means must be devised to end the U.S. combat role in Iraq and reduce our troop levels, so that we can begin to rebuild our military and reclaim our position of leadership in the world. The bill the House will consider this week does that in an effective and responsible way.''

Former NATO Commander Wesley Clark:

''The conflict must be resolved politically—military efforts alone are insufficient—and this legislation strongly promotes that political solution.''

Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this supplemental legislation. For the first time the debate about Iraq is not ''if' or ''how.'' It is about ''when'' . . . when our troops will come home.

It is binding language.

It is sensible language.

It is language that will change the direction of the war.

It is language that will help to heal our wounded troops.

It is language that will help heal our Nation.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today, I will vote in favor of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007 to fully fund our troops and end the war in Iraq.

This legislation will fully fund the troops serving in Iraq. It is imperative that they have the necessary equipment to conduct their mission as safely and swiftly as possible.

Today's vote marks a major shift in the strategy for Iraq by imposing real responsibility on the Iraqi government. President Bush outlined several benchmarks for the Iraqi government in his January 10 address. Unfortunately, there were no real consequences for the Iraqi government if these benchmarks were not met. Today's vote put real pressure on Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqi government to meet these benchmarks. If the Iraqis do not step up and take control of their own security, U.S. forces will begin a phased redeployment as early as July 1, 2007. All U.S. troops must begin their redeployment by March 1, 2008, by which time, the Iraqis will have had ample opportunity to be trained and take control of their situation.

The U.S. cannot remain in Iraq indefinitely. During the past 4 years, the U.S. has suffered over 3,000 casualties and countless injuries attempting to curb the violence in Iraq. The time has come for the Iraqis to stand up and make a real investment in the security and future of their nation.

I will continue to support our troops and ensure they are trained and properly equipped for battle. But the course in Iraq must be changed, and that change has begun today.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591, the so-called U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

That's what my Democratic colleagues are calling the bill. And while I support the funding in the bill for troop readiness and veterans' health care, I wonder why the bill's title ends with Iraq Accountability. Why not mention hand-outs to dairy interests, spinach farmers, citrus growers, or for storing peanuts? Yes, $74 million for storing peanuts.

Why not mention the unrequested funding for fighting wildfires in the west, or the doubling of so-called ''emergency'' funds for the long-known and well planned Base Realignment and Closure effort—funding that the new majority knew was needed, but wouldn't provide in the continuing resolution just last month? Why not mention the increase in the minimum wage or funding for asbestos abatement in the Capitol contained in this alleged emergency wartime supplemental appropriations bill?

''Clean'' is not a word I would use to describe this bill, which includes more than $21 billion in spending that is completely unrelated to troop readiness, veterans' health, or Iraq. Sure, I've heard of Christmas in July, but Christmas in March? What happened to the other party's promise to end business as usual? This bill is worse than usual. As the editorial in USA Today put it yesterday, ''It's hard to believe which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts.''

Don't get me wrong. I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an obligation to ensure the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense have the resources necessary to care for our veterans from all wars and our wounded soldiers returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an obligation to see that American troops are ready and able to fulfill their mission. That's why I am a cosponsor of a bill introduced by my distinguished and decorated colleague from Texas, Mr. JOHNSON. H.R. 511 pledges, ''Congress will not cut off or restrict funding for units and members of the Armed Forces that the Commander in Chief has deployed in harm's way'' in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I also agree that we must do a better job holding the Iraqi government accountable. For too long, we pursued an open-ended commitment without well-defined goals and clear benchmarks for success.

That's why I am a cosponsor of legislation, H.R. 1062, that will hold the Administration—and the Iraqi government—accountable in achieving clear benchmarks.

It requires the President to report to Congress, every 30 days, on the extent to which the Government of Iraq is moving forward on more than a dozen fronts, from troop training and security to rebuilding, reconciliation, international cooperation and enforcing the rule of law.

It also requires progress reports on the implementation of strategies that will prevent Iraqi territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorist activities.

But the bill we are considering today goes beyond funding and benchmarks and crosses a constitutional line that has long kept Congress from micromanaging military and foreign affairs.

Instead of sweeping away bureaucratic obstacles to success, this bill creates 435 new armchair generals.

Instead of giving General Petraeus and our diplomatic leaders the flexibility to fulfill their mission, it saddles them with bureaucratic requirements and arbitrary timetables.

Instead of ensuring that our troops in harm's way have the resources and equipment they need, this bill uses our military men and women as pawns in a dangerous political game.

Instead of giving our troops, the Iraqi people, and their fledgling government one last chance, it gives them one last mandate—to retreat in defeat.

As if the bill wasn't wasteful enough, it starts a perilous countdown to a vacuum in leadership and security that threatens any prospect for peace or stability in the Middle East for years to come. And it does a great disservice to our men and women in uniform and their commanders in the field who have already sacrificed so much for our freedom and security and that of the Iraqi people. They deserve better.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this irresponsible bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, we meet on what is the fourth day of the fifth year of the war in Iraq. It is a war that has gone on longer than the war in Korea. America has been fighting longer in Iraq than we did during World War II—even though that was an international conflict fought on two fronts against some of the most dangerous threats to our national security ever known.

Too many Members of this Congress and of this Administration have for years seen what they wanted to see in Iraq, and believed what they wanted to believe. But their conceptions couldn't matter less to the men and women of that nation, or to the men and women of the American military who are fighting there.

Civilians and soldiers don't live in the world as politicians say it is. They live in the world as it really is. And they live, every day, with the consequences of the decisions made here in this chamber.

During the first 4 years of the Iraq war, they had to live with an Administration and a Congress that either could not, or would not, see this conflict for what it really was: a war that was not being won, that was being fought by soldiers who often did not have the equipment they needed or the care they were owed, that was not improving the security of the Iraqi people, that was depleting our military and, as a result, endangering the long-term security of this nation, and that was based on a flawed strategy that desperately needed to be changed.

They lived with the former Secretary of Defense dismissing persistent equipment shortages by telling us that our nation had gone to war with the Army it had. By the time Mr. Rumsfeld had uttered those words, on December 9th, 2004, 1,288 U.S. soldiers had been killed.

They lived with predictions that the insurgency in Iraq was in its last throes, a statement made 6 months later. Four hundred thirty-seven more soldiers had lost their lives in those months.

And now, they live with more calls for patience from the Administration and its allies, and more denunciations of anyone who would seek a different course in Iraq.

As of today, more than 3,200 soldiers have died in this war. The civilian death toll is astonishing, with estimates now running as high as 1 million Iraqi men, women, and children killed as a direct or indirect result of the conflict and the chaos it has unleashed. Millions more have been dislocated, driven out of their homes and into refugee camps.

It is long past time for this institution to join with our soldiers and with the people of Iraq in seeing this war for what it really is.

The legislation before us today represents the first real chance Democrats have had since 2003 to change the course of the war in Iraq. And we intend to do it.

We will do it not because we are conceding anything to those who would do our Nation harm, not because we lack the will to continue the fight, and not because, as some would have you believe, we are giving up.

Instead, we are going to change the course of this war because the future of the people of Iraq hinges on it, because a basic level of respect for our soldiers demands it, and because the long-term security of our Nation depends on it.

Mr. Speaker, the simple reality is that the situation in Iraq is stagnant at best, and deteriorating at worst. Politically, economic and military goals are not being met there. Faced with such truths, why should this House pass yet another blank check for the war, as past Congresses have done?

Instead, this bill is based on a simple and logical idea: it makes America's continued involvement in Iraq conditional on the situation there improving.

America's soldiers will no longer be asked to fight in an open-ended war whose goal line keeps moving. This legislation requires Iraqi leaders to make the political compromises necessary to produce a working government that will function for all of Iraq—or else risk losing America's military support. And it will require security benchmarks to be met if American soldiers are to continue sacrificing their own safety for that goal.

But what is more, this bill represents the first step Congress has ever taken towards ending the war in Iraq.

A clear majority of the American people want this body to take decisive steps toward that end. A clear majority of our global allies want the same thing. A significant number of generals and military officials think that ending this conflict must be achieved sooner rather than later.

This bill is a response to their words, and to their counsel. It will not end the war immediately, nor will it end it recklessly.

Instead, it rejects the idea of a war in Iraq without end.

To continue funding this conflict without requiring any tangible progress to be made in Iraq makes no sense. It would achieve neither peace in that nation, nor security here.

But what it would achieve, Mr. Speaker, is the continued depletion and degradation of our military beyond all reason. It would continue to render our armed forces unable to fight in other parts of the world against other threats. And it would continue to force suffering soldiers to return to the battlefield time and again, despite physical and mental injuries.

We know the statistics: in addition to the 3,223 soldiers that have died, tens of thousands more have been injured, some permanently. And there are more than 32,000 Iraq veterans—32,000—who who every day suffer silently from the scourge of mental health problems. More than 13,000 of those men and women have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

And yet, they are afforded no relief. The President's escalation of this conflict is forcing more soldiers back into combat sooner, with less rest, with less training, and with less time to heal. There are even reports of men and women being sent back to Iraq who are too injured to wear body armor.

Mr. Speaker, it is important not to view these realities in the abstract. I want to share with you a story I recently heard, the story of one young lieutenant currently awaiting his second deployment to Iraq.

Though he trained as an engineer, his first tour of duty saw him bravely patrolling dangerous streets north of Baghdad. He returned last December, and was initially expecting a year on base during which to rest and train a new platoon.

Instead, he will be heading back months sooner. He says that the soldiers under his command are not going to get the time they need to train properly for their mission. The vehicles and equipment they now use to train for war are failing and often break They are physically weary, with many still suffering from the lingering effects of leg and back injuries. Others are battling more elusive damage, and are in counseling for PTSD. He even told me that the vast majority of the once married soldiers in his unit are now or will soon be divorced. Their lives outside of the war are coming apart.

And yet, if you ask him, he will never complain about these difficulties. They are all part of the life of the soldier, he says, a few of the many challenges he and his men will confront every day they are deployed. When those in the military are given a mission, he told me, they find a way to complete it. That creed is the foundation of the strength of our Armed Forces.

It is the personification of the word sacrifice, Mr. Speaker. This young soldier and those under his charge are going back to Iraq again, even though they are wounded, and tired, and lacking in training and equipment. They miss their families. They miss their lives back home. But they are going all the same—going simply because this body has given the President the right to send them into battle.

But what this soldier did tell me is that our Armed Forces cannot go on like this. He said that if the foundation of our military's strength—its refusal to admit defeat—is misused, then we will end up destroying our system of national defense.

We hear the reports of the 82nd Airborne, for decades able to respond anywhere in the world within 72 hours, now struggling to respond to anything besides deployment orders sending its soldiers to Iraq.

We see men and women in uniform being sent back for tour after tour after tour, our services desperately trying to find a way to meet new troop requirements.

Mr. Speaker, this war represents a dramatic misuse of our military. In the name of our national security, it is undermining the only true guarantor of national security that we have: our Armed Forces. And for 4 years, this Congress let it happen.

But not any more. Today, the House will finally recognize that our military is at the breaking point—not because of any inherent weakness, but because it is being asked to complete a mission no army could succeed at.

And so, that mission must change.

The new strategy this bill sets forth has nothing to do with surrender, Mr. Speaker. Instead, it has everything to do with doing what must be done to work toward a secure Iraq. And it has everything to do with refusing to allow those who would do us harm fool us into defeating ourselves—in the process, attaining a victory that they will never be able to achieve on their own.

Let me say as well that this funding bill also respects our soldiers enough to put their needs at the forefront of our national priorities, instead of leaving them behind. From now on, if they are asked to go into battle without being fully armored, fully rested, and fully trained, then the President himself will have to stand before this country and explain why it is necessary to do so.

This bill will also provide desperately needed funds for veterans' health care. Our country is seeing more wounded soldiers returning from abroad than at any point in 40 years, and yet for years, our health care system has failed thousands of them. It is unconscionable, and it is long past time that it was changed.

Finally, this bill both increases funding for the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and for a variety of other critically important national security objectives.

Taken together, it represents the beginning of what will be a responsible and ethical shift in our national security priorities away from a mistaken conflict in Iraq and back toward other concerns—the continued rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, for example, and the needs of wounded soldiers at home.

By changing a flawed strategy that has weakened our military for years without getting us any closer to a stable Iraq, this legislation represents our country's best chance to shake both of our nations free from the shackles of a stalemate benefiting neither.

It is an important and historic bill, one that the people of Iraq deserve, that the American people deserve, and that our troops most certainly deserve. I am proud to support it, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Katrina-Rita supplemental. The President was quoted yesterday as saying we needed a clean bill to fund the rebuild of Iraq. I disagree with that statement and suggest that we need the comprehensive bill put forth by the majority, so that the people of the Gulf Coast States can rebuild. For too long we are funding the rebuilding of foreign communities. While this is admirable, the American people deserve first call on the rebuilding money, and help when it is their very tax dollars that are being spent.

My Caucus leadership took me seriously when I challenged them to put forth action rather than words. The supplemental appropriation bill we are debating tonight is the first and only vehicle available to Katrina-Rita affected citizens! Because of budgetary rules, there is no other opportunity to address the unfinished levees, the rebuilding needs of local governments, affordable housing so people can return, and help for the coastal fisheries and farmers who have, to date, been virtually ignored.

My colleagues in the affected Gulf Coast States need to decide where they stand. If we let this one chance for $1.3 billion in levee assistance pass us by, every Member of Congress who votes against this should be held accountable for putting South Louisiana's citizens in harms way.

Are you in support of your Party, or are you for helping Louisianians, Mississipians and taxpaying Americans?

I support the Americans!

I would also like to submit the following clarification for the record:

This supplemental will provide funding for agriculture and fisheries disaster assistance along the Gulf Coast. For livestock producers, our intent is to increase the payment limit for those who lost hundreds of cattle as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These cattlemen have been inadequately compensated as a result of previously underfunded USDA programs. Our citrus growers—whose groves were destroyed from up to a month of saltwater several feet deep—should receive an increase in the payment rate for USDA's hurricane assistance program.

Additionally, this bill contains desperately needed assistance for our shrimp, menhaden,

as well as other fisheries that were devastated by the storms and, unfortunately have been forgotten for the past 18 months by the Administration and Congress.

Mr. MCNULTY. Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 1970, during my first term as Town Supervisor of Green Island, I testified against the War in Vietnam at a Congressional Field Hearing in Schenectady, New York.

Several months after that testimony, my brother, HM3 William F. McNulty, a Navy medic, was killed in Quang Nam Province.

I have thought—many times since then—that if President Nixon had listened to the voices of reason back then, my brother Bill might still be alive.

As a Member of Congress today, I believe that the Iraq War will eventually be recorded as one of the biggest blunders in the history of warfare.

In October 2002, I made a huge mistake in voting to give this President the authority to take military action in Iraq. I will not compound that error by voting to authorize this war's continuation.

On the contrary, I will do all that is within my power to end this war, to bring our troops home, and to spare other families the pain that the McNulty family has endured every day since August 9, 1970.

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, we entered the fifth year of the war in Iraq. Throughout that this Congress has provided the President with all the resources needed to wage this war. However, this body failed to provide any of the oversight he needed. Today, this Congress will correct that lack of oversight, while still providing our troops the funding they need and our military leaders the flexibility they require.

Today we say an open-ended commitment to this war is no longer acceptable. We say that we will no longer grant the President a blank check.

The war in Iraq has already lasted longer than World War I, World War II, and the Civil War. Continuing this war in the same manner with no accountability from the Administration or requirements on the Iraqi government is unacceptable.

Today, we stand up for our men and women in uniform; we honor our veterans, and we begin a new course to securing Iraq by passing H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

Passing this emergency funding guarantees our troops will have the equipment and resources they need. This bill demands that our troops are fully mission capable and meet the readiness standards set by the Department of Defense before we send them to war. And this bill demands the Iraqis get off the sidelines and begin fighting for their country.

The people of Western North Carolina sent me to Congress to ask the tough questions and demand accountability on this war. I have attended briefings at the White House and the Pentagon where I have been able to ask those questions. I have spoken to generals and troops on the ground, veterans and the families of those fighting. I have listened to my constituents, and I have prayed. I am confident that supporting this bill is the proper course of action. Soldiers support this bill. Generals support this bill. Veterans support this bill. The families of those fighting support this bill. A vote against this bill is a vote against our troops.

I am confident that this bill is a step in the right direction towards promoting a just and stable Iraq, and in bringing our nation closer to the day when all of our troops can return home to the warm welcome of a grateful Nation. May God bless our troops and their families, and may God bless the United States of America.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591.

In considering what to say about H.R. 1591, I looked back at what I said in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD about House Resolution 861, an Iraq resolution from the 109th Congress in June of last year. I lamented the fact that 2,500 soldiers had died, 18,000 had been wounded, and 320 billion dollars had been spent or appropriated. I said that enough was enough and that it was time to begin redeploying troops to the periphery of the conflict and bring some of them home.

Sadly, in the last nine months, we have lost over 700 more troops and seen more than 5,000 additional soldiers wounded. We have little to show for our efforts, as Iraq is still in chaos and there is no peace in sight. I am afraid that if we do not take a different approach that this pattern will continue—progress in Iraq will not be made and increasing numbers of American soldiers will suffer. H.R. 1591 is a new, reasonable approach.

Like most Americans, I want Iraq to succeed as a stable democracy. But Iraqis have to want this too and actually work towards this goal in a meaningful way. H.R. 1591 encourages the Iraqi government to do this by offering our continued assistance, if it meets certain political and military benchmarks. These markers were laid out by President Bush in January. A further incentive for Iraq to take more responsibility for its own security is the knowledge that, under H.R. 1591, we will not be there forever. There will now be a date certain, August 2008, after which the Iraqi government could not longer rely on our soldiers for its security.

This is not just the right course for Iraq, it is the right course for America. After 4 long years, thousands dead and wounded, and hundreds of billions spent, it is time that this war comes to an end.

Ending the war in Iraq will stop the losses and devastating injuries inflicted on our troops. It will also allow us to redirect the billions that would otherwise be spent on Iraq to meet needed priorities here at home, such as providing health insurance to low-income children. I ask my colleagues to keep in mind this tremendous opportunity cost should we not stop the war.

While the legislation before us today will bring the war in Iraq to close over a reasonable period of time, it also supports our troops in the field. H.R. 1591 appropriates almost $100 billion for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I strongly support our troops who have done everything asked of them with dignity, courage, and skill. It is with their safety and security in mind that I will vote in favor of this bill.

Beyond Iraq, H.R. 1591 contains over $20 billion to meet other emergency priorities. These include resources for veterans' health care, recovery from the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, relief for farmers and ranchers from years of drought, and money to states for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Enacting H.R. 1591 is thus important to address these emergencies, support our troops in the field, and end our involvement in the war in Iraq. I strongly encourage all Members of the House to support its passage.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bill.

If the President of the United States were a rational decision maker, a bill of this kind would not be necessary in the first place. Unfortunately, the President continues to cling to the illusion that the situation in Iraq will improve if only we're willing to sacrifice still more American lives. But we cannot solve Iraq's civil war any more than we could solve Vietnam's civil war 40 years ago.

By unleashing forces he does not understand and cannot control, the President has put our military forces in an impossible situation. Our troops cannot referee Iraq's sectarian conflict. The longer our forces remain in Iraq, the more they become identified with a government that is seen as increasingly repressive, and incapable—or unwilling—to take the steps necessary to resolve Iraq's internal conflict politically and peacefully. It is for all these reasons that it is past time for Congress to take steps in forcing the President to change course and withdraw our combat troops.

This course correction is far slower and more difficult than I would like. I share the frustration of many of my colleagues that the President is not moving quickly enough or boldly enough to end our military involvement in Iraq. I for one do not expect the President to provide the Congress with accurate assessments of the readiness of our forces or of the Pentagon's ability to meet some key needs of the troops.

Existing DoD readiness assessments already show that our forces are overworked and overstretched. My friend from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, has included provisions in this bill that seek to limit the President's ability to deploy our ground forces to Iraq that are not truly ready and therefore less effective and more at risk. I believe zealous oversight of these provisions will be required if this bill becomes law. The President has shown he is willing to say or do anything to try to get his way when it comes to Iraq policy. He must not be allowed to politicize readiness assessments the way he has politicized intelligence assessments.

One bogus criticism of this measure is that setting a date certain for withdrawal is bad policy or micromanagement by the Congress. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been trotting this argument out frequently of late. Their position is undercut by the fact that they voted to impose time lines and benchmarks on President Clinton during our effort in the Balkans a decade ago.

By the way, I am pleased that this measure contains significantly increased funding for two critical areas of veterans health care: traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. We are only beginning to come to grips with the true costs of this conflict for our veterans, and we must take aggressive measures to ensure that they receive the follow up care they need to have the best possible chance of leading full, productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, we should be under no illusions regarding this bill. It is only the first concrete step in our effort to redirect our nation's policy in Iraq. Some weeks ago, we passed a non-binding resolution that pointed us in a

new direction with respect to the occupation and war in Iraq. That was the right thing to do, even though it was non-binding on the President. Similarly, this supplemental appropriation is beneficial, although the actual withdrawal of troops will require, I believe, additional forceful action by Congress to fulfill the provisions of this bill.

It is important to move forward with this measure now and force this President to make America's combat occupation of Iraq history rather than a limitless, open-ended future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 261, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 218, nays 212, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 3, as follows:

[Roll No. 186]

YEAS—218

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Levin
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Millender-McDonald
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

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Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
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Bishop (UT)
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Bonner
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Boozman
Boren
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
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Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
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Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
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Graves
Hall (TX)
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Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
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Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
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Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Lewis (CA)
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Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNulty
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Waters
Watson
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Stark

NOT VOTING—3

Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Watt

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery in contravention of the law and rules of the House.

The Sergeant at Arms will remove those persons responsible for the disturbance and restore order to the gallery.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery in contravention of the law and rules of the House.

The Sergeant at Arms will remove those persons responsible for the disturbance and restore order to the gallery.

□ 1243

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to get here to cast my vote on H.R. 1591. Had I been here, I would have voted for the bill.

□ 1251

AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008; AND H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, the Rules Committee intends to meet on Tuesday, March 27, at 4 p.m. to report a rule that may structure the amendment process for floor consideration of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for the Fiscal Year 2008. The Committee on the Budget ordered the concurrent resolution reported on March 22, 2007, and is expected to file its report with the House later today.

Members who wish to offer an amendment to the concurrent resolution must submit 55 copies of the amendment and a brief description to the Rules Committee in H–312 in the Capitol no later than 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 27. As in past years, the Rules Committee intends to give priority to amendments offered as complete substitutes. The text of the concurrent resolution should be available on the Rules Committee Web site later today.

Substitute amendments should be drafted by Legislative Counsel and also should be reviewed by the Office of the Parliamentarian to be sure that the substitute amendments comply with the rules of the House.

The Rules Committee is also scheduled to meet on Tuesday, March 27, at 4 p.m. to grant a rule which may structure the amendment process for floor consideration of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

Members who wish to offer an amendment on this bill should submit 55 copies of the amendment and a brief description of the amendment to the Rules Committee in H–312 in the Capitol no later than 3 p.m. on Monday, March 26.

Amendments should be drafted to the bill as ordered reported by the Committee on Armed Services. A copy of the bill is posted on the Web site of the Rules Committee. Amendments should be drafted by Legislative Counsel and should be reviewed by the Office of the Parliamentarian to be sure that the amendments comply with the rules of the House. Members are also strongly encouraged to submit their amendments to the Congressional Budget Office for analysis regarding possible PAYGO violations.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO). The gentleman will state it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, on the bill that was just passed, H.R. 1591, which passed, as I understand it, by a vote of 218–212, was rule XXIII, clause 16, applicable?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may state his inquiry.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, so it is my understanding the rule under which we operated on H.R. 1591 did not waive House rule XXIII, clause 16. Is that correct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is referencing the Code of Official Conduct, the operation of which was not affected by House Resolution 261.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 1227, GULF COAST HURRICANE HOUSING RECOVERY ACT OF 2007

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to correct a clerical error in the passage of the recommittal amendment to H.R. 1227.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, could the gentleman explain his request?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I will explain it. We had talked to members of the minority. In the engrossment of H.R. 1227, the Clerk made some clerical errors. We were notified; the staff of the Committee on Financial Services talked to the minority staff. This is a request to correct some errors that were made in the recommit.

It is not in any favor to us. If you want the thing uncorrected, go ahead and object.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I am just not recalling that.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Well, I don't expect the gentleman to recall it. I did not recall it either. We didn't know they made clerical errors. They didn't tell us they made clerical errors.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is an innocent question. And the clerical error was?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield to me, I don't know what the clerical error was. We were notified that there was an error in the transcription. We did not know what the error was. Members of our staff spoke to the minority staff on the Financial Services Committee and explained it. I don't know how they mistyped it. I wasn't there when they did it. I don't know what the clerical error is. I wasn't particularly concerned. We thought it was routine.

If the minority wants the bill to go uncorrected, that is the minority's choice. We did speak to the staff beforehand.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Would the gentleman be willing to withdraw the unanimous consent request?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I will withdraw it, but I am not sticking around to make it again.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the request, and let it stand uncorrected.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of Ohio). The request is withdrawn.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my good friend, the majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the House will meet at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour business and 2 p.m. for legislative business. We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules. There will be no votes before 6:30 p.m. on that Monday.

On Tuesday next, the House will meet at 10:30 a.m. for morning hour business and noon for legislative business. We will consider additional bills under suspension of the rules. A complete list of these bills will be available by the end of the week. We also expect to consider H.R. 1401, the Rail Security Act, out of the Homeland Security Committee.

On Wednesday and Thursday the House will meet at 10 a.m. On Friday, no votes are expected. We will consider H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act, and the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

Mr. BLUNT. The gentleman said he expected that budget resolution to be on Friday?

Mr. HOYER. On Thursday. I do not expect that we will be meeting on Friday, unless debate occurs longer than I expect. But otherwise we will not be meeting on Friday.

Mr. BLUNT. Does the gentleman have a sense on the rule on the budget? Will there be substitutes allowed? What is the gentleman's sense on that?

□ 1300

Mr. HOYER. I will tell the gentleman my sense is that substitutes will be allowed.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, we traditionally have allowed substitutes. I will express to the gentleman my disappointment in the rule on the bill we just passed, which as far as I know is the first closed rule on an appropriations bill since 1992. And the previous appropriations bill was largely closed, and I hate to see us headed down that path. I think it is going to be much harder to get our appropriations work done. I know our appropriators are concerned that a long-standing tradition on appropriations bills has been violated, and I hope we don't see that same thing happen on the budget resolution coming to the floor next week.

Mr. HOYER. I appreciate the gentleman's observations. I understand his concern. Although I do observe that there was no motion made to either add or subtract from the bill that we just considered in a motion to recommit. But I do expect substitutes will be made in order.

Mr. BLUNT. I think the gentleman's suggestion that if we don't take advantage of whatever small parliamentary procedure we are allowed, that somehow that justifies not allowing us any amendments on the bill is not a very good excuse for that. I hope that we don't continue to see that happen.

I was concerned about the CR and the way it was handled. I was concerned about this bill. The next logical step, when we get to the appropriations bills, is that they, too, would not have the opportunity for debate and amendment as this was, in violation of long-standing traditions in the House. The last time this happened was when the gentleman's party was in the majority, and I hate to see us revert back to that lack of debate. I hope the gentleman will work with me and others to try to do everything we can to move the process along, not only rapidly, but also appropriately.

Mr. HOYER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I would.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Having been in the gentleman's position for too long, I honestly empathize with his position. It is my expectation that the appropriation bills, as they have historically, will come to this floor starting mid-May and continuing through June, and we hope to complete our appropriations bills by the end of June. My expectation is they will be, as they are traditionally, on the floor with open rules, or at least structured rules. Obviously, open rules, if you have 500 or 600 amendments from all

the folks, we may not get finished, which is why we have structured rules. But certainly the gentleman is correct that that is the tradition. I would expect us to follow that tradition.

On supplementals, over the last 15 supplementals, I was looking around to see if I had it immediately in front of me, I don't, but on the last 15 supplementals there have been a variety. Seven of them were open, eight of them were less than open, some more structured than others.

I understand the gentleman's representation, and I certainly look forward to working with the gentleman.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I think to make the gentleman's point, none of them were closed, and none of the wartime supplementals came in the fashion that this one did today, and I am disappointed with that.

What is the gentleman's sense on when the work that was stopped in the middle, right before a vote yesterday on the D.C. bill, when will we see that again?

Mr. HOYER. As soon as possible.

Mr. BLUNT. Do you think we will see it next week?

Mr. HOYER. I don't know that we will see it next week, although I would like to see it next week.

As the gentleman knows, I was very concerned and remain concerned about the interpretation of germaneness. And, frankly, that wouldn't have been a problem either had the minority been willing to offer the traditional motion, which was to recommit and have it immediately reported back to the floor. I will tell my friend we would have had a vote on that. I think you would have probably prevailed on the motion itself, and we would have prevailed on the bill. It would have carried that rider with it, of course. But the minority, frankly, from our perspective, chose to try to defeat the bill by not just making the motion to recommit to adopt the proposition that you offered, but sending it back to committee for that purpose, which was obviously not necessary, which leads me to believe, I want to tell you honestly, my friend, that this was a procedural device to kill the bill rather than let it come to a vote on its merits.

As the gentleman knows, I feel very strongly personally, others do as well, but I feel very strongly personally that we ought to extend a full voting franchise to the Representative who sits on this floor and represents 600,000 of our fellow Americans. The answer to your question is, I hope to bring that to the floor as soon as possible under conditions where we will protect ourselves from procedurally losing a bill which has the majority of votes on this floor.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that response. On the issue of merit, I suggest that the use of the procedural availability to the minority wouldn't be nearly as necessary if this bill is meritorious and has a majority of votes on the floor to actually have a debate where the bill is amendable, where there are substitutes available, where the other side of this debate has an opportunity to truly offer other ideas. And so far in this year we have not really seen an openness on any bill that was a bill that didn't pass in the last Congress on suspension to competition of real ideas and debate. I think that is what we saw on that bill. That is one of the reasons that that is one of the few alternatives we had to push back a bill that was not adequately debated, that has significant constitutional questions. We look forward to the bill being on the floor again.

Mr. HOYER. I appreciate the views. Although, as the gentleman knows, that bill was reported out of the Government Reform Committee chaired by a Republican, with a Republican majority, with a majority of Republicans voting for the bill to report it out of the committee in the last session. So while I understand your view, it is not as if we were taking up a bill that hadn't already been processed by your committee in the last Congress, reported out of that committee, and because obviously there is opposition to it on your side of the aisle, not brought to the floor.

I understand the gentleman's point; but very frankly, the only reason it has not passed, because it has the majority of votes on this floor, was because the motion that was made was not the traditional motion of adopting a proposition, in this case the gun control issue, and reporting it immediately back out with that amendment attached.

I appreciate what the gentleman is saying, but I can't feel too guilty about bringing to the floor a bill that was reported out of a Republican-chaired committee with a Republican majority.

Mr. BLUNT. I appreciate my friend's sense of that. But I would also say that if this bill has such broad support and such unquestioned merit, there shouldn't be any fear in having a full and open debate where the bill is amendable, where alternatives can be proposed, and where the only opportunity to slow this process down would not be to take advantage of the only possible rule available to us under a rule that was otherwise closed. That is my view of that.

I thank my friend for his comments. We look forward to the budget debate next week.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

PROTECTING AMERICANS FIGHTING TERRORISM ACT

(Mr. PEARCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, ever since 9/11, law enforcement agencies have been telling the American people they should immediately report suspicious activities. This important step is one of the best ways we have to stop terrorism. Sadly, last week, Americans who were simply trying to protect themselves in their country have now found themselves subject to a lawsuit for reporting suspicious activity.

In a lawsuit filed against US Airways, 60 moms removed from planes in Minneapolis have named ''John Does'' as defendants. These are simply people who were watching suspicious activities and called to report those suspicious activities, and now they are going to be terrorized in our court system in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that is unconscionable, and so I am presenting the Protecting Americans Fighting Terrorism Act to keep people safe who report suspicious activity in this country to law enforcement officials to protect the American people.

I urge my colleagues to support this important measure to help us be able to police ourselves and report suspicious activity.

SUPPLEMENTAL BILL PASSED FOR PEANUTS

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, today the House passed a bill claiming to be the U.S. Troop Readiness Act that included billions in pork barrel spending unrelated to the needs of our troops. The funding restrictions included in the bill were so unpopular that the congressional leadership loaded a $25 million bailout for spinach farmers, a $74 million payment for peanut storage, and a $283 million subsidy for milk producers, all to attract votes for the unpopular bill.

As USA Today stated: ''Votes were won for peanuts, or to be more accurate, for peanut subsidies.'' The bill also declares all of this spending, for spinach, for milk and peanut subsidies, as emergency wartime supplemental appropriations.

This bill passed $23 billion over budget. It only passed by four votes. Calculating a pork-to-vote ratio, that means that the Congress spent over $5 billion in pork spending per vote just to win passage for this legislation. And it is only March. How much more will the taxpayer be charged to pass other unpopular bills?

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

REMEMBERING CALDWELL COUNTY SHERIFF GARY CLARK

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

Mr. MCHENRY. Today, I rise with a heavy heart. Recently a good friend of mine, Sheriff Gary Clark of Caldwell County, passed from this Earth.

Caldwell County lost a true leader and public servant, and many of us lost a dear and beloved friend when Sheriff Clark went home to be with his Lord after a brief, but valiant, fight against cancer.

Those of us who knew and loved Gary grieve the loss of his friendship. We are also grateful to know that he is no longer in pain and no longer suffering.

Sheriff Clark cared deeply for the needs of families and relentlessly pursued drug dealers and criminals in Caldwell County. He made a career of that.

It was Sheriff Clark's passion for fighting against the scourge of methamphetamine and drugs that brought the White House drug czar to Caldwell County. His progressive innovative vision for law enforcement will create enormous benefits for years to come, not just in Caldwell County, but across western North Carolina.

Caldwell County lost a hero and heaven gained a treasure. My prayers are with his family and with his friends in this time of loss. He lived a determined life, a proud life. And the legacy he leaves continues on because the good a man does lives long after he is gone.

Mr. Speaker, we mourn the loss of Gary Clark, a great public servant and leader in North Carolina, a true law enforcement leader and a hero to those of us from western North Carolina.

□ 1315

THE FUTURE FOR CONGRESS AND IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of Ohio). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today is a very solemn day for our Nation. The House just voted to pass a bill that will continue to fund the ongoing occupation of Iraq. I know all too well how my colleagues anguished over their decision, but we must be clear what this vote means.

The supplemental, the largest in the history of our country, will pay for the President's escalation, an escalation that he calls a surge that we voted against just a few weeks ago.

It will include benchmarks and requirements that the administration can waive with the bat of an eye; and, most importantly, it could keep our troops on the ground for another year and a half at least.

Let's remember that the public did not elect Democrats to bring our troops home in 2008. They elected us to bring them home now.

I am truly and sincerely sad to say that as we debate the future of our troops, our troops are being targeted by terrorists, are being wounded by IEDs, and the most tragic and heartbreaking part of all, they are dying, and they are killing.

The American public knows the simple truth, Mr. Speaker: You can't be against the occupation and vote for this supplemental of at least $100 billion. The Democrats were elected in November because the American people want us, are expecting us, and are demanding of us that we bring our troops home as soon as possible. They do not trust the administration to do the right thing. They want us to hold the administration accountable.

We must stand up to an administration that has lied to get us into this war and will keep lying to keep us in it. It is sad when a Nation cannot trust its Commander in Chief to put the lives of the troops above his political legacy. But in that position, a Congress must take real and enforceable steps to bring an end to the occupation.

I have come to this spot over 195 times to speak about the unmitigated disaster that is Iraq. This is my moral obligation and that of our country.

To those who are watching and wondering about the future of our Iraq policy, I say: I will not stop, I will not rest, and I will not back down in my fight until every single last soldier and marine is home safe with his or her family.

This fight is far from over. Over the next several months, we will revisit this issue many, many times. I will work with my colleagues to make each measure stronger and each measure more effective and to bring our troops home to their families earlier rather than later. It is with their families that they belong. Today will be marked in history. I know that the future of our standing in the world and the future of Iraq depends on us being bold and brave and taking the actions that will bring our troops home.

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.)

DEPORTING AFTER SIXTH OFFENSE FIVE TOO MANY

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, according to a memo that was just released from the U.S. Justice Department from 2005 and reported in the Houston Chronicle today, it reveals procedure and criteria for arresting, detaining, prosecuting and deporting illegals that come into the United States.

It is a very interesting memo. Apparently the Department of Justice did not want to make this memo public for some time. Now we understand why. According to this memo, Texas prosecutors along the Texas-Mexico border generally do not prosecute illegals until the sixth offense. In other words, they have to come over, get caught; come over, get caught; come over, get caught; come over, get caught; come over, get caught; come over, get caught, and the sixth time our Federal Government decides, okay, we get the message, we are going to prosecute you for your sixth illegal entry into the United States.

So we don't prosecute them the first time like most Americans would want. And, of course, the illegals on the other side of the border from whatever country they come from know this is our procedure.

According to this Department of Justice memo, it says because of a ''lack of resources and bed space to detain and prosecute every illegal entry violator,'' we are not able to prosecute them the first time.

Mr. Speaker, this ought not to be. This is bad American policy. According to the border agents who work on the Texas-Mexico border and throughout the South, they arrest 1 million illegals a year coming into the United States; and we are telling them you have to work six times harder because the first time just doesn't count.

According to T.J. Bonner, the head of the Border Patrol Association, he said: ''It's devastating on morale. Our agents are risking their lives out there, and then they're told, Sorry, that doesn't meet the criteria,'' and they must be released.

So what does this mean? This means that the Federal Government and the Justice Department and the Federal prosecutors along the Texas-Mexico border and the entire border with Mexico need to get their act together and prosecute people that illegally come into the United States.

They need to quit prosecuting the border protectors and spending all of the American money going down into Mexico and finding drug smugglers and giving them immunity for bringing drugs into the United States and prosecuting border agents like Ramos and Compean. They need to quit making deals with seven or eight illegals who came into Texas and were caught by Deputy Gilmer Hernandez, and then they were given a deal to stay in the country, given green cards, all to prosecute Deputy Hernandez because he fired his gun.

We need to find the resources to protect our border. Whatever it takes, we have to protect the border. It is the duty of our government to protect the sovereignty of this Nation.

Today this House just spent billions of dollars dumping money for spinach farmers and peanut farmers and for all kinds of little special pork projects in this country. Maybe that money would have been better spent to find more facilities to detain the illegals, to find more immigration judges to hear these cases, and to find more prosecutors who will do their job and prosecute the illegals in this country and deport them back where they came from no matter where they are.

Mr. Speaker, it is the first duty of government to protect its people, and that includes the people that live in the United States. Part of that protection is to keep us protecting from the unlawful invasion of foreigners who come to this country without permission. Whether they come here just for illegal reasons, criminal intent, whether they are human smugglers or drug smugglers, or whether they are terrorists, they need to stay out. And when caught, they need to be deported the first time, not the sixth time. This six time rule, five get-out-of-jail-free cards by our Federal Government, and this absurd policy needs to be eliminated immediately.

I yield back the remainder of my time saying that's just the way it is.

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

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

MEETING OUR MORAL OBLIGATION

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago we commemorated the fourth anniversary of the United States' invasion of Iraq. Today we pause, and we voted for the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, and we took a pivotal step in responding to the mandate issued by the American people.

I have opposed this war from the very beginning; however, I voted for this legislation because I am realistic about our circumstances. As long as our brave men and women are serving in this country, we have a moral obligation to ensure that they are trained, equipped and rested when they go into battle. Supporting this measure was not easy, especially in light of the fact that a young man from Baltimore, Kendall Waters-Bey, who lived only a few blocks from me, was the first to die in the Iraq war.

However, after many discussions with my constituents and much contemplation, I strongly believe that H.R. 1591 was in the best interest of our brave men and women, the people of Iraq, and the people of these great United States.

Although I am opposed to the war, I have a responsibility to vote my conscience and a responsibility to help protect the servicemembers while they are risking their lives in Iraq. However, it is more important that we take care of those wounded warriors when they return home. When they have risked so much, we much respect them enough to provide the quality of medical treatment that they deserve.

Of the $124 billion to be spent, $900 million will be dedicated to two areas that I feel are of utmost importance, injuries which some military doctors say have become the signature wounds of the Iraq war: traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. This is in addition to the $20 million dedicated to addressing the problems that we saw at Walter Reed.

While H.R. 1591 provides $2.8 billion for military health care, this is not nearly enough for the thousands who have already returned or for those who are expected to need that care in the future. However, it is my hope and my intention to revisit this issue at a later date.

This legislation is monumental because it marks the first time during our efforts in Iraq that Congress will hold the President accountable. No more blank checks. We have established benchmarks for the war in Iraq that the President himself has repeatedly stated must be reached to resolve this crisis. If these benchmarks are not met, this legislation requires the troops to be fully redeployed by August 2008.

I know that there are many reasons that others oppose the legislation; however, the reality of the situation is very simple. Our troops will be in Iraq. In fact, more troops are being mobilized as we speak. We can no longer remain silent. We do not have the right to remain silent. Failing to pass this legislation was no option, because if we had failed to pass the legislation, we would have been in a situation where we would have sent to the President the possibility of a stripped-down supplemental. So we have a moral obligation to provide the equipment and the adequate health care that our troops need. We have done that with the passage of H.R. 1591.

I congratulate the Democratic leadership, our Speaker NANCY PELOSI, certainly to STENY HOYER, and to our whip JIM CLYBURN and all of the leadership members.

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

(Mr. KING of Iowa 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 Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today we passed H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

Mr. Speaker, in so doing, we will do at least three things: We will help our troops and support those troops who are in the field; we will provide assistance and care for our veterans who are at home; and we will also provide some assistance for the friends, the family, and the people who are in this country at the same time we are helping our troops.

I do want to remind people that the troops are there risking their lives so we can have a better life here.

□ 1330

In so doing we want to make sure that we take care of them, but we should also be mindful that their families and their friends back home have needs as well. This bill addresses troops in the field and family and friends who are left behind.

Let us just talk for a moment, if we may, about what happened today. We had a bipartisan bill to pass the House. Democrats and Republicans supported this effort. Members of Congress voted their consciences, and I do not begrudge any Member for any vote that a Member took. I do want to talk for a

moment about what this bill will mean to the American people and especially to our soldiers who are in the field.

This bill provides $1.2 billion approximately for Afghanistan. It provides $2.8 billion for defense health; for veterans health, $1.7 billion; for readiness, military readiness which is important, we want our men and women, our soldiers, to be prepared, $2.5 billion.

But at home, we have some needs as well, and this bill addresses many of our needs at home. Aviation security is important to us, $1.25 billion. Port, transit and border security is important to us, $1.25 billion. Disaster relief is important to people who were left behind, $910 million.

There are those who have made comments about agriculture and the assistance that we are providing. Many of those persons who are in the field, who are in harm's way, came from the farm lands of America, and they have relatives who are still in need here. We must support the troops, but we can also do it and support the friends, relatives and family members that they left behind. So, yes, for agriculture disaster we have $140 million.

We also have many children in this country who are not getting the proper health care, many children without health care in the richest country in the world. If we truly want to leave no child behind, we have to do more than fund schools. If we want to leave no child behind, we have got to make sure every child that goes to school is healthy, that every child is mentally ready to embrace the learning process. We have $750 million for the CHIP program. This will help children have good health care.

There are wildfires in this country. Many family members and friends of our troops may have to suffer from an incident that could be prevented. So we do have wildfire suppression, $500 million.

But there are people who may not be related to the troops, who may not be a friend of a member of our armed services in harm's way, and they, too, deserve some assistance, $400 million for the energy assistance program.

I will close with this, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the time. We must protect and defend our country and we have to protect our military in harm's way and the people who are left behind.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILSON of Ohio). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor our Nation's agricultural producers. U.S. agriculture is innovative, adaptive and certainly responsive. I am here today to celebrate National Ag Week which ends tomorrow, as well as celebrate National Ag Day, which we celebrated on Wednesday.

It goes without saying that agriculture is tremendously important to my district and the Nation as a whole. I hope you join me in celebrating everyone who works so hard to provide nutrition for the world.

I represent one of the largest agriculture districts in the country. My district ranks first in the value of sales of grains and oil seeds, second in total value of agricultural products sold, and first in cattle and calf inventory. According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, my State ranks first in the Nation in commercial red meat production as well.

In 2005, agriculture industry cash receipts contributed more than $11 billion to Nebraska's economy. Over 20 percent of all Nebraskans are employed in farm or farm-related jobs. Every dollar in agriculture exports generates $1.48 in additional economic activity such as transportation, financing, warehousing and production. Cash receipts from farm marketings contributed more than $11 billion to Nebraska's economy in 2005.

As impressive as those facts are, I do want to make sure that the rural way of life is enhanced and certainly encouraged to grow. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, I look forward to helping draft the reauthorization of the next farm bill before it expires in September. My goal is to create a workable, comprehensive package which will strengthen American agriculture and provide long-term stability for our Nation's producers. Any attempt to make major reforms of the current farm program must be in the long-term interests of American agriculture. We know that we need good, sustainable policy. Taxpayers appreciate that, markets appreciate that, and we can achieve that with a good, hearty discussion. We must also aggressively pursue new markets and break down barriers to trade with other countries.

In doing so, we must remain mindful of other aspects of rural life, and that is, the shrinking communities throughout Nebraska and other rural areas. I serve as a member of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Rural Development, as well as the House Rural Caucus, and I know we must do all we can to strengthen and protect our rural communities, the backbone of our values and way of life. I look forward to helping create strong, sustainable world economies and responsible tax policies to encourage economic development for these areas.

As a member of the House Science and Technology Committee, I am also putting a priority on expanding modern technology in our district to support new and existing businesses, attract new employers and make our rural communities more competitive in the modern economy.

So what are we really celebrating this week? National Ag Day is a day to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture and our Nation's agriculture industry. Every year, producers, agriculture associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and countless others across America join together to recognize the contributions of agriculture during this week.

This year, National Ag Day was celebrated on March 21, 2007, the first day of spring, and National Ag Week of course runs through the rest of the week. Ag Day was first celebrated in 1973, and this is the 34th year of celebrating Ag Day on the first day of spring. I am proud to have this opportunity to make these remarks to take part in this celebration.

The Agriculture Council of America hosts the campaign on a national level; however, awareness efforts in communities across America are as influential, if not more, than the broad scale effort. If you are interested, I recommend checking out www.agday.org, once again www.agday.org. The Web site has a tremendous amount of information, and I thank the ACA for letting me use their information here today.

Ag Day is about recognizing and certainly celebrating the contribution of agriculture in our everyday lives. The National Ag Day program encourages every American to understand how food and fiber products are produced, to value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy, appreciate the role that agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products.

Why do we celebrate agriculture? Certainly, agriculture provides almost everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis, but too few people truly understand this contribution and certainly may not appreciate it as we should.

This is particularly the case in our schools where students may only be exposed to agriculture if they enroll in the very specific and related vocational training. By building awareness, the Agriculture Council of America is encouraging young people to consider career opportunities in agriculture.

Each American farmer feeds nearly 130 people, a dramatic increase from 25 people in the 1960s. Let me repeat that: each American farmer feeds nearly 130 people and certainly a dramatic increase from the 25 people that each American farmer fed in the 1960s. Quite simply, American agriculture is doing more and doing it better; and as the world population soars, there is an even greater demand for the food and fiber produced in the United States.

From a team of horses in the early 1900s to tractors with the power of 40 to 300 horses today, American farmers provide consumers with more and certainly better quality food than ever before. In fact, one farmer now supplies food, as I mentioned earlier, for about 129 people very specifically in the U.S. and abroad, compared to just 25.8 people in 1960.

The efficiency of the American farmer pays off in the price American consumers pay for food as well. The United States consumers spend roughly 9 percent of their income on food, compared with 11 percent in the United Kingdom, 17 percent in Japan, 27 percent in South Africa, and 53 percent in India. That is a pretty good deal.

This great value is due in large part to improved equipment efficiency, enhanced crop and livestock genetics through biotechnology and conventional breeding, and advances in information management.

All Americans are asked to enjoy and admire the wonders of American agriculture as National Agriculture Day is celebrated on the first day of spring as it was this last week.

Today's farmers work nearly 3½ times more land than their predecessors from the 1900s. Their needs are different, the crops are different, and the rules governing production practices are different. Most American farms are still family farms. Today, almost 99 percent of all U.S. farms are owned by individuals, family partnerships, or family corporations. Less than 1 percent of America's farms and ranches are owned by non-family corporations according to the Census of Agriculture.

Biotechnology certainly increases capacity and product quality. It is another factor in efficiency of American farmers in their ability to provide more and certainly higher quality food and livestock. Biotechnology provides benefits similar to traditional plant and livestock breeding but does so in a more controlled environment and with faster results.

Advancements made in plant biotechnology provide consumers with better quality products in many areas, and those benefits are just beginning.

There are many products in the biotechnology research pipeline that will provide better livestock feeding, resulting in leaner meat for consumers. Many of these same products will lessen the environmental impact of livestock production by reducing waste and/or the chemicals found in animal waste.

Pharmaceutical companies are actively working with farmers to develop crops that can go directly from the field to pharmaceutical production, eliminating some of the processing steps that occur in today's operations. This research will significantly reduce the costs required to produce many life-saving drugs.

Research and technology advancements have also resulted in new uses for commodity crops like corn, soybeans and various grains. Use of products like ethanol and soy diesel will reduce American dependence on fossil fuels and improve air quality throughout the United States and the world. Ethanol is the largest industrial use of these commodity crops, but soy diesel and other uses are emerging every year.

When it comes to ethanol, America's farmers do not just produce fuel for our bodies. Crops such as corn and soybeans are used to produce fuel for our vehicles. Renewable fuels contribute to a cleaner environment, reduce pollution and reliance on foreign oil and contribute to the stability of the world farm economy by creating commercial markets for crops.

With the record production of 2.81 billion gallons of ethanol in 2003, 1 billion bushels of corn and 12 percent of the grain soybean crop were used to produce fuel for our vehicles. In 2003, 73 ethanol plants were in operation in the United States, several in my district and in Nebraska. In fact, according to the USDA, one in every 10 rows of corn went into ethanol production in 2003. In both his 2006 and 2007 State of the Union addresses, President George Bush called for making renewable energy sources a national priority.

□ 1345

His recent call for 35 billion gallons of renewable fuels, including ethanol and biodiesel, has led to crop producers and customers alike asking how we will meet the challenge without disrupting traditional markets.

The demand for corn, for ethanol production grew rapidly in 2006, and it will grow rapidly again this year. That has caused concern among corn and other end users, including the livestock industry and importers, like Japan. There is no question that a big transition is taking place. As producers will have to react more quickly to the market, so will our customers, the livestock industry, importers and ethanol industry.

There are new markets for ethanol 85, or E85, as we call it. Ethanol today is largely a blend component with gasoline. E85 is a mix of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline. The ethanol blend adds octane and displaces toxics, which helps refiners meet Clean Air Act specifications. There are about 600 E85 refueling stations across the country. New market opportunities include E85 and ethanol fuel cells. Today there are millions of flexible fuel vehicles capable of using E85, but they make up less than 3 percent of the total U.S. motor vehicle fleet.

A valuable coproduct of ethanol is dried distillers grain solubles, a high-protein feedstock. A bushel of corn used in the dry-grind ethanol process yields 2.8 gallons of ethanol, 17 pounds of carbon dioxide and 16 pounds of distillers grains. Wet grains go to dairy and cattle rations; dry goes to hog and poultry, or when it is shipped. A majority of DDGs is fed to beef and dairy; however, swine and poultry consumption is increasing, although a very small percentage can be used now as the feed industry gains a better understanding of how best to utilize that product in those rations.

According to commodity specialist companies, dairy accounted for 45 percent of 2005 distillers grains consumption in North America, while beef accounted for 37 percent. Swine accounted for 13 percent of the North American distillers grains use, while poultry made up 5 percent.

In the 2005–2006 marketing year, 8.35 million metric tons of distillers grains were produced. In 2006 and 2007, more than 10.8 million metric tons will be produced. By 2011 and 2012, the industry is expected to produce more than 20 million metric tons.

The supply of distillers grains has a displacement on the corn feed market. In 2005 and 2006, distillers grains displaced an estimated 3.89 million bushels of corn from feed markets, making that corn available for other uses.

Ethanol and biodiesel are just the beginning. Research continues to find new uses for agriculture commodities and waste. For example, livestock manure is being used to create electricity. Commodities such as soybean and canola are being developed as lubricants to replace petroleum-based products. Corn starch is replacing petroleum-based plastics. It's exciting to see these advancements.

American agriculture can also be celebrated for its effort in environmental conservation. Farmers and ranchers provide food and habitat for approximately 75 percent of this Nation's wildlife. The current farm bill has provisions for farmers to create environmental habitats that will ensure protection of the land and water resources of this country.

Farmers use computer and satellite technology to map the fields for production inputs. This increases yields and reduces crop inputs like fertilizer and crop-protection chemicals. With today's technology, farmers are better able to match seed production characteristics and production practices to soil type and climate conditions. The result is higher yields with lower input costs for more efficient use of chemicals, fertilizers and tillage. Ultimately, that results in more food at a lower cost for consumers.

Today's farmers understand the importance of improving the quality and quantity of food available to the world. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, it is estimated that there will be 7.5 billion people in the world by the year 2020. We currently are at 6.2 billion. It's agriculture's job to find a way to feed those people.

Advancements in crop technology, equipment technology and information management will make that possible. American farmers and others involved in the agriculture industry have met and will continue to meet this challenge again and again. World population growth is creating needs for food and fiber, obviously. World population is at 6.2 billion today, and expected again to reach 7.5 billion by the year 2020. There will be millions of new mouths to feed, many of whom rely on the United States' food production to meet this need.

The United States is best positioned to meet this growing need, as agriculture is America's number one export. Again, agriculture is America's number one export. About 17 percent of raw U.S. agriculture products are exported yearly.

U.S. farmers and ranchers produce more than 200 raw commodities yearly for domestic and export markets. One-fourth of the world's beef and nearly one-fifth of the world's grain, milk and eggs are produced in the U.S.

Through research and changes in production practices, today's food producers are providing Americans with the widest variety of foods ever. Research and advancements in biotechnology are now in the marketplace with tastier fruits and vegetables that stay fresh longer and are not damaged by insects. Consumers derive health benefits from changes in farm production, including less fat in meat, longer-lasting fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as tofu, a soybean product which has been shown to reduce the risk of some cancer and heart disease.

Certainly technology leads the way in today's agriculture protection. Precision farming boosts crop yields and reduces waste by using satellite maps and computers to match seed, fertilizer and crop-protection applications to local soil conditions. Sophisticated global positioning systems, as we call GPS, can be specifically designed for spraying herbicides and pesticides. A weed detector equipped with infrared light identifies specific plants by the different rays of light they reflect and then sends a signal to a pump to spray a preset amount of herbicide onto the weed.

Biogenetics is another technology that is being utilized in crop production. A particular trait is implanted directly into the seed to protect the seed against certain pests. Artificial insemination of livestock is producing more and certainly better meat supplies.

Farmers are utilizing four-wheel-drive tractors with up to 300 horsepower, requiring fewer passes across fields, saving energy and time. Huge combines are speeding the time it takes to harvest crops. That leads to more efficient use of energy.

With modern methods, 1 acre of land in the U.S. about the size of a football field can produce 42,000 pounds of strawberries, 11,000 heads of lettuce, 25,400 pounds of potatoes, 8,900 pounds of sweet corn, or 640 pounds of cotton lint. America is producing not only more food, but certainly higher quality and lower costs.

Two out of every three bushels of corn in the world originate in the United States. In 2001, 45 percent of the world's soybeans were grown in the United States. American consumers spend the lowest percentage of their annual income on food, just 9.3 percent. Nearly 19 billion pounds of pork, the most widely eaten meat, were processed in 2001. Cotton is by far the most dominant fiber produced in the United States, and, as you know, is used for apparel, home fabrics, as well as industrial uses.

Fertilizer and pesticides contribute to increases in production, as crop-production products have tripled the output of resource-intensive food like cooking oil, meat, fruits and vegetables. Crop-production products have doubled the production of world food calories since 1960. Without synthetic crop-production chemicals, American farmers certainly cannot feed the world.

Farmers are good stewards of the land's environment as well. Farmers and ranchers are the first environmentalists, maintaining and improving the soil and natural resources to pass on to the future generations. Farmers use reduced tillage practices on more than 72 million acres to prevent erosion. Farmers maintain over 1.3 million acres of grass waterways, allowing water to flow naturally from crops without eroding soil. Contour farming, planting crops, which is planting crops on hillsides instead of up and down, keeps soil from washing away. About 26 million acres in the United States are managed this way. Cattle ranchers and others control water run-off with sod waterways and diversions, erosion-control structures and catch basins.

Just as urban families recycle grass, newspaper and aluminum, farm families have practiced recycling for a long time by applying manure to fields to replace nutrients in the soil. Food service food scraps are used to make animal feed. Agriculture land provides habitat, again, for 75 percent of the Nation's wildlife.

Let's discuss the profile of the farmer. More than 3 million people farm or ranch in the United States. Individuals, family partnerships or family corporations operate almost 99 percent of U.S. farms. Over 22 million people are employed in farm or farm-related jobs, including production agriculture, farm inputs, processing and marketing, and wholesale and retail sales.

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, 50 percent of the farmers are 55 years of age or older, up only 3 percent from 1997. The average age of the principal operator is 55.3 years. Forty-one percent of U.S. total land area is farmland. In 1900, the average farm size was 147 acres, compared to 441 acres today.

The top five agriculture commodities are cattle and calves, dairy products, broilers, corn and soybeans. U.S. farmers produce 46 percent of the world's soybeans, 41 percent of the world's corn, 20.5 percent of the world's cotton and 13 percent of the world's wheat.

Let me repeat that, because I believe that we are losing sight of how important these markets are. U.S. farmers produce 46 percent of the world's soybeans, 41 percent of the world's corn, 20.5 percent of the world's cotton and 13 percent of the world's wheat.

Farmers and ranchers are independent business people who provide for their families by growing and producing food and fiber. Farmers and ranchers are producing meat lower in fat and cholesterol. This has resulted in retail cuts that are 15 percent leaner, giving consumers better value for their dollar. For example, a pork tenderloin now has only one more gram of fat than a skinless chicken breast, one of the true fat lightweights, so to speak. Also much leaner beef cuts are being produced much more now than 20 years ago, resulting in 27 percent less fat reaching the retail case than in 1985.

Research and advancements in biotechnology are now in the marketplace with better fruit and vegetables that stay fresh longer and are not damaged by insects. A new technology called precision farming boosts the crop yields and reduces waste by using satellite maps in computers to match seed, fertilizer and crop-protection applications to local soil conditions.

As the amount of mechanization and horsepower and farm machinery has increased, the time needed to complete tasks has decreased. Combines, these huge machines used to harvest grains such as corn, soybeans and wheat, have dramatically changed agriculture. In the 1930s, before the machines were available, a farmer could harvest an average of 100 bushels of corn by hand in a 9-hour day. Today's combines can harvest 900 bushels of corn per hour, or 100 bushels of corn in under 7 minutes.

The efficiency of U.S. farmers benefits the United States consumer in the pocketbook. Americans spend less on food than any other developed Nation in the world. On average, again, in 2004, Americans spent only 2 percent of their disposable income on meat and poultry compared to 4.1 percent in 1970.

I think it's important, as we reflect on all of these numbers, it can be a little overwhelming. But it's important to reflect the importance of agriculture, as we look at National Agriculture Week, and certainly as we look to the future. Hopefully we can learn from our past, the policies that, perhaps, discourage trade or policies that come down in a Draconian manner on farmers and ranchers. I will get to more of that in a few minutes.

Meanwhile, I would like to yield to my friend from Iowa, as he would like to discuss American agriculture as well.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH) for bringing the highlight on agriculture here, because this is Agriculture Week. I am confident there have been some Agriculture Weeks go by here in this Congress without mention of such an important event.

I would like to take this discussion, if I could, I would like to take this discussion to a broader point, an overall point over the components that Mr. SMITH has laid out here and try to put it into a perspective of where we are today in agriculture, and what it means for the future of agriculture, and what it means for the future of the world.

□ 1400

And I look back upon some of the great movements that have taken place in the history of humanity. And those movements being, for example, we go back to the stone age, and then from the stone age we move into the bronze age, and then the iron age, and then the industrial age.

In the industrial age we figured out how we could have labor that would be compartmentalized in its approach so that it wasn't one person that made all the components of a machine and put it together, but it was mass production. And in the industrial era, when we took to mass production, we raised the level of the standard of our living and raised the level of our technology dramatically. That was the Industrial Revolution.

And then we came along into the information age, where we figured out with the invention of the microchip that we could store and transfer information faster and more efficiently than ever before. And it took both the industrial era and the information age, took our society, took our culture to a higher level. A quantum leap in our economy.

Well, agriculture has really sat here, and since the inception of agriculture, the first time I think it was a cavewoman, planted some seeds outside the cave or recognized that they were growing, and they figured out how to cultivate crops thousands of years ago. What agriculture has done for thousands of years has just produced food and fiber. Produced it a lot better than they ever did before, more efficiently than ever before, as Mr. SMITH has articulated very well about the increase in our production and our production capability, nearly an entire semi-load in a single hour today. But it is still food and fiber. Food and fiber for thousands of years the foundation of agriculture. But today we are going the next level up. We are food, fiber, and renewable fuels. A third level now for agriculture.

And I believe that the fuel components, the ethanol, the biodiesel in particular, and then the way we are able to render animal fats back into biodiesel, so now we have taken this next level not just for energy and not just for fuel, but at the same time where biotech has moved agriculture up to another level to where we are really in the middle of science at the same time.

But I think that agriculture has gone from that level of food and fiber and has taken the kind of quantum leap up into food, fiber, renewable fuel, and biotech products, the same kind of quantum leap that our society took when we went into the information age or when we went into the Industrial Revolution. Those are huge, huge things that we need to contemplate here, the efficiencies that have come into agriculture and the technology.

So today I have the privilege of representing one of the top ethanol production and biodiesel, actually wind generation of electricity production, renewable fuels production congressional districts in America. And I have watched that capital be invested. Private capital last year invested over $1 billion in infrastructure to produce renewable energy just in my congressional district, one out of 435 congressional districts, Mr. Speaker. And that is a huge investment, but it also says a lot about an industry that is being developed and an industry that is growing, and it is making us less dependent on Middle Eastern oil.

And as we move forward into cellulosic, and we are very confident that we can develop the technology to produce cellulosic ethanol, that opens up vast acres for the production of cellulose that has not been used in that kind of an efficient fashion before. And, again, that will produce a significantly larger portion of our ethanol that will go then to reduce our dependency on Middle Eastern gas.

But that is the energy side of this. And I talk about the energy side a lot, and I would like to maybe stretch our minds a little bit on what can happen with the biotech side, what is happening with the biotech side.

For example, there is biotech research that recognizes that there are 25 million little babies in the world each year that die unnecessarily due to the dehydration that is associated with diarrhea. And if the lactopheron, the component of mother's milk, can get into that little baby, that little baby that is on its last gasp and if we can put lactopheron in that baby, within 3 to 4 days that baby has its health back, its vigor back, and the baby is ready to go home with its mother. Well, we can't find enough and produce enough lactopheron by going to the mothers to extract it from their milk. But what we have done with biotech is spliced that lactopheron genetic chain into rice; and so then when we harvest the rice, we bring the rice back in and we extract the lactopheron, that genetic chain of lactopheron from the rice, and turn it into a little powder lactopheron that is a little piece of powder in a packet like maybe the sugar you put in your coffee. You tear that, drop that into a little vial of water, stir it up, warm it a little, give it to that baby that would be dead in a few hours, and that baby springs back to life and in 3 to 4 days that baby is ready to go home. That is science and technology.

And today we can save the lives of 6 million babies on 60 acres of rice. And we are extracting that lactopheron up there in our neighborhood, not very far from the Missouri River, I would add, Mr. SMITH. It is on my side. That is one of the great things that we can do and are doing with science.

Another one is trypsin, and that is a component that you find in your tears. And as those tears wash across the eyeball, they are an antiseptic that keeps your eyes from getting infection in them, and one of the things from that would be pink eye. So we have also learned how to synthesize trypsin. And you see the pictures, especially Africa and in poor countries, of flies walking across little children's eyeballs. Well, the trypsin cures the blindness that comes from that kind of an affliction. That is another piece of biotech science that we have going on.

Another one, and I would say, Mr. Speaker, this is the most impressive and fantastic development and I am going to call it also agriculture. Of all the presentations that I have heard, of all the briefings that I have had the privilege to receive, this one is I believe the most impressive and has tremendous implications for all of humanity, and that is that today we have spliced through transgenics, and we can clone and use transgenics in the same operation, and it goes on thousands of times a day in America, at least the attempts to do, but splice through transgenics the human immune system into that of a hog. Now, we raise a few hogs in our neighborhood, too, so we are paying attention to those things. But it happens that not very far from where I live there is only one person in the country that is, at least for profit, bringing pigs by cesarean in a sterile environment. And this is Dr. Rexanne Struve, Manning, Iowa. She is working with a doctor from Pennsylvania who is working out of Blacksburg, Virginia, Virginia Tech University. And there they have spliced the immune genetics from a baboon into that of a hog, and raised that hog up until the hog was of adequate size that they could go in and harvest the heart from that hog and transplant it into a baboon.

Now this being an experiment, the baboon lived for 6 months. Now, that is a little better than the first human heart transplant; I think significantly better.

But what they have proven now is that they are confident that they can transplant through transgenics this human immune system into a hog. And in doing so, and we are only 3 years, maybe 4 years away from being able to do this effectively, they can also custom build the organ rejection genetics. There are 12 major indicators, and they can put together the configuration of those 12 major indicators so they have the highest possibility of organ acceptance on a transplant and the lowest possibility of rejection for an organ transplant. So we will be able to very soon custom raise human organs in hogs. And today we are transplanting out of hogs anterior cruciate ligaments, knee ligaments, Mr. Speaker, and also heart valves. And we have done that for years. And the reason we can do that is that cartilage, and so there is not a rejection factor for cartilage.

But organs themselves; so I brought up we can raise in hogs 28 different organs. Not just hearts, but lungs, esophagus, stomach, bladder. One of the important ones, kidneys, pancreas, liver. Name your organ. Except for the brain;

we really don't plan to transplant that hog's brain in there. I think there are some folks in this Congress that might have had that already happen, Mr. SMITH. At any rate, we would limit that organ. But there are 28 organs that we believe we can utilize in transplanting those organs from a hog into a human being. We had success doing that with anterior cruciate ligaments and with heart valves. We can surely do that with all the other organs.

And one of the most important is skin transplants. The burn victims that we have, the burn victims coming back from Iraq, to be able to give them a new skin that is custom raised in the feed lot in a sterile, sterile environment. And then the next step after that is to match your identical DNA, Mr. Speaker, so you can have your own customized hog there that has got customized organs that are identical as if they happened to have been your twin brother.

We will get there with this science, and it won't be there very long from now, 2 to 3 years on the first part of this matching the DNA chains exactly to take a sample. And raising those organs will happen within about, I am going to say, 12 to 15 years. But those are some of the things that we can do with biotechs in both the plant and animal science. And couple that with the renewable fuels, couple that with the tremendous production that we have provided. At the same time, we have more soil conservation, better water conservation, more fertilizer conservation, better land management, better processing and handling of our manure, for example.

There is no better steward for the environment than the American farmer. No one cares more about their water quality. No one cares more about their air quality. They live right in the middle of that every day, and they care about their land. They want to hand that along to the next generation and the next generation. The best stewards are the ones in charge, and they are in Iowa, they are in Nebraska, they are all across the Corn Belt, all across the soybean area, and they go from coast to coast with the specialty crop farmers.

This is a tremendous production system that we have in the United States, with outstanding and impressive people that commit their lives to feeding the world. And we need to honor them today on Ag Week here on the floor of Congress. And I certainly appreciate and respect the gentleman from Nebraska for raising this issue and being here tonight and for the opportunity to say a few words.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING). I appreciate the fact that you speak to the future. As we look at so many of the aspects of agriculture, I think sometimes we forget about the future and how far we have come.

We have water challenges in Nebraska. And it is interesting, in the middle of about a 7-year drought, I don't think enough credit is given to the better practices that have been engaged in Nebraska relating to irrigation, that we are seeing record amounts of yields, record yields amidst about 50 percent reduction in irrigation.

Now, there are also those critics out there, they tend to be critical of the fact that there aren't return flows from the former flowing of irrigation perhaps that many would consider waste. But it is interesting that as farmers become more and more efficient, they are also criticized along the way, and I think that that is unfortunate. When you talk about energy, it is absolutely vital that we realize that, even amidst corn prices that are strong, we have unprecedented costs of inputs especially related to energy, whether it is the fertilizer or whether it is the diesel for the tractor.

And that is what makes me nervous about these urges to regulate industry even more, that it will drive up the cost. And not only electricity for the consumer in their residence, but it will drive up the cost of energy, as we see it on farms and ranches. And that will drive up the cost of food, plain and simple. And as I stated earlier, we have come a long way in terms of producing food in an affordable format.

I was reading through, and I noticed part of the essay contest winner from the Ag Council of America, and this is the 2007 winner, LaTasha Cote, a 12th grader from Myrtle, Missouri Couch High School. And students from 7th to 12th grade submitted original essays of 450 words about the importance of agriculture in the United States. Under the theme, ''American Agriculture in 2025,'' students were encouraged to focus their essays on the potential landscape of American agriculture in 2025 based on where we are today and the opportunities that lie ahead. And Ms. Cote read her essay to industry representatives, Members of Congress, Federal agency representatives, media and others in a celebration of agriculture; and let me share with you just an excerpt:

''The alarm sounds off at about 8:00 a.m. A young man reaches over to turn it off, gets up, jumps in the shower, eats his breakfast, and then heads out the door toward the milk barn. There is no rush to get to the cows because they have already been milked.

''He begins to check the computer system to see the amount of milk produced from the third milking of the day. Immediately, a very precise chart pops up and gives the percentage of milk given per second, the amount of butter fat, and accurately tells the farmer the exact weight of the milk.

''Wait, where is the reality check? Well, there isn't one. This is only one example of how far the industry in all farms has come since the year of 2007.''

And I haven't had a chance to read the entire piece, but I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Cote and every student who submitted an essay in the contest. I think that it may be even sooner than 2025 when we see these things come about, but it is great to see young people looking to the future.

As we look at the big picture of agriculture, certainly globally we always think of trade, and I think the unfortunate situation with the closure of our beef, the rejection of our beef in many cases to Asia, but it does I think send a message to the larger issue of where we are at with livestock in America. It is interesting that we do find ourselves with a bit of a shortage of grain to feed our livestock.

□ 1415

And as we try to address this shortage, certainly, I think it can be best if the government stays out of the way. But when I hear concerns of this and the livestock industry, perhaps, getting a little worried, it worries me, too, because the livestock industry has been absolutely crucial to economies of rural America. And the fact that these economies are not, I think, appreciated like they should be, it is interesting to note how further regulations of the recent past have led to many livestock operations having to become much, much larger. And as they become much larger, certainly, others become concerned about the livestock waste.

And it was encouraging to me last year to finally see some understanding that we don't want policies that force the producer to get larger. We want them to have the options of getting larger should they pursue that. Should they feel comfortable with their current status, that is fine, too.

It is interesting, though, as we see large operators, small operators, middle-size, medium-size operators, we have to realize that I believe our fundamental responsibility is to create opportunities. Government can create opportunities, not through a check necessarily, but we can create policy opportunities so that the little guy has the option of getting larger and can prosper and pursue the economic dreams that they wish to.

And the gentleman from Iowa certainly pointed out the fact that there are a lot of promising scenarios out there. As I go across the Third District of Nebraska and I visit operators, whether they are small or large, it is so encouraging to see people engaged in the economy. And as they are engaged, whether it is at a beef cattle processing plant or a pork processing plant, or an ethanol plant, or whether they are even creating biodiesel in their garage, I think there is just tremendous opportunity, and that I believe it is my responsibility to maybe not protect that opportunity, but to expand that and to make sure that every producer, every taxpayer has that opportunity to grow and, hopefully, make a greater living, and the government won't take it all away from them, and they can reapply that through available capital back into the economy.

And if the gentleman from Iowa would like to participate, go ahead.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I appreciate the gentleman from Nebraska yielding. And as you discussed, the future of agriculture, and especially the young families, the families that are going to be raising their families on the farm and working in agribusiness in the towns, and it occurs to me that we often don't discuss about entrepreneurial agriculture. And it used to be that that was all we had was entrepreneurial agriculture. The traditional agriculture that I grew up with and in the middle of was purely, almost purely, entrepreneurial.

And yet we went through the farm crisis in the 1980s, and I recall those days. I lived for 3½ years with a knot in my gut, Mr. Speaker, wondering if I was going to make it through from week to week. And sometimes your identity of your life's work is what you do. And I was in an ag-related business.

But the point that I want to make is that I saw this happen. And I saw producers, our bank closed April 26, 1985, Friday afternoon, 3 o'clock, not too far from where this clock sits right now. And the red tag went on the door of the bank, and the Highway Patrol guarded the doors. And everybody's account was frozen; my account, the accounts of my customers. And I had a payroll to meet, and I literally had two pennies in my pocket was all I had to work with. I could rub them together and, in fact, I did rub them together and think about the symbolism of what had happened.

Also, we had pretty good balanced ag operations going on at that time, with a significant commitment to the livestock industry. And so we had row croppers there raising soybeans and corn, and also cattle, hogs and some turkey feeders.

And as the new owner in the bank, which was identified over the weekend, began to take up the loan applications and the financial applications, now this is right in the middle of prime corn-planting time, April 26 in 1985. To have your account shut down, have your credit line shut down, and if you didn't have your inputs all purchased and delivered, no one knew if you had any credit or if they would ever be paid or not or how it would unfold.

So what happened was loan applicant after applicant that had been financed the day before began to line up to get applications, get their application reconsidered by the new owners. And the new owners, being prudent financiers, took a look at those balance sheets and the list of assets, and they asked the question, where are we the most vulnerable? Where are we most likely to lose our money? Well, that would be the livestock because it can die. And what is the most liquid commodity you have that you can turn it into cash the most quickly? That would also be the livestock.

And so the livestock was loaded up, hauled to the sale barn, ordered to slaughter, and farmer after farmer, neighbor after neighbor was taken out of the livestock business. And then they could set up so that these same producers could stay in the row crop business, and, because of the programs we had and the risk management tools that were in place then, and we have better ones in place today, because of that, they could lock them into the point where if they had a reasonable yield and not too much bad luck, they could stay in business another year and maybe another year.

So these balanced risk-spread operations, diversified ag operations, became row-crop operations. Livestock went on the truck and was shipped. And then so went the equipment that was necessary to support the livestock. Often the best combine was lined up and sold, and maybe even the best tractor, or even the best pickup, also sold, shrunk the operation down to where they could stay in business.

Now, that was a good thing to keep them in business, but we lost the livestock tradition. And we are rebuilding that now, and the industry has changed so much. But the entrepreneurialism that came with that, much of that disappeared at the same time, Mr. Speaker. And so what we need to have is people that can make a good living by taking risks and by investing in new ideas and new approaches.

Now, livestock has been a traditional approach, and it has been the mortgage lifter for years. Especially the hog production has been the mortgage lifter. But then to broaden that out and to raise specialty crops today with some of the biotech industry we had that I mentioned a little bit earlier.

Or I happened to come across, about 4 years ago, during a political campaign, a family in my district that had 1,300 acres. Presumably they were crop acres. I would suspect they were not all crop acres. But one of those 1,300 acres, it was all to corn that year except 1 acre, and that 1 acre was set aside to what I would call a glorified garden. And they had six kids, and these six kids must have turned out a lot of good, healthy development child labor. But that single acre, that acre of corn that that year that it went in was only penciled out at $300 an acre. This single acre of this glorified garden, high labor-intensive, highly managed type of an operation produced $27,000 worth of crop on that single acre. Now, they might have put $40,000 worth of child labor into that, but they learned a work ethic, and they learned marketing, and they learned rotation, and they learned irrigation, and they learned weed management. But $27,000 per acre.

So when I found out about this, and I am sure there are other similar stories out there. It occurs to me that someplace between that, it is more than $300 an acre now, of course, but on that day, about $300 an acre for that field of corn versus $27,000 for that single acre of garden.

Between those two are all kinds of alternatives that are there for the entrepreneurs. So if they want to go the route of a lot of hard stoop labor and a lot of intense management and take on that labor to do that and try to pull that $27,000 out of that acre, or if they want to add some other things like organic, or if they want to raise specialty crops, all of these things need to be open for the young producers, and that is where they will find their extra margin profit. Not raising so much program crops; that is a baseline income that maintains the value of the land. But to up the ante, take a little more risk, put more management skill in, more labor in, and raise these specialty crops that, some of which I have talked about, and the organics on top of that, we will see young producers take that on because it is more labor-intensive, and young people are usually short of capital, and so what can they do? Well, they have got more labor that they can provide. They can do the work.

So I am looking forward to watching and hoping to provide the tools for the young agricultural entrepreneurs in both the crop and in the animal sciences for them to develop high-value commodities. And as they begin to feed the world, species after species, crop after crop, and we haven't gone anywheres near touching the surface of the things that we can do with biotech.

One of the other points, this is another scientific mind-stretcher, and that is that about, let's see, the years now come, about 32 years ago there was a rather dangerous species of an Asian animal, a bovine-related animal called a gaur, spelled G-A-U-R. And that animal had been in the San Diego Zoo for years. This poor gaur was getting old and had gone down, and it looked like it was going to die. Well, the zookeepers there or the scientists took a punch out of the ear of that gaur, froze it in liquid nitrogen at about, I think, 421 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and kept that little piece of that ear of that endangered species animal that had died frozen for 28 years. And they picked that up and they sent it, then, about, oh, I am going to say 6 years ago on up to a town, a lab in Sioux Center, Iowa, called Trans Ova. There Dr. Jan Schietemann took that frozen piece of tissue, and he cloned that gaur animal by implanting the nucleus of that that he could take from that cell and cloning that into the egg of a cow, and implanted that embryo that was created, the cloned embryo of the gaur, into the uterus of the cow, where this gaur, this rare animal, kind of looks like a yak if you look him up on the Google image page.

This animal then was cloned and raised up, and the cow had this calf, a genetic copy of the animal that had died more than 28 years earlier. And about a year later, they shipped that young juvenile gaur back to the San Diego Zoo, where I presume he is still walking around and living happily ever after.

Now, that is a space age, Star Wars kind of a thing. But when you think about what we can do with that kind of science and how we can improve our herds, how we can improve productivity, how we can improve the meat quality and the feed conversion factors, how we can reduce and eradicate and in some cases eliminate disease, how we can work with all of that, at the same time opening up the field so that the ag producers across this country can continue to make a living and feed America is a very, very optimistic story. And I think we are in the best position right now in agriculture that we have ever been in the history of the United States and, in fact, the history of the world, and I am just sorry I am not going to be around long enough to see where it is going to take the next generation of humanity.

But I wanted to express those things. And I appreciate it. And I yield back to the gentleman from Nebraska and thank him.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. I thank the gentleman from Iowa. As I wrap this up, I certainly want to thank the gentleman for really focusing on the future, and I think the sky is the limit when we can focus on the benefits of agriculture and perhaps the things we take for granted.

But as we talk about the future and younger generations engaging in agriculture, I find it unconscionable that the so-called death tax, or, in a more technical sense, the estate tax, would go back up to 55 percent, and that a subsequent generation on a farm or ranch would have to come up with cash to inherit that farm or ranch. That is sad. That is un-American. I think it is insensitive to taxpayers, and I think it has an immense disregard for the future and economic impact that that would have.

I think too many people think that only certain departments of the grocery store really come from agriculture, as we would think of it. But the fact is it is involved in health care, whether it is pharmaceutical, surgical sutures, ointments, X-ray film, latex gloves, gelatin for capsules and heart valves, or with construction, lumber, paint, brushes, tar paper, other things. And I could go on a list that would take much more time than I can consume here today.

But the fact is, we have come a long way, and we can go a lot further as we focus on opportunities, as we look at the fact that we need each other. Farmers need consumers. Consumers need farmers. And in between those entities, there is opportunity, whether it is processing, whether it is research. I think we can go a lot further than we have already come as we look to the future.

□ 1430

Again I would like to thank the Agriculture Council of America for providing a lot of this information and the very hands-on approach that they take and certainly look forward to working with them as I serve the people of the Third District of Nebraska and as farmers of the Third District of Nebraska and farmers and ranchers continue to feed the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LOEBSACK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, and our entire Democratic leadership for the opportunity for the 30-Something Working Group to once again come to the floor and talk about the priorities of the Democratic Caucus and the new direction for America that we are humbled to be able to lead this country in.

On November 7 of last year, the American people spoke loudly and clearly, Mr. Speaker, that it was imperative that we move this Nation in a new direction on a variety of issues, not the least of which is the direction that we are going in in this war in Iraq. And I am so proud today to be able to stand here knowing that the vote that I cast personally and that the 217 other Members that passed that legislation off this floor this afternoon cast so that we can now finally begin to ensure that our troops will have the armor that they need, the armor and equipment that they need, a plan to get them home most importantly, and to ensure that we can begin to transition in Iraq so that the Iraqi people will be able to stand on their own, run their democracy and make sure that they can focus on solving the civil war and the strife that is going on in the midst of their country, because that is essentially what we have been doing for them. What we have been doing for them that we can no longer continue to do is inserting ourselves in the middle of their chaos without plans to be able to withdraw, without a single brigade of their army completely trained to stand on their own. It is time and the American people have insisted that it is time to begin to move in the direction where we can shift the mission from combat to training, where we can focus our troops that will remain there by the end of next year on counterterrorism, on putting down the insurgency and on making sure that the Iraqi troops are well trained so that they can continue to move forward with their experiment in democracy. That is what the legislation that we passed today will do, and I am so proud of our caucus and of our colleagues and of our leadership for the work that we have done together, for the unity that we showed, for the courage that so many of our colleagues showed, Mr. Speaker. We have a very diverse caucus, a very diverse group of Democratic Members who for a variety of reasons, for a variety of soul searching were able to come together from all of the different facets of the philosophical spectrum, to come together today and pass this extremely important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in public office for 14 years. I have only served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 2 years, but that was one of the most emotional experiences and the most difficult experiences that I know I have gone through. And I cast that vote knowing that I had the support of my constituents, knowing and confident that my constituents want to make sure that we can bring those American troops home.

I had an opportunity to travel and spend some time with our troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center a few weeks ago before we voted on the resolution opposing the President's escalation proposal. I have said this the last few times we have talked about this on the floor. I had a chance to speak to a number of different troops individually. One young man who has stayed with me, and I think I've thought about him and his family every single day since then. As a mom with little kids, I have 7-year-old twins and a 3-year-old little girl. Almost every major vote I cast, I cast with them in mind. There is another generation of Americans who we are going to protect from that vote that we cast today. And this young man who I had a chance to meet with, he had just gotten home from his third tour of duty. Each was a year. His third tour and his 6-year-old little boy was in the room along with his wife and his little boy was so excited and just full of vibrancy and life. He shook my hand. It was just so neat to be able to talk to him. He told me that his daddy was finally going to be coming home for good, forever, in August. He had come down with a really inexplicable illness and was convalescing at Walter Reed. And when the young man told me that he had been through his third tour of duty and that his boy was 6, it was not lost on me that he had missed half of his son's life, a 6-year-old little boy with his dad gone for 3 separate years. That is just unacceptable. That is not what the procedures are supposed to require of our men and women in uniform. There is supposed to be at least 365 days of noncombat duty in between tours. The legislation that we passed today will ensure that that will happen. The legislation that we passed today will ensure that our troops have the equipment that they need. It will ensure that $1.7 billion in funding will provide the health care that our veterans need.

I listened to a lot of the speeches on the floor, almost all of them, today. What we continually heard from our friends on the other side of the aisle was almost as if maybe they didn't

read the bill, maybe they weren't paying attention, but more likely they were just being political. I heard comments about how our legislation didn't provide the equipment for the troops, when up until now it is this President, with the acknowledgment of the military leadership, that has sent our troops into harm's way without the proper training. We have the least trained, least prepared Army that we have ever had at this point, spread as thin as they possibly could be spread, and then they have the nerve on the other side of the aisle to suggest that it is us that is not providing the protection for our troops. That is ludicrous. I'm not sure whether they're not listening to their constituents when they're home or not having a chance like I did and like I know you have to sit down with troops who have been in the line of duty. Maybe they're listening with different ears or maybe more likely they're listening with a different heart, because the heart that I listened with knows that we can't allow the pointless loss of human life anymore, not for our men and women in uniform and not for the Iraqi people who are also losing their lives in the midst of chaos. If we are going to focus on the war on terror, we should be shifting our approach to the war in Afghanistan, where we provide a significant infusion of funding, badly needed funding so that we can turn Afghanistan back around.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, after the tragedy of 9/11 and we initially went in to respond to that tragedy, to stand up for America, we went into Afghanistan and we got rid of the Taliban and we made sure that we could restore human rights in that country and we could restore the rights of women to go to school and to walk in public without a burqa and to really shine the light of freedom on a country that lived in darkness for decades. Instead, this President and this Republican leadership shifted our focus, lost our purpose, lost their way, or gave up is really a better way to put it, and invaded Iraq under false pretenses, provided this Congress, many of our colleagues who voted ''yes'' relying on the information from this administration that it was out of necessity. This wasn't a war of necessity. This was a war of choice. We don't have the luxury of going into wars of choice, Mr. Speaker, when we have wars of necessity like Afghanistan, when we have a situation like we have in Iran, where we have a leader in that country who has threatened the very existence of the State of Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, where we have nations in the Middle East who truly want to see democracy fail. Instead, we have created an incubator for terrorism in Iraq.

I heard colleagues on the other side of the aisle speak today about how we were going to lose the war on terror if we passed this legislation today. Well, the administration has made the war on terror worse, has made the likelihood of being attacked greater by creating the cesspool that exists in that nation. We must take the steps that the legislation that I proudly supported and that you proudly supported today, that that legislation will do so that we can put some benchmarks in place, so that we can make sure, just like the President said on January 10, so that we can establish some benchmarks, make sure that the Iraqi leadership meets those benchmarks, and if they don't, then the blank check and the open-ended commitment to this pointless war will end. That is the direction that we are now moving in.

I am pleased to be joined by my good friend and neighbor from the State of Florida, my colleague, Mr. KENDRICK MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I can tell you, Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, it was definitely a pleasure hearing you speak as we were talking before in the cloakroom, in the back here, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about what happened here on this floor less than 2 hours ago. A major vote that took place here in this House. And it didn't pass by one or two votes. It only takes one vote to win as it relates to a bill or what have you, a resolution moving through the floor here. I just want to say that I am proud of the Members that voted in the affirmative for this bill. The emergency supplemental funding bill has started a new era as it relates to how Americans think about the war in Iraq, how our troops are being treated in Iraq and Afghanistan and even here back at home on health care services. And also it gave voice to those individuals that went to the voting booth looking for representation, looking for a new direction, looking for the Congress to carry out the kind of oversight that we should carry out as Members of Congress on behalf of any action that will involve the American taxpayer and in many cases involve foreign nations loaning money to the United States of America. We have to pay all of that back. We have to be accountable to the U.S. taxpayer. And we have to make sure that we provide the oversight for the American people.

Now, I heard Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ speak to the point. As some members came to the floor to vote against the bill, some voted against the bill because that's just what they do. They vote against war. They vote against whatever their philosophy may be as it relates to war, but also you had people that voted for the bill that is against war, that want to see an end to war. No other emergency supplemental up until the one that came before this House today actually put forth benchmarks for the Iraqi government to meet, actually hold the feet to the fire of the executive branch saying that if you are going to send additional troops, then the parameters that you put on the Iraqi government will actually be enforced. Department of Defense regulations as it relates to how troops can be deployed and the readiness of our troops before they go into theater. They wrote that in the Department of Defense, the administrator, bureaucrats, Secretary, what have you, in the Bush administration wrote those regulations. We put it inside this piece of legislation and enforced it. And also we made sure that Members had the opportunity to show their constituents where they stand.

Now, let's talk a little bit about that, because I heard the gentlewoman from Florida mention something, folks coming to the floor, saying things like, ''never before in the history of the country that we've ever voted to micromanage.'' They would use words like ''micromanage.'' ''We've never come to the floor to limit anything as it relates to war.''

And when will we have a victory?

And that has never, ever, ever happened.

□ 1445

You know, I am in my office, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and I am watching these Members on the floor, and I spoke to this point last night, because last night I was here after 10, 10:30, I actually closed the House last night, moved to adjourn the House last night, and I couldn't help but try to get the evidence to show that it has happened.

As a matter of fact, timelines have been set by some of the very Republican leaders that are now in the Republican leadership right now that came to this well here today and had issue with what the majority of the Members of the House wanted to do and ultimately did in the vote.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure, because this is what this whole 30-Something Working Group is about, making sure that we shed light where it needs to be. Let's look at this.

Bosnia, June 24, 1997, the House brought to the floor an amendment that would set a timeline and a date certain for withdrawal of U.S. peacekeepers from the mission in Bosnia. Pay attention to these dates.

On December 13, 1995, an attempt to prohibit funds from being used for the deployment of ground troops in Bosnia. It actually failed 210–218, which I have the names of those individuals that are in the Republican leadership now that voted in the affirmative to try to stop that from happening.

December 13, 1995, a resolution passed expressing serious concerns in opposition to the deployment of troops in Bosnia, where ethnic cleansing was taking place. Some of our same Members in the Republican leadership voted to pass that piece of legislation.

Again, June, there was also another vote that was taken on June 24, 1997, voted to set a timeline, date certain for withdrawal of troops from Bosnia, and that passed 278–148. The date certain that troops had to leave was June 30, 1998.

I am going to say it again. Some of the same individuals that voted today against, their reason for voting against

this emergency supplemental for the men and women in harm's way and the veterans to be able to receive the kind of healthcare they deserve, voted for a timeline in Bosnia.

Let's talk about the comparisons here. The Bosnia conflict was 18 months, Mr. Speaker. This conflict is 48-plus months, moving well into its fifth year. The cost of Bosnia to the United States of America, $7 billion. The cost of the war in Iraq, $379 billion and counting, well beyond $379 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars and loan money.

Casualties in Bosnia, casualties in Bosnia, I repeat, zero of U.S. troops. Zero. Casualties as of 10 a.m. today in Iraq of U.S. personnel, troops, men and women in uniform, 3,229. I would even go further to say 13,415 wounded in action and have returned to duty. I would even go further by saying 10,772 wounded in action who cannot return back to duty.

I think it is important that we look at the facts. Again, I want to say we didn't come down here to play around, we came down here to share the facts, because we are both very busy people and we have things to do and this is the end of the workweek and Members are heading back to their districts. We want to go back to our districts too. But we want to make sure this moment of leadership, this moment of courage, is in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, to let it be known that we did have Members that stood up on behalf of our men and women in uniform and we had the men and women of this House that were in the majority that were willing to put their name and their vote on the line on behalf of the men and women that serve our country and their families.

I have the vote sheet here from the Bosnia vote. Every Republican voted yes for the timeline, with the exception of two. It is right here. Any Member that wants to run down to the floor and take a look at that, they can.

Also we have here the vote as it relates to passing the resolution that we had today, which is the emergency supplemental, roll call vote 186. I can say for the two Republicans who voted in opposite of the Republican leadership, when we took the vote on June 24, 1997, were consistent today of the only two Republicans that voted in the affirmative with the majority of the House to make sure that we place benchmarks and a timeline in Iraq. Consistency for those two Members, that anyone can find in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and we commend them for their consistency.

So I think it is important, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, that we look at the hard facts here and the tough votes that need to be taken. Does everyone agree with what is in the emergency supplemental? I don't agree with everything that is in the emergency supplemental. But for the greater good of the men and women in harm's way, I voted for it.

There are Members in here who had a rough time and it was also very tough vote for them. But they didn't want to continue to look in the eyes of their constituents as they go to high school programs and junior high school programs and they are asked a question, as I am asked a question, and I don't ask folks for their voter registration, I don't ask, well, are you a constituent of mine or not?

The prevailing question is, Congressman, how long are we going to be in Iraq? I can't answer the question, because the President says we are going to be there as long as we need to be there. And, guess what? Those very same individuals, Democrat, Republican, independent, some individuals never voted before in their lives, went last November and voted for a new direction, voted for leadership, voted for an opportunity to have this Congress stand in the position that it should be standing, and that is oversight and accountability on behalf of the men and women that are in harm's way.

So I feel that the Members that voted in the affirmative, voted for outstanding healthcare, moving in the direction of outstanding healthcare for our veterans, making sure that our men and women when they are deployed, some of them are deployed 120 days after they return back to their family because some bureaucrat in the Defense Department says, well, we got to make sure we keep our rotation and our troop numbers, levels, up to over 143,000 troops on the ground. I know this brigade has only been home for a couple of months, three months, we have to get them back in the fight, when the Department of Defense regulations rule against that.

But I must add, Mr. Speaker, to make sure since we are having a moment of clarity, in this bill it allows the President, if it is within the national security interests that these troops go back into theater, he has the ability to do that, but report to Congress on that action.

So anyone that says we are binding the President, we are endangering the troops, the general can't do what he wants to do, that has nothing to do with it. That is nothing but rhetoric. That is nothing but good talking points for a crowd that you may want to get a cheer out of based on where you are.

But the reality and the hard-core facts are we have been sent up here to legislate and to bring about oversight, and that the President of the United States is not the only person that can make decisions on accountability and oversight. It is the U.S. Congress constitutionally and also it is our duty.

We are not in the forward area. We don't wear a uniform. But we have been sent here to make sure things go the way they are supposed to go on behalf of the men and women in harm's way.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I wanted to take off on the point you just made about the ability we give for the President to make a decision that he thinks is in the national interest, of national security.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides benchmarks, the same benchmarks that this President came before the country and said were essential on January 10; that we have unit readiness; that we have a length of deployment.

We have two sets of benchmarks here. We have benchmarks that this Democratic Congress put in this legislation to make sure we can protect our troops, to make sure we weren't sending them into harm's way unprepared. Then we have benchmarks in this bill to ensure that the Iraqis meet their obligations. Those obligations, those benchmarks, are the same ones that the President indicated to the American people were essential when he spoke to the Nation on January 10.

When this Congress switched from Republican to Democrat after November 7, the main reason it happened is because the American people were sick and tired of being sick and tired. They had lost their confidence in their government. Their confidence in this Congress was badly shaken. We had scandals. We had a culture of corruption. We had a situation where the American people couldn't believe that their Congress was doing right on their behalf, and that the majority, Republican at the time, was here for the right reasons. That is why there was a wholesale shift and we won 33 seats on November 7.

We are exercising Congress's appropriate oversight role and reasserting the system of checks and balances that the Founding Fathers envisioned, particularly by putting language in this bill that ensures that units have to be ready. They have to be prepared. The chief of the military department concerned has to determine that a unit is fully mission capable before it is deployed to Iraq.

The reason that I wanted to interject during Mr. MEEK's remarks is because you, Mr. MEEK, mentioned that the President can certify to the Congress that sending a unit into harm's way in Iraq in spite of the fact that they are not fully mission capable would be in the national interest.

He is the commander-in-chief. There is no question that the President is the commander-in-chief. But it is our responsibility as Members of Congress that we look out for the American people, specifically and especially in this case our men and women in uniform who are going over to defend this country. We provide the funding to send them over. We provide the funding to ensure that they are fully equipped and prepared. And the President should have to come back to us and say in spite of the fact that this unit, these women and men are going over there unprepared and aren't fully mission capable, it still is in the national interest to send them. That is the least that he can do.

He can maintain his role as commander-in-chief in this legislation, but he has to make sure that he is doing right by our troops, and he has to own

up to what he is doing in this legislation, including in their length of deployment.

There is a Defense Department policy, Mr. Speaker, that requires the Department of Defense to abide by its current policy, which is that you shouldn't deploy a unit to Iraq or any region more than 365 days for the Army and more than 210 days for the Marines. The President in this legislation can waive that provision too, but he has to say that it is in the national interest to do so, to send troops on another tour with less than a year's rest, less than 210 days in the case of Marines.

Again, he has to actually say to that young man, whose 6-year-old boy I met, it is okay to miss half your son's life, because we need you, it is in the national interest, instead of being able to sort of duck and cover and do it in a clandestine way without the American people really knowing and without him owning up to it.

The same with time between deployments. It requires the Defense Department, besides length of deployment, the time between deployment is essential as well. The President can waive that provision, but he has to say to the Congress that it is in the national interests to do so.

We also have benchmarks related to the Iraqi people as well. By July 1, 2007, the President has to certify that Iraq is making meaningful and substantial progress in meeting political and military benchmarks, including a militia disarmament program and a plan that equitably shares oil revenues among all Iraqis. After all, they are in the midst of civil war. They are killing each other over things like that.

The President has to certify there is progress being made. Otherwise, we are going to be there forever, with no end in sight, with no pressure on the Iraqi leadership to get the job done. Why would they feel the need to move in the direction of progress if they know that there is a never-ending, open-ended commitment for us to be there and for the money to keep flowing.

□ 1500

They also have to achieve political and military benchmarks. By October 1, 2007, the President has to certify that Iraqis have achieved political and military benchmarks, and if he doesn't provide that certification, then U.S. forces will begin immediate deployment completed by March 2008. There are steps toward progress that the Iraqi leadership must take or we are not going to continue to put our men and women in harm's way, and we shouldn't.

And, finally, we need to eventually end our participation in this war. Our commitment there should be finite, not open-ended. The President should not have a blank check, and this legislation that we passed today ensures that.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, when you think about it, you can't help but think about the debate that took place, and the vote has now happened. And again, Mr. Speaker, I commend those that worked very hard day in and day out to make sure that Members felt comfortable in voting for this legislation.

I think it is also mindful for us to remember, because so many times here in Washington, D.C., and even when we return back to our districts, I return back to sunny south Florida; Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ does the same. Some of us go to the far West. Some of us go to the Northeast, where it is very cold and frigid. Some of us go down to the Southwest and Arizona and Texas and some of the other areas of the great part of our country. Some of us from the gulf coast, some of us from the great Blue Mountains.

I think it is very, very important for us to remember that over 56 of our men and women in uniform died this month alone, and we are not even out of this month yet. Over 55 men and women wearing the uniform, some citizens, some non-citizens, some are from the west coast, some are from the east coast, some are from urban areas, some of them are from rural America. They are not coming back home. Their memory will ever be in our minds and in our hearts. And we appreciate their paying the ultimate sacrifice. We pray for their families. And we stand on their behalf here today in making sure that we can bring the kind of accountability forward to this government and to the Iraqi Government, and to make sure that those that are in harm's way have what they need when they need it.

Also, what is in this bill, and I think it is very, very important because I want Members to not only go home and talk about that they voted for, the majority of this House, which was good, but for those who voted against it, I want not only them, but I want their constituents to know what they voted against. This is serious business. I have a lot of friends here in this Chamber. I don't know of a Member of the House that I have a negative relationship with that I don't talk to that person or that person doesn't talk to me. I get along. I am second generation here in this House of Representatives; my mother served here. But this is serious business when we start talking about the sacrificing that U.S. families are making to bring about some sort of harmony in the middle of a civil war in Iraq.

So the vote that took place today, Mr. Speaker, is a vote in the right direction and in a new direction, to let it be known that this House of Representatives is willing to play a role in the oversight of the U.S. taxpayer dollar, and also on behalf of those that are in harm's way right now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I am glad that she is a member of the Appropriations Committee because they spent a lot of time with this legislation, this emergency supplemental. It is probably going to be the last time that we have an emergency supplemental outside of the regular budget process. And speaking of the budget, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be debating the budget here on this floor next week. We are going to have a great discussion about where our priorities are as Americans and the things that are important to the financial standing of the country and where we are going to make the kind of investments that we need to make on behalf of this great country of ours.

It is also important to understand next week that is tied in with this bill that we are going to also consider the Wounded Warriors bill that is going to be coming up next week, which is 1538, for consideration before this House that I must add that passed Armed Services Committee this week with a unanimous vote, to make sure that we correct some of the issues that are dealing with our veterans. And we are going to deal with H.R. 1401, that is the Rail Security Act that will be coming up next week.

This is serious business, and we have to be very serious about what we do here. And I want to make sure that this vote will be seen as one of the many.

Now, we had a vote, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, about a month ago that folks criticized, the vote to say that we are against the escalation, against the President's escalation of troops in Iraq. Seventeen Republicans voted with the majority of the House Members on that. Obviously, 15 of those Republicans decided to vote against the binding resolution. Remember all those, oh, it's nonbinding, it really doesn't mean anything; why are you doing this? Why are you spending a whole week of debate? Even the President said, oh, it's nonbinding. And the President said at that time a binding resolution will be coming which will be the emergency supplemental. I want to know the House of Representatives' stand on the binding resolution.

Well, that message is clear today where we stand. And I think that in the Senate, with the passage of the legislation even has a shorter time line passed the Appropriations Committee last night than what the House is calling for, I think the issue of a time line and benchmarks are going to be in that legislation when it goes to the President. Now, the President is saying that he is going to veto it. Well, that is all a part of his right to do so. But I think the American people and Members of this Congress have to rise up. If the President is not willing to lead us in a new direction as it relates to Iraq, then we may need to lead the President. That is the reason why we have a democracy. That is the reason why we have an executive branch and a legislative branch. That is the reason why men and women who no longer can walk on two legs now paid the price for us to have this democracy that we celebrate here today, which I don't take

lightly. That is the reason why this specialist here, that covers the page of Newsweek, paid with her legs. She is a patriot.

So if Members or anyone has a problem with the way our democracy is working, then you have a problem with America. I am glad that I am free and able to stand here on this floor to say that what took place here today is a great testimonial to that democracy. And just because you said that you are going to do one thing doesn't necessarily mean that you have to follow through on it to show folks that you are tough.

You have folks coming to the floor saying, well, by passing this emergency supplemental, it will waive the white flag. What white flag? Okay. Continuing to do the same thing expecting different results? The Speaker of the House took the well here earlier, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and said there have been three other escalations of troops in Iraq and the same outcome is the fact that we lost more troops in the middle of the battle, in the middle of a civil war, and that did not turn the security situation around on the ground.

What did the Iraq Study Group say? They said that diplomacy is going to be the number one key in dealing with this. What did Mr. MURTHA say, a decorated marine and chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee? This is a diplomacy issue, and we need to make sure that the Iraqi Government stands up not only on behalf of their country, but for the region and provide the kind of leadership that they deserve.

For every day we are in Iraq, Mr. Speaker and Members, that is a day that a U.S. city will not receive the kind of appropriations that it needs to be able to provide the quality of life that the U.S. taxpayers deserve. It is another day that we won't be able to fully implement all the 9/11 recommendations and be able to provide the kind of funding to secure the homeland. It means that what we pay now on the debt that the Republican Congress and the Bush administration has given us, that we will not have enough money to pay down on that debt, just on the debt of the money that this country has borrowed, and which is more than what we invest in education, more than what we invest in homeland security, more than what we invest in veteran affairs.

So I think it is important that this paradigm shift that took place here today is recognized as one of the great days of the U.S. House of Representatives and moving in a new direction, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You know, there are students of history, our esteemed Speaker in the Chair is a former college professor, and he certainly knows that the origin of this country was one where our Founding Fathers and the people that came before them that colonized this nation were escaping from tyranny, essentially, were escaping so that they could be free, so that they could be free from one individual telling them how their lives would be run, so they could be free from persecution about their religious choices that they made, so they could be free from taxation without representation, so that they could be free. And the reason that our democracy was set up as it is, with a Commander in Chief, with an executive as well as a legislative and judicial branch, was so that there would be a system of checks and balances.

I am baffled by our friends on the other side of the aisle when they seem to be saying that the Congress weighing in with binding legislation, with benchmarks, and with a time line so that we can ensure that there is not a never-ending commitment and a blank check being written to folks fighting a civil war in another country, our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to be saying that we should only care about the opinion of one person, the person in the White House, that the decisions that the executive of this Nation makes are the only ones that matter.

Well, if you go back to the origin of this Nation, Mr. MEEK, you go back to the origin of this Nation, that is why our power was diffused. That is why our Founding Fathers created three branches of government, because they experienced the tyranny of one individual. They had decisions forced on them by a king, by a monarch, who told them exactly what was going to happen. And there was no place to turn, there was nowhere to go. Well, the American people and our men and women in uniform can turn to us because they have a Congress, they have a representative body that can rescue them when the executive makes the wrong decision, and that is what has happened here.

That is also what has happened with our veterans, Mr. MEEK, because it is incredibly important that we emphasize that, while we have made some very important, significant and essential decisions about the direction that we are going to continue to go in this war in Iraq, we also made some significant decisions to help our veterans, the ones that have already fought and have come back and have been left behind, have been forgotten, the ones that this administration and the Republican leadership before us had callous disregard for.

And we are always about third-party validation in the 30-Something Working Group, so people just shouldn't take it from me or take it from you. Let's just walk through what happened before and what has happened leading up to today with the vote that we cast on this floor.

So, Mr. Speaker, before I got here, Mr. MEEK, you were here, but before I got here, this is right when you got here, in January 2003, the Bush administration cut off veterans health care for 164,000 veterans. That is right in the Federal Register. It is documented on January 17, 2003.

In March of 2003, the Republican budget, crafted then by this Republican Congress at the time, cut $14 billion from veterans health care that was passed by the Congress with 199 Democrats voting against it.

In March of 2004, the Republican budget shortchanged veterans health care by $1.5 billion, and that was passed by a Congress with 201 Democrats voting against it.

Fast forward to March of 2005. President Bush shortchanged veterans health care by more than $2 billion in 2005 and cut veterans health care by $14 billion over 5 years, and that had 201 Democrats voting against it.

But that is not all. Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 2005, after Democratic pressure, the Bush administration finally acknowledged, when I got here, Mr. Speaker, the Republican administration was denying, Mr. MEEK, you remember this, they were denying there was a shortfall in the Veterans Administration budget, repeatedly denying it. There were articles about the dispute. The Veterans Administration insisted there wasn't a problem; but finally in the summer of 2005, after constant pressure from the Democrats in the minority, they finally had to acknowledge that the fiscal 2006 shortfall in veterans health care totaled $2.7 billion. We had to fight all summer to fix that.

□ 1515

We had to do an emergency supplemental during that summer to make sure that we could fund that shortfall.

I remember when we were doing the 30-Something Working Group during that time, I remember Mr. MEEK put the picture of the Secretary of the Department of the Veterans Administration up on that table there because what seemed important to the Secretary of the VA at the time was that his picture be hanging in every building run by the VA, and he was all the while denying there was a shortfall in his budget, and he couldn't adequately provide for the veterans under his care; but he was going to make darn sure his picture was hanging in every building.

In March of 2006, President Bush's budget cut veterans' funding by $6 billion over 5 years, and that was passed by a Republican-controlled Congress.

Finally, after November 7, 2006, and the American people voted for a new direction, the Democratic Congress increased the veterans' health care budget by $3.6 billion in the joint funding resolution. And in the supplemental legislation we passed, we provide an additional $1.7 billion to fund veterans' health care and to address the significant problems we have at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which were also denied and not acknowledged until the Washington Post exposed the travesty. We have since had heads roll, the Secretary of the Army, the general that headed up Walter Reed and numerous

others. The only reason we had accountability there, finally, is because we have a check and balance. We have oversight and hearings going on. Congress is asking questions. We are not allowing one person to make all of the decisions and impose them on the people that he represents. Finally.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we have all worked very hard this week to see the positive outcome of the legislation today.

As I started, I would like to close in my comments today by saying that I am glad that the Members voted in the affirmative for this legislation that passed. I think the American people will reflect on this day, and historians will reflect on this day that this has been the first day by the House of Representatives since the start of the war in Iraq that there were true accountability measures in there. There is reporting back to the Congress that the troops were protected by the language that the Department of Defense used as relates to its own policy of deploying troops, of sending troops back into theater on another rotation of what they have to have. I think men and women in uniform and their families will be forever appreciative of our action here today.

It is like when you are working at a work site, not at headquarters, you are working in a subsidiary, and you know there are certain policies management is supposed to meet, but because nobody is watching, they decide to waive the policy manual and have you work overtime without being paid overtime, or have you working in conditions that you should not be working in just to keep their numbers up so they don't get in trouble with their bosses.

Well, with the emergency supplemental that we passed here today, we have the backs of those workers. In this case, we have the backs of the men and women who wear the uniform.

Furthermore, I think it is important for those who have served in a battle zone that we have started down the track of making sure that we provide the kind of funding so when they get back, they will be able to get the counseling that they deserve. There is money in here to prevent abuse as it relates to children and families when they get back to military bases, and there is money to make sure that veterans don't have to wait months to be able to see a specialist. I think it is very, very important because there is a back end to this war, and there is a reality to this war, and it is our responsibility to ensure there is assistance to those who need it when they come back.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the American people for the role that they have played during this whole war. This week here at the Capitol we had people that were supporting the war, and against war but saying we have to support our troops. And I commend both of them for exercising their rights as Americans to be able to speak to their government about their feelings. I am glad that we live in a country that you can do that.

I am glad that Members did come to the floor. Some of them voted their conscience, some voted partisanship, and some voted because it was the right thing to do on behalf of this legislation.

As we move on with this process of bringing accountability to the war in Iraq and bringing an end to the war in Iraq with troops on the ground, that Members continue to pay attention to what our democracy is all about. I commend the Speaker for standing in the wind, getting bugs in her teeth on this issue and being tough on this issue even when we were in the minority. Now we are in the majority, and I think the American people are going to be very appreciative.

I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for hosting this hour today. It is always an honor to come to the floor and talk about the actions of today and look forward to tomorrow.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We have locked elbows for 12 years, Mr. MEEK, worked together and fought together. As we close, I was thinking as you were closing that you and I, we were born 3 weeks apart. The Vietnam war, when the Vietnam war was ending, we were less than 10 years old. We were little kids. I don't remember much about how the Vietnam War closed out, but that was the beginning part of the history lessons that we had in public school.

I remember learning about, and I have read articles and read textbooks and studied for exams learning about what happened to our men and women in uniform when they came back from that war. As they came back, they were spat upon and disrespected and unappreciated. We see sadly the results of that with so many of the homeless and mentally disabled veterans that scatter on our Mall and who stand up for the rights of veterans.

I have to tell you, I am also proud of the American people because as we grew up, and as we spent the balance of our lives until this point without there being war, that is not how our troops are treated any longer. The American people grew, and they learned, and that is what I am incredibly proud of.

I am proud that our colleagues today did two things that are important: We used our heads, and we listened with our hearts, and we will be able to bring our men and women in uniform home from this war. Until then, we will make sure that they have the funding that they need, the equipment that they deserve, and the plan to get them home.

Mr. Speaker, the 30-Something Working Group is always proud to be able to come to the floor at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House and our leadership team. If anyone wants to contact us or see any of the charts or see any of the information that we have talked about on the floor this afternoon, they can e-mail us at 30SomethingDems@mail.house.gov or visit us at our Web site, www.speaker.gov/30something.

OMISSION FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2007 AT PAGE H2954

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2007 AT PAGE H2760

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) for 2 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR. First let me tell the gentleman from Georgia I appreciate him trying to save some money. I think his efforts, though, are a year late. If you want to look for Katrina fraud, look for Katrina fraud that was perpetrated by the Bush administration.

In south Mississippi we had 40,000 people at one point living in FEMA trailers. We are grateful for every one of them, but those trailers were delivered by a friend of the President, Riley Bechtel, a major contributor to the Bush administration. He got $16,000 to haul a trailer the last 70 miles from Purvis, Mississippi down to the gulf coast, hook it up to a garden hose, hook it up to a sewer tap and plug it in; $16,000.

So the gentleman never came to the floor once last year to talk about that fraud. But now little towns like Waveland, Bay Saint Louis, Pas Christian, that have no tax base because their stores were destroyed in the storm, a county like Hancock County where 90 percent of the residents lost everything, or at least substantial damage to their home, he wants to punish Bay Saint Louis, he wants to punish Waveland, he wants to punish Pas Christian.

* * *

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair would ask Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I would inquire as to whether or not those words are eligible to be taken down.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair cannot render an advisory opinion on that point.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I demand that his words be taken down.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. SARBANES, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.
(The following Member (at his own request to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)
Mr. MCHENRY, for 5 minutes, today and March 26, 27, 28, and 29.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 24 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, March 26, 2007, at 12:30 p.m., for morning hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

944. A letter from the Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Advertising by Commodity Pool Operators, Commodity Trading Advisors, and the Principals Thereof (RIN: 3038-AC35) received March 14, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

945. A letter from the Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Conflicts of Interest in Self-Regulation and Self-Regulatory Organizations (''SROs'') (RIN: 3038-AC28)received March 14, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

946. A letter from the Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Membership in a Registered Futures Association (RIN: 3038-AC29) received March 14, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

947. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Karnal Bunt; Regulated Areas [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0149] received March 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

948. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Importation of Mangoes From India [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0121] (RIN: 0579-AC19) received March 12, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

949. A letter from the Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Organization; Definitions; Disclosure to Shareholders; Accounting and Reporting Requirements; Regulatory Accounting Practices; Title IV Conservators, Receivers, and Voluntary Liquidations; and Disclosure to Investors in System-wide and Consolidated Bank Debt Obligations of the Farm Credit System (RIN: 3052-AC11) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

950. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket No. FEMA-7961] received February 28, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

951. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations — received February 28, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

952. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations — received February 28, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

953. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747 Airplanes [Docket No. FAA-2006-23921; Directorate Identifier 2005-NM-205-AD; Amendment 39-14812; AD 2006-22-15] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

954. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A300 Airplanes, Equipped with General Electric CF6-50 Series Engines [Docket No. FAA-2006-24958; Directorate Identifier 2006-NM-075-AD; Amendment 39-14818; AD 2006-23-06] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

955. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Raytheon Aircraft Company Models C90A, B200, B200C, B300, and B300C Airplanes [Docket No. FAA-2006-25157; Directorate Identifier 2006-CE-34-AD; Amendment 39-14814; AD 2006-23-02] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

956. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Boeing Model 747-100, 747-100B, 747-200B, 747-200C, 747-200F, 747SR, and 747SP Series Airplanes [Docket No. FAA-2006-24877; Directorate Identifier 2005-NM-253-AD; Amendment 39-14831; AD 2006-24-02] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

957. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Cessna Model 750 Airplanes [Docket No. FAA-2006-26242; Directorate Identifier 2006-NM-229-AD; Amendment 39-14817; AD 2006-23-05] (RIN 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

958. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Stemme GmbH & Co. AG Model STEMME S10-VT Sailplanes [Docket No. FAA-2006-24956; Directorate Identifier 2006-CE-32-AD; Amendment 39-14835; AD 2006-24-06] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

959. A letter from the Program Analyst, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Airworthiness Directives; Air Tractor, Inc. Model AT-602 Airplanes [Docket No. FAA-2004-20007; Directorate Identifier 2004-CE-50-AD; Amendment 39-14821; AD 2006-23-09] (RIN: 2120-AA64) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. RANGEL: Committee on Ways and Means. H.R. 1562. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and expand certain rules with respect to hosing in the GO Zones; with an amendment (Rept. 110–66). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California: Committee on Education and Labor. H.R. 1429. A bill to reauthorize the Head Start Act, to improve program quality, to expand access, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 110–67). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

Mr. SKELTON: Committee on Armed Services. H.R. 1538. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 110–68, Pt. 1). Ordered to be printed.

Mr. SPRATT: Committee on the Budget. House Concurrent Resolution 99. Resolution revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012 (Rept. 110–69). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

DISCHARGE OF COMMITTEE

Pursuant to clause 2 of the rule XII, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs discharged from further consideration. H.R. 1538 referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed.

TIME LIMITATION OF REFERRED BILL

Pursuant to clause 2 of rule XII the following action was taken by the Speaker:

H.R. 493. Referral to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means extended for a period ending not later than March 26, 2007.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mrs. NAPOLITANO (for herself, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, and Mr. RENZI):

H.R. 1662. A bill to amend the Reclamation Safety of Dams Act of 1978 to authorize improvements for the security of dams and other facilities; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. STARK (for himself, Mr. RAMSTAD, and Mr. KENNEDY):

H.R. 1663. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand and improve coverage of mental health services under the Medicare Program; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GOODLATTE:

H.R. 1664. A bill to authorize grants for contributions toward the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. ROSS (for himself, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. KILDEE, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. WALSH of New York, Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. EHLERS, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. PAUL, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, and Mr. MCGOVERN):

H.R. 1665. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide Medicare beneficiaries greater choice with regard to accessing hearing health services and benefits; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BURGESS (for himself and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas):

H.R. 1666. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide for increased price transparency of hospital information and to provide for additional research on consumer information on charges and out-of-pocket costs; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mrs. DAVIS of California:

H.R. 1667. A bill to establish a Vote by Mail grant program; to the Committee on House Administration, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee (for himself, Mr. FARR, Mr. FILNER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. COHEN):

H.R. 1668. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide that an individual's entitlement to any benefit thereunder shall continue through the month of his or her death (without affecting any other person's entitlement to benefits for that month) and that such individual's benefit shall be payable for such month only to the extent proportionate to the number of days in such month preceding the date of such individual's death; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. KENNEDY (for himself and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN):

H.R. 1669. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for integration of mental health services and mental health treatment outreach teams, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California:

H.R. 1670. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to require that advance notice of the results of any Department of Defense review of the circumstances surrounding the death of a member of the armed forces by friendly fire be given to the primary next of kin of the member before public release of the review; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. MORAN of Virginia (for himself, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. HINOJOSA, Ms. NORTON, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. FARR, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, and Mr. LEWIS of Georgia):

H.R. 1671. A bill to establish the United States Public Service Academy; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts:

H.R. 1672. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to deny qualified dividend income treatment to certain foreign dividends; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SHUSTER (for himself, Mr. TANCREDO, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. MACK, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, Mr. REYES, Mr. DENT, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. GALLEGLY, Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. COBLE, Mr. REGULA, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. WOLF, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. FILNER, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. CUMMINGS, Ms. CARSON, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. CANTOR, Ms. HARMAN, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. SHULER, Mr. PASTOR, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. HOLT, Mr. MCKEON, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, Mr. FOSSELLA, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. KUHL of New York, Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. TIAHRT, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. NUNES, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. PITTS, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. RUSH, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Ms. GRANGER, and Mr. DICKS):

H.R. 1673. A bill to posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of passengers and crew members aboard United Airlines Flight 93 who resisted the hijackers and caused the plane to crash; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. SPRATT:

H.R. 1674. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the site of the Battle of Camden in South Carolina, as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. CARDOZA:

H. Res. 263. A resolution recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity for Congress to improve the foster care system throughout the United States; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. HOLDEN (for himself, Mr. LOBIONDO, and Mr. ELLSWORTH):

H. Res. 264. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of ''National Correctional Officers and Employees Week'' and honoring the service of correctional officers and employees; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MORAN of Virginia (for himself, Mr. ISSA, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. HAYES, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. ROTHMAN, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. POE, Mr. HARE, Mr. MCHUGH, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. CASTOR, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. MCINTYRE):

H. Res. 265. A resolution honoring military children during ''National Month of the Military Child''; to the Committee on Armed Services.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 199: Ms. GIFFORDS.

H.R. 269: Mr. CARNEY and Mr. PORTER.

H.R. 281: Mr. STARK and Mr. KIND.

H.R. 303: Ms. FOXX and Mr. PORTER.

H.R. 354: Mr. CUELLAR.

H.R. 473: Mr. MILLER of Florida.

H.R. 493: Mr. UDALL of Colorado.

H.R. 522: Ms. CARSON.

H.R. 552: Mr. LOBIONDO, Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico, Mr. WALSH of New York, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mrs. BONO, and Mr. MICHAUD.

H.R. 553: Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Ms. KILPATRICK, and Mr. HOBSON.

H.R. 566: Mr. REYES and Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California.

H.R. 594: Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 628: Mr. JORDAN and Mr. WICKER.

H.R. 642: Mr. WALSH of New York.

H.R. 643: Mr. FLAKE, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. JINDAL, Mr. CHANDLER, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Ms. CARSON, Ms. WOOLSEY, and Mr. LAMPSON.

H.R. 680: Mr. PICKERING.

H.R. 683: Mr. WAMP.

H.R. 692: Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 694: Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, and Mrs. JONES of Ohio.

H.R. 698: Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, and Mr. LOEBSACK.

H.R. 790: Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS and Mr. RODRIGUEZ.

H.R. 804: Mr. BAIRD.

H.R. 861: Mr. PICKERING.

H.R. 868: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. UDALL of Colorado.

H.R. 890: Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. KIND, and Mr. AL GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 891: Mr. SNYDER, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, and Mr. SMITH of Washington.

H.R. 917: Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky and Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky.

H.R. 969: Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. SOLIS, and Ms. BALDWIN.

H.R. 970: Mr. TERRY.

H.R. 971: Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. GINGREY, and Mr. ALEXANDER.

H.R. 980: Mr. FOSSELLA, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. FERGUSON, and Mr. LAHOOD.

H.R. 988: Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California.

H.R. 989: Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. HENSARLING, and Mrs. MUSGRAVE.

H.R. 1002: Mr. BURTON of Indiana.

H.R. 1010: Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. SIRES, Ms. SUTTON, Ms. HIRONO, and Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California.

H.R. 1023: Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 1029: Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. RENZI, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1051: Ms. GIFFORDS.

H.R. 1061: Mr. COHEN and Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota.

H.R. 1076: Mr. KIRK, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. CAMP of Michigan, and Mr. PLATTS.

H.R. 1105: Mr. MCHUGH.

H.R. 1108: Mr. ELLSWORTH, Mr. STUPAK, and Mr. UPTON.

H.R. 1110: Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. ROTHMAN, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. JINDAL, Mr. PAYNE, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. BOREN, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. PLATTS, Mr. FORBES, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. RAHALL, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WAMP, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. SIRES, and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 1125: Mr. DENT, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, and Mr. KIRK.

H.R. 1153: Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. PUTNAM, Mr. RENZI, and Mr. FLAKE.

H.R. 1177: Mr. KANJORSKI.

H.R. 1192: Ms. LEE.

H.R. 1228: Mr. POMEROY.

H.R. 1239: Ms. CASTOR, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. MCHUGH.

H.R. 1252: Mr. REYES and Mr. KAGEN.

H.R. 1268: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. PLATTS, Mr. CARNEY, and Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 1302: Mr. PAYNE, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. WATSON, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Mr. ENGEL, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. BERMAN, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. BOSWELL, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. DICKS, Mr. RUSH, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, and Mr. SHAYS.

H.R. 1306: Mr. PORTER and Mr. MILLER of Florida.

H.R. 1331: Mr. BAIRD, Mr. COHEN, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HONDA, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. ORTIZ, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. SUTTON, and Mrs. JONES of Ohio.

H.R. 1343: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. MCCOTTER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. RENZI, and Mr. FARR.

H.R. 1350: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1391: Mr. WAXMAN.

H.R. 1398: Mr. LINDER, Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. MCHUGH, and Mr. REHBERG.

H.R. 1399: Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. PENCE, Mr. PORTER, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. PITTS, Mr. SHULER, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. KELLER, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, and Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 1400: Mrs. BONO, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. WOLF, Mr. BERRY, Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, Mr. MATHESON, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. DENT, Mr. PORTER, Mr. MAHONEY of Florida, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MACK, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1415: Mr. CLAY, Mr. STARK, and Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 1416: Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. CLAY, Mr. STARK, and Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 1439: Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, and Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida.

H.R. 1459: Mr. PITTS, Mr. OLVER, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Mr. MICHAUD, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. AKIN, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, and Mr. CONYERS.

H.R. 1462: Mrs. CUBIN and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 1469: Mr. PAYNE, Ms. WATSON, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. HOLT, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. BERMAN, and Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida.

H.R. 1475: Mr. CUELLAR.

H.R. 1497: Ms. SOLIS, Mr. HINCHEY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, and Mr. MCDERMOTT.

H.R. 1498: Mr. CLAY, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. EHLERS, and Mr. BERMAN.

H.R. 1524: Mr. SHAYS and Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 1532: Mr. WAXMAN and Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota.

H.R. 1533: Mr. KIRK.

H.R. 1536: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. REYES, Mr. MITCHELL, and Ms. ESHOO.

H.R. 1538: Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. HAYES, Mr. DELAHUNT, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. BILBRAY, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. AKIN, Mr. PORTER, and Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 1551: Mrs. MALONEY of New York.

H.R. 1558: Mr. PASTOR.

H.R. 1567: Mr. WAXMAN.

H.R. 1594: Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 1600: Mr. RENZI, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. GOODE, Mr. HINOJOSA, and Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 1608: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. OLVER, Mr. HARE, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. PETRI, Mr. HONDA, and Mr. KIND.

H.R. 1616: Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1620: Ms. BORDALLO.

H.R. 1638: Mr. ISRAEL.

H.J. Res. 9: Mrs. BLACKBURN.

H. Con. Res. 4: Mr. KLEIN of Florida.

H. Con. Res. 25: Mr. RENZI, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN.

H. Con. Res. 71: Mr. DENT.

H. Con. Res. 72: Mr. KILDEE, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Ms. SUTTON, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. DOYLE, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. ELLISON, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. REYES, and Mr. WILSON of Ohio.

H. Con. Res. 80: Mr. MCCOTTER.

H. Con. Res. 92: Mr. BOSWELL.

H. Res. 132: Mr. CROWLEY and Mr. HONDA.

H. Res. 233: Mr. DELAHUNT and Mr. GALLEGLY.

H. Res. 259: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. DOYLE, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. REYES, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. PETRI, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, and Ms. GIFFORDS.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

Under clause 9 of rule XXI, lists or statements on congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits were submitted as follows:

The amendment to be offered by Representative Bennie G. Thompson or a designee to H.R. 1401 the ''Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007,'' does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9(d), 9(e), or 9(f) of rule XXI.

OFFERED BY: MR. BOB GOODLATTE

I certify that neither I or my spouse has financial interest in legislation I introduced today (H.R. 1664) that would authorize grants from the National Archives and Records Administration toward the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library located in Staunton, Virginia.

DISCHARGE PETITIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XV, the following discharge petition was filed:

Petition 1, March 20, 2007, by Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas on House Resolution 220, was signed by the following Members: Sam Johnson, Jerry Lewis, John Kline, Candice S. Miller, Roy Blunt, John R. Carter, Joseph R. Pitts, Ted Poe, Joe Wilson, Tom Price, Jim Saxton, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, David Davis, Kay Granger, K. Michael Conaway, Rick Renzi, Thaddeus G. McCotter, Eric Cantor, Donald A. Manzullo, Michele Bachmann, Kevin Brady, Jerry Weller, John Campbell, F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Ginny Brown-Waite, Patrick T. McHenry, John T. Doolittle, Tom Cole, Jeb Hensarling, Thelma D. Drake, Michael T. McCaul, Mary Fallin, Jo Bonner, J. Dennis Hastert, Peter J. Roskam, Virginia Foxx, Mary Bono, Connie Mack, Stevan Pearce, Gus M. Bilirakis, Adam H. Putnam, Mark E. Souder, Rob Bishop, Scott Garrett, James T. Walsh, Mario Diaz-Balart, Dennis R. Rehberg, Ralph M. Hall, Jon C. Porter, J. Randy Forbes, Trent Franks, Ken Calvert, Lynn A. Westmoreland, Ron Lewis, Elton Gallegly, Dana Rohrabacher, Sue Wilkins Myrick, Jeff Miller, Zack Wamp, Henry E. Brown, Jr., Mac Thornberry, Paul Ryan, Tom Feeney, Bill Sali, Doc Hastings, John A. Boehner, Daniel E. Lungren, Harold Rogers, Ander Crenshaw, David Dreier, Patrick J. Tiberi, Jeff Flake, Joe Knollenberg, Lamar Smith, Howard P. ''Buck'' McKeon, Randy Neugebauer, Darrell E. Issa, Spencer Bachus, Cathy McMorris Rogers, David G. Reichert, Phil Gingrey, Tim Walberg, John Abney Culberson, Frank D. Lucas, Jean Schmidt, Peter Hoekstra, Paul E. Gillmor, John R. ''Randy'' Kuhl, Jr., Charles W. Dent, Thomas E. Petri, Devin Nunes, Bill Shuster, Greg Walden, John B. Shadegg, Wally Herger, Roger F. Wicker, Michael K. Simpson, Louie Gohmert, Doug Lamborn, Lee Terry, Jim Gerlach, Marsha Blackburn, Vern Buchanan, John Boozman, John E. Peterson, Judy Biggert, Deborah Pryce, Jack Kingston, Chris Cannon, Jim Jordan, Thomas M. Reynolds, Charles W. Boustany, Jr., Ray LaHood, Adrian Smith, Terry Everett, Barbara Cubin, Dan Burton, Bob Goodlatte, Nathan Deal, Todd W. Akin, Gary G. Miller, Howard Coble, Steve King, Bob Inglis, Brian P. Bilbray, Kenny Marchant, George Radanovich, Michael N. Castle, Roscoe G. Bartlett, Phil English, Mark Steven Kirk, Dave Camp, Bobby Jindal, Geoff Davis, Robert B. Aderholt, Todd Russell Platts, Steven C. LaTourette, Jim McCrery, Charles W. ''Chip'' Pickering, Rodney Alexander, Frank R. Wolf, Todd Tiahrt, Mike Rogers, Ric Keller, Joe Barton, Edward R. Royce, Jim Ramstad, Richard H. Baker, Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, Christopher Shays, Tom Latham, J. Gresham Barrett, Virgil H. Goode, Jr., Fred Upton, John Sullivan, Kevin McCarthy, Dean Heller, Michael C. Burgess, John Shimkus, Jeff Fortenberry, Heather Wilson, John L. Mica, Vernon J. Ehlers, Kenny C. Hulshof, Michael R. Turner, Mike Pence, Pete Sessions, Marilyn N. Musgrave, Sam Graves, Mike Ferguson, Ed Whitfield, and Peter T. King.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153 WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2007 No. 51

Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Spirit of the living God, fix our thoughts on You. Let not arrogant or impure thinking distract us from listening to You. Focus the attention of our Senators on serving You as they seek to do Your will. Make them wise to discern what they don't know.

Lord, today, enable our lawmakers to debate without quarreling. May they strengthen their friendships with each other. Inspire them to become disciplined followers, always ready to obey Your commands. May their lives be open letters for You that people can receive blessings from reading. Guide, teach, and strengthen our Senators until they reflect Your image of purity, gentleness, honesty, humility, generosity, and love.

We pray in Your blessed Name. Amen.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate will immediately resume consideration of the budget resolution, and only 30 minutes remains for debate. That time is equally divided between the two managers of the bill.

It is my understanding that the staffs of the chair and ranking member have been in discussions about establishing some order in the way the amendments will be voted on during the early stages of this vote-arama.

Members are asked to stay near the Chamber once the voting begins. There will be 10-minute votes all day long, and that time will be enforced for both sides.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 21, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 21) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for the fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

Pending:

Kyl/Thune amendment No. 583, to reform the death tax by setting the exemption at $5 million per estate, indexed for inflation, and the top death tax rate at no more than 35 percent beginning in 2010, to avoid subjecting an estimated 119,200 families, family businesses, and family farms to the death tax each and every year, to promote continued economic growth and job creation, and to make the enhanced teacher deduction permanent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled between the chairman and ranking member of the Budget Committee.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, first, I thank the Chaplain for the most excellent prayer that he offered today. I think it set the right tone for today's discussions. I hope very much that while we may disagree strenuously, we can do so in a civil way. I thank especially the ranking member, Senator GREGG, for the way he has conducted this debate on the other side throughout. As is always the case with him, it has been thoroughly professional. It has set an excellent tone. We have vigorous disagreements on policy from time to time, but there are many areas where we actually agree. With him in leadership, it has always been done in a professional way. We especially appreciate the cooperation from all of our colleagues and especially from the ranking member and his outstanding staff.

The budget, as it stands at this moment, takes us in a new direction. It takes us back to fiscal responsibility. It takes us toward a balanced budget by 2012. Here is where the budget stands as of the latest numbers that we have after action last night. Every year of the 5-year budget the deficits will be reduced until we are in balance in 2012, albeit just barely.

The next chart. The debt under the budget resolution, the gross debt of the United States as a percentage of GDP, will finally start to head down instead of increasing year after year after year.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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Under this budget resolution, the gross debt of the United States as a share of GDP will start going down in 2009. We will see a slight reduction in 2010. It is somewhat improved, in terms of reduction, in 2011 and 2012.

Spending under this budget resolution is going down as a share of gross domestic product—from 20.5 percent in 2008 down to 18.8 percent in 2012. So we have spending going in the right direction.

The budget resolution is only slightly above baseline for nondefense discretionary funding. The baseline is $438.8 billion. The spending in the 2008 budget resolution is $445 billion, a 1.4-percent difference. That is spending in dollar terms. I was talking about spending previously as a share of GDP. The previous chart showed spending as a share of GDP actually going down.

We do have a number of very significant priorities addressed in this budget. First and foremost is children's health care. We have up to $50 billion allocated over 5 years for children's health care to make possible the coverage for every child who would be eligible in the country. That is 25 times as much as in the President's budget for that same period.

We have also improved on the President's education numbers by 2008. In 2008, the budget resolution provides $62.3 billion compared to the President's budget for education of $56.2 billion for that year.

Another key priority is veterans health care. I am especially proud of what we have done. We have matched, or exceeded, the independent budget prepared by the Nation's veterans organizations. We have matched or exceeded it in every single category except construction, where the Veterans' Affairs Committee tells us they could not spend the amount of money in the independent budget because they simply could not let the contracts in time. In comparison to the President, we are at $43.1 billion for veterans funded, compared to the President's number of $39.6 billion.

On the alternative minimum tax, the old millionaires' tax that is rapidly becoming a middle-class tax trap, we prevent the number of people being swept up into the AMT from increasing from 3.8 million last year. If we didn't take action, that would increase to over 23 million in 2007. We prevent that increase from 3.8 million to over 23 million.

Similarly, in 2008, we prevent an increase to over 25 million people—largely the middle class—and to the upper side of the middle class from being caught up in the alternative minimum tax. That, by the way, is completely offset. Key priorities are the child health and family tax relief amendment. There is $15 billion in the budget resolution itself for children's health care. There is up to $35 billion in a deficit-neutral reserve fund. We also now in the resolution, after the Baucus amendment, extend middle-class tax relief.

We fully provide for marriage penalty tax relief, child tax credit, and the 10-percent bracket. We also provide for estate tax reform. Members will recall that we have this anomalous situation where we are going to go from $3.5 million of exemption per person under the estate tax in 2009—in 2011 it goes back to a million. We prevent that from occurring. So under the budget resolution, a couple could shield $7 million in assets without paying a penny of tax, and it is indexed for inflation.

The revenues in this resolution now, compared to the President's, are depicted on this chart. The green line is our revenues; the red line is the President's revenues. There is a difference of 1.8 percent now.

Seen in a different way, if you look back at what the President initially proposed for revenue, the President proposed $14.826 trillion of revenue. We have in this resolution almost the identical amount; we have $14.827 trillion.

So let me make clear that there is almost no difference in the revenue in this proposal compared to what the President initially proposed. Where would we get that slight difference in revenue? In the first place, there is no tax increase. We don't propose any tax increase in this budget resolution at all. I read some of the stories saying we have all these tax increases. We do not.

We do believe more revenue can be gained. The first place to go is the tax gap. That is the difference between what is owed and what is paid. In 2001 alone, the Internal Revenue Service tells us the tax gap was $345 billion.

Also, offshore tax havens. I have shown this picture many times. There is a five-story building in the Cayman Islands that is the home to 12,748 companies. Mr. President, this is a tax dodge. There are not over 12,000 companies doing business out of this building. They are doing monkey business out of this building. They are engaged in a massive tax evasion. This is the kind of thing we ought to shut down.

Another committee of Congress has told us that there is $100 billion a year—over $500 billion over 5 years—being lost to the U.S. Treasury to these offshore tax haven scams. We suggest cutting that off, stopping it, recovering that revenue. In fact, that would more than cover, by a substantial amount, the revenue difference between us and what is in the President's proposal.

Here is another example. This is a picture of a sewer system in Europe. What does a sewer system in Europe have to do with the budget of the United States? Unfortunately, a lot because wealthy investors and companies bought this sewer system in Europe, depreciated it on the books in the United States to reduce their tax in America, and then they leased the sewer system back to the European city that built it in the first place.

There are hundreds of billions of dollars involved in these tax scams. It is growing, and it is a cancer that has to be stopped.

This budget resolution also makes a beginning at addressing our long-term fiscal challenges. We have $15 billion in Medicare savings. We have major program initiatives to crack down on waste, fraud, and abuse. We have a requirement that tax cuts and new mandatory spending be paid for with a tough pay-go provision. We have a long-term deficit increase point of order. We have a ''save Social Security first'' point of order. We have a health information technology reserve fund. The Rand Corporation told us that alone could save $81 billion a year.

Finally, we have a comparative effectiveness reserve fund so that we go out and look at what are the most effective technologies and treatments in the medical area that work in one part of the country but have not yet been applied elsewhere. Health experts tell us massive savings could come from that initiative.

Let me end as I began. This budget resolution takes us in a new direction, a better direction. This is a budget resolution which restores fiscal discipline. It will balance the books by 2012; it will meet the high-priority needs of the United States; it fully funds the President's defense request and his request for war costs; it has major tax reductions for those in the middle class so that we assure that middle-class tax breaks continue. It also provides for estate tax reform and, at the same time, begins to address the long-term fiscal challenges facing our Nation.

I don't assert that this is a perfect budget. If I had a totally free hand, I am certain it would be different. But at the end of the day, the test for us is, can we write a budget for our country? In 3 of the last 5 years, there has not been a budget for the United States of America. Let me repeat that. In 3 of the last 5 years, there has not been a budget for the United States. It is our obligation and our responsibility to put a budget in place to begin the difficult task of balancing the books while meeting the priority needs of our Nation.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I begin by returning the courtesies of the chairman and doing it with sincerity. The chairman and his staff have been gracious and fair with us and, obviously, they are always professional. It is a pleasure to work with him and his staff.

We do, obviously, have philosophical differences, but hopefully it is a reflection of how this place should work, which is we do it professionally, we don't game each other, we don't yell at each other—sometimes we yell at each other—we basically air our views, make our points, go to our votes, and allow everybody to get their 2 cents in. That is the way this place should work, and it works because the chairman is courteous enough to allow us to accomplish that. I thank him for that and his

staff. They have done a great job here, as well as mine.

I do agree the country needs a budget. That is critical. But regrettably, the budget he has brought forward is not a good budget for this country. It is a budget that is inconsistent in many areas, but at its essence is the fact that it spends a lot more money, grows the size of the Government, increases taxes a great deal, increases the debt a great deal and, regrettably, does not address the most essential issue we face today, which is the fiscal meltdown this country is going to face when we put on our children the cost of the Government as we head into the retirement of the baby boom generation.

This chart reflects that situation. It is a little outdated because it was done earlier, and we don't have a chart machine like the chairman, but it essentially captures the concept that this budget has $700 billion in tax increases. That is the one number which is wrong on this chart because of the Baucus amendment being adopted—$700 billion of tax increases. That is the largest tax increase in the history of the country. There is $144 billion minimum in nondefense discretionary spending, $2 trillion of new debt, and it does nothing in the entitlement area.

The inconsistencies in this budget are palpable. In the tax area, for example, this budget, as I mentioned, will be the largest tax increase in the history of the country and will take us down the road toward what is essentially a European tax system where essentially we are going to be looking at a total tax burden on the American people that will head toward the tax burden of the nation of France. When this budget reaches its end, it will be about a 19-percent to 19.5-percent tax burden on the American people. Historically, the Federal Government tax burden has been about 18.2 percent. That is a huge increase.

The chairman holds up these charts which show the lines are very close between the President's tax increases and his tax increases. But his tax increases, as he says, recalculated now are about 2 percent higher than the President. Two percent is real money when you are talking a base of $3 trillion. In fact, 2 percent represents approximately a little more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in new taxes above what the President would have suggested.

Those are huge tax increases which the American people are going to have to bear. The concept that keeps being put out here, that these are not going to be tax increases, that they are going to be found behind a curtain somewhere, is simply not defensible. It doesn't pass what I call the duck test. It is ducking the issue, basically. But it doesn't pass the duck test; that is, if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and talks like a duck, it must be a duck. When you put $700 billion of new taxes into a budget, you are talking about raising taxes dramatically, you are talking about increasing taxes on working Americans dramatically, and that is what this budget does.

In the pay-go area, this budget is also totally inconsistent. It says we are for pay-go. In fact, pay-go has become a solemn oath of the other side of the aisle. I read a New York Times editorial the other day that says pay-go is wonderful. Somebody tell the New York Times that the Democratic leadership, under this budget, has exempted most of their favorite programs from pay-go. They have pay-go for programs that maybe the Republican side of the aisle would support, such as not allowing taxes to increase—yes, they apply pay-go to that issue. But when they have their programs they think are important, they don't apply pay-go to it. In fact, they specifically exempt it. For example, the agriculture language is exempted from pay-go. It looks as if SCHIP may be exempted from pay-go. The Baucus tax proposal which came to the floor was exempted from pay-go. The AMT amount in this bill is exempted from pay-go. The simple fact is, pay-go has become Swiss cheese-go under this bill. There is no relevance at all because it is an arbitrary effort to keep one side from doing what they philosophically agree with while the other side ignores it or basically overrules it for what they like to do.

The argument is that they haven't increased spending that much. Well, $144 billion in nondefense discretionary spending is a lot of money when you put it on top of the base. That is a big number. At least in New Hampshire it is a big number. I mean, $144 billion would run the State of New Hampshire for probably 20 years. Yet they claim it is not a big number.

Then there is no talk again of the inconsistency in this, there is no talk about the fact that there are over 27 reserve funds representing a $200 billion cost in new programs should they be instituted. That is a growth of the Government—which, I am sure, not all of those will be instituted, but the game plan is there to institute them—$200 billion of potential expansion in the size of the Government.

They take the position that they have added other programs by using the 920 account. There was an interesting debate yesterday where the chairman of the committee said to the Senator from Minnesota: We can't use 920 to address the extension of renewable tax credits relative to wind energy and issues such as that because that would cut veterans and it would cut health care and education. But he failed to mention to the Senator from Minnesota that there was already about $38 billion of the 920 account in here. Mr. President, 920 is a euphemism for, well, we really don't know how we are going to pay for this, so we are going to use the 920 account, and that is allegedly a cut across the board. So there is another $40 billion of spending in this bill that probably, in the end, is going to occur and not get paid for.

There are huge expenditures, huge expansion in the size of the Government, tremendous growth in the size of the Government in this bill.

Then we have entitlement accounts. The chairman of the committee continues to allege he has $15 billion in entitlement savings in this bill. That is an impossible statement to make unless you are only willing to look at one part of the bill because in the other section of the bill, they spend $50 billion in new entitlement programs. So you can't claim you are saving money when you are expanding entitlement programs and not net the two out. It is totally inconsistent.

This bill expands entitlement spending. It does not restrict entitlement growth. Ironically, it does it in a way that makes those programs probably not subject to pay-go when they are expanded.

This is the biggest failure of this bill. The spending is pretty bad and the taxes have improved a little, but basically this is the biggest failure of this bill, the failure to address what the chairman has talked about—I agree with his discussions, I agree with his hearings—has talked about the most severe problem we face as a nation; that is, the fact that when this baby boom generation retires, this Government becomes unaffordable for our children. The cost of three major entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—will actually exceed the total Federal Government cost as a percentage of gross national product by 2025, and we will have nothing available to do anything else or, alternatively, will have to tax our children into oblivion so they cannot enjoy a quality lifestyle. Yet this bill does nothing on that.

We offered a reasonable amendment on this subject. We suggested that people earning more than $80,000 as individuals and $160,000 jointly should not be subsidized in their drug benefit by people working in restaurants across this country or working at gas stations or working on assembly lines, and it was rejected by the other side of the aisle.

We suggested that hospitals and provider groups that are getting an inflated payment under the COLA by about 1.2 percent should have that inflated COLA payment reduced by about half. They will still be getting an extra half a percent, six-tenths of a percent in benefits, and that was rejected.

If either of those had been accepted, we would have moved toward some semblance of getting under control this outyear instability in our Medicare fund. Those two amendments would have done more to make Medicare solvent than anything else we could do around here and thus make it available to seniors when they retire and have our children able to afford it. But that was rejected. There was no action at all in that area.

The tax issue—have to come back to this issue. The idea that there is not a

tax increase in this bill is so patently absurd on its face that the first amendment out of the box offered by the Democratic leadership was to extend the tax cuts for certain tax cuts they felt they didn't want to have go up, and the reverse of that, of course, is they are willing to let the other tax cuts go up. That is obvious. That is just A follows B or 1 and 1 makes 2. So there is no question they are taxing.

This idea that there is a comparison between the President's numbers and their numbers in tax increases, again is a total inconsistency. They use OMB to score the President's numbers and they use CBO to score their numbers. But if we score it apples to apples and oranges to oranges, we see the difference is significant. This was calculated before the Baucus amendment was adjusted, so these would be adjusted down somewhat, but the differences are still significant, somewhere in the range of $250 billion of difference if we compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

When we peel everything away from this bill—I understand we are going to start voting at 9:30—all these inconsistencies, the fact that they don't use pay-go for programs they like but they do apply to positions which the Republicans might take, the fact that the tax increase in this budget is the largest in history and yet they claim there is no tax increase, the fact that the spending goes up dramatically and they claim spending doesn't go up, the fact that there is virtually—there are no savings in entitlements on a net basis and there is actually significant aggravation of the cost of entitlements for our children in this bill as a result of new programs which they anticipate, this bill is going to do significant damage to our economy, and it is going to grow the Government and make us larger.

It comes down to a very simple fact, really, when we take everything away: This bill essentially is a classic Democratic tax-and-spend bill. That is all it is. Bigger taxes, bigger spending, bigger debt, larger Government, and as a practical matter, it is not going to be a constructive event for us as a nation. So I hope my colleagues, when we get to final passage, will vote against it. We are going to have a lot of votes here, but in the end, what is going to pass, if this bill passes, is your classic tax-and-spend bill.

Mr. President, I believe we are supposed to start voting at this time.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, might I say the Senator now has hurt my feelings. Would the Senator's staff put up the caveman chart? That now has hurt my feelings. I don't know how I am going to be able to get through the day after the caveman chart. I don't think that is even a good likeness of the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. GREGG. I think this is actually the likeness of somebody from Nevada.

Mr. CONRAD. OK.

Mr. President, I think we now need to establish the order of the votes, or at least the first several votes, and for that purpose, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 622

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk, and I ask that it be reported.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. GREGG] proposes an amendment numbered 622.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Point of order against using reconciliation to create new mandatory programs and 20% limitation on spending reconciliation)

SEC. . POINT OF ORDER—20% LIMIT ON NEW DIRECT SPENDING IN RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION.

(a)(1) In the Senate, it shall not be in order to consider any reconciliation bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or any conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a reconciliation bill pursuant to section 310 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, that produces an increase in outlays, if—

(A) the effect of all the provisions in the jurisdiction of any committee is to create gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee; or

(B) the effect of the adoption of an amendment would result in gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee.

(2)(A) A point of order under paragraph (1) may be raised by a Senator as provided in section 313(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(B) Paragraph (1) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under paragraph (1).

(C) If a point of order is sustained under paragraph (1) against a conference report in the Senate, the report shall be disposed of as provided in section 313(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be accepted.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I will not object. This, frankly, is a complicated amendment. I am not sure I fully understand all the implications or ramifications of it, but the basic notion that we try to make certain that reconciliation is used for deficit reduction is one I embrace and, in fact, one that is in the budget resolution before us.

We have a requirement in this budget resolution that reconciliation only be used for deficit reduction. The amendment of the Senator from New Hampshire is an attempt to send that signal even more clearly, if I understand it correctly, and the Senator can correct me if I misinterpret it. That is my interpretation, and on that basis I would accept the amendment.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from North Dakota the purpose of this amendment is to make it absolutely clear we do not make reconciliation a stalking-horse to spend money. You have to use it to reduce the deficit.

Mr. CONRAD. Maybe we should explain what the term means. Reconciliation is a special process here in the Senate that gets around the regular order. It creates a superhighway to pass something. Reconciliation was designed and implemented to permit a fast-track basis for reducing deficits. Unfortunately, it can be abused and it has been abused in the past and used to actually increase deficits. That was never the intention.

We have prevented that from occurring in the budget resolution. So this is an attempt to prevent something that would have minimal deficit reduction from being used as a stalking-horse for a significant expansion of spending.

On that basis, I accept the amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the amendment is adopted.

The amendment (No. 622) was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senator from Arkansas has an amendment, but do we have an order that indicates on every amendment that there be 2 minutes evenly divided and that there be no second degrees?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The order provides that once voting begins, there is 2 minutes between each amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. And do we have an agreement that there be no second degrees, but that we would reserve the right, based on the managers' decision, to have side-by-sides in any case where that is required? Do we have that as an order?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The order is not for second degrees.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that both those provisions be in order, that we have 2 minutes of debate equally divided on a vote, that there be no second degrees, that at the discretion of the managers there be the opportunity for side-by-sides, and that we order rollcall votes at this juncture on all those votes that are presented.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 601

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I believe I am limited to 1 minute; is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is the Senator offering an amendment?

Mr. PRYOR. Yes, I offer amendment No. 601.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arkansas [Mr. PRYOR], for himself, and Mr. NELSON of Florida, proposes an amendment numbered 601.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a reserve fund to provide additional training for physicians and attract more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians in training)

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ____. RESERVE FUND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR PHYSICIANS AND ATTRACT MORE PHYSICIANS IN STATES THAT FACE A SHORTAGE OF PHYSICIANS IN TRAINING.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides additional training for physicians and attracts more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians in training, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to offer amendment No. 601, and I encourage my colleagues to look at it and vote for it.

The statistics are that by the year 2020 this country will be tens of thousands—tens of thousands—short on doctors providing the medical care we need around this country. What this amendment does is it creates a reserve fund that would provide additional training for physicians and help to attract more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians for training. It does not impose a prescriptive solution but creates a deficit-neutral reserve fund the Finance Committee can use to find the best way to help ensure citizens and States will have the number of physicians they need over the long term.

I thank Senator BILL NELSON for cosponsoring the amendment, and also the majority leader and the chairman of the Finance Committee for supporting this amendment. This goes back to the mid 1990s, where there were some caps imposed. This doesn't change that, but it allows the Finance Committee the room during this budget cycle to try to help resolve that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Who requests time?

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I suggest we do this amendment on a voice vote, and I ask unanimous consent that be the case.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 601.

The amendment (No. 601) was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 581

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the bill that creates a BRAC-type process for the rest of Government. I think this is one where we have a lot of priorities that people are interested in, yet nobody is for wasteful spending. So here is a process where we can actually reduce Federal spending in low-performing areas and be able to get the resources to spend in places we want to. It would be a BRAC-type system, which we are familiar with, and it would apply it to the rest of Government.

The commission of reports gives us one vote, up or down, without amendment, limited timeframe. This is a way we can responsibly, both parties, look at ways we can fund priorities in the future without raising taxes, and I hope that is what we are all about.

We are familiar with how that BRAC process works. A lot of people aren't particularly happy when the report comes out, but it has worked and eliminated some $50 billion worth of lower priority military base spending. I don't know anybody who runs for Federal office or public office anywhere who is for wasteful Government spending. Here is a way of getting at it. Because the system is built to spend, this would actually change that system to give us a process that can be fair to both sides of the aisle, and ongoing in its effort to be able to get this allocation on a more appropriate basis.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues on both sides to vote for the amendment, and I call up amendment No. 581 and ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. BROWNBACK] proposes an amendment numbered 581.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide funds for a Commission on Budgetary Accountability and Review of Federal Agencies)

On page 24, line 12, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 24, line 13, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 24, line 16, increase the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 24, line 17, increase the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 24, line 20, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 24, line 21, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 24, line 24, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 24, line 25, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 25, line 3, increase the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 25, line 4, increase the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, might I inquire of the Senator whether he will accept a voice vote?

Mr. BROWNBACK. Yes.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to vote aye on the Brownback amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on amendment No. 581.

The amendment (No. 581) was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 623

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk for immediate consideration. This is a technical amendment, agreed to by both sides.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. CONRAD] proposes an amendment numbered 623.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To clarify the treatment of certain provisions in conference reports)

On page 36, line 15, strike beginning with ''If'' through line 19 and insert ''When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.''.

On page 39, line 19, strike beginning with ''If'' through line 23 and insert ''When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.''

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, this is to safeguard minority rights on a conference report. It was suggested by Senator GREGG and his staff. It is very well taken. It should be adopted.

Mr. GREGG. I ask unanimous consent the amendment be adopted.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 623) was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 513

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, may I inquire, is amendment No. 513 next?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. DEMINT. I have a minute to speak?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is the Senator offering the amendment?

Mr. DEMINT. Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. DEMINT] proposes an amendment numbered 513.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for true deficit reduction in appropriations bills)

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT REDUCTION PROTECTION POINT OF ORDER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any appropriations bill that does not include the following provision:

''SEC. ___. For deposit of an additional amount into the account established under section 3113(d) of title 31, United States Code, to reduce the public debt $_____.''.

(b) ENFORCEMENT.—For purposes of enforcing allocations pursuant to section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, any amendment that transfers budget authority (and the outlays flowing therefrom) into the debt reduction account provided by subsection (a) shall be scored so that the budget authority continues to count towards the section 302(b) allocation (with the outlays scored at the same level as scored in the original account).

(c) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—In the Senate, subsection (a) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, this amendment is called the Debt Reduction Appropriation Account. Currently, while all of us, on both sides, are talking about the need to cut wasteful spending and try to trim the size of Government, our appropriations process does not allow for cutting spending and using it for debt reduction. This amendment establishes a debt reduction account for every appropriations bill so if during the debate of that appropriations bill we cut something in it, it will not be put back in the pot to be spent on something else. This account will be used for debt reduction, so if all of us have a debate about an item that should not be in a bill, it will go to debt reduction. It is a very simple debt reduction account for every appropriations bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Might I inquire from the Senator how this works? Perhaps this is something we could accept, but I need to understand how it works. Could the Senator tell me, as I looked at the amendment, on the bottom of the first page there is a blank, at least in the copy I have. It says, ''For deposit of an additional amount into the account established under section 3113(d) of title 31, United States Code, to reduce the public debt''—and then there is a blank. Is that filled in on the amendment of the Senator?

Mr. DEMINT. No, it is not. There is no dollar amount although there is a dollar sign here. I will have to inquire how that ended up there, but this is not a requirement to put anything in the account. This is an account, a designated account. If an amount of money is actually cut from an appropriations bill, then it will reduce the 302(b) amount. That amount will effectively be in that account which goes to debt reduction.

Mr. CONRAD. I see.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am constrained to resist this amendment because, as I understand it, what it does is, if the Appropriations Committee would cut in a certain area they would then be prevented from using that money in some other perhaps higher priority area. If there were savings in one area of the budget and Homeland Security needed additional funding, they would not be able to transfer the money.

On that basis I urge my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. DEMINT. Will the Senator yield for a clarification? His explanation, I am afraid, is not the amendment. We can still do what we normally do here, which is take money from one account and put it in another. But if a Senator wishes to reduce the amount of spending in a given area and does not designate it, there is an opportunity for it to go into a debt reduction account. So if we want to take money from any account and shift it to military or Defense, there is no prohibition in this amendment, so we do not change what we are able to do now. What we are not able to do now is, if we cut something and want that money to go to debt reduction—this amendment would simply allow, in the future, for us to designate it to an account rather than to additional spending.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, that is not my reading of how this amendment would function. I wish I had more time to analyze it. This is the first time I have seen it so I am in a very awkward position here. That is my reading of the amendment, so I have no alternative but to ask my colleagues to oppose it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

Mr. CONRAD. The yeas and nays have already been ordered. I ask the yeas and nays be ordered on all these amendments so we don't have to go through that every time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. It is not appropriate to order the yeas and nays by unanimous consent.

Is there a sufficient second on the yeas and nays on the DeMint amendment?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 38, nays 61, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 99 Leg.]

YEAS—38

Allard	DeMint	Inhofe
Bayh	Dole	Isakson
Brownback	Ensign	Kyl
Bunning	Enzi	Landrieu
Burr	Feingold	Lott
Chambliss	Graham	Lugar
Coburn	Grassley	Martinez
Corker	Gregg	McCain
Cornyn	Hagel	McCaskill
Craig	Hatch	McConnell
Crapo	Hutchison	

Sessions	Thomas	Vitter
Sununu	Thune	Voinovich

NAYS—61

Akaka	Dorgan	Pryor
Alexander	Durbin	Reed
Baucus	Feinstein	Reid
Bennett	Harkin	Roberts
Biden	Inouye	Rockefeller
Bingaman	Kennedy	Salazar
Bond	Kerry	Sanders
Boxer	Klobuchar	Schumer
Brown	Kohl	Shelby
Byrd	Lautenberg	Smith
Cantwell	Leahy	Snowe
Cardin	Levin	Specter
Carper	Lieberman	Stabenow
Casey	Lincoln	Stevens
Clinton	Menendez	Tester
Cochran	Mikulski	Warner
Coleman	Murkowski	Webb
Collins	Murray	Whitehouse
Conrad	Nelson (FL)	Wyden
Dodd	Nelson (NE)	
Domenici	Obama	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 513) was rejected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that succeeding votes be 10-minute votes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, Senator GREGG and I have now visited about the number of outstanding amendments. There are over 60 outstanding amendments. We can do three an hour. That means, unless some of our colleagues relent, we are going to be voting for 20 hours. That is the simple math.

I ask my colleagues on both sides, please, if you can withhold on your amendment and wait for another vehicle, we urge you to do that. We simply cannot spend the next 20 hours voting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from North Dakota. I would note, in our batting order, we have Senator BUNNING on Social Security, Senator DOLE on IRAs for soldiers, Senator ALLARD on mandatory spending, Senator SMITH on SCHIP, Senator THOMAS has one on extraneous items in the supplemental.

Then we will have, potentially, Senator GRASSLEY and—Senator SESSIONS on AMT first. Then Senator HATCH is going to get in here. We are going to get Senator HATCH taken care of. That is the lineup on our side so people have some type of idea.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 621

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that amendment No. 621 at the desk be called up for immediate consideration. I have sent a copy of the amendment to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING] proposes an amendment numbered 621.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund for a repeal of the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security Benefits)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR REPEAL OF THE 1993 INCREASE IN THE INCOME TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution by the amounts provided by a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would repeal the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security benefits, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, my amendment would repeal an unfair tax that affects 15 million seniors. I have brought this issue before the Chamber before, so it should be familiar to many of my colleagues.

When the Social Security Program was created, benefits were not taxed. In 1983, Congress decided that 50 percent of the benefits to seniors should be subject to tax. In 1993, we raised the amount to 85 percent of Social Security benefits. This tax affects supposedly wealthy seniors with incomes of $34,000 for single seniors and $44,000 for a couple.

My amendment is fairly simple. It creates a deficit-neutral reserve fund to allow Congress to drop the tax back to its pre-1993 levels. This means that 85 percent of the tax would be eliminated.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senator from Kentucky has done us all a favor by the way he has modified his amendment. It is an amendment we can accept. I ask if the Senator could accept a voice vote.

Mr. BUNNING. Absolutely.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, in my statement earlier, I failed to mention we have an agreement that Senator KYL's vote will come before 11 o'clock.

Mr. CONRAD. Correct. We will need to insert that.

I ask unanimous consent that we accept the Bunning amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 621) was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. We would like to proceed to Senator DOLE for the purpose of offering her amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized for 1 minute.

AMENDMENT NO. 553

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Carolina [Mrs. DOLE] proposes an amendment numbered 553.

Mrs. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To extend financial relief for our reservists and national guard deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq by allowing them to make penalty free withdrawals of their retirement funds through the year 2012)

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

Mrs. DOLE. The amendment I offer today is critical to our National Guard and reservists serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. It fixes a problem in the Pension Protection Act of 2006. Section 827 of that act allows National Guardsmen and reservists called into active duty for at least 6 months to make penalty-free early withdrawals from their IRA, 401(k), or 403(b) retirement accounts. This provision expires at the end of 2007. My amendment, which is fully offset, corrects this by extending this important provision through 2012.

Our National Guardsmen and reservists always stand ready to put their lives on hold and answer the call of duty. They are putting themselves into harm's way to protect our freedoms and security. They can face lengthy deployments that cause major financial strains for their families. These outstanding men and women should continue to have penalty-free access to their retirement savings if they find themselves in a deployment-related financial crunch.

I urge passage of the amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we are prepared to accept the amendment of the Senator from North Carolina. We urge our colleagues to accept it.

I ask unanimous consent to agree to the amendment offered by Senator DOLE.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 553) was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, next up is Senator FEINSTEIN. She has an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

AMENDMENT NO. 574

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I thank the manager of the bill. I call up amendment No. 574.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from California [Mrs. FEINSTEIN], for herself, Mr. KYL, and Mrs. BOXER, proposes an amendment numbered 574.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide an additional $543,000,000 for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program)

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $543,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $119,000,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $163,000,000.

On page 23, line 21, increase the amount by $109,000,000.

On page 23, line 25, increase the amount by $81,000,000.

On page 24, line 4, increase the amount by $71,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $543,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $119,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $163,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $109,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $81,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $71,000,000.

At the end, insert the following:

SEC. ___. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE STATE CRIMINAL ALIEN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Control of illegal immigration is a Federal responsibility.

(2) The State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (referred to in this section as ''SCAAP'') carried out pursuant to section 241(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1231(i)) provides critical funding to States and localities for reimbursement of costs incurred as a result of housing undocumented criminal aliens.

(3) Congress appropriated $300,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2004.

(4) Congress appropriated $305,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2005.

(5) Congress appropriated $405,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2006.

(6) Congress appropriated $399,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2007.

(7) Congress has authorized to be appropriated $950,000,000 to carry out SCAAP for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2011.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the budgetary totals in this resolution assume that $950,000,000 should be made available for SCAAP for fiscal year 2008.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I ask unanimous consent to add Senator BOXER as a cosponsor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, this amendment is cosponsored by Senator KYL.

SCAAP is a vital program to the States and localities to reimburse them for the costs associated with housing undocumented criminal aliens. Funding for SCAAP is authorized in the amount of $950 million for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2011, but we have never fully funded SCAAP.

Instead we have paid only pennies on the dollar for these costs. In my home State of California, there are currently over 20,000 criminal alien inmates. It costs California approximately $715 million per year to house these aliens.

In 2007, Congress appropriated $399 million for SCAAP. In this budget resolution, SCAAP is funded at $407 million.

In 2005, a total of 758 applications from 50 different States and the U.S. territories were submitted for fiscal year 2005 SCAAP funds.

The real problem here is that the problem of illegal immigration is a Federal responsibility. Yet the Federal Government consistently shifts the costs for enforcing immigration laws onto our States. This cost-shifting is not fair to State governments.

My amendment makes SCAAP funding whole by providing an additional $543 million to this program.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent to adopt the Feinstein amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 574) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 473

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, next we have Senator SESSIONS to offer an amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 473 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is the amendment at the desk?

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alabama [Mr. SESSIONS], for himself and Mr. DEMINT, proposes an amendment numbered 473.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To save families from the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) first by permitting a deduction for personal exemptions for purposes of computing the AMT)

On page 3, line 10, decrease the amount by $6,494,000,000.

On page 3, line 11, increase the amount by $2,594,000,000.

On page 3, line 12, increase the amount by $9,100,000,000.

On page 3, line 13, decrease the amount by $59,600,000,000.

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $51,000,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $31,100,000,000.

On page 3, line 19, decrease the amount by $6,494,000,000.

On page 3, line 20, increase the amount by $2,594,000,000.

On page 3, line 21, increase the amount by $9,100,000,000.

On page 3, line 22, decrease the amount by $59,600,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $51,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $31,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 5, increase the amount by $106,000,000.

On page 4, line 6, increase the amount by $255,000,000.

On page 4, line 7, decrease the amount by $12,000,000.

On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by $1,174,000,000.

On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $3,822,000,000.

On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $5,934,000,000.

On page 4, line 14, increase the amount by $106,000,000.

On page 4, line 15, increase the amount by $255,000,000.

On page 4, line 16, decrease the amount by $12,000,000.

On page 4, line 17, increase the amount by $1,174,000,000.

On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $3,822,000,000.

On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $5.934,000,000.

On page 4, line 23, increase the amount by $6,600,000,000.

On page 4, line 24, decrease the amount by $2,339,000,000.

On page 4, line 25, decrease the amount by $9,112,000,000.

On page 5, line 1, increase the amount by $60,774,000,000.

On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $54,822,000,000.

On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $37,034,000,000.

On page 5, line 6, increase the amount by $6,600,000,000.

On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by $4,261,000,000.

On page 5, line 8, decrease the amount by $4,852,000,000.

On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by $55.923,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $110,745,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $147,779,000,000.

On page 5, line 14, increase the amount by $6,600,000,000.

On page 5, line 15, increase the amount by $4,261,000,000.

On page 5, line 16, decrease the amount by $4,852,000,000.

On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by $55,923,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $110,754,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $147,779,000,000.

On page 25, line 8, increase the amount by $106,000,000.

On page 25, line 9, increase the amount by $106,000,000.

On page 25, line 12, increase the amount by $255,000,000.

On page 25, line 13, increase the amount by $255,000,000.

On page 25, line 16, decrease the amount by $12,000,000.

On page 25, line 17, decrease the amount by $12,000,000.

On page 25, line 20, increase the amount by $1,174,000,000.

On page 25, line 21, increase the amount by $1,174,000,000.

On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $3,822,000,000.

On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $3,822,000,000.

On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $5,934,000,000.

On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $5,934,000,000.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, this is an important amendment. It is not related to partisan votes that we have been casting, but it is a technical amendment that amends the nature of the AMT patch.

The AMT patch is a huge tax reduction. It does eliminate about three-fourths of the people who would pay taxes under the AMT. My amendment is fairer. It would include 87 percent as many, but the way it would fix the AMT and give relief would be to allow families to utilize their personal exemptions and their children's exemptions under the AMT accounting. That is not done today. As a result, seven times as many families with children are caught by AMT as are single persons. It is definitely striking at children and families. I urge that this be adopted because it is fairer, and it would reduce costs and save $82 billion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Sessions amendment would increase taxes in fiscal year 2008 by $2.6 billion. It would increase taxes in fiscal year 2009, for a total in those 2 years of $11.7 billion of tax increases. In later years, the Sessions amendment would provide additional revenue loss of $148 billion over 5 years. That busts the budget and takes us back into deficit. It is sort of the worst of all worlds. It increases taxes in the front end and then blows a hole in the budget.

I urge colleagues to vote against the Sessions amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 473.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask for the yeas and nays on the Sessions amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 100 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Alexander	Bennett	Brownback
Allard	Bond	Bunning
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Chambliss	Gregg	Sessions
Coburn	Hagel	Shelby
Cochran	Hatch	Smith
Corker	Hutchison	Specter
Cornyn	Inhofe	Stevens
Craig	Isakson	Sununu
Crapo	Kyl	Thomas
DeMint	Lott	Thune
Dole	Lugar	Vitter
Domenici	Martinez	Voinovich
Ensign	McCain	Warner
Enzi	McConnell	
Graham	Murkowski	

NAYS—53

Akaka	Durbin	Murray
Baucus	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Harkin	Obama
Bingaman	Inouye	Pryor
Boxer	Kennedy	Reed
Brown	Kerry	Reid
Byrd	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Kohl	Salazar
Cardin	Landrieu	Sanders
Carper	Lautenberg	Schumer
Casey	Leahy	Snowe
Clinton	Levin	Stabenow
Coleman	Lieberman	Tester
Collins	Lincoln	Webb
Conrad	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Dodd	Menendez	Wyden
Dorgan	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 473) was rejected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who requests time?

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, next is the Nelson amendment. I say to colleagues, on the Nelson amendment and the succeeding Kyl amendment, there will be 6 minutes evenly divided.

Mr. President, I ask Senator GREGG to remind Senators of whom we have left in terms of what is the rest of the order.

Mr. GREGG. Unfortunately, it is not whom we have left, but it is what the order is. I wish it was what we had left. Anyway, we go to Senator NELSON and Senator KYL, which are under a prior agreement to have both those votes before 11 o'clock; then Senator HATCH, Senator ALLARD, Senator SMITH, Senator THOMAS, Senator SPECTER, and Senator GRAHAM on our side. We are picking up other people as they come along and ask for time. That is the order now. All those will require votes potentially.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 626

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nebraska [Mr. NELSON of Nebraska], for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mr. PRYOR, proposes an amendment numbered 626.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To reform the estate tax to avoid subjecting thousands of families, family businesses, and family farms and ranches to the estate tax, and to promote continued economic growth and job creation)

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ____. ESTATE TAX REFORM INITIATIVE.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would provide for estate tax reform legislation that addresses the current flaws in the estate tax law by establishing an estate tax exemption level of $5,000,000, an estate tax rate of 35 percent, and a 5 percent surcharge on the largest estates, provided that such legislation does not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. President, this amendment provides a fiscally sound alternative for estate tax reform. It represents a fiscally sound approach to protecting family farms, ranches, and small businesses from the onerous estate tax. It is cosponsored by Senators LINCOLN, BAUCUS, LANDRIEU, STABENOW, SALAZAR, BILL NELSON, and MARK PRYOR.

The amendment provides for an estate tax reform initiative; the necessary next step to improving the estate tax component of the Baucus amendment adopted by an overwhelming margin of 97 to 1. This amendment gets us to a $5 million exemption and a 35 percent rate.

I hope the day will come when we can fully repeal the estate tax forever, but unfortunately today is not that day. Unfortunately, the fiscal realities we face do not at this time allow for a permanent solution. That is why we must adopt this amendment to provide peace of mind for thousands of families who are planning to pass their business, farm, or ranch on to the next generation.

Like the Kyl amendment, our amendment will allow us to accommodate the Landrieu proposal of a $5 million and 35 percent with a surcharge for the largest estates. Unlike the, Kyl amendment, this amendment is fiscally responsible and deficit neutral.

I look forward to working with the cosponsors of this amendment and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to enact meaningful estate tax reform this session, and eventually finding a permanent solution.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and join me in following through on the promise made in this amendment to extend estate tax relief with an exemption of $5 million and a top rate of 35 percent.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to Senator LINCOLN from Arkansas.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, Senator NELSON, as well as Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY, who have helped us in the direction of moving forward to something that is realistic in terms of estate tax reform. We will

have the opportunity in the Finance Committee to be able to craft something that makes sense. But without what Senator NELSON and I and others are doing here, we will not have the direction to do that.

Many of us know we have outlived the boundaries of the current estate tax law. We know in 2010 it may go away, but the fact is in 2011 it comes back at an old and arcane number.

What we do is take what Senator BAUCUS has already done in the first amendment we voted on and adopted, and we increase it to a realistic and balanced level of a $5 million exemption and a 35-percent rate, and we do it with a reserve fund that will allow us to make sure we pay for it in a fiscally sound way when it comes through the Finance Committee.

I have worked diligently on this issue since I have come to the Senate, recognizing that for our small businesses, our family businesses, and our family farms this is an essential component for them to be able to be aware of how they can plan for their finances to keep those family businesses in working order.

So we appreciate it. I urge our colleagues, this is a great opportunity to have the Senate on record as moving forward on this issue. I encourage all of my colleagues to take a look at it and support us because it gives us an opportunity to get moving on this issue.

Mr. President, I yield to my colleague, the Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, how much time is remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana has 10 seconds.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds, please, and to have the same amount of time added to the other side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, this is the right compromise on the estate tax at the right time. It is going to bring order to this tax that should be paid. It is about what Kent Conrad has done, by generating a budget that generates surpluses, enabling us to give tax relief, so we can give tax relief to small businesses and farms and people who have built their businesses. That is what this amendment does: a $5 million exemption, a 35-percent rate, and we will continue to take it down as the money comes forward to do so.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time in opposition?

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I am glad we are having the debate about the death tax. I regret the amendment I proposed a couple days ago was voted down. There were some suggestions it was because of the capital gains and dividends provisions that were tied to it. So I brought an amendment back with Senator THUNE that would eliminate the capital gains and dividends part of it and simply have us vote, along with one education tax credit, for real reform to the death tax.

Now, I want my colleagues on the Democratic side to appreciate—and I have certainly appreciated working with all three of them.

Mr. BUNNING. Can we have order, please.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky is correct. Please take conversations out of the Chamber.

Mr. KYL. Thank you, Mr. President. I prefer not to be raising my voice, but I cannot hear myself.

Let's understand what voting for the Democrat ''cover'' amendment would do. First of all, when we had a $5 million exemption we were talking about last year, all of the groups came to us and said: You have to index it for inflation or pretty soon it will not mean anything. The Kyl-Thune amendment is indexed for inflation, the $5 million exempted amount. The amendment that is being proposed on the Democratic side is not indexed for inflation, and you will hear from groups such as the Farm Bureau and the NFIB and other groups that understand it has to be indexed for inflation.

Secondly, you say the rate is 35 percent, but there is a surcharge for ''large'' estates. How are they defined? They are not defined. A majority of Americans, according to surveys, say rates above 35 percent are confiscatory. So the 40-percent top rate in this Democratic proposal is going to be a big problem for a lot of Americans, both those who have to pay and those who do not have to pay.

Finally, with respect to the idea this is paid for, appreciate the big expenses for estate tax are after the year 2011. So it is folly to say this is paid for. Yes, you will have raised taxes by about $60 billion to ''pay'' for this for the 5 years covered by the budget, but the reality is, it is not going to be paid for in the future.

Do you know what. All of us—the Senator from Arkansas, the Senator from Nebraska, the Senator from Louisiana, and other Senators on the Democratic side—have in the past appreciated the fact that when it comes to death tax reform, we should not raise taxes on some taxpayers to provide this relief for the people who have to pay the death tax.

The reality is, we should not have to raise money from one group of taxpayers to pay for the relief granted to this group. The reality is probably it is going to be the same group of folks.

So I say to my friends who would want to suggest this is a ''cover'' amendment, that they can be just fine on this issue of death tax if they will vote for the proposal that is before us right now. That is not the case. If you want the real cover, that is to say the appreciation of the American people, reserve your aye vote for the Kyl-Thune amendment which will come next.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 626.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 25, nays 74, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

YEAS—25

Akaka	Klobuchar	Pryor
Baucus	Kohl	Salazar
Bayh	Landrieu	Snowe
Byrd	Leahy	Stabenow
Cardin	Lincoln	Tester
Casey	Lugar	Voinovich
Collins	Mikulski	Wyden
Feingold	Nelson (FL)	
Inouye	Nelson (NE)	

NAYS—74

Alexander	Dole	McCaskill
Allard	Domenici	McConnell
Bennett	Dorgan	Menendez
Biden	Durbin	Murkowski
Bingaman	Ensign	Murray
Bond	Enzi	Obama
Boxer	Feinstein	Reed
Brown	Graham	Reid
Brownback	Grassley	Roberts
Bunning	Gregg	Rockefeller
Burr	Hagel	Sanders
Cantwell	Harkin	Schumer
Carper	Hatch	Sessions
Chambliss	Hutchison	Shelby
Clinton	Inhofe	Smith
Coburn	Isakson	Specter
Cochran	Kennedy	Stevens
Coleman	Kerry	Sununu
Conrad	Kyl	Thomas
Corker	Lautenberg	Thune
Cornyn	Levin	Vitter
Craig	Lieberman	Warner
Crapo	Lott	Webb
DeMint	Martinez	Whitehouse
Dodd	McCain	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 626) was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 583

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. KYL. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate my colleagues not supporting this proposition. There are two main—

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator have an amendment at the desk?

Mr. KYL. I am sorry, Mr. President. I thought my amendment was at the desk. It is pending.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. KYL. There are two main differences between the amendment that was just rejected and the one which I hope we will all support. The first difference was that the $5 million exempted amount for estates was not indexed

for inflation. In the Kyl-Thune amendment, it is indexed for inflation. I think if you will all check with your folks, you will find they want this indexed for inflation.

This is a little like AMT. At first it didn't hit very many people, but after awhile, it begins to hit a lot of people, primarily because of inflation. The same thing will occur here. The whole point of an exemption is so people would not have to worry about spending all the money on insurance and lawyers and accountants, and so on, to plan against the estate tax. That is why you want an exempted amount such as the $5 million, but it is important it doesn't get eroded over time. Again, one of the key differences between the amendment that was just rejected and this amendment, which I hope you will support, is this amendment is indexed for inflation.

Secondly, most Americans believe that a 40- or 45- or 50-percent rate is confiscatory.

The other difference between the amendment that just failed and the one I hope you will now support is that the maximum rate under this is 35 percent. I still think that is too high.

The amendment just agreed to had a maximum rate of 40 percent. I think 35 percent is too high, if you look at the various polls that have been taken. In any event, that is the maximum rate under this amendment. It has been supported by a bipartisan group on both sides of the aisle, which is why we sit at 35 percent, because the reality is that in order to have the estate tax reform, we are going to need a bipartisan coalition.

My concluding remarks are to reach out to my friends on the other side of the aisle. My final plea is that we can demonstrate in a bipartisan way by supporting this amendment, which has enough flexibility in it because it is a budget amendment rather than a specific proposal, to accommodate nuances that Members on both sides of the aisle would like to see in estate tax reform.

The time for reform has come. Adopting this amendment will make that point in a general way. Then we can sit down and work together to try to work something out that we can get passed. I would appreciate our colleagues expressing support for death tax reform by voting aye on the Kyl amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, there have been a number of statements about the previous amendments that are factually wrong. The previous amendment had a $5 million exemption per person, plus a top effective rate of 35 percent. My colleagues on the other side have misread the previous amendment. It had a top effective rate of 35 percent. I wanted to state that for the RECORD.

The fundamental difference between the two is that the previous amendment was paid for. This amendment, by Senator KYL, whom I respect, is not paid for. I would say to my colleagues, if this is a priority, why not pay for it? The hard reality is that if this amendment before us now is adopted—the Kyl amendment—it blows a hole in the budget, puts us back into deficit, after we have worked so hard all these hours to get a balanced budget by 2012. This proposal would put us back into deficit by over $15 billion in 2012. It would add $35 billion to the deficit.

I urge my colleagues to reject this amendment. In the previous Baucus amendment, we provided for all of the middle-class tax cuts and fundamental and significant estate tax reform. It was paid for. This amendment is not. It ought to be rejected.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 15 seconds.

Mr. KYL. I would like to make sure my colleagues don't think I was misstating a fact. The top effective rate is 35 percent, but there is a 5-percent surcharge on the largest estates. Am I wrong in that?

Mr. CONRAD. The Senator is wrong. I know why the Senator is reading it to conclude that. My tax experts tell me that the way the interactive effect occurs, the top effective rate is never more than 35 percent. I know why the Senator is reaching that conclusion. I would be glad to have my tax counsel visit with him because they assure me that in the previous amendment, the top effective rate was 35 percent. I know the Senator agreed about the 5-percent surcharge. I think time has expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is all time yielded back?

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I wish to make a point. I have talked to the chairman and this will be a 10-minute vote, not a 15-minute vote. From here on out, they will all be. Anybody who is not here, you are going to miss it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 583.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second. There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 102 Leg.]

YEAS—48

Alexander	Chambliss	Craig
Allard	Coburn	Crapo
Bennett	Cochran	DeMint
Bond	Coleman	Dole
Brownback	Collins	Domenici
Bunning	Corker	Ensign
Burr	Cornyn	Enzi
Graham	Lott	Smith
Grassley	Lugar	Snowe
Gregg	Martinez	Specter
Hagel	McCain	Stevens
Hatch	McConnell	Sununu
Hutchison	Murkowski	Thomas
Inhofe	Roberts	Thune
Isakson	Sessions	Vitter
Kyl	Shelby	Warner

NAYS—51

Akaka	Feingold	Murray
Baucus	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Inouye	Obama
Bingaman	Kennedy	Pryor
Boxer	Kerry	Reed
Brown	Klobuchar	Reid
Byrd	Kohl	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Landrieu	Salazar
Cardin	Lautenberg	Sanders
Carper	Leahy	Schumer
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Clinton	Lieberman	Tester
Conrad	Lincoln	Voinovich
Dodd	McCaskill	Webb
Dorgan	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Mikulski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 583) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks time? The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, Senator GREGG has indicated repeatedly that the 10-minute votes are just not being abided by. The only way they can be abided by is, No. 1, if people stay in the Chamber or very close to the Chamber. We are not going to finish this resolution unless we change the way we are doing business. We still have dozens and dozens of amendments remaining. We are going to be here until 1 o'clock this morning unless we change the way we do business.

I have to ask the leadership if they will support going to 10-minute votes.

Mr. REID. With no 5 minutes. That is fine with me.

Mr. CONRAD. Does the leadership support that request?

Mr. MCCONNELL. We have been doing it.

Mr. CONRAD. No, we have gone over.

Mr. REID. We have gone 15 minutes.

Mr. CONRAD. Will the leadership support us going to 10-minutes votes?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I certainly think that is a good idea.

Mr. CONRAD. Then the word has to go out that we are going to 10-minute votes.

I have to try to make amends on a previous debate. Senator KYL indicated on the Nelson amendment that it appeared to be higher than a 35-percent rate. There was reason for him to believe that, looking at the amendment. I want to make clear that while we believe the Nelson amendment had a top effective rate of 35 percent, just looking at the amendment, one could easily conclude that is not the case. So I want to make that clear. In no way were we denigrating Senator KYL's honor with respect to accurately and honestly depicting that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I thank the chairman for his remarks. I appreciate

it. Certainly, I knew there was no attempt to suggest that I was misrepresenting. I try to read things very closely. This is one of the situations where apparently it could have been read both ways.

I appreciate the comments of the chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the clerks have a difficult time going through these votes in 10 minutes. They can do it, but it would be a lot easier if people will stay here and when their name is called answer ''yea'' or ''nay.'' The way it is, they have to go back and forth so many times that it is like a jigsaw puzzle they have to work out every time.

The votes will be 10 minutes. There will be a 1-minute grace period. That is the way it is going to be. That is what everybody should acknowledge will happen. It is approaching noontime. We have a lot to do. We can condense this quickly, but people have to cooperate.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, for the information of Members on our side, the amendments, as they are presently lined up, are Senator HATCH, Senator ALLARD, Senator SMITH, Senator THOMAS, Senator SPECTER, Senator GRAHAM, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator LOTT, myself, Senator DEMINT, and Senator THUNE.

AMENDMENT NO. 508

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 508.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Utah [Mr. HATCH] proposes an amendment numbered 508.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a reserve fund for protecting coverage choices, additional benefits, and lower cost-sharing for Medicare beneficiaries)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. RESERVE FUND FOR PROTECTING COVERAGE CHOICES, ADDITIONAL BENEFITS, AND LOWER COST-SHARING FOR MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) implements improvements to the Medicare or Medicaid programs under titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act, respectively, or the State Children's Health Insurance program under title XXI of such Act; and

(B) does not—

(i) lead to fewer coverage choices for Medicare beneficiaries, especially for those beneficiaries in rural areas; or

(ii) result in reduced benefits or increased cost-sharing for Medicare beneficiaries who choose a Medicare Advantage plan under part C of such title XVIII, especially for low-income beneficiaries who depend on their Medicare Advantage plan for protection from high out-of-pocket cost-sharing; and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008, and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I have offered amendment No. 508 to ensure that Congress continues to protect Medicare beneficiaries' coverage choices, especially for those living in rural areas and low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

My amendment establishes a budget-neutral reserve fund so that if Congress implements improvements to Medicare, Medicaid, or CHIP, it may not do so in a way that leads to fewer coverage choices for Medicare beneficiaries. It also may not reduce the benefits of those beneficiaries who are enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans.

Medicare Advantage plans provide a range of benefits not available in traditional Medicare such as vision and dental care, physical exams, and hearing aids.

Medicare Advantage plans also have chronic care management programs to help beneficiaries with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or congestive heart failure better manage their conditions and stay healthy.

I conclude by urging my colleagues to keep in mind the following:

Beneficiaries across the Nation—whether they live in a rural State such as Utah or urban area such as New York City—now have more coverage choices.

These choices offer beneficiaries more benefits and lower out of pocket costs.

Beneficiaries are satisfied.

Let's not forget that it was through policy decisions supported by Members on both sides of the aisle that helped achieve those results.

And those results, in my opinion, are worth protecting for beneficiaries' sake. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment.

I ask unanimous consent that letters from the NAACP and LULAC opposing cuts to the Medicare Advantage Program be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WASHINGTON BUREAU, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2007.

Re NAACP support for the Medicare Advantage Program.

MEMBERS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), our nation's oldest, largest, and most widely recognized grassroots civil rights organization, I would like to express our deep concern about efforts to reduce funding for the Medicare Advantage (MA) program.

The NAACP has a long history of working to ensure that African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities have access to high-quality, affordable health care. That is why we strongly support maintaining adequate funding for the Medicare Advantage program that serves as a ''critical link'' for accessing health care services, particularly for low-income and minority Medicare beneficiaries.

MA plans—private health plan options that provide coverage to 8.3 million Medicare beneficiaries—disproportionately provide coverage to low-income and racial and ethnic minority beneficiaries. Specifically, 40 percent of African Americans without Medicaid or employer coverage rely on comprehensive health insurance coverage provided by MA plans. By providing more comprehensive benefits and lower cost-sharing than traditional Medicare, MA plans help racial and ethnic minority populations gain access to health care services that are critical to their long-term health and well-being.

Moreover, minorities also benefit from the care and disease management offered by MA plans. These programs help assure that members with chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and asthma receive high-quality care by encouraging timely and regular check-ups, access to preventive services, and chronic care management programs. Access to coordinated care and disease management services are especially critical to minorities who are more likely to suffer from common chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, respiratory disease, and certain forms of cancer.

Reduced funding for the MA program would have a negative impact on the health and health care of millions of Medicare beneficiaries—particularly for low-income and minority beneficiaries. A study by Emory University's Kenneth Thorpe, Ph.D., found that without MA, 2 million Medicare beneficiaries would lose all supplemental coverage. Racial and ethnic minorities would be especially hard hit, with the number of African-Americans without supplemental coverage rising to 59 percent.

As Congress continues to debate efforts to expand access to high-quality, affordable care, we urge you not to backtrack on these priorities by cutting funding for the MA program. This program is vitally important to the health and well-being of racial and ethnic minorities who rely on MA to provide them with the comprehensive, affordable, and coordinated care they need.

Thank you in advance for your attention to the NAACP position on this matter. Should you have any questions or comments, I hope that you will not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

HILARY O. SHELTON,
Director.

LEAGUE OF UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS,
Washington, DC, March 14, 2007.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS,
U.S. Senate and House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: I am writing on behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)—the oldest and largest Hispanic membership organization in the United States—to urge your opposition to efforts by some Members of Congress to reduce funding for the Medicare Advantage (MA) program.

LULAC's mission is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, health and civil rights of Hispanic Americans. Ensuring access to high quality, affordable health care is one of our top priorities, and one that is especially critical in the Hispanic community. We firmly believe Medicare Advantage is helping meet this challenge for Hispanic seniors.

Medicare Advantage is vital to the well-being of Hispanic Medicare beneficiaries. According to a 2005 study by Ken Thorpe, Ph.D.,

of Emory University, Hispanics rely disproportionately on the Medicare Advantage program. According to this study, more than half (53 percent) of Hispanic beneficiaries without Medicaid or employer-based coverage are enrolled in an MA plans where they are available.

MA plans are important because they provide enhanced benefits and lower cost-sharing than traditional Medicare. According to CMS, MA enrollees save $86 per month when compared to beneficiaries in traditional Medicare. We are concerned that additional cuts in funding for Medicare Advantage will threaten access to comprehensive benefits, result in higher out-of-pocket health care costs, and create financial barriers to care that will be particularly harmful for Hispanic seniors.

The coordinated care and disease management offered under Medicare Advantage plans is especially critical for Hispanic Medicare beneficiaries, who are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and certain forms of cancer. These programs help assure that members with chronic conditions benefit from care management and coordination initiatives, which promote appropriate treatment and medication use, reduce the risk of adverse events, and optimize therapeutic outcomes.

LULAC calls upon your leadership to oppose these cuts and fund MA programs to sustainable levels.

Sincerely,

ROSA ROSALES,
LULAC National President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, on April 11, the Finance Committee is going to be holding a hearing on Medicare Advantage plans and other providers' plans that affect Medicare. We want to do this right. We want to do this in a very thoughtful, considerate way.

There are Medicare Advantage plans that are doing a lot of good work. That is clear. Certainly, the Finance Committee, of which Senator HATCH is a member—and we have the April 11 hearing—is going to deal with this issue. I urge Members to do this the right way, and the right way is to figure out what to do generally with all Medicare providers, including managed care. Again, there are managed care companies that are very good and provide benefits for seniors. Dental has already been mentioned by the good Senator from Utah. The more thoughtful way is to not hamstring the committee by preventing the committee from making any changes to these programs. Rather, let's be thoughtful, flexible.

I urge Members not to approve this amendment.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 508. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 103 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Alexander	Dole	McConnell
Allard	Domenici	Murkowski
Bennett	Ensign	Roberts
Bond	Enzi	Sessions
Brownback	Graham	Shelby
Bunning	Grassley	Smith
Burr	Gregg	Snowe
Chambliss	Hagel	Specter
Coburn	Hatch	Stevens
Cochran	Hutchison	Sununu
Coleman	Inhofe	Thomas
Collins	Isakson	Thune
Corker	Kyl	Vitter
Cornyn	Lott	Voinovich
Craig	Lugar	Warner
Crapo	Martinez	
DeMint	McCain	

NAYS—50

Akaka	Feingold	Murray
Baucus	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Inouye	Obama
Bingaman	Kennedy	Pryor
Boxer	Kerry	Reed
Brown	Klobuchar	Reid
Byrd	Kohl	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Landrieu	Salazar
Cardin	Lautenberg	Sanders
Carper	Leahy	Schumer
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Clinton	Lieberman	Tester
Conrad	Lincoln	Webb
Dodd	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Dorgan	Menendez	Wyden
Durbin	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 508) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we are making progress, but we are not making progress fast enough. If we stick to this current pace, and people insist on the number of amendments that are still outstanding, we are going to be here all night. Staff just informed me that is the reality.

Please, if you can withhold and offer them on a separate vehicle, do that.

Senator ALLARD is next.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

AMENDMENT NO. 521

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 521 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Colorado [Mr. ALLARD] proposes an amendment numbered 521.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of Federal programs and reduce the Federal debt by eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse)

At the end of the resolution, insert the following:

TITLE IV—RECONCILIATION

SEC. 401. SPENDING RECONCILIATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN MANDATORY PROGRAMS.

(a) SPENDING RECONCILIATION INSTRUCTIONS.—In the Senate, not later than June 29, 2007, the Senate committees named in this section shall submit their recommendations to the Senate Committee on the Budget. After receiving those recommendations, the Senate Committee on the Budget shall report to the Senate a reconciliation bill carrying out all such recommendations without any substantive revision.

(b) SPECIAL SCOREKEEPING RULE IN THE SENATE.—

(1) REPORT TO SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE.—If a reconciliation bill is enacted under this section, the Congressional Budget Office, pursuant to section 202 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, shall send a report to the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget—

(A) whether that measure contains provisions that decrease budget authority or outlays from the elimination of waste, fraud, and abuse; and

(B) the amount of budget authority or outlays reduced each year attributable to the elimination of waste, fraud, and abuse in the bill, including the current year, the budget year, and for each of the 10 years following the current year.

(2) EXCLUSION FROM PAY-AS-YOU-GO SCORECARD.—Any budget authority or outlays reduced from provisions eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse (as detailed in the report required by paragraph (1)) shall not count as offsets for purposes of section 201 of this resolution.

(c) COMMITTEES.—

(1) COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY.—The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $686,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $3,577,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(2) COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS.—The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $113,000,000 in new budget authority for fiscal year 2008 and $529,000,000 in new budget authority for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(3) COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION.—The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $110,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $545,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(4) COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.—The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $48,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $250,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(5) COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS.—The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $18,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $97,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(6) COMMITTEE ON FINANCE.—The Senate Committee on Finance shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that

committee by $10,406,000,000 in budget authority for fiscal year 2008 and $58,820,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(7) COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS.—The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $148,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $665,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(8) COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.—The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $1,063,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $5,784,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(9) COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—The Senate Committee on the Judiciary shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $81,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $406,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(10) COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS.—The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce the level of direct spending for that committee by $145,000,000 in outlays for fiscal year 2008 and $778,000,000 in outlays for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, this is an amendment that puts in reconciliation language a 1-percent reduction in spending in the mandatory programs that have been identified as having fraud, waste, and abuse. It excludes Armed Services, Veterans, and Social Security.

The amendment comes about because of the 2004 budget resolution, where Congress directed the Comptroller General to submit a comprehensive report identifying instances in which the committees of jurisdiction may make legislative changes to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of Federal programs in their jurisdiction.

In compliance with our request, the GAO submitted a 300-plus-page report full of specific examples of legislative changes with potential to yield budgetary savings. This will reduce the debt by $13 billion the first budget year and $71 billion over 5 years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, this amendment, if it were adopted, would cut Medicare and Medicaid by $58.8 billion. It would cut the Homeland Security Committee by $5.8 billion. It would cut the Agriculture Committee by $3.6 billion.

Beyond that, Mr. President, the pending amendment is not germane. Therefore, I raise a point of order that the amendment violates section 305(b)2 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and I urge a ''no'' vote.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask that we waive the point of order, and I call for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 39, nays 60, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 104 Leg.]

YEAS—39

Alexander	DeMint	Lott
Allard	Dole	Martinez
Bennett	Ensign	McCain
Brownback	Enzi	McConnell
Bunning	Graham	Roberts
Burr	Grassley	Sessions
Chambliss	Gregg	Shelby
Coburn	Hagel	Sununu
Cochran	Hatch	Thomas
Corker	Hutchison	Thune
Cornyn	Inhofe	Vitter
Craig	Isakson	Voinovich
Crapo	Kyl	Warner

NAYS—60

Akaka	Durbin	Murray
Baucus	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Harkin	Obama
Bingaman	Inouye	Pryor
Bond	Kennedy	Reed
Boxer	Kerry	Reid
Brown	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Byrd	Kohl	Salazar
Cantwell	Landrieu	Sanders
Cardin	Lautenberg	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Smith
Casey	Levin	Snowe
Clinton	Lieberman	Specter
Coleman	Lincoln	Stabenow
Collins	Lugar	Stevens
Conrad	McCaskill	Tester
Dodd	Menendez	Webb
Domenici	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Dorgan	Murkowski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 39, the nays are 60. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The point of order is sustained, and the amendment fails.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 510, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the next amendment is the Smith amendment.

Let me just say we have to get colleagues to cooperate a little more on reducing the number of amendments they are insisting on or we are going to be here late into the night. That is just what the reality is. Please, colleagues, withhold.

Senator SMITH is next.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 510 and ask that it be modified with the changes at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. SMITH] proposes an amendment numbered 510, as modified.

Mr. SMITH. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of section 301, add the following: ''Among the policy changes that could be considered to achieve offsets to the cost of reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program and expanding coverage for children is an increase in the tobacco products user fee rate with all revenue generated by such increase dedicated to such reauthorization and expansion.''.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I also ask that Senator KENNEDY, at his request, be added as an original cosponsor to the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, since the beginning of this Congress, I have heard colleagues on both sides of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats, talk about their determination to reauthorize and fund SCHIP to keep its promise to America's children, especially those with low income. This amendment is the one amendment that proposes a real policy that will raise real dollars so we can take a meaningful step in keeping the promise of SCHIP. It proposes a reasonable increase in the tobacco tax that would provide up to $35 billion to help in this reauthorization, keeping this very important promise to millions of America's children.

I believe this is a defining moment. Put politics aside and do something the American people can be proud of.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition? The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we would be pleased to accept this amendment on a voice vote.

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

Mr. CONRAD. If objection is heard—Senators can vote however they think is the right way. We certainly always have that right; Senators always have that right.

On this side, I urge Senators to vote aye.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 510, as modified. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 105 Leg.]

YEAS—59

Akaka	Bennett	Boxer
Baucus	Biden	Brown
Bayh	Bingaman	Byrd

Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Clinton
Cochran
Coleman
Collins
Conrad
Dodd
Dorgan
Durbin
Feingold
Feinstein
Gregg
Harkin
Hatch
Inouye
Kennedy
Kerry
Klobuchar
Kohl
Landrieu
Lautenberg
Leahy
Levin
Lieberman
Lincoln
Lugar
Martinez
Menendez
Mikulski
Murkowski
Murray
Nelson (FL)
Obama
Pryor
Reed
Rockefeller
Salazar
Sanders
Schumer
Smith
Snowe
Specter
Stabenow
Stevens
Tester
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—40

Alexander
Allard
Bond
Brownback
Bunning
Burr
Chambliss
Coburn
Corker
Cornyn
Craig
Crapo
DeMint
Dole
Domenici
Ensign
Enzi
Graham
Grassley
Hagel
Hutchison
Inhofe
Isakson
Kyl
Lott
McCain
McCaskill
McConnell
Nelson (NE)
Reid
Roberts
Sessions
Shelby
Sununu
Thomas
Thune
Vitter
Voinovich
Warner
Webb

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 510), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 519, 499, 528, 546, 602, 619, 490, 616, 620, 615, AND 614, EN BLOC

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, Senator GREGG and I have worked through a number of amendments, and I will now send that package to the desk and ask that the amendments be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid on the table.

The list of amendments includes: Lieberman-Collins No. 519; Burr No. 499; Biden No. 528; Thune No. 546; Kennedy No. 602; Chambliss-Feinstein No. 619; Reid-Sanders No. 490; Kerry-Sanders No. 616; Webb-Warner No. 620; Kerry No. 615; and Graham No. 614.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments were agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 519

(Purpose: To increase funding for vital first responder homeland security programs, including $400,000,000 to establish a dedicated interoperability grant program and $331,000,000 for Emergency Management Performance Grants)

On page 16, line 10, increase the amount by $731,000,000.

On page 16, line 11, increase the amount by $156,000,000.

On page 16, line 15, increase the amount by $232,000,000.

On page 16, line 19, increase the amount by $181,000,000.

On page 16, line 23, increase the amount by $133,000,000.

On page 17, line 3, increase the amount by $28,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $731,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $156,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $232,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $181,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $133,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $28,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 499

(Purpose: To develop biodefense medical countermeasures by fully funding the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) in a fiscally responsible manner)

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $140,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $84,000,000.

On page 18, line 17, increase the amount by $42,000,000.

On page 18, line 21, increase the amount by $14,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $140,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $84,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $42,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $14,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 528

(Purpose: To increase funding by $100 million for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs administered by the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, with an offset of an unallocated reduction to non-defense discretionary spending and/or reduction to administrative expenses)

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $11,000,000.

On page 18, line 17, increase the amount by $18,000,000.

On page 18, line 21, increase the amount by $9,000,000.

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $60,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $13,000,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $18,000,000.

On page 23, line 21, increase the amount by $12,000,000.

On page 23, line 25, increase the amount by $9,000,000.

On page 24, line 4, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $100,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $24,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $36,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $21,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $9,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $8,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 546

(Purpose: To provide for a total of $99,000,000 in COPS Hot Spots funding, as authorized in the Combat Meth Act)

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $29,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $26,100,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $2,900,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $29,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $26,100,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $2,900,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 602

(Purpose: To increase funding for drug safety oversight at the Food and Drug Administration by $40,000,000 in fiscal year 2008)

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $36,000,000.

On page 18, line 17, increase the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $36,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 619

(Purpose: To provide Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program finding as authorized in the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005)

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $376,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $338,400,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $37,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $376,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $338,400,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $37,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 490

(Purpose: To provide funding to eliminate the offset between military retirement pay and disability compensation for America's veterans)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. ____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ELIMINATING MILITARY RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY OFFSET.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would extend eligibility for concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and veterans' disability compensation or would expand eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation to permit additional disabled retirees to receive both disability compensation and retired pay, by the amounts provided by such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 616

(Purpose: To increase funding for small business programs at the Small Business Administration such as microloans, Women's Business Centers, and Small Business Development Centers)

On page 14, line 9, increase the amount by $97,000,000.

On page 14, line 10, increase the amount by $75,000,000.

On page 14, line 14, increase the amount by $16,000,000.

On page 14, line 18, increase the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 14, line 22, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $97,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $75,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $16,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 620

(Purpose: To provide funding for NASA aeronautics at the fiscal year 2007 levels)

On page 15, line 9, increase the amount by $163,000,000.

On page 15, line 10, increase the amount by $163,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $163,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $163,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 615

(Purpose: To include in the veterans' reserve fund services for low-vision and blinded veterans)

On page 59, line 7, after ''erans,'' insert ''including services for low-vision and blinded veterans,''.

AMENDMENT NO. 614

(Purpose: To increase the budgetary totals for the Department of Commerce to provide additional trade enforcement capability and to provide an offset)

On page 9, line 8, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 9, line 9, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 9, line 12, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 9, line 13, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 9, line 16, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 9, line 17, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 14, line 9, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 14, line 10, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 14, line 13, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 14, line 14, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 14, line 17, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 14, line 18, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 23, line 16, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 24, line 20, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 23, line 21, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 14, line 17, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 14, line 18, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 24, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 24, line 13, increase the amount by $8,000,000.

On page 24, line 16, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 24, line 17, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 24, line 20, increase the amount by $_____.

On page 24, line 21, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $32,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $_____.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $_____.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $4,000,000.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of an amendment to the budget resolution that Senator CHAMBLISS and I have offered to increase FY2008 funding for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program to $900 million.

The need for this amendment is clear. This country is currently experiencing a violent crime surge unlike anything we have seen in more than a decade. Just a few weeks ago, the Police Executive Research Forum reported that their survey of 56 cities and sheriffs' departments showed that, from 2004 to 2006, homicides increased overall by 10 percent, aggravated assaults with guns rose 10 percent, and robberies rose 12 percent. In just 2 years.

Of course, these updated survey results mirror the FBI's own statistics, which showed that in 2005 violent crime rose in every region of the country, and by 2.5 percent overall—the largest reported increase in 15 years. For the first 6 months of 2006, the surge in violent crime was even worse—3.7 percent overall, according to the FBI.

Let me put these numbers in human terms. The International Association of Chiefs of Police equates this 2.5 percent rise to 31,479 more victims of violent crime in 2005. And a 3.7 percent increase for all of 2006, it says, equates to about 47,000 more Americans murdered, robbed, assaulted, raped, or subjected to violent crimes last year.

Unfortunately, despite these disturbing numbers, the President's budget proposal for FY2008 continued to propose drastic cuts in the Federal assistance traditionally available to State and local law enforcement.

Listen to the warning cry that the International Association of Chiefs of Police recently issued:

> [T]he cuts contained in the proposed FY 2008 budget have the potential to cripple the capabilities of law enforcement agencies nationwide and force many departments to take officers off the streets, leading to more crime and violence in our hometowns and, ultimately, less security for our homeland.

These are strong words, but they make sense in the wake of the drastic Federal cuts we have seen to State and local law enforcement, especially in the last few years.

In FY2007, the total funding level for State, tribal and local law enforcement assistance was $2.316 billion. That was already more than $1.5 billion below the level given only 5 years earlier, when DOJ funded programs for state and local law enforcement totaled $3.831 billion.

Last year's $2.316 billion amount included not only Byrne/JAG, but also the COPS program and 17 other State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance grant programs, including the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, SCAAP; Tribal Courts Initiative, and other programs to promote Drug Courts, Prescription Drug Monitoring, Cannabis Eradication, and State and Local Intelligence Capabilities.

For FY2008, however, the President remarkably proposed to eliminate all 17 of these programs. In their place, it proposed only two consolidated programs, one of which would be called the Byrne Public Safety Program, or BPSP. Unfortunately, even when BPSP was combined with the President's other proposed programs, its total budgeted amount for FY2008 was only $582 million—a $1.7 billion cut from the already-depleted FY2007 number.

In other words, the President's budgeted $582 million represented an 85 percent cut in these funds in just 6 years. And to make matters worse, the President's FY2008 budget also proposed more than $500 million in cuts to the DHS grant programs traditionally available to State and local law enforcement.

During the 1990s and earlier years in this decade, our Federal Government vigorously funded grants programs for State and local law enforcement. And we saw results—violent crime went down year after year. But with the recent cuts, violent crime rates have now turned back up. Literally tens of thousands of additional Americans each year have become victims of violent crime.

It is time for the Senate to add substantial Byrne/JAG funding to this year's budget resolution—just as we have done in the past 2 years. In FY2006 and again in FY2007, this Senate voted to increase Byrne/JAG to $900 million—even after President Bush and previous Budget Committees tried to ''zero out'' this program.

I recognize and appreciate that Senator CONRAD and his Budget Committee in the new Congress have taken a very different view of Byrne/JAG. I applaud their decision to reject the much smaller budget figure for Byrne/JAG that was contained in the President's Budget, as well as the decision to reject the President's proposal to consolidate Byrne/JAG with other grant programs and eliminate its formula funding. This is a major step forward.

Unfortunately, however, it just is not enough. At a time when this country is seeing the biggest surge in violent crime it has experienced in more than a decade, using FY2007 levels that are $1.5 billion below FY2002 levels will not do the trick. The Senate must do more—just as we rose to the occasion and voted to do more in the past.

After a Byrne/JAG amendment was offered on the budget resolution last year, we were confronted in June with the sharply higher 2005 violent crime numbers reported by the FBI. And in December, the FBI gave us even worse violent crime numbers for the first half of 2006. Given these disturbing trends, the Senate needs to restore these needed funds to the Byrne/JAG program.

I understand that this budget is tight, and I appreciate the difficult tradeoffs involved. But at a time when

we are about to consider a Supplemental Appropriations bill that may add more than $100 billion so that we can try to secure the streets of Baghdad against violence, I do not think that it's asking too much for us to spend the funds we need to secure our own streets from the violence that the FBI says we are increasingly seeing.

Homeland security is undoubtedly important, but so is home town security.

The Byrne/JAG program, named after slain New York Police Officer Edward Byrne, is a time-tested program run by DOJ that has proven its effectiveness over the course of more than 20 years. It is a key source of funding for multi-jurisdictional task forces. And because 40 percent of a State's Byrne/JAG funds must be set aside for local governments, smaller and rural law enforcement agencies are often especially dependent on Byrne/JAG to meet their needs.

Increased funding for Byrne/JAG has been endorsed by a wide array of law enforcement groups, and I urge my colleagues to support this important amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 616

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting the amendment Senator SNOWE and I offered to provide an additional $97 million to the Small Business Administration. This amendment was necessary because the President's budget request of $464 million was inadequate to fund the agency's core programs.

This, unfortunately, is nothing new. Since the President took office in 2001, he has cut the SBA, the only Federal agency dedicated to the startup and growth of small businesses, more than any other agency. If we exclude disaster loan funding, the President has cut the SBA by more than 30 percent.

As a result of the President's cuts, SBA's loans and venture capital are more expensive, shifting more than $100 million in fees to the small business community, businesses are getting less counseling, and they are losing out on opportunities to do business with the Federal Government, a very serious problem since the Federal Government spends about $370 billion on contracting for services and goods each year.

Consequently, the baseline funding for the SBA is so low that it has made it very hard for Congress to reverse the President's cuts. Nevertheless, Senator CONRAD and his Committee were able to increase by $635 million the account—referred to as function 370—that provides funding for the SBA and other agencies. I congratulate them, and thank them. They have demonstrated that it is possible to provide reasonable funding for effective initiatives and still put the country back on track to a balanced budget.

Among the most disturbing proposed cuts to the SBA in fiscal year 2008, the President has for the fourth year in a row eliminated all funding for the Microloan program and for Microloan Technical Assistance. This is very hard to justify given that the administration is willing to spend so much on micro-credit in other countries. In 2005, the administration provided approximately $211 million for the development of foreign microenterprise programs through the Agency for International Development. In fiscal year 2006, we are told by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, that the administration provided more than $54 million for microloans in Iraq. And for fiscal year 2007, the administration has requested supplemental funding for Iraq that includes at least $160 million for micro-credit programs.

Our amendment restores the Microloan and Microloan technical assistance programs to the levels they were at in 2001—$3.2 million to leverage $30 million in loans and $20 million in technical assistance. Our amendment also restores the proposed cuts to the Women's Business Centers, the Small Business Development Centers, the Office of Veterans Business Development, and programs for the development of minority businesses and Native Americans. It restores $10 million in funding for the New Markets programs, which have never received support from this administration, in spite of claims about targeting areas of high unemployment.

My one big regret is that this amendment does not provide funding for the 7(a) Loan Guaranty Program. My original budget amendment, No. 515, did include $79 million in order to reduce fees on borrowers and lenders, which could have gone a long way to making these loans more affordable. Right now, on the largest loans, borrowers are paying around $50,000 in fees when a conventional loan would only cost around $20,000 in fees. We need to get that cost down. I am very disappointed that the Republican leadership would not allow any funding for the 7(a) loans to be included in our amendment. I am hopeful that Senator SNOWE and I, with our colleagues in the House, can continue to work on this and get funding for fee relief during the appropriations process.

Aside from that one disappointment, I am very pleased with our amendment. It is reasonable and realistic. By restoring $97 million to the SBA, we bring its funding for fiscal year 2008 to $561 million. This is still $125 million—or 18 percent—less than SBA's funding in fiscal year 2001, and it is a fraction of the $2.9 trillion budget President Bush proposed for fiscal year 2008, but it will go a long way to fostering small business growth and sparking innovation.

I thank Senator SNOWE and our colleagues Senators LIEBERMAN, ENZI, CANTWELL, and PRYOR for joining in this bipartisan effort.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I rise to draw attention to funding for our Nation's small businesses, which has systematically declined over the last 6 years and is inadequate in both the President's budget and this budget resolution before us. I first commend my colleage, Senator KERRY, for working with me on this bipartisan amendment to restore this critical funding for small businesses.

This amendment would restore $97 million in funding to the Small Business Administration, an agency that contributes substantially to our economic growth. Since 2001 the SBA's overall budget has declined by an unacceptable 31 percent. Especially when one considers that small businesses are the backbone of our economy, breathing life into areas once devastated by manufacturing closures, disasters, and economic recessions, it is frankly beyond me why we continue to shrink the resources that actually help our Nation's job creators grow.

Just last month, I heard firsthand from over 90 Maine small business manufacturers about the barriers that hinder their success and the programs that have helped manufacturers grow and expand their business like the SBA's 504, 7(a), SBDC and HUBZone programs. However, this budget falls short of providing the very programs that have helped revitalize Maine's and our Nation's communities devastated by over 20,700 manufacturing job losses since 2000.

This amendment is about the 25.8 million small businesses and small manufacturers across the country, which are vital to the economic growth and job creation in each of our States. In every State, small businesses are the engine that drives our economy. Small businesses use SBA loans to expand and hire new workers; they receive vital advice from Women's Business Centers, Small Business Development Centers, and Veterans Business Development Centers; and they survive and thrive by obtaining contracts with the Federal Government. These are the people and the businesses my amendment assists. So why does this budget handcuff the very programs that have allowed our businesses and economy to expand?

The SBA has helped create and retain over 5.3 million jobs since 1999. It is clear that our economic future depends on the success of small firms, which constitute over 98 percent of our Nation's manufacturing enterprises, create nearly three-quarters of new jobs, and produce 50 percent of the gross domestic product. However, we cannot, on the one hand, state how much we value small businesses, and on the other hand, neglect to provide the assistance that small businesses so desperately need to compete.

This bipartisan amendment provides funds for the SBA's Microloan Program, which provides loans of up to $35,000 and technical assistance to new and growing small businesses. The administration proposes to eliminate the

subsidy for microloans and transfer the technical assistance duties to the entrepreneurial development programs. However, this relatively inexpensive program is critical to our next generation of entrepreneurs. In fact, in my own State of Maine, the Microloan Program has made 94 loans over the last 2 years, for a total of $1.7 million. The elimination of this subsidy will increase interest rates for our Nation's microlenders and micro-entrepreneurs located in rural and underserved communities that have no other resource for financing.

Additionally, this amendment provides the critical funding for Small Business Development Centers, SCORE and Women's Business Centers, which served over 1.2 million clients in 2006. Not only has funding for these programs decreased over the last 5 years but the SBA proposes to increase their responsibility to take on microloan technical assistance. These critical programs need and, quite frankly, deserve the resources to reach and assist more small businesses.

Moreover, this amendment provides the resources necessary for our small businesses to access prime contracting and subcontracting opportunities. The SBA has failed to fix regulatory loopholes identified by the GAO that allows large contractors to keep small business set-asides. To address a contracting market that has increased to nearly $400 billion a year, the SBA budget needs to increase its resources and provide proper oversight.

I would like to point out the irony that the administration's budget supports and funds microloans and assistance for foreign microenterprises, but eliminates, yes, eliminates, all funding for domestic microloans and assistance for American microenterprises. While I fully support aid and assistance to foreign microenterprises, what are we saying with this imbalance? Is this fair? Is this the message we want to send to our Nation's small businesses?

How can we justify repeated cuts in funding for loans and assistance here at home? Is this our priority? I think it is not, and this amendment reflects our priorities and our commitment to American small businesses. The $97 million provided for here would make a significant difference to our job-creating small firms and helps them grow, flourish and thrive.

My amendment is absolutely necessary for America's small businesses and is an investment in the entrepreneurship and future of this country. I urge my colleagues to support it for the SBA and our small business job creators. If we fail to provide sufficient support to SBA's core lending and business development programs, we threaten to reduce small businesses' ability to compete. The American economy needs a strong and vibrant Small Business Administration.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, the amendment the majority leader and I are offering today is the first step in our effort this Congress to undo a fundamental unfairness that affects over 300,000 disabled veterans in this country who also happen to be military retirees. In short, this amendment creates a reserve fund that will allow this Congress to once and for all eliminate the offset that exists between military retiree pay and VA disability benefits.

At a time when we have men and women in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan and in other locations around the globe, it is appropriate that the budget resolution we pass out of the United States Senate acknowledge and seriously address the unmet needs of our Nation's veterans.

It is wrong that our veterans are enduring long waiting lines to receive health care from the VA due to inadequate funding. It is wrong that the Bush administration slammed the doors of the VA health care system on hundreds of thousands of so-called ''higher income'' veterans—veterans who in reality make as little as $28,000 a year. And it is wrong for this administration to try to impose higher copayments and enrollment fees on our veterans. As someone who sits on both the Budget Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee, I am incredibly proud that on all these issues, this budget resolution is on the side of veterans and rejects administration proposals that short-change and nickel and dime those who have served.

The scandal at Walter Reed has highlighted that even here in Washington, only a short distance from this chamber, some of our servicemembers were living in sub-standard conditions with moldy walls, rodents, and holes in the ceilings. Thankfully, this budget resolution also addresses this outrage.

In addition, this budget resolution also provides for substantial, new investments in mental health services for our veterans to help us treat the thousands of veterans returning from the Iraq War with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD. Also this budget resolution recognizes that we need to significantly increase funding to treat the large number of servicemembers returning with traumatic brain injury.

Finally, this budget resolution includes an amendment I added in committee that will allow us to make other important improvements to veterans' programs later this year. In short, the budget resolution we are considering is a huge step in the right direction when it comes to veterans' health care and benefits. Chairman CONRAD and his staff deserve tremendous credit for recognizing the very serious needs of our veterans and moving boldly to address them. I also want to commend Chairman AKAKA of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and his staff for their work and support throughout this budget process.

Even with the tremendous strides forward we have made for veterans in this budget resolution there is one additional issue that needs to be addressed. Today, Senator REID and I are offering this amendment to take care of that very important issue. Before getting into the details first let me start off by saying that I am honored to be working with the majority leader on this issue. I know that, year after year, he has been the leading voice in the Senate to eliminate the Disabled Veterans Tax. And today, he continues that leadership with this amendment.

This amendment would create a reserve fund to allow for the elimination of the remaining offset between military retiree pay and VA disability payments. In my view, this is an issue of basic fairness. Military retirees earned their retiree pay based on their long-term service to the Nation. They earn their VA disability benefits based on the disability they acquire or aggravate in the service of their country.

The current offset between these separately-earned benefits originates from a 19th century law that required a dollar-for-dollar offset of military retired pay for VA disability compensation. In my view and the view of millions of veterans across the country, it is clear that veterans deserve to receive both their military retirement which they receive for their service and their VA disability payments as additional compensation for the injuries and lost earning power due to their service-connected disabilities.

Let me provide just a bit of background on some of the progress Congress has made on this issue in recent years, thanks in large part to the work of Senator REID. In the fiscal year 2003 Department of Defense Authorization, Congress created a special benefit called ''combat-related special compensation'' or CRSC. It expanded it in the fiscal year 2004 DoD Authorization. CRSC gives certain combat disabled veterans a cash benefit equivalent to what they would receive if full concurrent receipt were allowed.

In the fiscal year 2004 DoD Authorization bill, Congress approved phasing-in concurrent receipt for military retirees rated as at least 50 percent disabled. The fiscal year 2005 DoD Authorization ended the phase in for 100 percent disabled veterans.

So, today we find ourselves in a situation where retirees who are less than 50 percent disabled are getting no relief from the Disabled Veterans Tax and veterans at least 50 percent disabled but less than 100 percent disabled are in the middle of the phase period that will not be complete until 2014. Frankly, if Congress has made the determination that the ban on concurrent receipt of military retiree pay and VA disability compensation is wrong—and I think the legislation passed so far demonstrates that Congress has made that determination—there is no excuse for making veterans wait for the benefits that we have acknowledged they are due. Now is the time—once and for all—we need to eliminate the disabled veterans tax.

The Reid-Sanders amendment is just one important step we need to take to

keep faith to the promises we made to our veterans. I look forward to working with the majority leader on this issue as it moves through the legislative process and I would ask that my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, next we go to the Thomas amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I note on this amendment, when we get into the rollcall, Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUYE wish to be deemed as paired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, did the desk get that?

On this next amendment, Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUYE are paired?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The desk got that.

The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 515

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. THOMAS] proposes amendment No. 515.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prevent the adding of extraneous earmarks to an emergency war supplemental)

On page 34, line 9, after the period insert ''In a nonregular appropriations bill designated to supplement funding for ongoing combat operations, the authority to designate under this subsection shall only apply to war-related items that meet the criteria provided in subsection (f).''

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, very quickly, this is a very simple vote, actually. What it has to do with is limiting the amount of additions that can be put on supplementals that are designed for Defense spending. The amendment I am offering would attempt to bring some discipline back into the emergency spending process.

It simply holds to a supplemental those things that a supplemental was designed for. The very nature of emergency spending is above and beyond the approved budget. If we want to control spending and control the deficit, then we need to control what we put on these kinds of supplemental bills we are seeing worked out right as we speak.

However, too often the emergency supplementals are larded with all kinds of pet projects and spending that Members cannot pass in the regular process or others put it in there to get theirs passed.

It is an abuse of the process. We are going to end up holding our troops hostage because of extraneous spending. I ask that Members support the amendment, that we hold spending in the supplemental to the military for which it is designed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, this amendment, while well intended, would create a serious problem for the body. This amendment prevents the Appropriations Committee from reporting a bill with more than one type of emergency designation. Let me give my colleagues a concrete example. Last year Congress enacted an appropriations bill that included funding for the war effort in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as disaster relief for the gulf coast. This amendment would prevent that kind of legislation. That would reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of this Chamber already noted for lacking efficiency. I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is agreeing to amendment No. 515.

Mr. THOMAS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 39, nays 59, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 106 Leg.]

YEAS—39

Alexander	Crapo	Isakson
Allard	DeMint	Kyl
Bayh	Dole	Martinez
Bennett	Domenici	McCain
Brownback	Ensign	McConnell
Bunning	Enzi	Murkowski
Burr	Graham	Roberts
Chambliss	Grassley	Sessions
Coburn	Gregg	Stevens
Cochran	Hagel	Sununu
Corker	Hatch	Thomas
Cornyn	Hutchison	Voinovich
Craig	Inhofe	Warner

NAYS—59

Akaka	Durbin	Mikulski
Baucus	Feingold	Murray
Biden	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Inouye	Obama
Boxer	Kennedy	Pryor
Brown	Kerry	Reed
Byrd	Klobuchar	Reid
Cantwell	Kohl	Rockefeller
Cardin	Landrieu	Salazar
Carper	Lautenberg	Sanders
Casey	Leahy	Schumer
Clinton	Levin	Shelby
Coleman	Lieberman	Smith
Collins	Lincoln	Snowe
Conrad	Lugar	Specter
Dodd	McCaskill	Stabenow
Dorgan	Menendez	Tester
Thune	Vitter	Whitehouse
	Webb	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Johnson Lott

The amendment (No. 515) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, was the last vote announced?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

Mr. GREGG. Then I believe we are going to Senator SPECTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

AMENDMENT NO. 613, AS MODIFIED

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 613, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. SPECTER] proposes an amendment numbered 613, as modified.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 63, after line 24, insert the following:

SEC. 326. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FOR ASBESTOS REFORM LEGISLATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report regarding asbestos reform, that (i) either provides monetary compensation to impaired victims of mesothelioma or provides monetary compensaton to impaired victims of asbestos-related disease who can establish that asbestos exposure is a substanial contributing factor in causing their condition, (ii) does not provide monetary compensation to unimpaired claimants or those suffering from a disease who cannot establish that asbestos exposure was a substantial contributing factor in causing their condition, and (iii) is estimated to remain funded from nontaxpayer sources for the life of the fund, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2057.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, after very considerable negotiation, it is my understanding this amendment is acceptable. I thank Senator CONRAD, Senator GREGG, Senator REID, and Senator ENSIGN for their cooperation.

What this amendment does is eliminate a highly technical point of order that might have been available on asbestos reform legislation, to give the discretion to the chairman of the Budget Committee to approve a reserve fund. The bill will have to be revenue neutral. There are other points of order which could lie, but I think we will be able to establish revenue neutrality when we produce the bill.

It has been necessary because some $30 billion to $40 billion have been lost on bankruptcy proceedings to retool the reform bill to cover mesothelioma and other deadly illnesses. We are in the process of working it out.

I also thank my colleagues Senators LEAHY, FEINSTEIN, and CARPER for their work on this issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we thank the Senator from Pennsylvania for the alterations he has made to this amendment. It is acceptable on this side.

I ask unanimous consent we agree to the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senator has reserved the right to object.

Mr. GREGG. Maybe we should move on.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has objected.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, it is agreeable with me to move on briefly.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this amendment be set aside and that we move to the amendment from Senator GRAHAM, who would be next.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from South Carolina.

AMENDMENT NO. 478

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 478 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant journal clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM] proposes an amendment numbered 478.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To extend the 35, 33, 28, and 25 percent income tax rate structure and protect nearly 28,000,000 families and individuals, including small business owners, from having their tax rates increase to 39.6, 36, 31, or 28 percent)

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $46,000,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $66,900,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $46,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $66,900,000,000.

On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $1,081,000,000.

On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $3,785,000,000.

On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $1,081,000,000.

On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $3,785,000,000.

On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $47,081,000,000.

On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $70,685,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $47,081,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $117,766,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $47,081,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $117,766,000,000.

On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $1,081,000,000.

On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $1,081,000,000.

On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $3,785,000,000.

On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $3,785,000,000.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, this amendment extends the marginal tax rate relief first passed in 2001. We lowered taxes in 2001. Simply put, if you vote against this amendment, the tax rates will revert back to the 2001 levels. You would be voting to increase taxes on 28 million families and small businesses. You would be voting to increase taxes on small businesses, on an average, by more than $3,600 per year. Mr. President, 78 percent of the benefit of this amendment goes to small business owners. I urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment. Tax policy in this country is about being globally competitive. We need to keep our tax rates down to keep our jobs in America. I urge everybody to vote for this amendment to make us competitive globally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the fact is, none of those rates change until 2010, No. 1. No. 2, the Senator's amendment also would not have the effect described by the Senator. The effect the amendment would have is to reduce revenue by $117 billion. It would put us back into deficit in 2012 by $71 billion. This amendment is a budget buster.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the Graham amendment No. 478.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. McCONNELL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 52, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 107 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Alexander	DeMint	McCain
Allard	Dole	McConnell
Bennett	Domenici	Murkowski
Bond	Ensign	Roberts
Brownback	Enzi	Sessions
Bunning	Graham	Shelby
Burr	Grassley	Smith
Chambliss	Gregg	Specter
Coburn	Hagel	Stevens
Cochran	Hatch	Sununu
Coleman	Hutchison	Thomas
Collins	Inhofe	Thune
Corker	Isakson	Vitter
Cornyn	Kyl	Warner
Craig	Lugar	
Crapo	Martinez	

NAYS—52

Akaka	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Harkin	Obama
Bayh	Inouye	Pryor
Biden	Kennedy	Reed
Bingaman	Kerry	Reid
Boxer	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Brown	Kohl	Salazar
Byrd	Landrieu	Sanders
Cantwell	Lautenberg	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Snowe
Carper	Levin	Stabenow
Casey	Lieberman	Tester
Clinton	Lincoln	Voinovich
Conrad	McCaskill	Webb
Dodd	Menendez	Whitehouse
Dorgan	Mikulski	Wyden
Durbin	Murray	
Feingold	Nelson (FL)	

NOT VOTING—2

Johnson	Lott

The amendment (No. 478) was rejected.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 490, AS MODIFIED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 490 previously agreed to be modified with the changes that are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 490), as modified, is as follows:

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ELIMINATING MILITARY RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY OFFSET.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would expand eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation to permit additional disabled retirees to receive both disability compensation and retired pay, by the amounts provided by such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 613

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we agree to the Specter amendment No. 613 and the Thune amendment No. 465.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SPECTER. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. I want to be sure, regarding amendment No. 613, as modified, that the Senator from Oklahoma has withdrawn his objection that it be included in the amendment package.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let's make certain we have the modified version of the Specter amendment. So before we approve that, let me have a chance—it has gone through a number of modifications. Let's make sure the version at the desk is the version we have been advised is at the desk.

Mr. GREGG. That is correct.

Mr. CONRAD. OK. That is fine.

Mr. GREGG. I renew the request, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Specter amendment, as modified, is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 613), as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 465

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair notes that amendment No. 465 has not yet been proposed.

Mr. GREGG. I ask that amendment No. 465 be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] proposes an amendment numbered 465.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for a budget point of order against legislation that increases income tax rates on small businesses, family farms, or family ranches)

At the end of title II, insert the following:

SEC. _____. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT RAISES INCOME TAX RATES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, FAMILY FARMS, OR FAMILY RANCHES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, resolution, amendment, amendment between Houses, motion, or conference report that includes a Federal income tax rate increase on incomes generated by small businesses (within the meaning of section 474(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) or family farms or family ranches (within the meaning of section 2032A of such Code) (regardless of the manner by which such businesses, farms and ranches are organized). In this subsection, the term ''Federal income tax rate increase'' means any amendment to subsection (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) of section 1, or to section 11(b) or 55(b), of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, that imposes a new percentage as a rate of tax and thereby increases the amount of tax imposed by any such section.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required in the Senate to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 465) was agreed to.

Mr. GREGG. I believe Senator GRASSLEY has the next amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Do I have to wait for my amendment to be reported?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may use his time and then call up the amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 471

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, my amendment repeals the AMT. Except for the telephone tax, the alternative minimum tax is the phoniest tax we have ever passed. The AMT, in 1969, was meant to hit 155 taxpayers who used legal means to avoid taxation, under the theory that everybody ought to pay some income tax.

This very year, more than 2,000 people who are very wealthy are not paying any income tax or alternative minimum income tax. So it is not even working and hitting the people it is supposed to hit. Right now, this year, 2007, the year we are in, there are 23 million families that are going to be hit by this tax. It is a phony revenue machine, over 5 years, $467 billion dollars. We are going to have to have a point of order this year to keep these 23 million taxpayers from paying this tax. We might as well do away with it right now, once and for all, and be honest about it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. GRASSLEY] proposes an amendment numbered 471.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the budget resolution for fiscal year 2008 in order to accommodate the full repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax preventing 23 million families and individuals from being subject to the AMT in 2007, and millions of families and individuals in subsequent years)

On page 3 line 10, decrease the amount by $30,700,000,000.

On page 3, line 11, decrease the amount by $82,500,000,000.

On page 3, line 12, decrease the amount by $96,300,000,000.

On page 3, line 13, decrease the amount by $112,200,000,000.

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $93,900,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $51,400,000,000.

On page 3, line 19, decrease the amount by $30,700,000,000.

On page 3, line 20, decrease the amount by $82,500,000,000.

On page 3, line 21, decrease the amount by $96,300,000,000.

On page 3, line 22, decrease the amount by $112,200,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $93,900,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $51,400,000,000.

On page 4, line 5, increase the amount by $500,000,000.

On page 4, line 6, increase the amount by $3,450,000,000.

On page 4, line 7, increase the amount by $7,727,000,000.

On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by $12,984,000,000.

On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $18,436,000,000.

On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $22,732,000,000.

On page 4, line 14, increase the amount by $500,000,000.

On page 4, line 15, increase the amount by $3,450,000,000.

On page 4, line 16, increase the amount by $7,727,000,000.

On page 4, line 17, increase the amount by $12,984,000,000.

On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $18,436,000,000.

On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $22,732,000,000.

On page 4, line 23, increase the amount by $31,200,000,000.

On page 4, line 24, increase the amount by $85,950,000,000.

On page 4, line 25, increase the amount by $104,027,000,000.

On page 5, line 1, increase the amount by $125,184,000,000.

On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $112,336,000,000.

On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $74,132,000,000.

On page 5, line 6, increase the amount by $31,200,000,000.

On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by $117,151,000,000.

On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by $221,178,000,000.

On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by $346,362,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $458,698,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $532,830,000,000.

On page 5, line 14, increase the amount by $31,200,000,000.

On page 5, line 15, increase the amount by $117,151,000,000.

On page 5, line 16, decrease the amount by $221,178,000,000.

On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by $346,362,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $458,698,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $532,830,000,000.

On page 25, line 8, increase the amount by $500,000,000.

On page 25, line 9, increase the amount by $500,000,000.

On page 25, line 12, increase the amount by $3,450,000,000.

On page 25, line 13, increase the amount by $3,450,000,000.

On page 25, line 16, increase the amount by $7,727,000,000.

On page 25, line 17, increase the amount by $7,727,000,000.

On page 25, line 20, increase the amount by $12,984,000,000.

On page 25, line 21, increase the amount by $12,984,000,000.

On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $18,436,000,000.

On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $18,436,000,000.

On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $22,732,000,000.

On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $22,732,000,000.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the reality of the budget resolution is this may not have anything to do with eliminating the alternative minimum tax. The one thing it will do is reduce the revenue of the Government over the next 5 years by $533 billion, plunging us right back into deficit. Look, we can deal with the AMT. We have dealt with it in the underlying budget resolution for the next 2 years. There will be no increase in the number of people affected by the AMT for the next 2 years under the budget resolution, and that is paid for. Unfortunately, this amendment is not paid for. It would plunge us back into deficit. I urge my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCCASKILL). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 108 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Alexander	Crapo	Martinez
Allard	DeMint	McCain
Bennett	Dole	McConnell
Bond	Domenici	Murkowski
Brownback	Ensign	Roberts
Bunning	Enzi	Shelby
Burr	Graham	Smith
Chambliss	Grassley	Specter
Coburn	Hagel	Stevens
Cochran	Hatch	Sununu
Coleman	Hutchison	Thomas
Collins	Inhofe	Thune
Corker	Isakson	Vitter
Cornyn	Kyl	Warner
Craig	Lugar	

NAYS—53

Akaka	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Gregg	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Harkin	Obama
Biden	Inouye	Pryor
Bingaman	Kennedy	Reed
Boxer	Kerry	Reid
Brown	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Byrd	Kohl	Salazar
Cantwell	Landrieu	Sanders
Cardin	Lautenberg	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Snowe
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Clinton	Lieberman	Tester
Conrad	Lincoln	Voinovich
Dodd	McCaskill	Webb
Dorgan	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Mikulski	Wyden
Feingold	Murray	

NOT VOTING—3

Johnson	Lott	Sessions

The amendment (No. 471) was rejected.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, next, we are going to go to a Bingaman amendment. He will discuss it briefly, and we will have a colloquy.

I yield to Senator BINGAMAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 587, WITHDRAWN

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I call up amendment No. 587.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Mexico [Mr. BINGAMAN], for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. TESTER, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. DURBIN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR, proposes an amendment numbered 587.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit the scoring of any amount realized from the sale or lease of land or interests in land that are part of the National Park System, the National Forest System, or the National Wildlife Refuge System)

On page 48, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 210. PROHIBITION ON SCORING OF AMOUNTS FROM SALES OR LEASES OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND.

Any amount realized from the sale or lease of land or interests in land (other than a sale or lease authorized by statute, as of the date of adoption of this concurrent resolution by both Houses) that are part of the National Park System, the National Forest System, or the National Wildlife Refuge System shall not be scored with respect to the level of budget authority, outlays, or revenues.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, the purpose of this amendment is to take away any incentive to sell off our National Park System, or forests or wildlife system, by ensuring that we not count revenues from those sales in order to get a balanced budget. That is the idea behind it.

I am informed by the chairman of the Budget Committee that he would have to oppose the amendment in this form but he is not necessarily in disagreement about the purpose I am trying to accomplish. So I ask him his views on it before taking any further action.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I would have to resist this amendment in its current form because it requires directed scoring. It requires the Congressional Budget Office to score something in a way mandated by Congress. I think that is a slippery slope. I don't think that is the way we want to go. We don't want to start requiring CBO to score things in a certain way. That would impede the impartiality of the CBO.

We are happy to work with the Senator to try to find other ways to address the concerns he has expressed in this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I am pleased that the amendment is going to be withdrawn. I will be happy to work with the chairman on this issue. I understand their concern. We should not be selling off our public land treasures for the purpose of balancing the budget. At the same time, if you sell a surplus vacant piece of property, should it not go in and be counted as revenue of our Government if it was once an asset? I think the answer is yes.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, this amendment would preclude the sale of National Park, National Wildlife Refuge and National Forest lands as a means of paying ongoing operating expenses of the Federal Government. The amendment would have reinstated the budget treatment of these land sales as it existed prior to 1995 and would preclude the sell-off of our national heritage to balance the budget.

On too many occasions over the past several Congresses, controversial land sales and leasing proposals have been advanced within the context of the Federal budget process. These provisions have complicated the consideration of the budget and have frustrated the efforts of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to ensure responsible stewardship of our Federal lands.

I understand that the chairman of the Budget Committee has concerns about changing the scoring rules in the context of this budget resolution. I have agreed to withdraw my amendment, with the understanding that the chairman of the Budget Committee will work with me and with the leadership of the Congressional Budget Office to address this important issue during the course of this year. It is my hope and expectation that this serious problem can be addressed prior to consideration of the next budget resolution. I ask unanimous consent that several letters in support of the amendment be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS, BERKLEY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE, IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA, NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION, ORION—THE HUNTERS INSTITUTE, TROUT UNLIMITED,

March 21, 2007.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts we represent, we urge you to support an amendment that Senator Jeff Bingaman (D–N.M.) will offer to the Senate Budget Resolution this week to prohibit the scoring for budget purposes of revenues associated with the sale of public lands.

In recent years the budget and reconciliation process has been abused to promote the sale of public lands and interests in public lands under the guise of deficit reduction. Last Congress, the House passed a reconciliation bill that included a mining law measure which would have resulted in a fire sale of millions of acres of our public lands. A draft of the same bill included a provision to sell off units of the National Park System such as Theodore Roosevelt Island. The President's budget proposals in Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008 included the sale of nearly $1 billion of lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. These controversial measures require a fair and open debate and are not appropriate to be considered in the budget process.

Millions of Americans enjoy hunting, fishing and the many other recreational opportunities that our magnificent public lands provide. It is irresponsible to sell our cherished public lands and interests in lands to balance the federal budget. Our public lands are a legacy for future generations that must be conserved. Unfortunately current budget rules provide an incentive to sell public lands for short-term revenues.

Budget reconciliation procedures are inappropriate for legislation regarding public lands sales and leasing. Senator Bingaman's amendment would reinstate the rule on the sale of assets as it applied to federal lands from 1987 through 1995. We respectfully urge you to stand for our public lands by supporting Senator Bingaman's amendment to the Budget Resolution.

Sincerely,

JIM LYON,
Senior Vice President for Conservation, National Wildlife Federation.

CHRIS WOOD,
Vice President for Conservation, Trout Unlimited.
JIM POSEWITZ,
Executive Director, Orion—The Hunters Institute.
STEVEN K. KLEIN,
Associate Conservation Director, Izaak Walton League of America.
JIM MARTIN,
Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute.
MIKE BEAGLE,
Chairman, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE, AMERICAN LANDS ALLIANCE, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE, EARTH JUSTICE, EARTHWORKS, LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST, NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, SIERRA CLUB, THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY,

March 21, 2007.

DEAR SENATOR: We write today to urge your support for Senator Bingaman's amendment to the FY2008 Budget Resolution to protect important land resources administered by the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service.

Senator Bingaman's amendment would reinstate the rule on the sale of assets as it applied to these lands from 1987 through 1995, and in so doing, would prohibit the scoring of revenues from the sale or lease of certain Federal lands or interests in lands. It is our hope that this change will bring an end to what has become an all-too-frequent push to parcel off and dispose of the nation's priceless natural resources and use the projected revenues as an offset during the budget debate.

The budget and reconciliation process has been used to promote the sale of public lands and interests in public lands under the guise of deficit reduction. For example, oil and gas leasing on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been proposed as part of the budget reconciliation process, as have the sales of National Park System units and so-called mining law ''reforms'' to sell off vast tracts of public lands. In addition, the Administration has—for two years running—pressed proposals to sell huge acreages of public lands as part of its yearly budget package.

The outcry generated by these proposals could not have been clearer: The American public values its land heritage and expects members of Congress to act as stewards of these irreplaceable resources. We believe that most Americans would consider it irresponsible to sell off their homes and investments to cover household operating expenses, but the current budget scoring rules encourage Congress to do just that. Senator Bingaman's amendment would remove that incentive and move the consideration of important public land management policies out of the budget venue and back to the committees of jurisdiction.

Thanks to the foresight of preservation pioneers such as Teddy Roosevelt and a continuing tradition of conservation, this generation has inherited a rich natural heritage. We urge you to stand up for that heritage and to join Senator Bingaman with a vote to protect public lands.

MARCH 21, 2007.

DEAR SENATOR: During consideration of the Budget Resolution on the Senate floor this week, Senator Bingaman plans to offer an amendment to prohibit scoring of revenue from the sale or lease of federal lands which are part of the National Park System, National Forest system or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge system. We urge you to support Senator Bingaman's amendment.

Over the past several years, various ideas about gaining revenue by selling federal land have surfaced in the budget and reconciliation process. Thankfully, these proposals have generally met with stiff opposition from Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. Clearly, selling off public assets to obtain a one-time credit toward reducing the deficit is bad public policy; but the possibility of addressing the deficit by selling pieces of the National Park System—places set aside by Congress as the most important examples of our natural and cultural heritage, and the part of the federal government most highly valued by the American people—is simply indefensible.

As unlikely as it might appear, there have been such poorly conceived proposals to sell off some of our most precious national treasures for budget purposes as recently as in the 109th Congress. In light of these attempts to pursue such ill-advised and untenable approaches to deficit reduction, it is imperative that Congress makes clear such options are foreclosed. By returning to the rule followed under previous budget resolutions, that is what Senator Bingaman's amendment will do.

Again, we urge you to support Senator Bingaman's amendment. NPCA considers this a significant vote to protect America's priceless heritage found in our national parks, and may use it in our biennial ''Friend of the National Parks'' scorecard for the 110th Congress.

Sincerely,

THOMAS C. KIERNAN,
President, National Parks Conservation.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, in light of the position of the chairman of the Budget Committee, I will withdraw the amendment and work with him in the coming months to see if we can get this issue addressed in another way so we don't have this incentive—not for the sale of all lands, of course, but for the sale of these particular lands to which we give a special designation.

With that, I withdraw amendment No. 587.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, Senator DEMINT is next.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 578

Mr. DEMINT. Madam President, I call up amendment No. 578.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. DEMINT], for himself, and Mr. KYL, proposes an amendment numbered 578.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To repeal the death tax)

On page 3, line 11, decrease the amount by $2,100,000,000.
On page 3 line 12, decrease the amount by $1,400,000,000.
On page 3, line 13, decrease the amount by $2,900,000,000.
On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $35,000,000,000.
On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $31,000,000,000.
On page 3, line 20, decrease the amount by $2,100,000,000.
On page 3 line 21, decrease the amount by $1,400,000,000.
On page 3, line 22, decrease the amount by $2,900,000,000.
On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $35,000,000,000.
On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $31,000,000,000.
On page 4, line 6, increase the amount by $50,000,000.
On page 4, line 7, increase the amount by $133,000,000.
On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by $240,000,000.
On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $1,142,000,000.
On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $2,747,000,000.
On page 4, line 15, increase the amount by $50,000,000.
On page 4, line 16, increase the amount by $113,000,000.
On page 4, line 17, increase the amount by $240,000,000.
On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $1,142,000,000.
On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $2,747,000,000.
On page 4, line 24, increase the amount by $2,150,000,000.
On page 4, line 25, increase the amount by $1,533,000,000.
On page 5, line 1, increase the amount by $3,140,000,000.
On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $36,142,000,000.
On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $33,747,000,000.
On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by $2,150,000,000.
On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by $3,683,000,000.
On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by $6,823,000,000.
On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $42,966,000,000.
On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $76,713,000,000.
On page 5, line 15, increase the amount by $2,150,000,000.
On page 5, line 16, increase the amount by $3,683,000,000.
On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by $6,823,000,000.
On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $42,966,000,000.
On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $76,713,000,000.
On page 25, line 12, increase the amount by $50,000,000.
On page 25, line 13, increase the amount by $50,000,000.
On page 25, line 16, increase the amount by $133,000,000.
On page 25, line 17, increase the amount by $133,000,000.
On page 25, line 20, increase the amount by $240,000,000.
On page 25, line 21, increase the amount by $240,000,000.
On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $1,142,000,000.
On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $1,142,000,000.
On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $2,747,000,000.
On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $2,747,000,000.

Mr. DEMINT. Madam President, we have had several votes regarding the death tax today. Some have reduced it a little bit. We have gotten into a lot of details about who would win and who would lose.

My amendment would eliminate the death tax, would continue what we will achieve in 2010. This Congress voted to phase out the death tax. In 2010, it will be gone. My amendment will keep it that way throughout the budget process.

I believe, as many do, this is the most immoral and un-American tax we can possibly have in this country. Yesterday, I was distressed to hear colleagues on the other side were concerned that some children might inherit wealth from a family farm or business they didn't earn. Yet we say the Government earned it even though these businesses have already paid taxes on their profit, payroll, sales taxes, and property taxes throughout the person's life.

We need to eliminate this death tax. It is un-American. This is our opportunity to vote for it today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I urge colleagues to resist this amendment. If we want to blow a hole in the budget, this is the way to do it. We have already addressed dramatic, important estate tax reform. This completely eliminates the estate tax and blows a total hole in the budget.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 55, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 109 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Alexander	DeMint	Lugar
Allard	Dole	Martinez
Bennett	Domenici	McCain
Bond	Ensign	McConnell
Brownback	Enzi	Murkowski
Bunning	Graham	Roberts
Burr	Grassley	Sessions
Chambliss	Gregg	Shelby
Coburn	Hagel	Smith
Cochran	Hatch	Specter
Coleman	Hutchison	Sununu
Corker	Inhofe	Thomas
Cornyn	Isakson	Thune
Craig	Kyl	Vitter
Crapo	Lott	

NAYS—55

Akaka	Clinton	Klobuchar
Baucus	Collins	Kohl
Bayh	Conrad	Landrieu
Biden	Dodd	Lautenberg
Bingaman	Dorgan	Leahy
Boxer	Durbin	Levin
Brown	Feingold	Lieberman
Byrd	Feinstein	Lincoln
Cantwell	Harkin	McCaskill
Cardin	Inouye	Menendez
Carper	Kennedy	Mikulski
Casey	Kerry	Murray
Nelson (FL)	Salazar	Voinovich
Nelson (NE)	Sanders	Warner
Obama	Schumer	Webb
Pryor	Snowe	Whitehouse
Reed	Stabenow	Wyden
Reid	Stevens	
Rockefeller	Tester	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 578) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

AMENDMENT NO. 529

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I send amendment No. 529 to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Delaware [Mr. BIDEN] proposes an amendment numbered 529.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To increase funding for the COPS Program to $1.15 billion for FY 2008 to provide state and local law enforcement with critical resources necessary to prevent and respond to violent crime and acts of terrorism and is offset by an unallocated reduction to non-defense discretionary spending and/or reduction to administrative expenses)

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $598,000,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $72,000,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $167,000,000.

On page 23, line 21, increase the amount by $150,000,000.

On page 23, line 25, increase the amount by $120,000,000.

On page 24, line 4, increase the amount by $90,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $598,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $72,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $167,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $150,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $120,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $90,000,000.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, this amendment reinstates the COPS Program. I remind everyone, when the COPS Program was functioning, violent crime in America reduced 8.5 percent a year for 7 years in a row.

Mr. President, throughout the 1990s, we funded the COPS Program at roughly $1.2 billion, and it drove down crime. Now crime is rising again. In every one of our States it is up. Violent crime is up across the board. The Police Investigative Research Forum released a report which found that murders were up 10.6 percent in 2004.

The COPS Program in the crime bill worked, and the Government Accounting Office found a statistical link between the COPS grants and a reduction in crime. The Brookings Institution reported the COPS Program is one of the most cost-effective programs we have ever had in this country. Local officials urgently need this support.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be added as cosponsors: LIEBERMAN, CLINTON, SALAZAR, OBAMA, KOHL, HARKIN, BOXER, KERRY, WHITEHOUSE, DORGAN, DODD, SCHUMER, and all Democrats on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, the COPS Program has some history here. It was started by President Clinton. His position was, and he asked for, 100,000 police officers. He said that when we got to 100,000, the program would stop. We got to 110,000 police officers and the program continues on and on and on.

This program should have ended 5 years ago or 6 years ago, but it continues. It is similar to so many Federal programs that get constituencies that go on well past what their original purpose was. It may be well intentioned, but we cannot afford it and we shouldn't continue it. It was never thought it would be continued this long.

Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 65, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 110 Leg.]

YEAS—65

Akaka	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Grassley	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Harkin	Obama
Biden	Hatch	Pryor
Bingaman	Hutchison	Reed
Boxer	Inouye	Reid
Brown	Kennedy	Roberts
Burr	Kerry	Rockefeller
Byrd	Klobuchar	Salazar
Cantwell	Kohl	Sanders
Cardin	Landrieu	Schumer
Carper	Lautenberg	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Snowe
Clinton	Levin	Specter
Coleman	Lieberman	Stabenow
Collins	Lincoln	Tester
Conrad	McCaskill	Thune
Corker	McConnell	Vitter
Dodd	Menendez	Voinovich
Dorgan	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murkowski	Wyden
Feingold	Murray	

NAYS—33

Alexander	Bunning	Craig
Allard	Chambliss	Crapo
Bennett	Coburn	DeMint
Bond	Cochran	Dole
Brownback	Cornyn	Domenici

Ensign	Isakson	Shelby
Enzi	Kyl	Stevens
Graham	Lott	Sununu
Gregg	Lugar	Thomas
Hagel	Martinez	Warner
Inhofe	Sessions	Webb

NOT VOTING—2

Johnson	McCain

The amendment (No. 529) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 530

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, at this time, I believe we can agree by unanimous consent to the DeMint amendment, as modified, amendment No. 530, which deals with Social Security.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, that amendment is acceptable on this side.

Mr. GREGG. Do you have the modification at the desk?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, they are now telling us we may not have seen the modification.

Mr. DEMINT. The amendment has not been modified.

Mr. CONRAD. It has not been modified.

Mr. DEMINT. It is the same amendment.

Mr. CONRAD. So let's just be clear. It is not modified. It is the amendment that was previously at the desk.

I thank the Chair, and I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. DEMINT] proposes an amendment numbered 530.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To clarify the point of order to save Social Security first, not discretionary spending)

On page 47, line 25, strike ''direct spending'' and all that follows through ''or revenue'' on page 48, line 1.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent that we agree to the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 530) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 534

Mr. GREGG. Senator DEMINT has another amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina,

Mr. DEMINT. I call up amendment No. 534, hoping I have the number right this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. DEMINT] proposes an amendment No. 534.

Mr. DEMINT. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prevent the adding of earmarks for spinach producers to an emergency war supplemental appropriations bill)

On page 34, line 9, before the period at the end, insert the following: '', except that the authority to designate shall not apply to funding for spinach producers on a supplemental appropriations bill pursuant to subsection (f)(1) that is designated to supplement funding for ongoing combat operations''.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, this amendment really is symbolic of a lot of the things we are trying to work on. What it does is it focuses on extraneous funding that is directed toward supplemental spending bills, supplemental funding for combat operation spending, which we expect to be coming over from the House.

There are dozens and dozens of nondefense-related earmarks on this bill. We had a number of amendments which we have agreed not to vote on, but just to vote on this one to make the point. We should not be adding $20 billion of extra spending on an emergency bill for our combat operations. We certainly should not be adding $25 million for spinach growers. This amendment would eliminate, as part of our budget process, the accepting of spending for spinach in relation to emergency supplemental spending for combat operations.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I urge adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask that we just accept this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

Without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 534) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 594, AS MODIFIED

Mr. GREGG. We are now to Senator BUNNING.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I send a modification of amendment No. 594 to the desk. I add as cosponsors Senator GRASSLEY and Senator MCCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. BUNNING], for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY and Mr. MCCONNELL, proposes an amendment numbered 594, as modified.

Mr. BUNNING. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide a deficit-neutral reserve fund for protecting State flexibility in Medicaid)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR PROTECTING STATE FLEXIBILITY IN MEDICAID.

If the Committee on Finance reports a bill or joint resolution, if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that implements improvements to Medicare, Medicaid, or the State Children's Health Insurance Program, but that does not reduce the ability of States to provide coverage to Medicaid recipients through flexible benefit options that provide greater opportunities to provide health benefits coverage for Medicaid recipients, or alter the guarantee in section 1937 of the Social Security Act of coverage of early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment services for children, then, provided that the Committee is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008 and the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

Mr. BUNNING. My amendment is very simple. It gives Members a chance to go on record about supporting States' flexibility in Medicaid which Congress provided under the Deficit Reduction Act. My State and several others have already used this flexibility to improve their Medicaid programs. A vote for my amendment supports allowing States to designate benefits that fit the specific needs of their State and population. A vote against it is support of a one-size-fits-all model for Medicaid.

Some people have tried to say this amendment tries to undercut the mandatory child care benefits under Medicaid. That is not true and could not be further from the truth. In fact, the amendment we are voting on clarifies that legislation could not alter Medicaid's mandatory coverage benefits for children.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to lend my support to the Bunning amendment No. 594.

In the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, we gave the States the ability to create flexible benefit plans. Section 6044 of the Deficit Reduction Act established a new section 1937 in title XIX, which allows States the option to provide a benefit package that meets a benchmark standard or benchmark equivalent standard of coverage for certain Medicaid beneficiaries. Under this section, States are required to provide Early and Periodic Screening Diagnostic and Treatment, EPSDT, services to children enrolled in benchmark coverage or benchmark equivalent coverage.

Specifically, section 1937(a)(1)(A) contained two related provisions. First, section 1937(a)(1)(A)(i), provides that States choosing to provide coverage under this section must provide benchmark coverage or benchmark equivalent coverage in the case of beneficiaries for whom a benchmark is an option. Second, section 1937(a)(1)(A)(ii), provides that in the case of children under age 19 receiving benchmark coverage or benchmark equivalent coverage, States must cover ''wraparound'' benefits to the benchmark

coverage or benchmark equivalent coverage consisting of EPSDT services and benefits specified in section 1905(r). In other words, an EPSDT ''wraparound'' consisting of all benefits and services enumerated in section 1905(r) is a requirement for States electing the benchmark option or benchmark equivalent coverage. The use of the term ''wraparound'' in this section should not be confused with the optional ''wraparound'' flexibility afforded states under section 1937(a)(1)(C). This section allows States to offer one or more ''wraparound'' benefits to enrollees, who otherwise would be limited to benchmark or benchmark equivalent coverage. EPSDT is not made optional but remains a required benefit.

On March 31, 2006, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, issued guidance to states in a Dear State Medicaid Director letter on the implementation of the benchmark coverage. The CMS letter stated the following:

Individuals under age 19 who are covered under the State plan under section 1902(a)(10)(A) of the Act must receive wraparound benefits to the benchmark, or benchmark-equivalent plan, consisting of early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) services defined in section 1905(r). Wrap-around benefits must be sufficient so that, in combination with the benchmark or benchmark-equivalent benefits package, these individuals receive the full EPSDT benefit. The State plan must include a description of how wrap-around benefits or additional services will be provided to ensure that these beneficiaries receive full EPSDT services.

It is my belief that the requirement of the provision of ESPDT to all children receiving benefits through a benchmark benefit package is a settled issue, both as a matter of law and of implementation of the law.

Giving States the ability to design benefit packages that are appropriate to the people receiving the benefits is key to Medicaid's future. The purpose of this important provision is to free States from a one-size-fits-all approach to Medicaid. Several States, including Kentucky, West Virginia, Idaho and Kansas, are taking the lead with these innovative plans to cover Medicaid recipients. We should resist any effort to limit the ability of the States to develop and implement these flexible, benchmark benefit plans. This flexibility will strengthen the long-term viability of the Medicaid Program and thereby protects coverage for low income children, pregnant women and families.

A vote against the Bunning amendment is a vote against the tools that States desperately need to manage their Medicaid Program. To me, the vote here is obvious. Vote to protect the Medicaid Program and state flexibility in Medicaid. Vote to protect the EPSDT benefit for children. Vote for the Bunning amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, this amendment does undermine the basis of Medicaid today, which is ''medically necessary services.'' The effect of this amendment is to allow States to lower health care coverage for low-income kids. That is the effect of this amendment. Why do States want more flexibility, especially with respect to this program? So basically they can lower benefits. They can save money. There has been a longstanding principle under Medicaid that Medicaid should provide medically necessary services, such as immunizations or checkups, to low-income kids, and that is the basis. We have to keep it. The effect of this amendment is to undermine that. If we stand for anything here, it is making sure low-income kids do not have less health care benefits, at least. They should have more. This amendment would undermine that and allow States to have lower benefits for kids, and for that reason it should be rejected.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, do we have any time on this side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. No.

Mr. GREGG. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 55, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 111 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Alexander	Dole	Martinez
Allard	Domenici	McCain
Bennett	Ensign	McConnell
Bond	Enzi	Murkowski
Brownback	Graham	Roberts
Bunning	Grassley	Sessions
Burr	Gregg	Shelby
Chambliss	Hagel	Stevens
Coburn	Hatch	Sununu
Cochran	Hutchison	Thomas
Corker	Inhofe	Thune
Cornyn	Isakson	Vitter
Craig	Kyl	Voinovich
Crapo	Lott	Warner
DeMint	Lugar	

NAYS—55

Akaka	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Feinstein	Obama
Bayh	Harkin	Pryor
Biden	Inouye	Reed
Bingaman	Kennedy	Reid
Boxer	Kerry	Rockefeller
Brown	Klobuchar	Salazar
Byrd	Kohl	Sanders
Cantwell	Landrieu	Schumer
Cardin	Lautenberg	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Snowe
Casey	Levin	Specter
Clinton	Lieberman	Stabenow
Coleman	Lincoln	Tester
Collins	McCaskill	Webb
Conrad	Menendez	Whitehouse
Dodd	Mikulski	Wyden
Dorgan	Murray	
Durbin	Nelson (FL)	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 594) as modified, was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 536

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Georgia [Mr. CHAMBLISS] proposes an amendment numbered 536.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I ask that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide a deficit-neutral reserve fund for the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that eliminates enhanced Federal matching payments for coverage of nonpregnant adults and permits States to offer supplemental dental and mental health benefits for children enrolled in SCHIP)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR REAUTHORIZATION OF THE STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (SCHIP).

If the Committee on Finance reports a bill or joint resolution, if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that provides for reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), eliminates enhanced Federal matching payments for health benefits coverage under SCHIP of nonpregnant adults, and permits States to offer supplemental dental and mental health benefits for children enrolled in SCHIP, then, provided that the Committee is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008 and the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, this is an amendment that relates to the SCHIP program we enacted 10 years ago that is designed to cover uninsured children.

Today there are 12 States that cover nonpregnant adults with SCHIP funding. CBO has estimated that eliminating the differential match on nonpregnant adults saves $400 million over 5 years, and $900 million over 10 years. This is a program for children, not adults.

I yield the rest of my time to the Senator from Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, this is budget neutral and kid friendly. It allows children to have access to health care and dentistry, and health care and mental health. It is a positive move at

the expense of no one and for the benefit of children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the underlying budget resolution expands SCHIP coverage. This amendment goes the other direction; it restricts coverage. It creates a false choice saying we will take away here, we will give there. The net effect of it is it restricts coverage for kids.

It is similar to—it is not exactly the same as, but it is similar to the Cornyn amendment on SCHIP, which we defeated with a vote of 38 to 59.

The long and short of it is, this does restrict SCHIP benefits. I urge us not to go in the direction of restricting SCHIP coverage. I want to actually go in the other direction and expand. I urge that we not adopt this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficent second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 536.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WEBB). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 55, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 112 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Alexander	Dole	Martinez
Allard	Domenici	McCain
Bennett	Ensign	McConnell
Bond	Enzi	Murkowski
Brownback	Graham	Roberts
Bunning	Grassley	Sessions
Burr	Gregg	Shelby
Chambliss	Hagel	Stevens
Coburn	Hatch	Sununu
Cochran	Hutchison	Thomas
Corker	Inhofe	Thune
Cornyn	Isakson	Vitter
Craig	Kyl	Voinovich
Crapo	Lott	Warner
DeMint	Lugar	

NAYS—55

Akaka	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Feinstein	Obama
Bayh	Harkin	Pryor
Biden	Inouye	Reed
Bingaman	Kennedy	Reid
Boxer	Kerry	Rockefeller
Brown	Klobuchar	Salazar
Byrd	Kohl	Sanders
Cantwell	Landrieu	Schumer
Cardin	Lautenberg	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Snowe
Casey	Levin	Specter
Clinton	Lieberman	Stabenow
Coleman	Lincoln	Tester
Collins	McCaskill	Webb
Conrad	Menendez	Whitehouse
Dodd	Mikulski	Wyden
Dorgan	Murray	
Durbin	Nelson (FL)	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 536) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

AMENDMENT NO. 522

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the next amendment is the Coleman amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 522.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Minnesota [Mr. COLEMAN] offers an amendment numbered 522.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To extend a provision allowing veterans to qualify for low interest mortgage programs)

On page 3, line 11, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 3, line 12, decrease the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 3, line 13, decrease the amount by $14,000,000.

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $22,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 3, line 20, decrease the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 3, line 21, decrease the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 3, line 22, decrease the amount by $14,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $22,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, decrease the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 4, line 17, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 4, line 24, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 4, line 25, increase the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 5, line 1, increase the amount by $15,000,000.

On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $24,000,000.

On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $33,000,000.

On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by $7,000,000.

On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by $22,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $45,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $78,000,000.

On page 5, line 15, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 5, line 16, increase the amount by $7,000,000.

On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by $22,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $45,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $78,000,000.

On page 25, line 20, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 25, line 21, increase the amount by $1,000,000.

On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, this amendment deals with veterans. Many States have first-time home-buy programs. They have tax-exempt programs that allow people of low income to get access to mortgages at low interest rates. By the wisdom of the Congress in 2006, the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 allowed veterans to participate, even if they are not first-time home buyers. It is a benefit that expires January 1, 2008. It allows veterans to participate in first-time home buyer mortgage programs, even if they are not a first-time home buyer. This is not the time to cut benefits for our returning heroes. I hope my colleagues agree.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to accept the Coleman amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 522) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 606

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. The next amendment is the Lott amendment.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 606.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Mississippi [Mr. LOTT] proposes an amendment number 606.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To repeal section 13203 of the Onmibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 by restoring the Alternative Minimum Tax rates that had been in effect prior thereto)

On page 3, line 10, delcrease the amount by $13,800,000,000.

On page 3, line 11, decrease the amount by $36,600,000,000.

On page 3, line 12, decrease the amount by $41,700,000,000.

On page 3, line 13, decrease the amount by $46,900,000,000.

On page 3, line 14, decrease the amount by $39,300,000,000.

On page 3, line 15, decrease the amount by $23,900,000,000.

On page 3, line 19, decrease the amount by $13,800,000,000.

On page 3, line 20, decrease the amount by $36,600,000,000.

On page 3, line 21, decrease the amount by $41,700,000,000.

On page 3, line 22, decrease the amount by $46,900,000,000.

On page 3, line 23, decrease the amount by $39,300,000,000.

On page 3, line 24, decrease the amount by $23,900,000,000.

On page 4, line 5, increase the amount by $225,000,000.

On page 4, line 6, increase the amount by $1,539,000,000.

On page 4, line 7, increase the amount by $3,413,000,000.
On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by $5,653,000,000.
On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by $7,944,000,000.
On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by $9,809,000,000.
On page 4, line 14, increase the amount by $225,000,000.
On page 4, line 15, increase the amount by $1,539,000,000.
On page 4, line 16, increase the amount by $3,413,000,000.
On page 4, line 17, increase the amount by $5,653,000,000.
On page 4, line 18, increase the amount by $7,944,000,000.
On page 4, line 19, increase the amount by $9,809,000,000.
On page 4, line 23, increase the amount by $14,025,000,000.
On page 4, line 24, increase the amount by $38,139,000,000.
On page 4, line 25, increase the amount by $45,113,000,000.
On page 5, line 1, increase the amount by $52,553,000,000.
On page 5, line 2, increase the amount by $47,244,000,000.
On page 5, line 3, increase the amount by $33,709,000,000.
On page 5, line 6, increase the amount by $14,025,000,000.
On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by $52,164,000,000.
On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by $97,278,000,000.
On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by $149,831,000,000.
On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by $197,075,000,000.
On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by $230,784,000,000.
On page 5, line 14, increase the amount by $14,025,000,000.
On page 5, line 15, increase the amount by $52,164,000,000.
On page 5, line 16, increase the amount by $97,278,000,000.
On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by $149,831,000,000.
On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by $197,075,000,000.
On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by $230,784,000,000.
On page 25, line 8, increase the amount by $225,000,000.
On page 25, line 9, increase the amount by $225,000,000.
On page 25, line 12, increase the amount by $1,539,000,000.
On page 25, line 13, increase the amount by $1,539,000,000.
On page 25, line 16, increase the amount by $3,413,000,000.
On page 25, line 17, increase the amount by $3,413,000,000.
On page 25, line 20, increase the amount by $5,653,000,000.
On page 25, line 21, increase the amount by $5,653,000,000.
On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by $7,944,000,000.
On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by $7,944,000,000.
On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by $9,809,000,000.
On page 26, line 4, increase the amount by $9,809,000,000.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this amendment would repeal the 1993 AMT tax increase that generally increased the AMT rates from 24 percent to a two-tiered 26 and 28 percent. This is one last opportunity on this resolution to correct the mistake we made in 1993, which began in 1969 with the so-called alternative minimum tax. This was the guarantee that the wealthy paid their fair share, ostensibly, but it has morphed into a terrible tax on the middle class. This is not a full repeal like the earlier amendment. This is the one that actually addresses the problem we created in 1993, the creeping rate increase that went from 24 to 26 percent. I urge colleagues to take this action to effectively deal with the AMT problem.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let me alert colleagues, if this amendment is adopted, we will be here until 2 o'clock this morning. I hope that sobers everybody's consideration on this matter.

On a serious note, the Lott amendment blows a hole in the budget because it is not paid for. It is not offset, $231 billion not paid for. I urge colleagues to vote no. Let's not give up the gains we have made in these hours of work to balance the budget by 2012. Please, reject the Lott amendment.

Mr. GREGG. I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 606.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 113 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Alexander	Dole	McConnell
Allard	Domenici	Murkowski
Bennett	Ensign	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Enzi	Roberts
Brownback	Graham	Sessions
Bunning	Grassley	Shelby
Burr	Gregg	Smith
Chambliss	Hagel	Snowe
Coburn	Hatch	Specter
Cochran	Hutchison	Stevens
Coleman	Inhofe	Sununu
Collins	Isakson	Thomas
Corker	Kyl	Thune
Cornyn	Lott	Vitter
Craig	Lugar	Warner
Crapo	Martinez	
DeMint	McCain	

NAYS—50

Akaka	Dorgan	Lincoln
Baucus	Durbin	McCaskill
Bayh	Feingold	Menendez
Biden	Feinstein	Mikulski
Bingaman	Harkin	Murray
Boxer	Inouye	Nelson (FL)
Brown	Kennedy	Obama
Byrd	Kerry	Pryor
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Reed
Cardin	Kohl	Reid
Carper	Landrieu	Rockefeller
Casey	Lautenberg	Salazar
Clinton	Leahy	Sanders
Conrad	Levin	Schumer
Dodd	Lieberman	
Stabenow	Voinovich	Whitehouse
Tester	Webb	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The amendment (No. 606) was rejected.

Mr. DURBIN. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mrs. BOXER. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I have another package of cleared amendments that Senator GREGG and I have agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 638

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Gregg-Conrad amendment No. 638 be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 638) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To create a point of order against increasing mandatory spending in appropriation bills)

At the end of Title II insert the following:

SEC.____POINT OF ORDER AGAINST PROVISIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION THAT CONSTITUTES CHANGES IN MANDATORY PROGRAMS WITH NET COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any appropriations legislation, including any amendment thereto, motion in relation thereto, or conference report thereon, which includes one or more provisions that would have been estimated as affecting direct spending or receipts under section 252 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (as in effect prior to September 30, 2002) were they included in legislation other than appropriations legislation, if such provision has a net cost over the total of the period of the current year, the budget year, and all fiscal years covered under the most recently adopted concurrent resolution on the budget.

(b) DETERMINATION.—For purposes of this section, the determination of whether a provision violates paragraph (a) shall be made by the Committee on the Budget of the Senate.

(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—This section may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the chair on a point of order raised under this section.

(d) GENERAL POINT OF ORDER.—It shall be in order for a Senator to raise a single point of order that several provisions of a bill, resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report violate this section. The Presiding Officer may sustain the point of order as to

some or all of the provisions against which the Senator raised the point of order. If the Presiding Officer so sustains the point of order as to some of the provisions (including provisions of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Senator raised the point of order, then only those provisions (including provision of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Presiding Officer sustains the point of order shall be deemed stricken pursuant to this section. Before the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may move to waive such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions against which the point of order was raised. Such a motion to waive is amendable in accordance with rules and precedents of the Senate. After the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may appeal the ruling of the Presiding Officer on such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions on which the Presiding Officer ruled.

(e) FORM OF THE POINT OF ORDER.—When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report or amendment shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.

AMENDMENT NO. 518

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Smith amendment No. 518 be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 518) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To fund the State Department, USAID, and other foreign affairs agencies and their programs at the level requested by the President)

On page 9, line 8, increase the amount by $2,200,000,000.

On page 9, line 9, increase the amount by $1,049,400,000.

On page 9, line 13, increase the amount by $567,600,000.

On page 9, line 17, increase the amount by $224,400,000.

On page 9, line 21, increase the amount by $149,600,000.

On page 9, line 25, increase the amount by $121,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $2,200,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $1,049,400,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $567,600,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $224,400,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $149,600,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $121,000,000.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to explain why I offered an amendment with Senator SMITH to increase the international affairs budget. Prior to the Budget Committee's consideration of the 2008 international affairs budget, Senator SMITH and I, along with many of our colleagues on both side of the aisle, circulated a letter to the Budget Committee asking for a significant increase in the international affairs budget.

I feel very strongly that given the myriad challenges facing the United States around the world, the international affairs budget needs be more robustly funded.

As my colleagues know, this budget supports the people and programs devoted to strengthening alliances, promoting peaceful relationships among nations, boosting economic development, eliminating poverty, and explaining and representing U.S. policy abroad.

As my colleagues also know, the international affairs budget constitutes just over 1 percent of Federal spending, yet it funds some of the most essential components of America's foreign policy, including our diplomatic service, foreign aid, international health programs, and emergency relief operations among others.

The international affairs budget provides the funding for the most important tools we have to implement our foreign policy. Robust funding is necessary to implement these critical programs and policies to fund American diplomacy and global development, so that we can continue to expand our leadership in the fight for freedom, prosperity and peace throughout the world.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to vote for this budget resolution today. I believe this blueprint for the government's spending and revenues will help put us back on a fiscally responsible path.

Before I turn to the merits of this resolution, I want to address the fact that my amendment to establish a deficit neutral reserve fund to promote American manufacturing has been included in this resolution. I thank Senators CONRAD and GREGG for accepting this amendment, and I look forward to working with them and other Members to carry out its intent.

I believe that we must take strong and dramatic actions in this Congress to revitalize and support our domestic manufacturing sector. We need to enhance our research and development programs, provide tax incentives to encourage and sustain domestic manufacturing, and level the playing field for our domestic manufacturers in the global marketplace. My amendment will be helpful as we fight in this Congress to take these important steps.

We need to stop the hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs from the United States. Our economy and well-being are directly linked to the health of our manufacturing sector, yet we continue to lose manufacturing jobs in this country. Since 2001, we have lost 3 million manufacturing jobs nationwide—including more than 200,000 in my home State of Michigan.

Millions more manufacturing jobs hang in the balance. Our companies face enormous pressure in competing in the global marketplace without sufficient support from the U.S. government. Our companies are not competing against other companies overseas—they are competing against other governments that strongly support their manufacturing sectors.

We need to provide significant federal support for technology initiatives and advances that will help keep our companies on the cutting edge of technology development and competitive in the global marketplace. All of this requires a bold and comprehensive effort across many segments of our federal government. It will involve many committees and many federal agencies, but I believe it is critical to stem the tide of the domestic manufacturing crisis occurring in this country.

My amendment points us in the direction we need to take. It will support legislation that would revitalize our domestic manufacturing sector in four critical ways—by increasing Federal research and development; by expanding the scope and effectiveness of manufacturing programs across the Federal Government; basing support for development of alternative fuels and leap-ahead automotive and energy technologies; and by establishing tax incentives to encourage the continued production in the U.S. of advanced technologies and the infrastructure to support them.

There are many other parts of this resolution to be pleased with as well. For too long now we have been digging deeper and deeper into a ditch of debt. President Bush's budget submitted to Congress in February would continue that trend by increasing the gross Federal debt by nearly $3 trillion to $11.5 trillion by 2012. That's $38,000 per person. The budget resolution we are considering today should start to reverse that trend.

First, this resolution reestablishes a strong pay-go rule, which would require any new spending or tax cuts to be paid for elsewhere in the budget or receive a supermajority of at least 60 votes in the Senate. This concept is common sense for most families, who work to live within their means by balancing what goes out with what comes in. I heartily welcome its return.

This budget also takes the positive steps of establishing a new budget point of order against long-term deficit increases and allowing the Senate's unique budget reconciliation process, which was abused in recent years by the Republican majority, to be used for deficit reduction only, not to increase the deficit with measures which otherwise could not pass the Senate.

This budget also sets a blueprint for going after our country's massive $350 billion tax gap, which is the difference between the amount of taxes owed by

taxpayers and the amount collected. One of the primary tax gap areas I hope Congress will focus on this year is the offshore tax haven and tax shelter abuses that are undermining the integrity of our tax system. There are many ways Congress can go about tackling these problems, and I commend Chairman CONRAD and the Budget Committee for their willingness to take on and push Congress to address these complicated areas. Cracking down on these abuses which shift the tax burden onto ordinary taxpayers is a critical step toward achieving fairness in our tax system.

Additionally, I am pleased that this budget assumes an extension of alternative minimum tax, AMT, relief for 2 years. This is relief we know is needed to avoid imposing this unintended tax increase on millions of middle income families. This time frame gives the Finance Committee time to work out a fix that is appropriate and, I hope, paid for.

The two AMT amendments offered to this resolution which we considered today were not paid for. The amendment offered by Senator LOTT would add $231 billion to the debt over the next 5 years, and Senator GRASSLEY's amendment would have cost $533 billion over that same time. We must not only fix AMT, we must fix it responsibly.

Furthermore, I am pleased that this budget resolution supports our men and women in uniform by providing all the funding requested by the President for national defense, for both the underlying national defense program and the additional costs of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I believe our policy in Iraq must change, but I do not support attempts to cut off funds for our troops in the field. This resolution fully funds our forces at home and overseas, at the levels I and Senator MCCAIN, the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, requested in our letter to the Budget Committee.

I also believe funding for these ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan should be accounted for in our budget, and that it was past time the President and Congress stop treating these costs as if they were unanticipated ''emergency'' expenditures. I am pleased that this resolution supports the request Senator MCCAIN and I made to build these costs into the budget.

This has two beneficial effects. First, it makes this budget more honest about the cost of this war and the impact it has on our federal deficit. Second, putting this spending into the regular budget process helps ensure that funding requested for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will receive greater congressional oversight. I commend Senator CONRAD for his continuing leadership on fiscal responsibility and accountability.

On the issue of funding for our Nation's veterans, I am pleased that this resolution includes the resources needed to ensure that our veterans get the health care they deserve. In total, the resolution provides more than $43 billion for the Veterans Affairs healthcare system—$3.5 billion more than President Bush's budget. Again, this year, the Senate has rejected President Bush's proposal to raise copayments and to impose new fees and higher copayments on certain veterans.

I am also pleased that this budget affirms the Senate's commitment to authorize at an appropriate level the Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, before it expires in September 2007. Making sure children have adequate health care should be one of our nation's top priorities. However, President Bush's budget would lead to the loss of critical coverage in many states. It is imperative that we reject that inadequate proposal, and this budget resolution does that.

This budget also represents a significant improvement over the President's budget for education. There are more funds for Pell grants, IDEA, and No Child Left Behind Act than the President requested. It would be shameful to fail in our responsibility to our children to adopt a spending blueprint that does not provide our schools the resources they need.

I am also pleased that this budget rejects the broad array of cuts to environmental protection programs that were included in the President's budget. This budget resolution fully funds the Environmental Protection Agency's programs to support clean and safe drinking water, and increases funding for the Superfund program by $211 million over the level in the President's budget. The budget also provides about $900 million more for the EPA than the President's budget. This bill also protects Federal lands by rejecting President Bush's proposal to assume revenues from proposals to sell Federal lands.

I am also heartened that the budget rejects the President's proposal to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR.

Further, I also support the Senate's adoption of an amendment to fund the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP, at $3.2 billion, which will ensure that more households can be served by this very important program. Unfortunately, this program has been woefully underfunded by President Bush's budget, as well as in past years.

I also want to talk a bit about a couple more of the amendments we voted on today. I support extending tax cuts for low- and middle-income taxpayers. However, I opposed Senator GRAHAM's amendment because it would have extended the excessive tax cuts for those in the highest income bracket which I have opposed from the first time we voted on it in 2001, and which we simply can't afford.

I also opposed an estate tax amendment offered by Senator BEN NELSON. I would support legislation to prevent a return to the 2001 exemption level, which is too low and no longer appropriate. The current law estate tax exemption level for 2009 of $3.5 million, $7 million for couples, is appropriate and results in only one-third of one percent of estates owing any estate tax. I also had concerns about the Nelson amendment because it proposed a reduction of the rate to 35 percent, which would be a huge loss to the treasury and the amendment does not specify how the revenue needed to keep these changes from increasing the deficit would be raised.

It is a welcome change to be voting for a budget resolution that I believe can change the failed fiscal policies and irresponsible tax cuts pushed by this administration. This resolution paves the way for important investments in America's future to put our country back on track and to begin the long process of climbing out of the ditch of debt.

Mr. President, during this budget debate there have been different views expressed regarding the amount of revenue that would result if Congress will go after the offshore tax haven and tax shelter abuses that are undermining the integrity of our tax system. There are many ways Congress can go about tackling these problems, and I commend Chairman CONRAD and the Budget Committee for their willingness to take on and push Congress to address these complicated areas. Cracking down on these abuses is a critical step toward achieving fairness in our tax system.

If Congress addresses these inequities, it would also bring in billions of dollars needed to pay for many important national priorities. These priorities are recognized in this budget resolution itself, such as education, children's health care, veterans medical care, community development block grants, and law enforcement. We can go a long way toward paying for these critical programs by stopping these tax dodges that rob the Treasury of up to $100 billion a year, and shift the tax burden from high-income persons and companies who are principal users of offshore tax havens onto the backs of middle-income families who pay their taxes.

For many years, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, of which I am chairman, has been looking at the problem of offshore corporate, bank, and tax secrecy laws and practices that help taxpayers dodge their U.S. tax obligations by preventing U.S. tax authorities from gaining access to key financial and beneficial ownership information.

The subcommittee has also spent years looking at abusive tax shelters, which are complicated transactions promoted to provide tax benefits unintended by the Tax Code. They are very different from legitimate tax shelters, such as deducting the interest paid on home mortgages or congressionally approved tax deductions for building affordable housing. Some abusive tax

shelters involve complicated domestic transactions; others make use of offshore shenanigans. All abusive tax shelters are marked by one characteristic: no real economic or business rationale other than tax avoidance.

I would like to talk briefly about what we found during those investigations. I think the specifics help make clear that if we have the political will, these are areas ripe with abuses that we can put an end to.

Offshore Investigation. During its year long investigation into offshore tax haven abuses, the subcommittee issued more than 70 subpoenas, conducted more than 80 interviews, and reviewed more than 2 million pages of documents. In the resulting hearing held in August 2006, the subcommittee showed through case studies that offshore tax haven countries have, in effect, declared economic war on honest U.S. taxpayers by giving tax dodgers a way to avoid their U.S. tax bills and leave them for others to pay. Offshore tax havens attract these tax dodgers by shrouding their financial transactions in a ''black box'' of secrecy that is extremely difficult to penetrate. They sell secrecy to attract customers and reward them with low or no taxes.

This legal black box allows tax dodgers to hide assets, mask who controls them, and obscure how their assets are used. An army of ''offshore service providers'' lawyers, bankers, brokers, and others then joins forces to exploit the impenetrable curtain of secrecy and help clients skirt U.S. tax, securities, and antimoney laundering laws. Many of the firms concocting or facilitating these schemes are respected names here in the United States.

These schemes require the secrecy of tax havens because they can't stand the light of day. Our investigation laid out six case studies that illustrated the scope and seriousness of the problem. In one case, two U.S. citizens moved about $190 million in untaxed stock option compensation offshore to a complex array of 58 offshore trusts and corporations and utilized a wide range of offshore mechanisms to exercise direction over these assets and hundreds of millions of dollars in investment gains. These untaxed earnings were then used to finance business ventures, acquire real estate, provide loans, and buy art, furnishings and jewelry for the personal use of the family members.

Much of this elaborate scheme involved an offshore bank and an administrative services firm for offshore entities, both housed in a building in the Cayman Islands that we have shown a few times on the Senate floor during this budget debate, the Ugland House. Believe it or not, the building is the official address of 12,748 companies. Just having a post office box in the building enables these shell companies to shift profits that otherwise should be reported as taxable income in the country where it is actually earned.

In another case study, two offshore shell corporations engaged in fake stock transactions, seeming to trade stock back and forth as if it were fantasy baseball to create the illusion of economic activity. The shell corporations pretended to run up hundreds of millions of dollars in fake stock losses and then used these phantom losses to offset about $2 billion in real capital gains of the promoters' U.S. clients. The result was $300 million in lost tax revenues to the Treasury. This offshore scheme would be comical because of its complexity but for the sobering fact that these tax haven abuses are eating away at the fabric of the U.S. tax system and undermining U.S. laws intended to safeguard our capital markets and financial systems from financial crime.

Our investigation shone a needed spotlight into the black box of offshore tax havens. It revealed a system that is corrupt and corrupting. Honest Americans are footing the bill for tax haven abuses, and it is long past time for Congress to shut those abuses down.

Abusive Tax Shelters. In addition to offshore shenanigans, there are plenty of homegrown tax shelters being used to dodge taxes. For 5 years, our subcommittee has also been conducting investigations into the design, sale, and implementation of these complex transactions that have no economic or business rationale other than to avoid tax. Our first hearing on this topic in recent years was held in January 2002, when the subcommittee examined an abusive tax shelter purchased by Enron. In November 2003, the subcommittee held 2 days of hearings and released a staff report that pulled back the curtain on how even some respected accounting firms, banks, investment advisors, and law firms had become engines pushing the design and sale of abusive tax shelters to corporations and individuals across this country. In February 2005, the subcommittee issued a bipartisan report that provided further details on the role these professional firms played in the proliferation of these abusive shelters. Our subcommittee report was endorsed by the full Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in April 2005. Most recently, a 2006 subcommittee staff report entitled, ''Tax Haven Abuses: The Enablers, the Tools, and Secrecy,'' disclosed how financial and legal professionals designed and sold yet another abusive tax shelter known as the POINT Strategy, which depended on secrecy laws and practices in the Isle of Man to conceal the phantom nature of securities trades that lay at the center of that tax shelter transaction.

The subcommittee investigations have found that many abusive tax shelters are not dreamed up by the taxpayers who use them. Instead, most are devised by tax professionals, such as accountants, bankers, investment advisors, and lawyers, who then sell the tax shelter to clients for a fee. In fact, as our 2003 investigation widened, we found a large number of tax advisors cooking up one complex scheme after another, packaging them up as generic ''tax products'' with boiler-plate legal and tax opinion letters, and then undertaking elaborate marketing schemes to peddle these products to literally thousands of persons across the country. In return, these tax shelter promoters were getting hundreds of millions of dollars in fees, while diverting billions of dollars in tax revenues from the U.S. Treasury each year.

For example, one shelter investigated by the subcommittee and featured in the 2003 hearings has since become part of an IRS effort to settle cases involving a set of abusive tax shelters known as ''Son of Boss.'' Following our hearing, more than 1,200 taxpayers have admitted wrongdoing and agreed to pay back taxes, interest, and penalties totaling more than $3.7 billion. That is billions of dollars the IRS has collected on just one type of tax shelter, demonstrating both the depth of the problem and the potential for progress. The POINT shelter featured in our 2006 hearing involved another $300 million in taxes lost to the Treasury on transactions conducted by just six taxpayers.

Tax Levies on Federal Contractors Who Don't Pay Their Taxes. That is not all. For the last 4 years, our subcommittee has been focusing attention on another sector of the tax gap involving Federal contractors who don't pay their taxes. These contractors are stuffing their pockets with taxpayer dollars, while stiffing Uncle Sam by not paying their taxes.

Past subcommittee hearings have exposed the fact that there are about 27,000 defense contractors with $3 billion in unpaid taxes; 33,000 contractors with other Federal agencies who owe $3.3 billion in unpaid tax debt; and 3,800 GSA contractors with $1.4 billion in unpaid tax debt. Earlier this week, another subcommittee hearing put the spotlight on 21,000 Medicare physicians and related medical suppliers with $1.3 billion in unpaid tax debt. These mind-boggling numbers represent tens of thousands of companies putting their hand in the taxpayers' wallet, while dodging billions of dollars in tax obligations.

A key program designed to stop this type of abuse is the Federal Payment Levy Program. This program was enacted about 10 years ago to enable the Federal Government to identify Federal payments being made to tax deadbeats, and to withhold a portion of those taxpayer dollars to pay off a portion of the person's tax debt. For the last 4 years, our subcommittee has conducted an intensive effort to strengthen the tax levy program for Federal contractors who don't pay their taxes. As a result, over the past 3 years, tax levy collections as a whole have more than doubled, increasing from about $136 million in 2004 to nearly $340 million in 2006. Of these totals, tax levy collections from Federal contractors in particular have also more than doubled, increasing from about $28 million

to $62 million. But $62 million is only a fraction of the billions of uncollected taxes owed by Federal contractors getting paid hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars. Much more can and should be done to reduce the Federal tax gap by increasing tax levy collections.

The first step would be to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to move as quickly as possible to make all $450 billion Medicare and Medicaid payments each year subject to the tax levy program, so that all of these taxpayer dollars are screened for repayment of tax debt. The next step would be to strengthen the tax levy program as a whole. In 2006, for example, the Federal Government identified a total of about $122 billion in assessed tax debt that could be collected, in part, through the tax levy program. At the same time, it determined that only about 45 percent of that uncollected tax debt was actually matched against the Federal payments being made that year. In other words, in 2006, some $67 billion in tax debt was never ''turned on'' for actual collection under the tax levy program.

Simple reforms could ensure that a lot more of that $67 billion is set up for collection under the tax levy program. One key barrier right now, for example, is an elaborate series of tax levy notices, mandated by law, that currently have to be issued by the IRS before tax debt can be collected through the tax levy program. While the tax levy notices make sense if the Federal Government is targeting payments being provided by a third party, such as an employer, they make a lot less sense when the levy is targeting taxpayer dollars going to the very people who owe the tax debt. For that reason, Senator COLEMAN and I plan to introduce legislation to reform the tax levy notice process for Federal payments. We also plan to strengthen other aspects of the tax levy program to start narrowing that multibillion-dollar tax gap.

IRS Enforcement Efforts to Reduce the Tax Gap. In our efforts to reducing the tax gap, it will be critical that we give the IRS the funds it needs to go after tax dodgers. For every dollar invested in the IRS's budget, the service yields more than $4 in enforcement revenue. Beyond the additional revenues collected, increased IRS enforcement deters those who might otherwise have dodged their tax obligations and reassures honest taxpayers that compliance with the law is broadly achieved.

I am pleased that this budget resolution fully funds the President's budget request for the IRS, and includes an additional $399 million available for IRS enforcement activities. I can't think of many better investments to recover revenues wrongfully lost to the U.S. Treasury and to build respect for the law and respect for the honest Americans who play by the rules and meet their tax obligations.

Scope of Problem. The abusive tax shelters and offshore case studies that the subcommittee has delved into are merely a handful of examples that can be used to better understand the details behind these widespread problems.

Because secrecy is such a key component of offshore abuses, it is incredibly difficult to estimate just how much income is sheltered offshore. Recent estimates from tax experts, Joe Guttentag and Reuven Avi-Yonah, estimate that offshore tax haven abuses by individuals cost the U.S. Treasury between $40 billion and $70 billion a year in taxes that are owed but not collected.

Corporations are also using tax havens to avoid payment of U.S. taxes. Preliminary results from a study to be released soon by Kimberly Clausing of Wellesley College show that $50 billion in U.S. revenue was lost in 2002 from profit-shifting by corporations to low-tax countries. A GAO report Senator DORGAN and I released in 2004 found that nearly two-thirds of the top 100 companies doing business with the U.S. Government had one or more subsidiaries in a tax haven. One company, Tyco International, had 115. Enron, in its heyday, had over 400 Cayman subsidiaries.

Data released by the Commerce Department further demonstrates the extent of U.S. corporate use of tax havens, indicating that, as of 2001, almost half of all foreign profits of U.S. corporations were in tax havens. A study released by the journal, ''Tax Notes'' in September 2004 found that American companies were able to shift $149 billion of profits to 18 tax haven countries in 2002, up 68 percent from $88 billion in 1999.

A 2004 study by Professor John Zdanowicz found that transfer pricing abuses by corporations cost the U.S. Treasury $53 billion a year. Last year the IRS settled a transfer pricing dispute with one company alone, drug giant Glaxo SmithKline, for $3.4 billion. The size of this settlement with just one company indicates that it is worth looking to see if there are ways to improve the relevant portions of the Tax Code. Treasury has proposed regulations in this area, and I urge the administration to finalize those rules in as strong a form as possible. I also urge the Finance Committee and others to make it a priority to stop these transfer pricing abuses that are hurting average taxpayers as well as disadvantaging U.S. companies that play by the rules.

How to Address the Problem. One of the big questions that surrounds all of this is how to start addressing these problems. I have a bill that would be a huge step in the right direction. We can't let the offshore tax havens hide $100 billion in U.S. tax revenues which are needed to protect our troops, fund health care and education, and meet the other needs of American families. We cannot tolerate high-priced accountants, lawyers, and banks concocting ways for tax cheats to offload their unpaid taxes onto the backs of honest taxpayers. That is why earlier this year I introduced the Stop Tax Haven Abuse Act, along with Senators Coleman and Obama. This bill provides a powerful set of new tools to clamp down on offshore tax and tax shelter abuses.

Among other measures, our bill would:

Establish Presumptions to Combat Offshore Secrecy by allowing U.S. tax and securities law enforcement to presume that nonpublicly traded, offshore corporations and trusts are controlled by the U.S. taxpayers who formed them or sent them assets, and to presume that money moving between U.S. taxpayers and offshore entities is taxable income, unless the taxpayer proves otherwise;

Impose Tougher Requirements on U.S. Taxpayers Using Offshore Secrecy Jurisdictions by listing 34 jurisdictions which have already been named in IRS court filings as probable locations for U.S. tax evasion;

Authorize Special Measures to Stop Offshore Tax Abuses by giving Treasury authority to take special measures against foreign jurisdictions and financial institutions that impede U.S. tax enforcement;

Strengthen Detection of Offshore Activities by requiring U.S. financial institutions that open accounts for foreign entities controlled by U.S. clients, open accounts in offshore secrecy jurisdictions for U.S. clients, or establish entities in offshore secrecy jurisdictions for U.S. clients, to report such actions to the IRS;

Close Offshore Trust Loopholes by taxing offshore trust income used to buy real estate, artwork and jewelry for U.S. persons, and treating as trust beneficiaries those persons who actually receive offshore trust assets;

Strengthen Penalties on tax shelter promoters by increasing the maximum fine to 150 percent of their ill-gotten gains, and on corporate insiders who hide offshore stock holdings by increasing the maximum fine on them to $1 million per violation of U.S. securities laws;

Stop Tax Shelter Patents by prohibiting the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office from issuing patents for ''inventions designed to minimize, avoid, defer, or otherwise affect liability for Federal, State, local, or foreign tax''.

This is only a partial list of a host of innovative measures we have included in our bill to strengthen the ability of Federal regulators to combat offshore tax haven and tax shelter abuses. We believe these new tools merit congressional attention and enactment this year if we are going to begin to make a serious dent in the $100 billion in annual lost tax revenue from offshore tax abuses that forces honest taxpayers to shoulder a greater tax burden than they would otherwise have to bear.

Tax cheats make it harder to maintain our highways, protect our borders, advance medical research, and inspect our food. They make it difficult to give needed tax relief to small businesses

and middle-income victims of the alternative minimum tax. They also deepen the deficit ditch that threatens the economic well-being of our children and grandchildren. The assumptions made in this budget resolution that we can raise ample revenues by shutting them down are not only reasonable, they are crucial to maintaining the integrity of our tax system. I applaud Chairman CONRAD and the Budget Committee, as well as the Finance Committee and Chairman BAUCUS, for their hard fought efforts on this front, and I look forward to working with them and other allies on this issue as we address these problems later this year.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I support this budget resolution. For the last few years, I have not been able to support the budget resolution because it focused on the wrong priorities. I would like to commend Senate Budget Committee Chairman CONRAD for crafting a budget resolution that focuses on the right priorities.

Today, we have before us a resolution that restores fiscal sanity to the budget process. It recognizes the realities of our current and future financial situation. This resolution eliminates the deficit by 2012 and unlike the Bush administration's budget it does not leave out important costs like the funding of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and addressing the individual alternative minimum tax, AMT.

This budget resolution returns discipline to the budget process. It restores the pay-as-you-go-rule which was essential to reducing the deficit in the 1990s. It includes a provision which requires the reconciliation process to be used for deficit reduction. The reconciliation process was designed to setup a procedure to expedite the passage of legislation. It was used successfully to reduce the deficit, but in recent years it was used to pass debt-financed tax cuts. Today, we are restoring the reconciliation process to its original purpose—deficit reduction.

The priority of the Administration's budget is to make permanent the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts—at the expense of hard working families. This budget puts families first; it puts education first; it puts health care first. It is a resolution we can and should be proud of, particularly because we will be reauthorizing the Higher Education Act and No Child Left Behind this year. Now we know we will have enough money to make a difference with our legislation.

This resolution specifically and substantially addresses one of my legislative priorities—providing health insurance to children. In 2005, 361,000 children under the age of 18 were added to the rolls of the uninsured, the first time in almost a decade that the number of children without insurance in this country increased. This brings the total number of uninsured children under the age of 21 to a staggering 11 million. Thankfully, this budget begins to put kids first.

Under the resolution, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, S-CHIP, will be funded with an additional $50 billion over the next five years. This will maintain coverage for all currently enrolled children and enable coverage to be expanded to the estimated six million children that are eligible for, but not enrolled in, public health insurance programs. I will continue to work on this issue to ensure that every child in America gets the health care coverage they deserve: Their health and our future depend upon it.

This budget resolution includes many deficit-neutral reserve funds which will allow us to address our priorities in a fiscally responsible manner, including a fund for small business health care. Recently, Senator SNOWE and I held a hearing on this issue in the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. This hearing provided a blueprint for how we can move forward to provide small business owners the relief they need from rising premium costs while also ensuring that more employees of small firms have access to affordable, meaningful health care coverage.

I have introduced legislation that would provide small businesses with refundable tax credits to help with the cost of providing their employees with coverage. I am also working on reinsurance legislation that would help small businesses with catastrophic costs. Small business health care needs to be addressed this year. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this issue.

This budget makes veterans a priority. Our veterans have admirably served their country and should receive the best health care that we can provide them. To follow through on this promise this budget resolution includes a deficit-neutral reserve fund to make sure that veterans receive necessary treatments and services.

I offered an amendment which ensures that this reserve fund addresses the needs of low-vision and blinded veterans. More and more of our brave soldiers returning from Iraq are coming home with serious eye injuries, mainly caused by traumatic brain injury. We must do our best to provide vision rehabilitation and screening services to try and save the sight of these veterans. The statistics are staggering: from March 2003 to April 2005, 16 percent of all causalities from Iraq had direct eye injuries. Between Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospital they have performed over 1,200 emergency eye surgeries. I am pleased that my amendment passed so that low-vision and blinded veterans will get the services they deserve.

I am pleased that this budget resolution puts an end to the myth that tax cuts pay for themselves. During the debate on this budget resolution, many of my colleagues argued that this resolution represents a tax increase. That is wrong. This budget provides a deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax relief. This will give the Finance Committee the opportunity to evaluate the tax cuts and extend them in a revenue neutral manner.

This budget addresses the individual AMT for 2007 and 2008. The Administration's budget only addresses this AMT for 2007. The resolution will prevent new taxpayers from being impacted by the AMT for the next 2 years and gives us time to work on a fiscally responsible solution. We need to address the AMT so it no longer punishes families with children that live in high tax States. Without addressing the AMT, there will be a hidden tax increase on the middle class.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this fiscally responsible budget resolution that puts families first.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, as the Senate concludes debate on the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution, I would like to thank Chairman CONRAD and Senator GREGG for all of their hard work at the mark-up last week. We had a constructive debate, and while I did not vote for the product, I respect the process and way he ran the committee mark-up. I know that crafting an annual budget is a difficult task. I also want to acknowledge the importance of writing and passing a budget resolution. This document is a vital part of the operation of Congress. It sets a fiscal blueprint that Congress will follow for the year, and establishes procedural hurdles when these guidelines are not adhered to.

As an accountant, I think it is a valuable exercise to review our Nation's overall priorities. I was disappointed to learn that the committee-reported resolution, adopted on a party-line vote, doesn't do more to promote economic growth and limit overall government spending. This is a tax-and-spend, big-government budget. It assumes that the tax cuts will expire as scheduled under current law, resulting in $900 billion in tax increases for Americans. The Democratic budget also far outspends the President's discretionary budget request. The committee-reported resolution allows for $949 billion in regular, nonemergency budget authority to the appropriations committee, $18 billion more than the President's requested level of $933 billion.

It also does nothing, on net, to reduce mandatory spending. Our Nation's mandatory health programs are growing each year by more than 6 percent—an unsustainable level—and last week the Budget Committee rejected, on party-line votes, two amendments that would have included reconciliation instructions to the Finance Committee to contain this spending.

I have a legislative track record of fiscal responsibility and meaningful deficit reduction. In 2005, under the Deficit Reduction Act, the Republican Congress was able to produce nearly $40 billion in spending cuts. I am proud that under my chairmanship, the HELP Committee led the entire Congress in deficit reduction, and produced

$15.5 billion in savings—that is 40 percent of the entire law.

But that was then. Let me restate that now, the budget resolution we are debating on the floor of the Senate does nothing to reduce net mandatory spending. It's not right to overspend now—and pass the bill on to our children and grandchildren to pay later. I challenge the Senate to work across party lines and do more to shore up our economic future. If one-half of the Senate authorizing committees equal the level of deficit reduction this year that the HELP Committee achieved in 2005, the deficit would be reduced by an additional $100 billion. But this week, similar to the mark-up last week, the Senate rejected multiple amendments to reform our Nation's largest entitlement programs and slow the growth in mandatory spending.

In my role as lead Republican on the HELP Committee, I will continue to use the reauthorization process to stretch Federal dollars the farthest—ensuring that programs are cost effective and not duplicative, so that precious Federal funds touch as many people as possible.

I will also look for an avenue this year to address health care access and affordability. As my colleagues know, last year Senator BEN NELSON and I introduced legislation that would allow business and trade associations to band their members together in small business health plans, and offer group health coverage on a national or statewide basis. This legislation, The Health Insurance Marketplace and Modernization and Affordability Act, was a direct response to the runaway costs that are driving Americans and small businesses away from the health insurance marketplace.

The HELP Committee has a role to play in making employer-sponsored health care more accessible and affordable. Employer-provided health insurance is voluntary—and it is in critical condition. Sixty percent of the country's employers offer insurance today, down 9 percent from just 5 years ago. And the cost of health insurance for companies has nearly doubled in that same period—with employers expected to pay an average of $8,167 per employee family, versus $4,248 5 years ago.

Progress on this critical issue is moving forward, and bipartisan discussions are promising. Last year we built a very solid foundation, which continues to grow.

We are continuing to move forward on this issue and to deal with outstanding concerns. I am actively engaged in negotiations with other members of this body on how best to craft that proposal.

Rather, the best way to achieve real small business health care reform is to proceed forcefully to build on the significant progress we made last year. Development of small business health legislation is a process that is well along, and I believe success is in sight. We are on a promising track, and we should stick with it. America's small businesses deserve no less than our sincere commitment to make this effort a success.

I also want to mention progress on another HELP-related bill, mental health parity legislation. In February, the HELP Committee favorably reported the Domenici-Kennedy-Enzi compromise parity bill on a bipartisan vote of 18–3. It is the product of more than 2 years of bipartisan negotiations and supported by more than 60 organizations. I am pleased that Senator DOMENICI authored a deficit-neutral reserve fund for mental health parity legislation at the mark-up last week. This reserve fund will serve as a placeholder in the budget for our compromise legislation, which focuses on a benefit, not a mandate.

Lastly, I would like to call attention to an amendment that I offered at the Budget mark-up last week, and reoffered on the floor. The amendment is very simple: it establishes a 60-vote threshold for legislation that imposes unfunded mandates on the private sector, in excess of the $131 million threshold for fiscal year 2007 established in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, UMRA.

A 60-vote point of order currently applies to legislation that imposes unfunded mandates on State and local governments. I think the Senate should have a new 60-vote point of order that applies to legislation that creates unfunded private sector mandates. We here in Washington must stop thinking that we have a monopoly on good ideas. This is a commonsense proposal, and should have been approved.

I also want to take this opportunity to mention a few programs that are important to Wyoming.

As our Nation's most abundant energy source, coal must play a central role in electrical generation for years to come. In order for that to happen, we need to continue finding ways to make coal generation cleaner. Programs like the Clean Coal Power Initiative will play a major role in making that happen and so I support increased funding of this program.

We also need to see proper funding of the Federal loan guarantee program. Federal loan guarantees can play an important role in developing new energy projects. It is my hope that we can provide enough funding to get some of these projects off the drawing board, and most specifically, I hope that we provide funding to the Department of Energy to move forward with loan guarantees for coal-to-liquids projects. Coal-to-liquids technology has the potential to help reduce our Nation's dependence on foreign energy barons and should be explored.

In addition, funding for rural air service and maintenance is essential for states like Wyoming. Without Federal support through essential air service and airport improvement programs, many rural communities would have no commercial air service and extremely limited general aviation. I hope this issue will be part of the debate on the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration this year. I encourage my colleagues to recognize the importance of this funding, not only as a matter of dependability, but also as a public safety issue.

I want to mention two additional issues of great importance to Wyoming and other rural States; housing and homelessness. The McKinney Vento Homelessness Assistance Act is the primary law through which Congress funds homelessness programs in the United States. Unfortunately, rural States have historically received very little of this money. Yet rural States must confront homelessness too, and the geographic size of our States further complicates our efforts. In response to this, Congress authorized the Rural Homelessness Grant Program in 1992 under the McKinney-Vento Act. This program provides funding for transitional housing and education services in rural States, as well as rental or down-payment assistance. The intent of this program is to level the playing field between rural and urban States. Unfortunately, this program has never been appropriated funds since its creation, so the purpose of this program has never been fulfilled, and rural states continue to suffer. This can be a valuable program for rural States like Wyoming.

I would like to briefly call attention to the Small Business Administration. I serve on the Small Business Committee and enjoy using my small business experience to help make a difference in the lives of many people in Wyoming and throughout the country. We are working in Wyoming to stabilize and steadily grow our small businesses through the utilization of the Small Business Innovation Research, SBIR, program. The risk and expense of conducting serious research and development efforts are often beyond the means of many small businesses, especially rural small businesses. By reserving a specific percentage of Federal R&D funds for small business, SBIR enables small businesses to compete on the same level as larger businesses and stimulate high-tech innovation in their rural States.

The FAST and Rural Outreach programs are congressionally authorized programs that provide technical assistance that helps Wyoming's small businesses utilize the SBIR program.

Finally, the Agriculture Committee has a big task in reauthorizing the farm bill this year. Writing a tight budget that will help us reach our long-term fiscal goals is a priority for me. However, we also need to provide adequate funding in the budget for the farm bill. Though you cannot tell by the name, the farm bill affects the lives of many unsuspecting Americans. Policies and projects for distance learning, conservation, food assistance, renewable fuels, and our forests are

provided for in the farm bill, in addition to the well-known commodity programs.

The Senate should reject this tax and spend budget. It increases taxes on working families by $900 billion, creates a spending spree on the Government's credit card and does nothing to contain runaway entitlement spending.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to support the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution and our Budget chairman, Senator CONRAD, who has done an extraordinary job in developing such a thoughtful resolution.

This budget resolution helps to get our country back on the right fiscal track, and it highlights many priorities for American families that were neglected or ignored over the last few years. For example, this resolution increases discretionary education funding by about $9 billion so that we can invest in title 1, IDEA and improving Pell grants and student aid.

Another important change is the investment in our veterans by providing $3.5 billion more for the VA. This resolution approximately matches the funding request of the veteran's organizations, known as the independent budget. It is a travesty that VA has been underfunded in the past as veterans are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. In West Virginia, I host confidential roundtables to listen in private to our returning veterans. I want to hear from them personally about their experience in combat, and their care and treatment after they come home. I am deeply disturbed by stories of hassles to get medical appointment and lengthy delays in processing claims for benefits. Every veteran who has bravely served our Nation deserves timely and quality care and benefits. Because of the violence and intense combat, many of our returning veterans want and need mental health care. We have a moral obligation to care for our veterans, both those coming home today and the aging veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam. This budget resolution is a meaningful downpayment to fulfill our obligations. It will let us investment in mental health care, and begin to improve our VA benefits system so that wounded soldiers do not have to wait ridiculous amounts of time to get their benefit claims resolved.

One part of this resolution that is deeply important to me is the investment of $50 billion for reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP. In 1997, I fought hard to create this program, and I am enormously proud of the success of CHIP in providing insurance coverage to children. In my own State of West Virginia, there are nearly 40,000 children covered through CHIP each year. This budget resolution will allow us to move CHIP forward in two important ways: first, to maintain coverage for children currently enrolled in the program today and, second, to expand coverage to children who are eligible but not yet enrolled in the program. This provision is a strong signal of the new priorities of the leadership in the 110th Congress. I would like to particularly thank Senator CONRAD and his staff for the commitment this resolution makes to CHIP. I know this budget wasn't easy. I know that there are many competing priorities for limited Federal resources and an ever escalating demand. But, I am so proud that Democrats are taking a stand for children and making CHIP reauthorization the top health care priority this year.

This budget resolution is responsible. It restores pay-as-you-go rules. But it also includes deficit-neutral reserve funds so that Congress can move forward on important areas like reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, competitiveness and other domestic priorities that have been ignored for too long. I have been proud to support this budget resolution throughout a long day of votes, and I want to thank and commend our chairman, Senator CONRAD, for a job well done.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my support for the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

This budget resolution provides Congress with a $2.9 trillion spending blueprint for the upcoming year. It establishes a process and guidelines by which Congress will determine the revenues and spending for the Federal Government.

I support this resolution. It puts our Nation on the road back to fiscal responsibility. Nevertheless, I am deeply concerned about our Nation's fiscal health.

We have moved a long way from where we were 6 years ago. When President Clinton left office, he left with a projected 10-year surplus of $5.6 trillion. That surplus could have allowed Congress to eliminate the Nation's debt by 2010.

But today, the Nation faces a $248 billion deficit and the debt has grown to $8.9 trillion. This translates to roughly $30,000 owed by each and every United States citizen.

It took almost 200 years for every President from George Washington to George H.W. Bush to amass $2.6 trillion in debt. President Bush matched their $2.6 trillion in debt in just 5 years.

And, over the next 10 years, the Congressional Budget Office projects the interest payments on the debt will be more than $3 trillion. That is $3 trillion that cannot be spent on priorities like healthcare, education or homeland security.

This should be a major concern to the American people.

Our Nation is in this situation because of the misplaced policies of the Bush administration and the Republican Congress.

The President's tax cuts have cost this Nation over $1 trillion. Over the next 10 years, these tax cuts will cost over $3 trillion more.

The vast majority of these tax cuts have gone to benefit the very wealthy.

Additionally, the War in Iraq and Afghanistan has cost $510 billion to date. And there is no end in sight.

This has squeezed the budget and made it difficult to fund all those programs that deserve funding.

Let me tell you what this means.

When the President submitted his budget proposal to Congress on February 5, it was deeply flawed.

It cut or eliminated 141 programs, programs that are of great importance to the American people.

My home State of California was especially hard hit.

The President's budget proposed cutting Community Development Block Grants by 21 percent. This would have meant that California's CDBG funding would be cut by almost $140 million from its 2006 funding level.

This would be devastating.

In the City of Victorville, CDBG funds have helped revitalize areas of the city 3000 residents call home.

In Los Angeles, these funds have allowed 8,500 housing units to be rehabilitated. CDBG funds have preserved over 2,000 jobs and removed over 41 million square feet of graffiti.

Yet the President's budget did not support this important program.

The President's budget also shortchanged the law enforcement programs that Americans rely on for their continued safety.

The Community Oriented Policing Services, COPS, program was eliminated under the President's budget, as was the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, SCAAP. As a border State, these programs are essential to California.

Additionally, under the President's budget, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, was given only half of the funding that is necessary to continue to serve the children already enrolled in this program.

The good news is the budget before us today restores many of the President's cuts. For instance:

It funds CDBG at 2007 levels, plus an adjustment for inflation. California State and local governments can continue to work for housing and community development in low-income areas.

The budget also restores funding to the COPS program. It allocates $522 million for COPS, a program that has put over 100,000 police officers on the streets in communities across the country. And we have adopted an amendment by my colleague Senator BIDEN to increase COPS funding to its authorized level of $1.5 billion. I was proud to support this increase.

This budget also restores $407 million for SCAAP. And through an amendment I offered and the Senate has adopted, will increase the funding for SCAAP to its authorized level of $950 million. California has the highest number of undocumented aliens in the country. And California prisons house over 20,000 criminal aliens, incurring tremendous costs. Last year alone, California spent over $715 million keeping criminal aliens off the streets.

This budget increases spending on SCHIP from $2 billion in the President's budget to $50 billion. The $48 billion increase will allow for continued coverage of all currently enrolled children in SCHIP. This budget then goes one step further. It expands SCHIP, insuring an additional six million children who are currently eligible for this program but are not enrolled. Young Americans should not suffer as a result of the President's misplaced priorities.

Additionally, this budget provides critically needed funding for vital Veterans' care programs. Specifically, it provides over $43 billion for Veterans, $3.5 billion more than the proposal offered by President Bush. This money will allow our brave troops to obtain the medical care they deserve.

After the alarming revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other Veterans' facilities around the country, it is clear that we need to ensure that VA facilities provide the highest level of care. This proposal funds medical and prosthetic research and information technology; and it ensures that baseline operating expenses are met.

In addition, the proposal provides middle-income taxpayers relief from the alternative minimum tax.

Absent congressional action, nearly 20 million more Americans will be forced to pay the AMT next year. This proposal adds 2 years of relief from the AMT, where the President could only find room for 1.

Congress faced many restrictions and tough choices in crafting this budget. And lawmakers' hands were tied due to years of fiscal mismanagement.

The budget resolution is far from perfect. It fails to provide permanent relief from the AMT for middle-class families and, while it restores much needed funds in critical areas, it does not fully fund critical programs. But it refocuses our priorities. And it takes important steps to restore fiscal responsibility.

Unlike the President's budget proposal, this budget will create a surplus in 2012 and is nearly balanced a year before that.

Change will take time. And there is no cure-all for the years of fiscal irresponsibility and misguided policies that we have seen.

As I said before, this budget is far from perfect. However, it initiates much needed change and I believe will put us back on the path from which the President and Republican Congress strayed.

Mr. President, I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to act in the best interest of Americans who have entrusted us with a great responsibility. I hope that they will join me today in meeting this responsibility by voting for the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I wish to speak today as a member of the Senate Budget Committee.

I had hoped that the budget that was presented before the Committee last week was going to be fiscally responsible. Chairman CONRAD had said earlier this year that he was prepared to get savings out of long-term entitlement programs. He had made similar statements in the past. So I had some hope that this budget would take a serious look at what we could do to address the issue of out-of-control entitlement growth.

Unfortunately, I was not able to support this budget in Committee and I will not be able to support it here on the Senate floor.

This budget does not take seriously the out-of-control entitlement spending looming on the horizon. This budget resolution fails to show that Congress is willing to make the difficult choices necessary to ensure that the Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid programs will continue into the future.

This country faces $67 trillion in unfunded liabilities over the next 75 years. Thirty two trillion dollars of that is in the Medicare program, $20 trillion is in the Medicaid program and the remaining $15 trillion is in the Social Security program and other liabilities.

As Senator GREGG pointed out yesterday, $67 trillion represents more than the entire amount of revenues received by the Federal Government since the beginning of the republic.

How are our children supposed to pay for that?

We don't have to wait 75 years for the problem to blow up in our faces. In about 2032—almost 25 years from now—the cost of just Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, if left unchecked, will exceed the 18.2 percent of GDP that is the historic level of our Federal revenues. So every single penny of what should be received by the Federal Government in revenue will be spent on just three programs.

Where is the money for defense to come from? Where is money for education to come from? LIHEAP? NASA? Worker training? Border enforcement? Name any program that you support and tell me just where the money is to come from? This is the future we face.

And yet this budget resolution doesn't move a toe toward fixing it. It includes not one penny in net entitlement reform.

President Bush presented Congress with a budget that makes strides in this direction by attempting to slow the rate of growth in these programs. I'm not talking about wholesale reform here—although I feel that such reform is needed. Just implementing incremental changes can make a huge difference simply because of the enormous amounts of money that we are dealing with here.

For example, in Medicare the President proposed reducing the growth in the program from 6.5 percent to 5.6 percent over 5 years. This change, just a 1 percent reduction from how Medicare would otherwise grow over the same time period, is estimated to reduce Medicare's 75-year unfunded liability by 25 percent—or $8 trillion. For Medicaid, the President proposed reducing the growth rate from 7.3 percent to 7.1 percent.

Keep in mind that this means we will still have spending increases in these programs—pretty substantial increases in fact. However, these increases just won't be as big as originally projected.

The President's budget calls for some commonsense reforms to both Medicare and Medicaid to reduce spending. In Medicare, for example, the President's budget makes several suggestions to ensure that the program is adequately paying providers for the cost of care without overpaying.

In Medicaid, the President has proposed ensuring Medicaid prescription drugs are reimbursed fairly and by improving the financial integrity of the program.

As a member of the Finance Committee, I would obviously need to take a close look at these reforms before any are implemented. However, it is vitally important that the American taxpayer does Not overpay for health care services or products.

The President's budget also requires wealthy seniors to pay more for Medicare by reducing the Federal subsidy for Medicare Part D premiums for these seniors. This means that seniors who have incomes over $80,000 for an individual or $160,000 for a couple would be required to pay more for their Medicare drug benefit.

To me, this just makes sense. Today's working middle-class American taxpayers should not be subsidizing the health care of Bill Gates' father. Also, we already do this for Medicare Part B. Such a change would only affect about 5 percent of seniors.

These are the types of changes that we need to be making. Yet this budget resolution before us today makes no net changes to entitlement programs. This, despite the fact that the Big 3 entitlement programs currently account for over 41 percent of the Federal budget, and that number will grow to almost 57 percent in 10 years.

A budget that does not seriously address entitlement spending is not responsible. This budget is not responsible.

Again, I am not asking for wholesale reforms here. I am very supportive of looking at comprehensive reforms and I support the efforts of Chairman CONRAD and Senator GREGG to set up a bipartisan group to take a look at recommending them.

But that is not what I am asking for in this budget before us today. We should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Maybe we don't have a perfect way to fix our entitlement challenge right now. But we could have made a good start this year and started on some incremental changes. However, the authors of this budget chose not to do that.

We face a demographic tidal wave in this country. As the baby-boom generation grows older, the number of people

in the United States ages 65 and over is expected to roughly double by 2030. But instead of saving for a rainy day, we continue to spend, spend, spend.

Hard choices have to be made. Spending has to be controlled. Entitlements have to be reigned in.

We are saddling our children and grandchildren with an unfair burden.

The President's budget started us in the right direction. Unfortunately, the Democratic budget has dropped the ball, and pushed off the inevitable hard decisions until another day.

I am profoundly disappointed with the budget I see before us today, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. Con. Res. 21, the budget resolution currently before this body. This budget restores fiscal discipline on both the spending and revenue sides of the ledger, reinstates the pay-as-you-go rules that were so successful during the late 1990s in helping us achieve budget surpluses, and provides a responsible framework for meeting our Nation's most important priorities. With these accomplishments, it represents a major improvement over the budgets of recent years and the budget submitted by the President last month. It puts our country in a much better position to address the major long-term fiscal challenges looming just around the corner.

We as Americans are fortunate to be a part of the world's largest and most prosperous economy. America is, by many measures, doing well but I defy anyone to say we that we cannot do better. We must ensure our national security and restore our moral authority in the world. We must address growing middle class insecurity, reflected in falling incomes coupled with rising costs and record low personal savings coupled with record high household debt. We must stem the backward slide of rising poverty of recent years.

As a Nation, we must take this opportunity to lay a strong foundation for the future: to constructively respond to the accelerating pace of globalization, to secure clean and renewable sources of energy, and to rein in the skyrocketing health care costs that threaten to overwhelm the budgets of households, businesses, and the Government.

Our ability to effectively address any of these challenges, Mr. President, depends on properly managing our fiscal resources. This budget takes an important step towards restoring fiscal responsibility, reversing the profligate trend of the last several years. Since the current President took office, fiscal discipline has been thrown to the wind. Since 2000, we have seen our nation go from a $236 billion budget surplus to a projected $244 billion deficit, from a National debt of $5.6 trillion to $8.8 trillion today, with the share of that debt held by foreign lenders doubling. Critical investments in education and infrastructure have been shortchanged, and middle-class tax cuts have been passed over in favor of more lavish, budget-busting tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans who needed them least.

Instead of continuing these irresponsible policies and passing the costs on to our children and grandchildren, the budget now before us would restore fiscal discipline and renew investments in our nation's critical priorities. First and foremost, it reinstates commonsense pay-as-you-go rules that require any new spending or tax cuts to be paid for up front, rather than added to the debt. And because of this commitment to pay-as-you-go, it balances the federal budget within 5 years and reduces the debt as a share of the economy. It requires honest budgeting for the cost of ongoing military operations. The resolution also imposes discipline on both spending and revenue, lowering spending every year as a share of the economy and cracking down on abusive tax shelters that cost American taxpayers an average of $2,000 apiece every year, according to the Internal Revenue Service's National Taxpayer Advocate.

Within the context of fiscal responsibility, this budget also allocates our resources to our Nation's most important priorities.

Mr. President, few priorities are more important than investing in our Nation's children. The budget before us recognizes this commitment by rejecting the President's proposed cuts to education. Instead, it provides a funding increase of $9.2 billion above the president's request for education and training, from birth through post-secondary education, including Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), programs authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act, and Pell Grants. The increased investment will ensure that more preschool children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be ready for school. It will help elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools close achievement gaps; increase graduation rates; and reduce the need for remedial education at a later time. It will ensure that schools can attract, train, and retain high-quality teachers. It will keep our commitment to educate students with disabilities. And it will make college more affordable so that eligible students can gain the skills and experience they need to compete in the global marketplace. Simply put, this budget gives more Americans the tools they need to fulfill their potential, including their college dreams. Mr. President, we can be confident of one thing: the investment we make here will be returned to us, many times over.

In addition to investing in our human capital, this budget also makes important investments in our physical capital. Specifically, it honors the funding levels for highways and transit that were authorized for fiscal year 2008 in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA), funding that will help States and communities conduct critical maintenance and make needed improvements in their transportation infrastructure. It more than doubles funding for transit security an important start, although more still needs to be done and rejects the Bush administration's continued attempts to zero out funding for Amtrak, which serves so many people in Connecticut and across the country.

With the number of Americans without health insurance on the rise, this budget provides up to $50 billion to help cover uninsured children through the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, which is up for reauthorization this year. We also know that this administration has failed to meet its commitments to the health of our veterans, as revealed by the recent reports on the disgraceful conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As an answer to this major shortfall, the budget before us provides more than $3.5 billion for veterans above the level proposed by the administration. And where previous budgets have cut funding for first responders, this budget restores the administration's proposed cuts to Firefighter Grants, the COPS program, and Local Law Enforcement and Terrorism Prevention Grants. Finally, this budget also rejects the administration's proposed cuts to low-income heating assistance and to the Community Development Block Grants an absolutely vital source of federal grant assistance for economic development in our local communities.

Mr. President, I would also add and I have already spoken on this matter—that I am pleased that the Senate voted to adopt the Smith-Dodd amendment to add $2.2 billion to Function 150 for the International Affairs budget, which will provide important funds for international aid, poverty reduction, and other critical foreign policy priorities.

Mr. President, the priorities in this budget set a positive course for our Nation. In its lists of numbers we read a statement of our values. We can all speak in unlimited praise of responsibility and education and opportunity in the abstract but for the first time in several years, I'm proud to say we have a budget in front of us that puts flesh on our words. It restores discipline. It confronts the challenges of a struggling middle class and an aging population, promoting opportunity, prosperity, and security across the board. And it puts the American people's money towards the wisest priority of all: investing in the years to come. In sum, I think we have a budget that reflects the best values of the American people, and I am proud to give it my support.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to express my disappointment with this year's budget resolution. This budget is putting us on a very dangerous path in terms of our economy. A huge tax hike is not the right direction for our country.

The Republican progrowth tax policies that have been implemented over the past few years have had a tremendous impact on our economy. Since August 2003, more than 7.5 million jobs have been created. Our unemployment rate remains low at 4.5 percent—which is well below the 5.1 percent average rate for 2005 and below the average of each of the past four decades. Thanks to our strong economic growth, tax revenues continue to pour in. Tax receipts were up about 12 percent in 2006, on top of 2005's 14.6 percent increase. Receipts have grown another 8 percent so far in fiscal year 2007.

But instead of building on this success, this budget takes us in a completely different direction. The resolution would raise taxes by $900 billion—the largest tax hike in history. This tax increase will have real consequences on American families. An Oregon family of four with $50,000 in earnings will see their taxes go up 132 percent to $3,675 in 2011 if the Republican tax relief is not made permanent, and 15 million seniors would see their taxes increase if current tax policy is not extended.

We are heading in the wrong direction with this budget. Therefore, I will be voting against the budget resolution.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, after many long years of flawed budget policies that have eroded our Nation's infrastructure and recklessly taken from the health and safety of American working families, the Senate finally has an opportunity to change course.

The President has submitted a grossly inadequate budget request for the fiscal year 2008, built around the erroneous premise that tax cuts are sacrosanct. I reject that argument. I hope that my colleagues will reject that argument.

The President's budget includes $2 trillion of new tax cuts, many of which will benefit those who least need them. In order to fund those tax breaks, the President cuts the programs that working Americans rely on the most. The President proposes to cut the Medicare and Medicaid Programs, which provide health care to seniors and children. He proposes to cut funding for housing for the elderly in rural America. He proposes to cut funding for first responder programs, jeopardizing the safety of our firefighters and law enforcement officers, and those of us whom they protect. He proposes to cut funding for our children and schools, for health care research and rural hospitals, and for our communities and economic development.

The President is proposing to take an awful lot from working American families in order to pay for his tax breaks. His budget cuts are not funding the troops overseas, or being used to pay down the national debt. The president's own budget tables show that the gross federal debt will continue to increase to record levels, $12 trillion in the next five years, even if his spending cuts are enacted into law.

I reject the argument that seniors must give up their health care, and that children must give up funding for their schools, in order to fund tax breaks for the wealthiest of the wealthy in America.

The President's budget continues the dangerous practice of chipping away at domestic priorities, and trying to get away with spending as little as possible on critical infrastructure. There are consequences—sometimes significant consequences, and sometimes deadly consequences—when the administration tries to hide the impact of its budget cuts in order to fund more tax cuts.

H.G. Wells wrote that human history is a race between education and catastrophe.

The Congress must get into the race to avert the next catastrophe. The squeeze on domestic discretionary spending these past years has done a lot of damage to the infrastructure of our Nation. It has resulted in budgetary shortfalls that are wholly irresponsible, and they must be addressed.

Look at FEMA's inability to respond to natural disasters. Look at the shortfalls in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistant Program, LIHEAP, affecting so many of our States. Look at the shortfalls in our homeland security, where glaring vulnerabilities along the border are left to linger year after year after year. Look at the shortfalls in the funding for our veterans. The problems at Walter Reed did not happen because our military is not committed to caring for its wounded. It happened because we have an administration that is trying to cut corners in order to pay for its tax breaks for wealthy Americans.

Look at the Department of Labor, where the administration chipped away at the mine safety budget for 6 years until it had lost 217 inspectors, undermined the enforcement of the Mine Act, and left coal miners underground with inadequate safety equipment. It is no coincidence that mining deaths increased to record numbers last year, while the administration cut the coal enforcement budget, reduced the number of safety inspectors, and reduced the severity of enforcement actions against habitual violators.

Gas and energy prices are on the rise again, and, still, the President's budget does not adequately address our Nation's congested roads, our overcrowded transit and rail systems, or the energy bottlenecks causing higher prices and electricity failures and power outages. These are the festering signs of our Nation's infrastructure slowly being starved.

When the catastrophes come, they are Hurricanes that brutalize our cities and people, or scandals that surface at our Nation's veterans facilities, or tragedies that take the lives of our coal miners underground due to lack of sufficient Federal inspections.

I reject the administration's tactics of cutting funds and hiding the consequences until a catastrophe hits. I reject that kind of Russian roulette. I reject the notion that the health and safety of the American people is less important than extending a tax cut. Today, the Congress has an opportunity to reject that approach, and I hope that it does reject it.

We must have a budget that sets realistic spending levels. That is the only way to real budget enforcement and discipline. The last Congresses pinned their expectations to pie-in-the-sky, fantasy spending levels that were totally disconnected from reality. When those budgets proved inadequate and the appropriations process stalled, the Congress was forced to consider massive off-budget supplementals and end-of-the-year continuing resolutions and omnibus spending bills that exempted hundreds of billions of dollars of spending from the oversight of the regular appropriations process. The result was always higher deficits, and less accountability to the American people.

The budget before the Senate today rejects that approach. It sets realistic spending levels that would allow the Congress to consider the annual appropriations bills in a timely manner, and subject those bills to debate and amendments in the Senate. That is the best kind of enforcement mechanism—full and open debate and amendments. This budget sets a discretionary spending level of $949 billion in the fiscal year 2008, $16 billion above the President's request, and above the President's requested freeze at fiscal year 2007 levels for domestic programs. The Congress must address the unacceptable cuts in health care, veterans programs, and other critical priorities that have been proposed by the President.

This budget is practical, and it is tough. This is not a budget lacking in enforcement mechanisms, and they would apply equally and fairly to all pieces of the budget revenues, mandatory entitlements, and discretionary spending. This budget caps discretionary spending in the fiscal year 2008, subject to a 60-vote point of order. It caps advance appropriations in the fiscal years 2009 and 2010, and it creates a 60-vote point of order against both emergency defense and nondefense spending, to limit the kind of budget gimmickry that has been used in the past to circumvent the discretionary spending caps. On the revenue and mandatory entitlement side of the ledger, this budget restores pay-go budget enforcement, subjecting new mandatory spending and tax cuts that are not offset to a 60-vote point of order. It also creates a 60-vote point of order against reconciliation legislation that worsens the deficit, causes a deficit, or reduces a surplus by decreasing revenues or increasing spending. Here, more than anywhere else, is where the budget process has been abused the most. Budget reconciliation has been used to shield controversial tax cuts from debate and amendments in the

Senate, which have added trillions of dollars to the national debt. This budget will stop such egregious practices from continuing.

This budget gives the Congress the flexibility it needs to address the gross deficiencies in the president's request, and it demands savings from every piece of the budget—revenues, discretionary, and mandatory—in order to do it. This budget is evenhanded and fair, and its spending levels can be enforced.

I commend the chairman of the Budget Committee for writing a budget that sets a new course. I hope that the Senate follows the lead of our chairman. He is trying to address the next catastrophe before it happens. He is trying to set enforceable spending limits to rein in this administration's budget deficits. He is doing the right thing with this budget. It deserves the support of the Senate.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the great untold story of the post–9/11 period is the recovery of America's will to move on, despite new threats, and build an even stronger economy, an even stronger America than before. We gave the American people the tools they needed to help themselves and then we got out of the way.

We eliminated the marriage penalty and doubled the child tax credit. We created a tuition tax deduction. We increased the deduction on charitable gifts and put the death tax on the road to extinction. We slashed the tax on capital gains and dividends.

The American people took care of the rest. They took all these things and unleashed a flood of economic activity that is still lifting the tide for tens of millions of working families and retirees. We look out at the American economy today with amazement. Despite 9/11, despite a recession, despite Katrina, despite a war, we see: 4.5 percent unemployment—lower than the average of the last four decades. An economy that is grown at 3.4 percent over the last four quarters. More than 7.2 million new jobs since August '03

That is more jobs over the last 4 years than the European Union and Japan—combined.

China may have the world's fastest growing economy. But its entire GDP is less than the amount that ours has grown in the last 5½ years.

New jobs create new revenue, and it's been pouring into the U.S. Treasury at a staggering clip. Since we cut taxes on capital gains, tax revenues exceeded government estimates by more than two-thirds.

President Bush looked out over this economic landscape too, and he gave us a budget that builds on it, that advocates discipline and anticipates continued strong revenues by keeping tax cuts in place.

That is the formula for continuing to shrink the deficit and leading us to a surplus. And we had reason to think the Democrats would embrace it, even on taxes, when my good friend the senior Senator from Nevada said back in November that raising taxes would be, ''Unacceptable.''

Well, we should have known better. Budget week is like an annual debutante ball for the Democrats. They step out so everybody can take a good look at them, but their budgets never look good in the lights.

The budget they proposed this week was a disaster. It restored the marriage tax, cut the child credit in half, lowered deductions on everything from charitable gifts to college tuition, and raised taxes on capital gains and dividends. It wasn't just a tax increase. It was the mother of all tax increases. Nearly four times bigger than the previous record.

It reversed every tax cut we passed, and its passage would have resulted in a tax increase on every single taxpayer in America.

A family of four with two kids and an annual income of $56,300 would pay an extra $2,000

Nearly 50 million married couples would pay an extra $2,700 each year in taxes.

More than 10 million single mothers would see their tax bill go up by more than $1,000.

Seventeen million seniors would see their taxes go up by more than $2,000.

Spending wasn't any better.

Here too, we thought the Democrats might be coming around. The day before the President's budget was released, my good friend, the Senior Senator from North Dakota, said:

> We need to be tough on spending. The week after that, he went even farther, saying we should sharply inhibit the growth of spending.

But then the curtain fell, and we saw the reality. The Democrats proposed to increase nonessential spending over the President's budget by nearly $150 billion.

And as if that wasn't enough, in addition to the tax hikes we could see, they set up 20 new accounts that they planned to fill up with money they had raised from a raft of new taxes they didn't even specify. Most of these funds are for worthy purposes. But let's be honest with the American people and pay for these programs by trimming waste, fraud, and abuse instead of open-ended tax hikes down the road.

Republicans opened this Congress with a pledge to work with Democrats. We gave them a soaring economy and an offer to take advantage of divided government to do big things, as divided governments have in the past. One of the big things we proposed was entitlement reform. Every Member of this Chamber knows Social Security is unsustainable in its current form. Yet the budget writers ignored the problem altogether. They proposed to raise $916 billion in new taxes—and to spend it. Budget week is when the rhetoric meets reality: and one of the sad realities this budget revealed was that Democrats weren't serious about reform this week.

Oh they will deny it. Just like they have tried to deny that the tax hikes in this budget are tax hikes.

After I and my colleagues pointed out the new taxes in this budget, the senior Senator from North Dakota rose to say that we were letting our imaginations get the better of us. He said the Democratic budget contained ''no proposed tax increase.''

But then, one day after rising on the floor to insist that there were no new taxes in this budget, he and his Democratic colleagues admitted as much. They voted for an amendment that would reduce some of the more unsavory tax increases in their budget.

Well, you don't need to be Einstein to know that you can't lower a tax increase that doesn't exist.

The upshot of that amendment is that the budget we are now being asked to vote on no longer represents a tax hike four times larger than the previous record.

We are being asked to vote on a tax hike nearly three times bigger than the previous record—and, in the process, to get in the way of an economic expansion, increase nonessential spending by tens of billions of dollars, and do absolutely nothing about a pending entitlement crisis.

Republicans wouldn't do any one of those things, let alone all four. And we urge our colleagues on other side to reconsider the damage they plan to inflict on Americans who have worked hard to rebuild and reenergize this country over the last 5 years.

Their current budget would squeeze three-quarters of a trillion dollars out of the American taxpayer without shaving so much as a dime from a single government program. This is the very definition of tax and spend. It represents a tremendous missed opportunity. And it is a terrible disappointment.

When Republicans proposed to accomplish big things, this isn't what we had in mind.

This budget is a big mistake. Republicans can't support it.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let me say for the colleagues who are waiting, we are working on a final package of amendments to be adopted by unanimous consent. That package has many amendments by many colleagues. It has to go through a vetting process. It is not quite complete. As soon as it is, we will move to that and then to final passage.

I thank my colleagues for their extraordinary cooperation. So many colleagues have agreed to withhold amendments. It has been very helpful. We have to have this final process complete before we can go to final passage.

While we are awaiting that package, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staffs who have made truly an extraordinary effort. Mary Naylor, my staff director; John Righter, my deputy staff director; the counsel, Lisa Konwinski; Kobye Noel, who is the one who does all of our charts. I know my colleagues enjoy them; Joel Friedman, my other deputy staff director; Steve Bailey, who does the tax

work; and Jamie Morin, who does defense. I thank all of the others on my staff who have done such an extraordinary job working nights and weekends for weeks—Steve Posner, Stu Nagurka, David Vandivier, Mike Jones, Jim Esquea, Sarah Kuehl, Jim Miller, Joan Huffer, Cliff Isenberg, Brodi Fontenot, Robyn Hiestand, Susan Reeves, Jim Klumpner, Anne Page, Ben Soskin, and Josh Ryan. I thank each and every one of my staff.

I also wish to recognize the extraordinary professionalism of Senator GREGG's staff. They are absolutely first rate and absolutely dependable—people whose word you can count on. Of course, no one is better than the ranking member, Senator GREGG. He has demonstrated over and over his willingness to cooperate; more than that, his professionalism and also his extraordinary knowledge of the budget. I wish to thank all of those who have participated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I wish to join Senator CONRAD in thanking both our staffs. They are exceptional. They are incredibly talented people. They work extraordinary hours: Mary Naylor and her team on that side. Scott Gudes, Denzel McGuire on our side, including Allison Parent, Jim Hearn, Cheri Reidy, Dan Brandt, Dave Fisher, Conwell Smith, Jay Kholsa, Richie Weiblinger, Seems Mittal, Vanessa Green, Winnie Cheung, Betsy Holahan, Jeff Turcotte, David Myers, Jason Delisk, Dave Pappone, Jennifer Pollum, Mike Lofgren, Kevin Bargo, Matt Giroux, Liz Wroe, and Lynne Seymour, our team that works so well over here. They are special people who put in an extraordinary amount of effort on behalf of the American people. We thank them for it. This is a complex bill. It involves many nights of work and takes a lot of time to work it up into a final package. As you can see from the amount of paper that is being run around right now, it is extraordinary that we are able to keep it straight, and it is because of their extraordinary ability.

I also wish to thank the staff on the dais, the Senate staff. This is probably the most difficult bill the Senate deals with because there are so many votes that come so quickly in such rapid succession and they always do an exceptional job and I very much appreciate it.

Finally, I wish to thank the chairman, Senator CONRAD, who treats us with dignity, respect and fairness and runs an extremely professional shop as chairman of the Budget Committee and who is committed to making sure the integrity of the Senate and the process of the Senate remains professional. We thank him for that, and we thank him for his assistance.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I so appreciate the two managers of this bill. A year ago the roles were reversed. Senator JUDD was the chairman. Senator CONRAD was the ranking member. Mr. President, the way they operate it doesn't matter. They truly set an example of how the Senate should operate. I say—and I say this without any reservation or qualification—these two fine Senators deserve a hand.

Mr. GREGG. Actually, last year Senator GREGG was in charge. This year, Senator JUDD is in charge.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, following morning business, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1591.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this being the case, there will be no votes on Monday. We have done such a great job here, and we are moving to the supplemental on Monday. There will be no votes Monday. We will have a tough week on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday perhaps, but we made great progress, and I think the Senate should feel good about the work we have accomplished.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Let me add my word of thanks to Chairman CONRAD and Senator GREGG. They have done a spectacular job on this budget, and I wish to thank my Senators on this side of the aisle for cooperating in such a way that we are going to finish this bill at midafternoon on Friday, one of the earliest completion times we have had.

Finally, with regard to next week, it is the view of the Republican side of the aisle that we need to finish that bill next week. The troops need the money. There is a veto threat out against the bill potentially if it is not fixed on the floor of the Senate. So we need to wrap up that bill up next week, and we will be working cooperatively on this side of the aisle to achieve that goal.

I yield the floor.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 580; 599; 632; 617; 540; 611, AS MODIFIED; 544; 524; 596; 600; 537; 627; 639; 589; 470, AS MODIFIED; 572; 551, AS MODIFIED; 629, AS MODIFIED; 636; 633; 635; 506; 548; AND 640.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following managers' amendments be considered en bloc, that they be agreed to en bloc, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table: Senator Nelson, No. 580; Senator Obama, No. 599; Senator Levin, No. 632; Senator Casey, No. 617; Senator Carper, No. 540; Senator Pryor, No. 611, with a modification; Senator Dorgan, No. 544; Senator Obama, No. 524; Reed-Collins, No. 596; Bingaman-Domenici, No. 600; Webb, No. 537; Pryor, No. 627; 639; Baucus-Grassley amendment, which is at the desk; Dorgan-Snowe, No. 589, with Senator Stabenow; Senator Voinovich, No. 470, with a modification; Senator Coleman, No. 572; Senator Murkowski, No. 551, with a modification; Snowe, No. 629, with a modification; Senator Grassley, No. 636; Senator Dole, No. 633; Senator Enzi, No. 635; Senator Specter, No. 506; Senator Grassley, No. 548; and the Dole amendment 640, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments were agreed to as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 580

(Purpose: To make funds available to ensure that Survivor Benefit Plan annuities are not reduced by the amount of veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation received by military families)

On page 49, line 17, insert after ''disabled military personnel'' the following: ''or veterans (including the elimination of the offset between Survivor Benefit Plan annuities and veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation)''.

AMENDMENT NO. 599

(Purpose: To add $200 million for Function 270 (Energy) for the demonstration and monitoring of carbon capture and sequestration technology by the Department of Energy)

On page 11, line 9, increase the amount by $200,000,000.

On page 11, line 10, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 11, line 14, increase the amount by $70,000,000.

On page 11, line 18, increase the amount by $50,000.000.

On page 11, line 22, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 12, line 1, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $200,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $70,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 632

(Purpose: To provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund for manufacturing initiatives)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. _____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR MANUFACTURING INITIATIVES.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, motions, or conference reports, including tax legislation, that would revitalize the United States domestic manufacturing sector by increasing Federal research and development, by expanding the scope and effectiveness of manufacturing programs across the Federal government, by increasing support for development of alternative fuels and leap-ahead automotive and energy technologies, and by establishing tax incentives to encourage the continued production in the United States of advanced technologies and the infrastructure to support such technologies, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 617

(Purpose: To establish a deficit neutral reserve fund for extending preschool opportunities to children)

After section 322, insert the following:

SEC. 322A. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR PRESCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES.

If the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, reports a bill or a joint resolution, or an amendment is offered in the Senate to such a bill or joint resolution, or a conference report is submitted to the Senate on a such a bill or joint resolution, that augments or establishes a Federal program that provides assistance to States that offer or expand preschool to children of low-income families, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revisit the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution by amounts provided in such measure for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 540

(Purpose: To reduce the deficit through he use of recovery audits)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT-REDUCTION RESERVE FUND FOR INCREASED USE OF RECOVERY AUDITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, functional totals, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution upon enactment of legislation that achieves savings by requiring that agencies increase their use of the recovery audits authorized by the Erroneous Payments Recovery Act of 2001 (section 831 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2002) and uses such savings to reduce the deficit, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 611, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To increase the budgeting totals for the National Nanotechnology Initiative for environmental, health and safety research and development for fiscal years 2008 through 2012)

On page 10, line 9, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 10, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 13, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 14, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 17, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 18, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 21, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 22, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 10, line 25, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 11, line 1, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 544

(Purpose: To provide for the use of the deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax relief for enhancing charitable giving from individual retirement accounts)

On page 50, line 8, insert ‘‘, such as enhanced charitable giving from individual retirement accounts,’’ before ‘‘and’’.

AMENDMENT NO. 524

(Purpose: To provide $100 million for the Summer Term Education Program supporting summer learning opportunities for low-income students in the early grades. Program will lessen summer learning losses that contribute to the achievement gaps separating low-income students from their middle-class peers)

On page 17, line 12, increase the amount by $100,000,000.

On page 17, line 13, increase the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 17, line 17, increase the amount by $58,000,000.

On page 17, line 21, increase the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 17, line 25, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $100,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $2,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $58,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 596

(Purpose: To increase LIHEAP spending by $703 million in FY 2008 for a total LIHEAP level of $3.2 billion, divided between the regular and contingency grant funds at FY2006 levels)

On page 20, line 12, increase the amount by $703,000,000.

On page 20, line 13, increase the amount by $527,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, increase the amount by $162,000,000.

On page 20, line 21, increase the amount by $14,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $703,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $527,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $162,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $14,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 600

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to provide for a delay in the implementation of a proposed rule relating to the Federal-State financial partnerships under Medicaid and SCHIP)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR A DELAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROPOSED RULE RELATING TO THE FEDERAL-STATE FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS UNDER MEDICAID AND SCHIP.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides for a delay in the implementation of the proposed rule published on January 18, 2007, on pages 2236 through 2248 of volume 72, Federal Register (relating to parts 433, 447, and 457 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations) or any other rule that would affect the Medicaid program and SCHIP in a similar manner, by the amounts provided in that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 537

(Purpose: To include in the veterans' reserve fund a provision for GI educational benefits)

On page 59, line 7, after ‘‘erans’’ insert ‘‘, including GI educational benefits’’.

AMENDMENT NO. 627

(Purpose: To provide additional funding for the Consumer Product Safety Commission to enhance its mission of protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from consumer products)

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 16, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 17, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 20, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 21, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 24, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 25, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 19, line 3, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 19, line 4, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 639

(Purpose: To establish a reserve fund to improve the health care system)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. ___. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) creates a framework and parameters for the use of Medicare data for the purpose of conducting research, public reporting, and other activities to evaluate health care safety, effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and resource utilization in Federal programs and the private health care system; and

(B) includes provisions to protect beneficiary privacy and to prevent disclosure of proprietary or trade secret information with respect to the transfer and use of such data; and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures

to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008, and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 589

(Purpose: To establish a reserve fund for the safe importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs)

On page 62, between lines 7 and 8, insert the following:

SEC. 322A. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR THE SAFE IMPORTATION OF FDA-APPROVED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that permits the safe importation of prescription drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration from a specified list of countries, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 470, AS MODIFIED

At the end of title II, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST COSTS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any direct spending or revenue legislation that is required to contain the statement described in section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, unless such statement contains a projection by the Congressional Budget Office of the cost of the debt servicing that would be caused by such legislation for such fiscal year (or fiscal years) and each of the 4 ensuing fiscal years.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—In the Senate, subsection (a) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

AMENDMENT NO. 572

(Purpose: To increase funds for the implementation of the forest management plans developed for the States of Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin, with an offset)

On page 12, line 9, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 12, line 10, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 12, line 14, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 551, AS MODIFIED

On page 11, line 9, increase the amount by $125,000,000.

On page 11, line 10, increase the amount by $56,000,000.

On page 11, line 14, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 11, line 18, increase the amount by $13,000,000.

On page 11, line 22, increase the amount by $6,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $125,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $56,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $13,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $6,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 629, AS MODIFIED

On page 50, line 8, insert ''and including the reauthorization of the new markets tax credit under section 45D of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for an additional 5 years'' after ''refundable tax relief''.

AMENDMENT NO. 636

(Purpose: To establish a reserve fund to improve payment accuracy for hospitals under the Medicare program)

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ___. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE MEDICARE HOSPITAL PAYMENT ACCURACY.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) addresses the wide and inequitable disparity in the reimbursement of hospitals under the Medicare program;

(B) includes provisions to reform the area wage index used to adjust payments to hospitals under the Medicare hospital inpatient prospective payment system under section 1886(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)); and

(C) includes a transition to the reform described in subparagraph (B); and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 633

(Purpose: To provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the necessary funding to effectively address the critical water and waste water needs of rural communities in the United States)

On page 16, line 10, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 11, increase the amount by $7,500,000.

On page 16, line 14, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 15, increase the amount by $15,000,000.

On page 16, line 18, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 19, increase the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 16, line 22, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 23, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 17, line 2, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 17, line 3, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $7,500,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $15,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 635

(Purpose: To provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund to improve health insurance)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE HEALTH INSURANCE.

If a Senate committee reports a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, reduces growth in the number of uninsured Americans, improves access to affordable and meaningful health insurance coverage, improves health care quality, or reduces growth in the cost of private health insurance by facilitating market-based pooling, including across State lines, and a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, provides funding for State high risk pools or financial assistance, whether directly, or through grants to States to enhance the effectiveness of such pooling or to provide other assistance to small businesses or individuals, including financial assistance, for the purchase of private insurance coverage, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may make appropriate adjustments in allocations and aggregates for fiscal year 2007 and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 506

(Purpose: To increase funding for the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the health professions)

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $2,200,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $2,200,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $2,200,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $2,200,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 548

(Purpose: To ensure that Medicare payments to physicians include incentives to improve the quality and efficiency of care furnished to Medicare beneficiaries)

On page 53, line 22, insert ''and that includes financial incentives for physicians to improve the quality and efficiency of items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries through the use of consensus-based quality measures'' after ''Act''.

AMENDMENT NO. 640

(Purpose: To provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the necessary funding to implement a pilot program authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to study the elimination of the reduced-price category for school lunches)

On page 20, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 13, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 16, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 20, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 20, line 21, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 596

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to thank the Chairman of the Budget Committee for his efforts to include my bipartisan amendment to increase the allocation for LIHEAP, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, to $3.2 billion in the budget resolution. As the chairman knows, this is the level that was recommended in a bipartisan letter signed by 35 governors and is the minimum level of funding needed to allow States to provide the same level of assistance as in fiscal year 2006.

The rise in energy prices has led to an increase in the number of families seeking and receiving assistance. In fiscal year 2006, with an additional $1 billion, over 500,000 additional households were served by LIHEAP, increasing the total to 5.6 million. However, that represents less than 15 percent of the eligible households.

LIHEAP is not only a heating program, it is also a cooling program. The number of households receiving cooling assistance increased to 540,000 in fiscal year 2006, up from 315,000 in 2005.

LIHEAP provides a vital safety net for our Nation's low-income households by helping them remain healthy and secure during bitterly cold winters in the North and hot summers in the South. For many low-income families, disabled individuals, and senior citizens living on fixed incomes, home energy costs are unaffordable. Low-income families pay close to 18 percent of their income on energy. The average family only pays 4 percent.

According to a recent survey conducted by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, NEADA, families who receive LIHEAP are very poor and have few choices but to cut back on food, medicine, and other essentials in order to pay their home energy costs when funding is inadequate to meet the need. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed said that without LIHEAP, they would have had to keep their home at an unsafe or unhealthy temperature. Fifty-four percent said that they would have had their electric or gas service disconnected if LIHEAP benefits had not been available.

Increasing funding for this vital and valuable program remains a top priority for me. I am grateful that the Senate has accepted this bipartisan amendment.

I also want to reiterate my comments from yesterday about this budget resolution. Chairman CONRAD has worked tirelessly to ensure that this resolution meets the pressing needs of the American people and restores the fiscal discipline that has been lacking for several years.

We have been charting an unsustainable fiscal policy course over the last 6 years. Instead of a $505 billion surplus in 2006, Republican fiscal policies left us with a deficit of $248 billion. Reversing this course and restoring balance is essential to our economic well-being. This budget takes the necessary steps toward equilibrium by achieving a balanced budget by 2012 and providing funding for essential programs that improve the lives of hard-working Americans who have been struggling during this sluggish economic recovery.

It includes necessary funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP; a program that provides a vital safety net to millions of families who do not earn enough to buy health insurance for their children.

The budget also includes language that allows for the establishment of an affordable housing fund financed by government-sponsored enterprises. This affordable housing fund will provide grants for the production, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable housing for very low-income families.

The budget resolution reinforces our commitment to America's veterans by including $43.1 billion for discretionary veterans' programs and rejecting the President's proposed increases in fees on veterans enrolled in the VA health care system.

I was also pleased to see that this budget rejects the President's proposed cuts in funding for education and training programs and instead appropriately invests in these necessary endeavors, in part by including significant increases in funding for the Department of Education—$6.1 billion above the President's request and $4 billion above the FY07 inflation-adjusted level.

I thank Chairman CONRAD and his staff for their hard work in producing this budget, which is both supportive of the needs of the American people and fiscally sound. I will support this resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, last year on March 20, the President signed S. 2320, which augmented funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program. In light of the historically high energy costs, it was prudent to shift funding to accommodate for the reduced purchasing power of the vital program. As many of us know, disaster was narrowly averted last winter and the summer of 2006.

With heating oil at $2.45 a gallon in Maine, we must recognize that energy prices will continue to burden the citizens who are most susceptible to heat and cold in the coming fiscal year. As we know in each of our states, energy is a necessity of life during extreme weather. In fact, it has been found that 73 percent of households have been forced to cut back on, and even go without other necessities such as food, prescription drugs and mortgage and rent payments. The LIHEAP program is, for many low-income families and our Nation's elderly, is the only barrier from nature's elements.

This program is a national program. In fiscal year 2006 LIHEAP assisted 5,710,000 households in the United States, including 48,000 households in Maine. In Fiscal Year 2006, the nearly 6 million households that received funding only represented 25 percent of the households eligible for assistance. Unfortunately, that figure illustrates that with the exponential rise in energy prices, this program has become an even more vital program.

This is also reflected in level of support from our Nation's governors. On February 15th, a bipartisan group of 35 governors wrote the leadership of the House and Senate stating that ''In 2006, we were grateful that Congress made a significant investment in LIHEAP, recognizing that soaring energy prices required additional funding for the program.'' The letter further reads that, ''We urge you to use the 2006 funding level of $3.2 billion as a base to build from in the future—not a one time emergency investment in energy assistance.'' The letter was signed by governors with diverse political views and from a distinct regions including Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. This is a national program and, accordingly, it has national support.

It is incumbent on us to prepare the Nation's budget in light of the year's perceivable threats facing the United States and with our citizens in mind. Current energy prices present an impending crisis for the United State's most vulnerable. The LIHEAP program does not stem the effects of winter, but it quells the effects of energy prices and allays the fears of our Nation's most vulnerable citizens.

I believe that our Nation's budget should prioritize the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and believe that an increase of an additional $703 million represents a responsible and vital investment. I urge my colleagues to support this program.

AMENDMENT NO. 635

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today, joined by Senators BEN NELSON, BAUCUS, GRASSLEY, KENNEDY, and SALAZAR, to offer a bipartisan amendment which creates a deficit neutral reserve fund that recognizes the significance of market-based pooling as a tool in addressing rising health insurance costs, and health care quality.

Market-based pooling is especially important for small businesses, which now have virtually no ability to use strength in numbers across State lines to negotiate better and more affordable coverage for their workers.

America faces an ever-widening gap between health care ''haves'' and ''have nots.'' Without effective market pooling power, ever-growing numbers of small businesses and uninsured and underinsured Americans are slipping into the ''have not'' column. This is a tragic gap we can and must close.

Senator NELSON and I are actively discussing with our colleagues possible

bipartisan approaches. As the wide bipartisan support for today's amendment shows, we are on a promising track, and we intend to stick with it. Market-based pooling must be a part of any comprehensive health reform solution.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on the adoption of the concurrent resolution, as amended.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 114 Leg.]

YEAS—52

Akaka	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Harkin	Obama
Biden	Inouye	Pryor
Bingaman	Kennedy	Reed
Boxer	Kerry	Reid
Brown	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Byrd	Kohl	Salazar
Cantwell	Landrieu	Sanders
Cardin	Lautenberg	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Snowe
Casey	Levin	Stabenow
Clinton	Lieberman	Tester
Collins	Lincoln	Webb
Conrad	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Dodd	Menendez	Wyden
Dorgan	Mikulski	
Durbin	Murray	

NAYS—47

Alexander	Dole	McCain
Allard	Domenici	McConnell
Bennett	Ensign	Murkowski
Bond	Enzi	Roberts
Brownback	Graham	Sessions
Bunning	Grassley	Shelby
Burr	Gregg	Smith
Chambliss	Hagel	Specter
Coburn	Hatch	Stevens
Cochran	Hutchison	Sununu
Coleman	Inhofe	Thomas
Corker	Isakson	Thune
Cornyn	Kyl	Vitter
Craig	Lott	Voinovich
Crapo	Lugar	Warner
DeMint	Martinez	

NOT VOTING—1

Johnson

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 21), as amended, was agreed to.

(The resolution will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

Mr. CONRAD. I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we have now taken the next step on the journey to having a budget resolution in place for the Nation. It passed the committee and has now passed the Senate. This is an important turning point for the Congress, certainly for the Senate. Three of the last five years, our country has not had a budget. It is important—critically important—for the Congress of the United States to agree on a budget. I would be the first one to say this is an imperfect budget, but it does advance the cause of having the discipline of a budget for our country.

I thank all of our colleagues who have worked to this end, even those who voted against it but who cooperated in the process. I especially thank Senator GREGG again and his outstanding professional staff. I see his staff director, Scott Gudes, who has been a true professional.

I very much appreciate having the chance to work with people of that caliber. And again, to my own staff director, Mary Naylor, who has worked such extraordinary hours, weekend after weekend, night after night until 10, 11, sometimes 2 in the morning, this has truly been an extraordinary effort, and I thank her, and I thank all of my staff. To many of them who are here, I say thank you. You have done this institution proud, and I appreciate it deeply.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for a period of up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPRINGTIME ARTISTRY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, once again, we welcome in the Spring.

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,
Drips the soaking rain,
By fits looks down the waking sun:
Young grass springs on the plain;
Young leaves clothe early hedgerow trees;
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
Swollen with sap put forth their shoots; Curled-headed ferns sprout in the lane; Birds sing and pair again.

There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything . . .

—*Christina Rossetti.*

March 21 is the vernal equinox, when the day and night are, briefly, in perfect balance. It is the first day of spring. This year, of course, the early switch to daylight savings time has created the illusion of an earlier spring with the artificial and arbitrary establishment of darker mornings and longer evenings. I, for one, am happy to welcome an early spring. It is my favorite season, full of new hope and untarnished promise.

West Virginia has seen some snow this winter. The snow was welcomed by skiers and farmers, but those of us who neither ski nor plow view snow more as a nuisance—something to be moved out of the way, something that complicates our commutes and closes the schools. Snow makes the world monochromatic, a palette that ranges along a single line from blinding white through the shades of gray to the tired black of grime-crusted snow along the roadways. We are ready for spring, ready for some light and for lots of vibrant color around us.

This year, the March winds again worked their artistry, blowing away the flotsam and jetsam of winter to uncover a clean canvas with just the sweeping curves of earth and the angular armature of tree limbs sketched in charcoal, awaiting the Master's hand to apply delicate springtime washes of color. Over the past weeks, we have seen the Master's skill at work in the first creeping stain of green across the lawns and fields, the soft blush of blossoms in the wild plum trees, the deepening blue of the sky. Each day, the colors have grown darker, richer, and more vibrant, as if the warm breezes carried them to us from some distant sunny clime. Bright details have begun to take shape in the scattered spangles of violet and yellow crocus and the bright accents of hardy daffodils amid their grass green leaves. Oh, daffodils—the poets write of you! The Boston poet Amy Lowell (1874–1925) wrote of you:

Thou yellow trumpeter of laggard Spring!
Thou herald of rich Summer's myriad flowers!
The climbing sun with new recovered powers
Does warm thee into being, through the ring
Of rich, brown earth he woos thee, makes thee fling
Thy green shoots up, inheriting the dowers
Of bending sky and sudden, sweeping showers,
Till ripe and blossoming thou art a thing
To make all nature glad, thou art so gay;
To fill the lonely with a joy untold;
Nodding at every gust of wind to-day,
To-morrow jeweled with raindrops.
Always bold
To stand erect, full in the dazzling play
Of April's sun, for thou has caught his gold.

Mr. President, spring would not be spring without the daffodils. Their delicate beauty and seemingly fragile petals belie their toughness. Year after year, the daffodils spread, competing with the grass and the tree roots to expand their beds. They manage to deter the onslaught of determined squirrels and other wild creatures who unearth and consume dainty and expensive spring bulbs like so many canapés at a reception. They push their way up into the sun through frozen ground and choking mats of fallen leaves. They defy howling winds and frigid nighttime temperatures. They survive people and houses to bloom on around the decaying foundations of long ago farmsteads. And they do it all with effortless beauty, inspiring us and filling us with joy. The first daffodil, like the first robin, is akin to the dove that brought the olive branch back to Noah—a reassurance to worried man

from God that the spring, like the land, will return.

I do not want to take up too much of the Senate's time. We have important matters before us, matters of war and peace, matters of spending and accounting. But even in the heat of debate, we can each find joy in those first spring days. We can each feel peace in the steady warmth of the springtime sun, calm in the soft breeze that carries the scent of hyacinths, and delight in springtime flowers. The first day of spring is truly a time to stop and smell the flowers.

There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything,
Before new nestlings sing,
Before cleft swallows speed their journey back
Along the trackless track—God guides their wing,
He spreads their table that they nothing lack,
Before the daisy grows a common flower
Before the sun has power
To scorch the world up in his noontide hour.
—*Christina Rossetti.*

STOPPING OVERSEAS SUBSIDIES ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, our Nation's manufacturers and their employees can compete against the best in the world, but they cannot compete against nations that provide huge subsidies and other unfair advantages to their producers. Time and time again, I hear from manufacturers in my State whose efforts to compete successfully in the global economy simply cannot overcome the practices of illegal pricing and subsidies of nations such as China. The results of these unfair practices are lost jobs, shuttered factories, and decimated communities.

Consider this one example that affects my home State. The American residential wood furniture industry has experienced devastating losses due to surges of unfairly priced furniture imports from China. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 146,600 jobs, or about 22 percent of the workforce, have been lost in the U.S. furniture industry since 2000. Unfairly priced imports from China are a leading cause in these job losses. China's wooden bedroom furniture exports to the U.S., which amounted to just $169 million in 1999, reached an estimated $1.8 billion in 2006. By subsidizing investments in furniture manufacturing facilities, China is exploiting the U.S. market to the benefit of its producers and putting our employees at an unfair advantage.

One fine furniture manufacturer in Maine, Moosehead Manufacturing, struggled for years to cope with the onslaught of unfair imports from China. Despite the company's quality products and attempts to survive through several rounds of layoffs and participation in the Federal Trade Adjustment for Firms program, Moosehead was not able to keep its doors open in the face of unfair Chinese imports. The company announced its closing on February 8, 2007. This is a tragic development—for this family-owned business, for its skilled employees, and for the community and State.

It is because of the experience of manufacturers such as Moosehead that I reintroduced the Stopping Overseas Subsidies Act. I am pleased to be joined by my friend and colleague from Indiana, Senator BAYH, who has worked closely with me on this legislation. The core provision of this bill revises current trade remedy laws to ensure that U.S. countervailing duty laws apply to imports from nonmarket economies, such as China.

Our Nation's trade remedy laws are intended to give American industries and their employees relief from the effects of illegal trade practices. Unfortunately, some countries in the world choose to cheat instead of compete fairly. In these cases, U.S. industries can file petitions under U.S. trade remedy laws for relief.

Up until recently, the practice of the Department of Commerce was to accept an antisubsidy petition against any market economy—such as Canada or Chile—but not against a nonmarket economy such as China. As a result, nonmarket countries that subsidize their industries the most heavily and cause the most injury to U.S. industries and workers, such as China, were exempt from the reach of American countervailing duty laws.

The countervailing duty statute on its face in no way limits the application of the law to any country. There is nothing in the countervailing duty provisions per se, or anywhere else in the statute, that limits the broad language applying countervailing duty remedies to every ''country.'' Unfortunately, the Department's interpretation of this statute for the last two decades has been that it does not apply to nonmarket economies, and this policy was upheld by a 1986 Federal court decision that maintained that Congress needs to clarify the statute on this issue.

The good news is that, on November 22, 2007, the Department of Commerce finally accepted the first countervailing duty petition against a nonmarket economy since the 1986 court decision. The case was filed against China by New Page Corporation, a coated free sheet paper company with operations in Maine, Ohio, and Maryland. Despite its efficient, state-of-the-art mills, skilled and dedicated employees, strong relationships with customers, strategically located mills and distribution facilities and growing markets for its products, New Page had to shut down an entire paper line as a result of unfair foreign competition.

Jim Tyrone, senior vice president of New Page Corporation, testified before the Ways and Means Committee on February 15, 2007, regarding the illegal subsidies that China is providing to its paper industry. Starting in the late 1990s the Government of China targeted its domestic coated paper industry for rapid development. As part of this development plan, the Chinese Government provides low-cost policy loans through government-owned banks. It also provides grants for the development of new paper capacity, and tax breaks based on export performance and domestic equipment purchases. Moreover, Tyrone testified, government banks in China forgave at least $660 million in loans they had provided to China's largest paper producer, Asia Pulp & Paper, when that company declared bankruptcy in 2003.

The result is that in the United States, Chinese coated free sheet market share has increased by an average 75 percent annually over the past four years based on publicly available data, despite having to ship their products thousands of miles to reach the U.S. market. Ironically, and in contrast to U.S. paper producers, China has no natural advantage in the production of paper. It does not have an abundant supply of the requisite inputs, and must import much of the pulp that it uses to make paper. It is only because of illegal subsidization that China can compete in the paper products market in the U.S. and Europe.

According to a 2005 study by the American Forest and Paper Products Association, China is using an array of subsidies to promote the development of timber and pulp production in China. These include government loans and loan subsidies for technology renovation, promotion of foreign investment in state-owned enterprises, and protection of debt-ridden state-owned enterprises that maintain excess or idle production capacity through local government ''soft'' loans and loan forgiveness.

In its 2006 Report to Congress, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a bipartisan organization established by Congress in 2000 to provide recommendations to Congress on the relationship between the United States and China, noted:

China has a centralized industrial policy that employs a wide variety of tools to promote favored industries. In particular, China has used a range of subsidies to encourage the manufacture of goods meant for export over the manufacture of goods meant for domestic consumption, and to secure foreign investment in the manufacturing sector.

Similar conclusions are contained in the United States Trade Representative's 2006 Report to Congress, which concludes:

China continues to pursue problematic industrial policies that rely on trade-distorting measures such as local content requirements, import and export restrictions, discriminatory regulations and prohibited subsidies, all of which raise serious WTO concerns.

These practices run counter to China's obligations under its 2001 World Trade Organization accession agreement. In its accession protocol, China explicitly agreed that it would be subject to the subsidy disciplines of other

member countries. In fact, it agreed to specific provisions in article 15 of the protocol which permit WTO countries to use alternative benchmarks for measuring subsidies in China. Yet, unbelievably, the Government of China is arguing in the New Page case that the Department of Commerce is legally prohibited from applying countervailing duty laws to imports from China.

This is exactly why our legislation is still needed, despite the Department of Commerce's acceptance of New Page's case. If U.S. law is clear on the subject of whether anti-subsidy petitions can be filed against nonmarket economies, countries such as China cannot use U.S. courts to dispute that fact. In addition, the Department of Commerce will not be able to summarily reject future antisubsidy petitions against nonmarket economies due to a change in leadership in the department or for political reasons.

I want to point out that this bill also includes a number of new provisions that are designed to strengthen our government's ability to hold our trading partners accountable for their illegal trade practices. The bill makes clear that the United States can use information from third countries and alternative methodologies when calculating China's subsidies. This is consistent with what China itself agreed to in its WTO accession protocol. The bill provides that a determination by the Department of Commerce to revoke a country's status as a nonmarket economy under U.S. antidumping law must be approved by Congress. Finally, the bill requires the U.S. International Trade Commission to conduct a study regarding how the People's Republic of China uses government intervention to promote investment, employment, and exports.

Unfair market conditions cannot continue to cause our manufacturers to hemorrhage jobs. No State understands this more than my home State of Maine. According to the United States Department of Labor, 10,400 manufacturing jobs in Maine have been lost since 2001, a 14.8 percent decline. This is why organizations such as the Maine Forest Products Council and the Maine Wood Products Association have strongly endorsed our proposal to extend U.S. countervailing duty laws to nonmarket economies.

The stopping overseas subsidies bill is a bipartisan, bicameral bill that has a broad range of support across many industries and geographical areas. A companion bill has been introduced in the House by Representatives by ARTUR DAVIS of Alabama and PHIL ENGLISH of Pennsylvania.

U.S. industries don't want protection—they want fair competition. Illegal subsidies distort fair competition, regardless of the economic system in which they are used. Our legislation simply levels the playing field by allowing antisubsidy petitions to be brought against nonmarket economies in addition to market economies.

Some countries, such as China, want to have all the benefits of engaging in international trading institutions and systems yet continue to cheat on the system with no penalties. It is time these countries were held to the same standards as other countries around the world. I ask you to join me in supporting the SOS bill to ensure that all countries are held accountable for their trade practices.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE MADISON HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASTICS TEAM

• Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I rise to honor the Madison High School gymnastics team. On February 16, 2007, the Lady Bulldogs won the South Dakota Class A State Gymnastics Title. This impressive accomplishment allowed the Lady Bulldogs to tie the national record of 13 consecutive championship wins. They currently share the national record with Sehome High School in Bellingham, WA, who set the record from 1973 to 1985.

The Lady Bulldogs finished the season with an outstanding performance at the South Dakota Class A State Gymnastics Meet. With a final score of 141.893 points they not only tied the national record for consecutive State championships, but also set a South Dakota Class A State record. These two records highlight the talent and dedication that has characterized Madison's gymnastics team for the past 13 years.

Head Coach Maridee Dossett has demonstrated her allegiance to the Lady Bulldogs both as an athlete and a coach. She was a senior on the team that brought home the first State title for the Madison gymnasts in 1995. Since that time, she has continued to contribute to the success of the team through her dedication and strong leadership.

Leading Madison to victory was Katie Finck in the uneven bars and floor exercise categories, and Katie Breuer in the balance beam, vault and all around categories. Following the example set by these two gymnasts, the Lady Bulldogs illustrated their extraordinary teamwork and successfully dominated each category of the competition.

I would like to take this opportunity to honor and thank all those dedicated to the Madison Central School District: Head Coach Maridee Dossett, Assistant Coach Kindra Norby, Athletic Director Bud Postma, Principal Sharon Knowlton, and Superintendent Dr. Frank Palleria. The time and effort put forth by these individuals have made it possible for the Lady Bulldogs to be one of the most successful gymnastics teams of all time.

I would also like to recognize the gymnast's parents for their support and devotion to the team. This great honor was made possible by your encouragement and dedication to your daughters and their teammates.

Most of all I would like to congratulate the women who won the State championship this year and all the athletes who have been a part of this record-tying streak. The gymnasts of the 2006–2007 Lady Bulldog team, in alphabetical order, are as follows: Katie Breuer, Kassie Finck, Theresa Knapp, Katie Mackenzie, Heidi Mogck, Mara Riedel, Sara Rogers, Kaitlyn Walker, and Heather Williams.

These student-athletes should be very proud of their remarkable achievements over the past years. The inspiration of the gymnasts that began this record success in 1995 has empowered those who have followed in their footsteps and will continue to bring motivation to Madison's student-athletes in the future.

On behalf of the city of Madison and the State of South Dakota, I am pleased to say congratulations Lady Bulldogs on this impressive national accomplishment and keep up the great work.•

HONORING DEPAUW UNIVERSITY'S WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

• Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to the DePauw University women's basketball team for winning the 2007 NCAA Division III National Championship. The Tigers defeated Washington University in St. Louis on Saturday at the ''Birthplace of Basketball,'' Springfield College. This is DePauw University's first national athletic championship and a proud moment for our State.

In being told of their victory, I was reminded of what people say about teamwork, that at the end of the day we are only as strong as the shoulders we lean on. The talent of the Tigers was apparent throughout their school record 31–3 season, but it was their extraordinary teamwork that brought the championship trophy back to Greencastle. These young women are a testament to what student athletes should be, and they should be commended for winning with class, courage, and character.

While the members of the team have put in countless hours practicing and developing their skills, the parents and coaching staff dedicated should also be recognized for their role supporting and preparing the team. As a father of two young boys who love to play sports, I know how rewarding it can be to watch my sons' games. I also know how dedicated parents must be to drive their children to practice every day, make it to the games, and cheer the whole game through. It is this kind of dedication that builds a support network worthy of a national championship.

Throughout the season, the Tigers' true character shined as they never lost faith in themselves and prevailed as a team. Their conduct this season should be an example for all other student athletes to follow. I congratulate

the DePauw University Tigers on their National Championship and commend them for the example they set for all student athletes who I hope are inspired by their example.

The 2006–2007 DePauw University Tigers are; Kristy Mahon, Suzy Doughty, Tina Frierson, Cassie Pruzin, Kalei Lowes, K.C. Stoll, Kelsey Flanagan, Caitlin McGonigal, Adedrea Chaney, Liz Bondi, Gretchen and Gwen Haehl, Kristin Barrow, Jenna Fernandez, Tegan Krouse, Bridget Bailey, Andrea Travelstead, Emily Marshall, Meghan Warner, Katie O'Connor and Sarah Merkel. They are coached by Kris Huffman, Mary Smith, Tria Yoder and Brian Kern.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 1:49 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 545. An act to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

H.R. 1227. An act to assist in the provision of affordable housing to low-income families affected by Hurricane Katrina.

H.R. 1591. An act making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 66. Concurrent resolution permitting the use of the Rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1227. An act to assist in the provision of affordable housing to low-income families affected by Hurricane Katrina; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 1591. An act making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

H.R. 545. An act to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–1162. A communication from the Secretary of Agriculture, transmitting, the report of draft legislation intended to authorize the Secretary to dispose of certain National Forest System land and retain the receipts for certain purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1163. A communication from the Secretary of the Army, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Nunn-McCurdy Unit Cost thresholds for the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical Program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1164. A communication from the Acting General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a nomination for the position of Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1165. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions and Clarifications of License Exception Availability, License Requirements and Licensing Policy for Certain Crime Control Items'' (RIN0694-AD47) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1166. A communication from the Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Office of the Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Public Access to HUD Records Under the Freedom of Information Act and Production of Material or Provision of Testimony by HUD Employees'' ((RIN2501-AD18) (FR-5015-F-02)) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1167. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Third Extension of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty'' (RIN0648-AP61) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1168. A communication from the Director, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office's Annual Report for fiscal year 2006; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1169. A communication from the Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Reclassification of the American Crocodile Distinct Population Segment in Florida from Endangered to Threatened; Final Rule'' (RIN1018-AI41) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1170. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the exercise of the President's waiver authority with regard to the prohibition on military assistance provided to Chad; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1171. A communication from the Acting Executive Secretary, United States Agency for International Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a nomination for the position of Assistant Administrator, received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1172. A communication from the Human Resources Specialist, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, 2 reports relative to vacancy announcements within the Department, received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1173. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Letter Report: Audit of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8A for Fiscal Years 2004 Through 2006, as of March 31, 2006''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1174. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Auditor's Examination of Privatization of Parking Meters Operations and Contractor's Performance Billing Under Parking Meter Services Contract''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1175. A communication from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Department's activities with regard to prison rape abatement during calendar year 2005; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM–30. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to authorize local governments to accept restrictive covenants with regard to certain properties; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

POM–31. A resolution adopted by the Lauderdale Lakes City Commission urging Congress to increase funding for the Community Development Block Grant Fund; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

POM–32. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the State of Florida to expand the use of its Department of Elder Affairs Optional State Supplementation Assistance Program Payments; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

POM–33. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to establish a program to provide matching funds for solar and other energy saving water heater installations for low-income homeowners; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

POM–34. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to designate part of the Florida Turnpike Homestead Extension in South Miami-Dade County the ''John F. Cosgrove Highway''; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

POM–35. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to reinstate the property tax exemption currently authorized in the Florida Constitution for certain energy systems; to the Committee on Finance.

POM–36. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to continue and expand the Hurricane Sales Tax Holiday; to the Committee on Finance.

POM–37. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners approving the 2007 Tri-County Commission Legislative Package; to the Committee on Finance.

POM–38. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to pass legislation eliminating a certain tax ''loop hole''; to the Committee on Finance.

POM–39. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to pass legislation as soon as possible implementing the Double Homestead Exemption for Low-Income Seniors Constitutional Amendment; to the Committee on Finance.

POM–40. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to impose a letter-grading system for restaurant inspection reports and to require the posting of that letter grade; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

POM–41. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to fund the South Florida Holocaust Survivors Assistance Program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

POM–42. A resolution adopted by the Lauderdale Lakes City Commission requesting Congress to increase funding for the No Child Left Behind Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

POM–43. A resolution adopted by the Lauderdale Lakes City Commission establishing a specific fund for targeted healthcare for children and pregnantwomen beginning 2008; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

POM–44. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to repeal the preemption of local government regulation of generators at gasoline stations, food stores and pharmacies; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

POM–45. A resolution adopted by the City Council of the City of Watsonville opposing the Citizenship and Immigration Services Citizenship Fee increase; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

POM–46. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature to increase the sentencing requirements for persons who commit crimes with assault weapons; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

POM–47. A resolution adopted by the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners urging the Florida Legislature and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner to develop and fund an outreach and public awareness campaign regarding unsolved violent crimes and unsolved criminal drug cases; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

POM–48. A resolution adopted by the Lauderdale Lakes City Commission requesting Congress to fully fund the Community Oriented Policing Program; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. ENZI, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. ALLARD, and Mr. SALAZAR):

S. 975. A bill granting the consent and approval of Congress to an interstate forest fire protection compact; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mr. BURR):

S. 976. A bill to secure the promise of personalized medicine for all Americans by expanding and accelerating genomics research and initiatives to improve the accuracy of disease diagnosis, increase the safety of drugs, and identify novel treatments; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SALAZAR:

S. 977. A bill to amend chapter 11 of title 18, United States Code, to ensure United States attorneys are able to act impartially, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. DORGAN (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. CONRAD):

S. 978. A bill to authorize the awarding of the Medal of Honor to Woodrow W. Keeble for his acts of valor during the Korean conflict; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. KERRY):

S. 979. A bill to establish a Vote by Mail grant program; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. SESSIONS):

S. 980. A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to address online pharmacies; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. LANDRIEU:

S. 981. A bill to authorize the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to waive the prohibition on duplication of certain disaster relief assistance; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mrs. CLINTON (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 982. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for integration of mental health services and mental health treatment outreach teams, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL):

S. Res. 121. A resolution to direct the Senate Legal Counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in support of the appellee in Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. HAGEL (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. CLINTON, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DODD, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. REED, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. VITTER, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BURR, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SPECTER, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. SUNUNU, Mr. TESTER, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. BYRD, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. BAUCUS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. CORKER, Mr. MCCONNELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. LOTT, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. ENZI, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mr. BUNNING):

S. Res. 122. A resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. REID (for himself and Ms. SNOWE):

S. Con. Res. 24. A concurrent resolution authorizing the use of Capitol grounds for the Live Earth Concert; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 117

At the request of Mr. OBAMA, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 117, a bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, and other veterans, to require reports on the effects of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes.

S. 254

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. ENSIGN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 254, a bill to award posthumously a Congressional gold medal to Constantino Brumidi.

S. 434

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 434, a bill to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to permit qualifying States to use a portion of their allotments under the State children's health insurance program for any fiscal year for certain medicaid expenditures.

S. 474

At the request of Mrs. HUTCHISON, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) and the Senator from

Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 474, a bill to award a congressional gold medal to Michael Ellis DeBakey, M.D.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. THOMAS) were added as cosponsors of S. 502, a bill to repeal the sunset on the reduction of capital gains rates for individuals and on the taxation of dividends of individuals at capital gains rates.

S. 549

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 549, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antibiotics used in the treatment of human and animal diseases.

S. 634

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 634, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish grant programs to provide for education and outreach on newborn screening and coordinated followup care once newborn screening has been conducted, to reauthorize programs under part A of title XI of such Act, and for other purposes.

S. 675

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 675, a bill to provide competitive grants for training court reporters and closed captioners to meet requirements for realtime writers under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and for other purposes.

S. 746

At the request of Mr. ALLARD, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) were added as cosponsors of S. 746, a bill to establish a competitive grant program to build capacity in veterinary medical education and expand the workforce of veterinarians engaged in public health practice and biomedical research.

S. 773

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 773, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums.

S. 807

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) were added as cosponsors of S. 807, a bill to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 to provide that manure shall not be considered to be a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

S. 890

At the request of Mr. INOUYE, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 890, a bill to provide for certain administrative and support services for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, and for other purposes.

S. 893

At the request of Mr. DEMINT, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 893, a bill to allow a State to combine certain funds and enter into a performance agreement with the Secretary of Education to improve the academic achievement of students.

S. 901

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 901, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide additional authorizations of appropriations for the health centers program under section 330 of such Act.

S. 903

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 903, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Muhammad Yunus, in recognition of his contributions to the fight against global poverty.

S. 909

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) were added as cosponsors of S. 909, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to permit States, at their option, to require certain individuals to present satisfactory documentary evidence of proof of citizenship or nationality for purposes of eligibility for Medicaid, and for other purposes.

S. 911

At the request of Mr. COLEMAN, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 911, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to advance medical research and treatments into pediatric cancers, ensure patients and families have access to the current treatments and information regarding pediatric cancers, establish a population-based national childhood cancer database, and promote public awareness of pediatric cancers.

S. 949

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 949, a bill to amend the Plant Protection Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into cooperative agreements with States to augment the efforts of the States to conduct early detection and surveillance to prevent the establishment or spread of plant pests that endanger agriculture, the environment, and the economy of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 961

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 961, a bill to amend title 46, United States Code, to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II, and for other purposes.

S. 970

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 970, a bill to impose sanctions on Iran and on other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 971

At the request of Mr. BOND, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 971, a bill to establish the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, to provide funding for the support of fundamental agricultural research of the highest quality, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 82

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 82, a resolution designating August 16, 2007 as ''National Airborne Day''.

S. RES. 117

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 117, a resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

AMENDMENT NO. 494

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 494 intended to be proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 506

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 506 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 508

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 508 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 510

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 510 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

At the request of Mr. KERRY, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 510 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 518

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 518 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 518 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 528

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 528 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 528 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 529

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 529 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 529 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 542

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) and the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 542 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 544

At the request of Mr. DORGAN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 544 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 548

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 548 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 574

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 574 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 587

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 587 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 596

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 596 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 600

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 600 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 607

At the request of Mr. CHAMBLISS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 607 intended to be proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 615

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 615 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

AMENDMENT NO. 616

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 616 proposed to S. Con. Res. 21, an original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mr. BURR):

S. 976. A bill to secure the promise of personalized medicine for all Americans by expanding and accelerating genomic research and initiatives to improve the accuracy of disease diagnosis, increase the safety of drugs, and identify novel treatments; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today joined by my colleague Senator RICHARD BURR, to reintroduce the Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act of 2007. This bill will expand and accelerate scientific advancement in the field of genomics, which is already beginning to change the paradigm of medical practice as we know it, and has profound implications for health and health care in this nation.

The ''miracles of medicine'' have been demonstrated since early man. Many of the traditional medicines used today, such as aspirin and morphine, are derivatives of plants ancient people used to treat illnesses and injuries centuries ago. Since those ancient times, our knowledge of medicine and disease has expanded tremendously. Today, modern breakthroughs in the fields of genetics and genomics have uncovered another layer of complexity in the way we treat and prevent disease.

Over the past decade, we have unlocked many of the mysteries about DNA and RNA, their structure, and how their code is translated into the proteins that make up the tissues and organs of the human body. Researchers have also made discoveries about the various functions of DNA such as replication, genetic recombination and regulation, just to name a few, and have developed the necessary technologies to do all of this work.

This knowledge isn't just sitting in books on the shelf nor is it confined to the work benches of laboratories. We have used these research findings to pinpoint the causes of many diseases, such as sickle cell anemia, cystic fibrosis, and chronic myelogenous leukemia. Moreover, scientists have translated this genetic knowledge into several treatments and therapies prompting a bridge between the laboratory bench and the patient's bedside.

We've made so many achievements and come a long way in our understanding and application of genetics knowledge. And yet, we are just beginning to realize the full potential of this science to predict the onset of disease, diagnose earlier, and develop therapies that can treat or cure Americans from so many afflictions.

Just 4 years ago, scientists at the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Energy reached another major landmark, with the completion of the sequencing of the entire human genome, our genetic blueprint described by many as the Holy Grail of biology and hailed as one of the greatest scientific achievements to date.

The completion of the Human Genome Project has paved the way for a more sophisticated understanding of disease causation. The HGP has expanded focus from the science of genetics, which refers to the study of single genes, to include genomics, which describes the study of all the genes in an individual, as well as the interactions of those genes with each other. The role environmental factors play in promoting disease and the potential influence they have at the genetic level is also an area of interest.

We know that all human beings are 99.9 percent identical in genetic makeup, but differences in the remaining 0.1 percent hold important clues about the causes of disease and response to drugs. Simply put, the study of genomics will help us learn why some people get sick and others do not, and use this information to better prevent and treat disease.

The relatively new field of genomics is key to the practice of personalized medicine. Personalized medicine is the use of genomic and molecular data to better target the delivery of health care, facilitate the discovery and clinical testing of new products, and help determine a patient's predisposition to a particular disease or condition. Personalized medicine represents a revolutionary and exciting change in the fundamental approach and practice of medicine

Pharmacogenomics, or the study of how genes affect a person's response to drugs, is a critical component of personalized medicine. Currently, so-called blockbuster drugs are typically effective in only 40 to 60 percent of patients who take them. Other studies have found that up to 15 percent of hospitalized patients experience a serious adverse drug reaction, causing an estimated 100,000 deaths each year. Pharmacogenomics has the potential to dramatically increase the effectiveness and safety of drugs, both of which are major health care concerns.

We have a growing number of examples of how pharmacogenomics research has helped to save lives. For example, the chemotherapy Purinethol is a lifesaver for kids with leukemia, but in some cases, patients suffer severe, sometimes fatal, side effects. In the 1990's, researchers identified the gene variant that prevents affected patients from properly breaking down Purinethol, allowing doctors to screen patients and adjust dosages for safer use of the drug.

Herceptin, another example, is a breast cancer drug that initially failed in clinical trials. However, researchers discovered that 1 in 4 breast cancers have too many copies of a certain gene, which helps cells grow, divide and repair themselves. Extra copies of this gene cause uncontrolled and rapid growth resulting in tumor formation. As it turns out, Herceptin is an effective drug for patients with this type of cancer, with significantly improved survival for affected women. Herceptin offers a clear illustration of the power of personalized medicine and highlights the importance of incorporating genetic analysis in the development and application of new therapies.

Realizing the promise of personalized medicine will require continued Federal leadership and agency collaboration; expansion and acceleration of genomics research; a capable genomics workforce; incentives to encourage development of genomic tests and therapies; and greater attention to the quality of genetic tests, direct-to-consumer advertising and use of personal genomic information.

The Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act of 2007 will address many of these issues. The bill requires the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to establish the Genomics and Personalized Medicine Interagency Working Group to expand and accelerate genomics research through enhanced communication, collaboration and integration of relevant activities.

Genetic and genomics research will be expanded, to increase the collection of data that will advance both fields, through the support of the biobanking initiative aimed at increasing and improving genomic screening tools, diagnostics and therapeutics. The Secretary will also establish a national distributed database so data finding can be shared.

This bill requests that the Secretary support efforts to improve the adequacy of genetics and genomics training through modernized curricula and review of relevant certifications, and by identifying alternative education options such as distance or on-line learning programs. In addition, the Secretary will promote initiatives to increase the integration of genetics and genomics into all aspects of medical and public health practice, with specific focus on training and guideline development for providers without expertise or experience in the field of genomics.

This bill also requests the National Academies of Science to formally study the development of companion diagnostic tests and to provide expert guidance about the level of incentives and potential approaches to really move this area forward.

Last but not least, the bill focuses on the safety, efficacy and availability of information about genetic tests, including pharmacogenetic and pharmacogenomics tests. The Secretary will contract with the Institute of Medicine to conduct a study and make recommendations regarding Federal oversight and regulation of genetic tests. After this study is complete, the Secretary will develop a decision matrix to help determine which types of tests require review and the level of review needed for such tests as well as the responsible agency. The Secretary will also establish a specialty area for molecular and biochemical genetics tests at CMS and direct a review by the CDC of direct-to-consumer marketing practices.

In conclusion, we stand at this new and expansive frontier of personalized medicine we must explore and test the hypotheses and innovations in the area of genomics that can protect and promote our health. Genomics holds unparalleled promise for public health and for medicine, and the Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act of 2007 will help us to fulfill this promise. I

urge my colleagues to support me in passing this critical legislation.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. KERRY):

S. 979. A bill to establish a Vote by Mail grant program; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on Election Day 2006 in Tillamook County, OR, 13 inches of rain fell. Roads were closed. Parts of the county became unreachable. Governor Kulongoski declared a state of emergency. And yet—70 percent of the voters in the county still cast their ballots.

Why? Because Oregonians in Tillamook County and all over the State cast their votes by mail.

Even without weather like this, folks in other States around the country had trouble casting their votes.

In Denver, CO, hundreds of voters were turned away when the database of registered voters crashed.

Nearly a quarter of precincts in Indianapolis, IN, resorted to paper ballots when poll workers couldn't figure out how to connect optical scan voting machines with the new touch-screen models.

In Johnson County, KS, poll workers used hand lotion to prevent the county's touch-screen voting machines from spitting out cards.

In Missouri, poll workers were demanding photo identification despite a court ruling barring the practice.

In Shaker Heights, OH, voters were turned from the polls when electronic voting machines failed to work.

Voters in Washington State received phone calls instructing them to vote at the wrong precinct.

A polling location in New Mexico received 150 ballots instead of 1,500.

The list goes on and on.

The point is, vote by mail has worked in Oregon and not just in this election, but in every election it has been used.

It's a pretty simple system. Voters get their ballots in the mail. Wherever and whenever they would like, right up to Election Day, voters complete their ballots and return them.

Vote by mail makes polling place problems a thing of the past—no more polls opening late and no more long lines.

There's no more confusion about whether you are on the voter rolls. Either you get the ballot in the mail, or you don't and if you don't, you have ample time to contact your election officials to sort it out.

Vote by mail dramatically reduces the chance of voter fraud. Trained election officials match the signature on each ballot against the signature on each voter's registration card and no ballot is processed or counted until officials are satisfied that the two signatures match.

Vote by mail ensures a paper trail—each voter marks up their ballot and sends it in. That ballot is counted and then becomes the paper record used in the event of a recount.

There's less risk of voter intimidation and that's why a 2003 study of Oregon voters showed that those groups that would likely be most vulnerable to coercion, including the elderly, actually prefer vote by mail.

Vote by mail leads to more educated voters. Because folks get their ballots weeks before the election, they have the time they need to get educated about the candidates and the issues, and deliberate in a way not possible at a polling place.

And vote by mail generates costs savings that can be spent on other priorities like education, law enforcement and roads. Because there is no longer any need to transport equipment to polling stations and to hire and train poll workers, Oregon has reduced its election-related costs by 30 percent since implementing vote by mail.

I think the Oregon experience can be copied elsewhere and that's why I am introducing my Vote by Mail Act of 2007 today, which creates a three year, $18 million grant program to help states adopt vote by mail election systems like the one that Oregon voters have been successfully using for some time now.

To participate in the grant program, States must demonstrate that the vote by mail system they intend to implement includes the same elements that have made Oregon's system so successful, including a system for recording electronically each voter's registration and signature and a process for ensuring that the signature on each VBM ballot is verified against that voter's electronically recorded signature. States that decide to participate in the program have the option of adopting vote by mail State-wide, within a group of selected counties, or even in a single county. States transitioning to vote by mail State-wide will receive $2 million. States transitioning to VBM less than State-wide will receive $1 million.

I think that vote by mail will improve the elections in every State that adopts it. But to be sure, my bill instructs the Government Accountability Office to evaluate the benefits of vote by mail and to produce a study comparing traditional voting methods and vote by mail.

I urge my colleagues to lend their support to the Vote by Mail Act of 2007. I believe it can help ensure hassle-free elections and help rebuild confidence in our election system.

Because right now, some folks feel like they are so powerless to do anything to fix things that they throw their hands in the air and walk away. And society suffers. For democracies to work there needs to be public engagement. But that requires a sense of investedness—unless I think of the government as my government, which means it's considering my interests and, more importantly, trying to solve them, it's pretty hard to stay invested.

The sense of resignation, of frustration, even dislocation, expressed by some folks troubles me. And I consider it my job to foster a greater sense of public investment. This means making sure that the government works for everyone and that there are tangible results that you can show people so that they understand that it's their government and that it works for them.

I think election reform like my vote by mail bill accomplishes this goal at the most basic level. Without fair, trouble-free elections, you've got serious problems. You don't even get past go. The public can't have confidence in its government if it doesn't have confidence in the system that elected that government. As we saw in 2000 in Florida, it is extremely difficult to untangle problems after Election Day so you really have to get it right the first time. Vote by mail helps ensures this.

I am pleased to have my esteemed colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY as an original co-sponsor. I am also pleased that Congresswoman SUSAN DAVID of California is introducing the House companion bill. I am also happy to announce that the American Association of People with Disabilities, the American Postal Workers Union, Common Cause, and the National Association of Postal Supervisors are publicly supporting this bill.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 979

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Vote by Mail Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Supreme Court declared in Reynolds v. Sims that ''[i]t has been repeatedly recognized that all qualified voters have a constitutionally protected right to vote . . . and to have their votes counted.''.

(2) In the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, voting technology failures and procedural irregularities deprived some Americans of their fundamental right to vote.

(3) In 2000, faulty punch card ballots and other equipment failures prevented accurate vote counts nationwide. A report by the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project estimates that approximately 1,500,000 votes for president were intended to be cast but not counted in the 2000 election because of equipment failures.

(4) In 2004, software errors, malfunctioning electronic voting systems, and long lines at the polls prevented accurate vote counts and prevented some people from voting. For instance, voters at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio waited in line for up to 12 hours because there were only 2 machines available for 1,300 voters.

(5) In 2006, election day problems plagued voters in a number of States as well. For instance, in Denver, Colorado, hundreds of voters were turned away when the database of registered voters crashed. In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, malfunctioning machines and an inadequate number of provisional ballots generated long lines, causing many voters to leave without casting a vote.

(6) Under the Oregon Vote by Mail system, election officials mail ballots to all registered voters at least 2 weeks before election day. Voters mark their ballots, seal the ballots in both unmarked secrecy envelopes and signed return envelopes, and return the ballots by mail or to secure drop boxes. Once a ballot is received, election officials scan the bar code on the ballot envelope, which brings up the voter's signature on a computer screen. The election official compares the signature on the screen and the signature on the ballot envelope. Only if the signature on the ballot envelope is determined to be authentic is the ballot forwarded on to be counted.

(7) Oregon's Vote by Mail system has deterred voter fraud because the system includes numerous security measures such as the signature authentication system. Potential misconduct is also discouraged by the power of the State to punish those who engage in voter fraud with up to five years in prison, $100,000 in fines, and the loss of their vote.

(8) Oregon's Vote by Mail system promotes uniformity and strict compliance with Federal and State voting laws because ballot processing is centralized in county clerk's offices, rather than at numerous polling places.

(9) Vote by Mail is one factor making voter turnout in Oregon consistently higher than the average national voter turnout. For example, Oregon experienced a record voting-age-eligible population turnout of 70.6 percent in the 2004 presidential election, compared to 58.4 percent nationally. Oregon's turnout of registered voters for that election was 86.48 percent.

(10) Women, younger voters, and homemakers also report that they vote more often using Vote by Mail.

(11) Vote by Mail reduces election costs by eliminating the need to transport equipment to polling stations and to hire and train poll workers. Oregon has reduced its election-related costs by 30 percent since implementing Vote by Mail.

(12) Vote by Mail allows voters to educate themselves because they receive ballots well before election day, which provides them with ample time to research issues, study ballots, and deliberate in a way that is not possible at a polling place.

(13) Vote by Mail is accurate—at least 2 studies comparing voting technologies show that absentee voting methods, including Vote by Mail systems, result in a more accurate vote count.

(14) Vote by Mail results in more up-to-date voter rolls, since election officials use forwarding information from the post office to update voter registration.

(15) Vote by Mail allows voters to visually verify that their votes were cast correctly and produces a paper trail for recounts.

(16) In a survey taken 5 years after Oregon implemented the Vote by Mail system, more than 8 in 10 Oregon voters said they preferred voting by mail to traditional voting.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ELECTION.—The term ''election'' means any general, special, primary, or runoff election.

(2) PARTICIPATING STATE.—The term ''participating State'' means a State receiving a grant under the Vote by Mail grant program under section 4.

(3) RESIDUAL VOTE RATE.—The term ''residual vote rate'' means the sum of all votes that cannot be counted in an election (overvotes, undervotes, and otherwise spoiled ballots) divided by the total number of votes cast.

(4) STATE.—The term ''State'' means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States.

(5) VOTING SYSTEM.—The term ''voting system'' has the meaning given such term under section 301(b) of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (42 U.S.C. 15481(b)).

SEC. 4. VOTE BY MAIL GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Election Assistance Commission shall establish a Vote by Mail grant program (in this section referred to as the ''program'').

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program is to make implementation grants to participating States solely for the implementation of procedures for the conduct of all elections by mail at the State or local government level.

(c) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—In no case may grants made under this section be used to reimburse a State for costs incurred in implementing mail-in voting for elections at the State or local government level if such costs were incurred prior to the date of enactment of this Act.

(d) APPLICATION.—A State seeking to participate in the program under this section shall submit an application to the Election Assistance Commission containing such information, and at such time, as the Election Assistance Commission may specify.

(e) AMOUNT AND AWARDING OF IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS; DURATION OF PROGRAM.—

(1) AMOUNT OF IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the amount of an implementation grant made to a participating State shall be, in the case of a State that certifies that it will implement all elections by mail in accordance with the requirements of subsection (f), with respect to—

(i) the entire State, $2,000,000; or

(ii) any single unit or multiple units of local government within the State, $1,000,000.

(B) EXCESS FUNDS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that there are excess funds in either of the first 2 years of the program, such funds may be used to award implementation grants to participating States in subsequent years.

(ii) EXCESS FUNDS DEFINED.—For purposes of clause (i), the term ''excess funds'' means any amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under subsection (h)(1) with respect to a fiscal year that are not awarded to a participating State under an implementation grant during such fiscal year.

(C) CONTINUING AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AFTER APPROPRIATION.—An implementation grant made to a participating State under this section shall be available to the State without fiscal year limitation.

(2) AWARDING OF IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance Commission shall award implementation grants during each year in which the program is conducted.

(B) ONE GRANT PER STATE.—The Election Assistance Commission shall not award more than 1 implementation grant to any participating State under this section over the duration of the program.

(3) DURATION.—The program shall be conducted for a period of 3 years.

(f) REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) REQUIRED PROCEDURES.—A participating State shall establish and implement procedures for conducting all elections by mail in the area with respect to which it receives an implementation grant to conduct such elections, including the following:

(A) A process for recording electronically each voter's registration information and signature.

(B) A process for mailing ballots to all eligible voters.

(C) The designation of places for the deposit of ballots cast in an election.

(D) A process for ensuring the secrecy and integrity of ballots cast in the election.

(E) Procedures and penalties for preventing election fraud and ballot tampering, including procedures for the verification of the signature of the voter accompanying the ballot through comparison of such signature with the signature of the voter maintained by the State in accordance with subparagraph (A).

(F) Procedures for verifying that a ballot has been received by the appropriate authority.

(G) Procedures for obtaining a replacement ballot in the case of a ballot which is destroyed, spoiled, lost, or not received by the voter.

(H) A plan for training election workers in signature verification techniques.

(I) Plans and procedures to ensure that voters who are blind, visually-impaired, or otherwise disabled have the opportunity to participate in elections conducted by mail and to ensure compliance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Such plans and procedures shall be developed in consultation with disabled and other civil rights organizations, voting rights groups, State election officials, voter protection groups, and other interested community organizations.

(J) Plans and procedures to ensure the translation of ballots and voting materials in accordance with section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973aa–1a)).

(g) BEST PRACTICES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Election Assistance Commission shall—

(A) develop, periodically issue, and, as appropriate, update best practices for conducting elections by mail;

(B) provide technical assistance to participating States for the purpose of implementing procedures for conducting elections by mail; and

(C) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(i) annual reports on the implementation of such procedures by participating States during each year in which the program is conducted; and

(ii) upon completion of the program conducted under this section, a final report on the program, together with recommendations for such legislation or administrative action as the Election Assistance Commission determines to be appropriate.

(2) CONSULTATION.—In developing, issuing, and updating best practices, developing materials to provide technical assistance to participating States, and developing the annual and final reports under paragraph (1), the Election Assistance Commission shall consult with interested parties, including—

(A) State and local election officials;

(B) the United States Postal Service;

(C) the Postal Regulatory Commission established under section 501 of title 39, United States Code; and

(D) voting rights groups, voter protection groups, groups representing the disabled, and other civil rights or community organizations.

(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) GRANTS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to award grants under this section, for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2009, $6,000,000, to remain available without fiscal year limitation until expended.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated to administer the program under this section, $200,000 for the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2009, to remain available without fiscal year limitation until expended.

(i) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act may be construed to authorize or require

conduct prohibited under any of the following laws, or to supersede, restrict, or limit the application of such laws:

(1) The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (42 U.S.C. 15301 et seq.).

(2) The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973 et seq.).

(3) The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (42 U.S.C. 1973ee et seq.).

(4) The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act(42 U.S.C. 1973ff et seq.).

(5) The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 1973gg et seq.).

(6) The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

(7) The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 701 et seq.).

SEC. 5. STUDY ON IMPLEMENTATION OF MAIL-IN VOTING FOR ELECTIONS.

(a) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States (in this section referred to as the ''Comptroller General'') shall conduct a study evaluating the benefits of broader implementation of mail-in voting in elections, taking into consideration the annual reports submitted by the Election Assistance Commission under section 4(g)(1)(C)(i) before November 1, 2009.

(2) SPECIFIC ISSUES STUDIED.—The study conducted under paragraph (1) shall include a comparison of traditional voting methods and mail-in voting with respect to—

(A) the likelihood of voter fraud and misconduct;

(B) the accuracy of voter rolls;

(C) the accuracy of election results;

(D) voter participation in urban and rural communities and by minorities, language minorities (as defined in section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973aa–1a)), and individuals with disabilities and by individuals who are homeless or who frequently change their official residences;

(E) public confidence in the election system;

(F) the residual vote rate, including such rate based on voter age, education, income, race, or ethnicity or whether a voter lives in an urban or rural community, is disabled, or is a language minority (as so defined); and

(G) cost savings.

(3) CONSULTATION.—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Comptroller General shall consult with interested parties, including—

(A) State and local election officials;

(B) the United States Postal Service;

(C) the Postal Regulatory Commission established under section 501 of title 39, United States Code; and

(D) voting rights groups, voter protection groups, groups representing the disabled, and other civil rights or community organizations.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than November 1, 2009, the Comptroller General shall prepare and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the study conducted under subsection (a), together with such recommendations for legislation or administrative action as the Comptroller General determines to be appropriate.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. SESSIONS):

S. 980. A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to address online pharmacies; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with Senator SESSIONS to re-introduce the Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act. Our legislation protects the safety of consumers who wish to fill legitimate prescriptions over the Internet, while holding accountable those who operate unregistered pharmacies.

This legislation imposes basic, commonsense requirements on an industry that presents both promise and peril.

First, this bill establishes disclosure standards for Internet pharmacies.

Second, this bill prohibits an Internet pharmacy from dispensing or selling a controlled substance without an in-person examination by a physician.

Third, it allows a State Attorney General to bring a civil action in a federal district court to enjoin a pharmacy operating in violation of the law, and to enforce compliance with the provisions of this law.

The disclosure requirements contained in this bill will allow patients to differentiate between shady off-shore pharmacies and legitimate licensed ones. Under this legislation, pharmacies must clearly disclose: the name and address of the pharmacy. Contact information for the pharmacist-in-charge. A list of States in which the pharmacy is licensed to operate.

They must also clearly post a statement that they comply with the requirements in this legislation.

The bill states that pharmacies can dispense to patients only if they have a valid prescription from a practitioner who has performed an in-person examination. This requirement will ensure that doctors can verify the health status of a patient and ensure that the drug he or she will receive from the pharmacy is medically appropriate.

This legislation recognizes that in the case of an emergency, a patient may not always be able to see his or her typical physician. For that reason, it allows a doctor to designate a covering practitioner to write a valid prescription if he or she is not available.

Finally, this bill contains real penalties to hold accountable those who continue to operate pharmacies in violation of these requirements.

First, for Internet sales of controlled substances, the bill makes clear that such activities are subject to the current Federal laws against illegal distributions and the same penalties applicable to hand-to-hand sales.

Second, the bill increases the penalties for illegal distributions of controlled substances categorized by the DEA as Schedule III, IV and V substances, with new penalties if death or serious bodily injury results, and longer periods of supervised release available after convictions.

The bill also allows a State's Attorney General to file a Federal motion to stop these pharmacies from operating illegally, no matter where the entity is headquartered. Previously, this type of enforcement would require a filing in every state.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing front on the War on Drugs, with 15.1 million adults admitting to abuse of prescription drugs in a 2003 study. That's a 94 percent increase in the last decade.

Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that deaths from accidental drug overdoses nearly doubled from 1999 to 2004, increasing from 11,155 in 1999 to 19,838 in 2004. Accidental drug overdoses are now the Nation's second-leading cause of accidental death, behind automobile crashes.

The CDC attributed the rise in drug overdose deaths to a higher use of prescription painkillers and increasing numbers of overdoses of cocaine and prescription sedatives. These increases did not occur in our inner cities; instead, the increase was described as being fueled by prescription drug abuse in middle-class, rural America—with overdose death rates doubling in 23 States, mostly in the South and Midwest.

Ready access to controlled substances over the Internet is helping to fuel these addictions. A study conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found at least 344 websites offering controlled substances.

89 percent of these pharmacies do not require a prescription from a physician, accepting either an online consultation or no prescription at all.

38 percent of these pharmacies claim their drugs are shipping within the United States, putting them within the reach of U.S. law enforcement.

We also know that internet pharmacies fill a disproportionate number of prescriptions for controlled substances. According to data from the National Community Pharmacy Association (NCPA)-Pfizer Digest, controlled substances account for only 11 percent of the business at community ''brick and mortar'' pharmacies. 89 percent of their business consists of non-controlled prescription drugs. In contrast, approximately 95 percent of the business done by internet pharmacies is controlled substances.

To understand how many of these Internet pharmacy websites exist, just visit any Internet search engine. Type in the name of any controlled substance, like Vicodin, Oxycontin, codeine, or even anabolic steroids. Several websites will appear, offering to sell you these drugs without a prescription and without a medical examination. Some of these websites simply ask patients to send copies of medical records, with no verification of their validity. Patients use these pharmacies to obtain addictive drugs like Vicodin and Oxycontin. They can receive these dangerous drugs without a doctor performing a physical exam to ensure that an underlying health condition will not cause a dangerous side effect. Often, a credit card is all that is required.

Law enforcement officials are well aware of this growing problem but face many challenges in trying to find and prosecute rogue pharmacy operators. Last year, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee and warned at

that time how ''the purchase of . . . controlled pharmaceuticals on the Internet is of great concern.'' He said that the Internet's wide accessibility and anonymity ''give drug abusers the ability to circumvent the law, as well as sound medical practice, a[s] they dispense potentially dangerous controlled pharmaceuticals,'' and said that, with ''no identifying . . . information on these websites, it is very difficult for law enforcement to track any of the individuals behind them.''

In January of this year, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales again appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The problem had only grown worse. He described the non-medicinal use of controlled substance prescription drugs as ''the fastest rising category of drug abuse in recent years.'' He noted how ''[r]ogue pharmacies operating illicitly through the Internet increasingly have become a source for the illegal supply of controlled substances,'' and offered to work with Congress to try to adopt additional enforcement tools that may be appropriate.

I believe that the bill I introduce today will address many of these problems that the Attorney General has identified.

At the same time, receiving medications from a legitimate, licensed Internet pharmacy is one of the new conveniences ushered in by the Internet age. This bill preserves the ability of well run pharmacies and well intentioned patients to access controlled substances by means of the Internet.

In closing, I want to share with you the story of Ryan T. Haight of La Mesa, CA. Ryan was an 18-year-old honor student from La Mesa, CA, when he died in his home on February 12, 2001.

His parents found a bottle of Vicodin in his room with a label from an out-of-state pharmacy.

It turns out that Ryan had been ordering addictive drugs online and paying with a debit card his parents gave him to buy baseball cards on eBay.

Without a physical exam or his parents' consent, Ryan had been obtaining controlled substances, some from an Internet site in Oklahoma. It only took a few months before Ryan's life was ended by an overdose on a cocktail of painkillers.

Ryan's story is just one of many. Internet pharmacies are making it increasingly easy for teens like Ryan to access deadly prescription drugs. That is why I support this legislation. It creates sensible requirements for Internet pharmacy websites that will not impact access to convenient, oftentimes cost-saving drugs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and I ask unanimous consent that the text of the legislation be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 980

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT RELATING TO THE DELIVERY OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(47) The term 'Internet' means collectively the myriad of computer and telecommunications facilities, including equipment and operating software, which comprise the interconnected worldwide network of networks that employ the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol, or any predecessor or successor protocol to such protocol, to communicate information of all kinds by wire or radio.

''(48) The term 'deliver, distribute, or dispense by means of the Internet' refers, respectively, to any delivery, distribution, or dispensing of a controlled substance that is caused or facilitated by means of the Internet.

''(49) The term 'online pharmacy'—

''(A) means a person, entity, or Internet site, whether in the United States or abroad, that delivers, distributes, or dispenses, or offers to deliver, distribute, or dispense, a controlled substance by means of the Internet; and

''(B) does not include—

''(i) manufacturers or distributors registered under subsection (a), (b), (c), or (d) of section 303 who do not dispense controlled substances;

''(ii) nonpharmacy practitioners who are registered under section 303(f);

''(iii) mere advertisements that do not attempt to facilitate an actual transaction involving a controlled substance; or

''(iv) a person, entity, or Internet site which is not in the United States and does not facilitate the delivery, distribution, or dispensing of a controlled substance by means of the Internet to any person in the United States.

''(50) The term 'homepage' means the first page of the website of an online pharmacy that is viewable on the Internet.''.

(b) REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS.—Section 303 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 823) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(i) DISPENSER OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET.—(1) A pharmacy that seeks to deliver, distribute, or dispense by means of the Internet a controlled substance shall obtain a registration specifically authorizing such activity, in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Attorney General. In determining whether to grant an application for such registration, the Attorney General shall apply the factors set forth in subsection (f).

''(2) Registration under this subsection shall be in addition to, and not in lieu of, registration under subsection (f).

''(3) This subsection does not apply to pharmacies that merely advertise by means of the Internet but do not attempt to facilitate an actual transaction involving a controlled substance by means of the Internet.''.

(c) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Section 307(d) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 827(d)) is amended by—

(1) designating the text as paragraph (1); and

(2) inserting after paragraph (1), as so designated by this Act, the following new paragraph:

''(2) A pharmacy registered under section 303(i) shall report to the Attorney General the controlled substances dispensed under such registration, in such manner and accompanied by such information as the Attorney General by regulation shall require.''.

(d) ONLINE PRESCRIPTION REQUIREMENT.—Section 309 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 829) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e) CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES DISPENSED BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET.—(1) As used in this subsection—

''(A) the term 'valid prescription' means a prescription that is issued for a legitimate medical purpose in the usual course of professional practice that is based upon a qualifying medical relationship by a practitioner registered by the Attorney General under this part;

''(B) the term 'qualifying medical relationship'—

''(i) means a medical relationship that exists when the practitioner—

''(I) has conducted at least one medical evaluation with the user in the physical presence of the practitioner, without regard to whether portions of the evaluation are conducted by other health professionals; or

''(II) conducts a medical evaluation of the patient as a covering practitioner and is not prescribing a controlled substance in schedule II, III, or IV; and

''(ii) shall not be construed to imply that one medical evaluation described in clause (i) demonstrates that a prescription has been issued for a legitimate medical purpose within the usual course of professional practice; and

''(C) the term 'covering practitioner' means, with respect to a patient, a practitioner who conducts a medical evaluation, without regard to whether the medical evaluation of the patient involved is an in-person evaluation, at the request of a practitioner who has conducted at least one in-person medical evaluation of the patient and is temporarily unavailable to conduct the evaluation of the patient.

''(2) In addition to the requirements of subsections (a) through (c), no controlled substance may be delivered, distributed, or dispensed by means of the Internet without a valid prescription.

''(3) Nothing in this subsection shall apply to—

''(A) the dispensing of a controlled substance pursuant to telemedicine practices sponsored by—

''(i) a hospital that has in effect a provider agreement under title XVIII of the Social Security Act; or

''(ii) a group practice that has not fewer than 100 physicians who have in effect provider agreements under such title; or

''(B) the dispensing or selling of a controlled substance pursuant to practices as determined by the Attorney General by regulation.''.

(e) ONLINE PRESCRIPTION REQUIREMENTS.—The Controlled Substances Act is amended by adding after section 310 (21 U.S.C. 830) the following:

''ONLINE PHARMACY LICENSING AND DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

''SEC. 311. (a) IN GENERAL.—An online pharmacy shall display in a visible and clear manner on its homepage a statement that it complies with the requirements of this section with respect to the delivery or sale or offer for sale of controlled substances and shall at all times display on the homepage of its Internet site a declaration of compliance in accordance with this section.

''(b) LICENSURE.—Each online pharmacy shall comply with the requirements of State law concerning the licensure of pharmacies

in each State from which it, and in each State to which it, delivers, distributes, or dispenses or offers to deliver, distribute, or dispense controlled substances by means of the Internet.

''(c) COMPLIANCE.—No online pharmacy or practitioner shall deliver, distribute, or dispense by means of the Internet a controlled substance without a valid prescription (as defined in section 309(e)) and each online pharmacy shall comply with all applicable requirements of Federal and State law.

''(d) INTERNET SITE DISCLOSURE INFORMATION.—Each online pharmacy site shall post in a visible and clear manner on the homepage of its Internet site or on a page directly linked from its homepage the following:

''(1) The name of the owner, street address of the online pharmacy's principal place of business, telephone number, and email address.

''(2) A list of the States in which the online pharmacy, and any pharmacy which dispenses, delivers, or distributes a controlled substance on behalf of the online pharmacy, is licensed to dispense controlled substances or prescription drugs and any applicable license number.

''(3) For each pharmacy identified on its license in each State in which it is licensed to engage in the practice of pharmacy and for each pharmacy which dispenses or ships controlled substances on behalf of the online pharmacy:

''(A) The name of the pharmacy.

''(B) The street address of the pharmacy.

''(C) The name, professional degree, and licensure of the pharmacist-in-charge.

''(D) The telephone number at which the pharmacist-in-charge can be contacted.

''(E) A certification that each pharmacy which dispenses or ships controlled substances on behalf of the online pharmacy is registered under this part to deliver, distribute, or dispense by means of the Internet controlled substances.

''(4) The name, address, professional degree, and licensure of practitioners who provide medical consultations through the website for the purpose of providing prescriptions.

''(5) A telephone number or numbers at which the practitioners described in paragraph (4) may be contacted.

''(6) The following statement, unless revised by the Attorney General by regulation: 'This online pharmacy will only dispense a controlled substance to a person who has a valid prescription issued for a legitimate medical purpose based upon a medical relationship with a prescribing practitioner, which includes at least one prior in-person medical evaluation. This online pharmacy complies with section 309(e) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 829(e)).'.

''(e) NOTIFICATION.—(1) Thirty days prior to offering a controlled substance for sale, delivery, distribution, or dispensing, the online pharmacy shall notify the Attorney General, in the form and manner as the Attorney General shall determine, and the State boards of pharmacy in any States in which the online pharmacy offers to sell, deliver, distribute, or dispense controlled substances.

''(2) The notification required under paragraph (1) shall include—

''(A) the information required to be posted on the online pharmacy's Internet site under subsection (d) and shall notify the Attorney General and the applicable State boards of pharmacy, under penalty of perjury, that the information disclosed on its Internet site under to subsection (d) is true and accurate;

''(B) the online pharmacy's Internet site address and a certification that the online pharmacy shall notify the Attorney General of any change in the address at least 30 days in advance; and

''(C) the Drug Enforcement Administration registration numbers of any pharmacies and practitioners referred to in subsection (d), as applicable.

''(3) An online pharmacy that is already operational as of the effective date of this section, shall notify the Attorney General and applicable State boards of pharmacy in accordance with this subsection not later than 30 days after the effective date of this section.

''(f) DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE.—On and after the date on which it makes the notification under subsection (e), each online pharmacy shall display on the homepage of its Internet site, in such form as the Attorney General shall by regulation require, a declaration that it has made such notification to the Attorney General.

''(g) REPORTS.—Any statement, declaration, notification, or disclosure required under this section shall be considered a report required to be kept under this part.''.

(f) OFFENSES INVOLVING CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES IN SCHEDULES III, IV, AND V.—Section 401(b) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 841(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''1 gram of'' before ''flunitrazepam'';

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking ''or in the case of any controlled substance in schedule III (other than gamma hydroxybutyric acid), or 30 milligrams of flunitrazepam''; and

(C) by inserting at the end the following:

''(E)(i) In the case of any controlled substance in schedule III, such person shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 10 years and if death or serious bodily injury results from the use of such substance shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 20 years, a fine not to exceed the greater of that authorized in accordance with the provisions of title 18, or $500,000 if the defendant is an individual or $2,500,000 if the defendant is other than an individual, or both.

''(ii) If any person commits such a violation after a prior conviction for a felony drug offense has become final, such person shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 20 years and if death or serious bodily injury results from the use of such substance shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 30 years, a fine not to exceed the greater of twice that authorized in accordance with the provisions of title 18, or $1,000,000 if the defendant is an individual or $5,000,000 if the defendant is other than an individual, or both.

''(iii) Any sentence imposing a term of imprisonment under this subparagraph shall, in the absence of such a prior conviction, impose a term of supervised release of at least 2 years in addition to such term of imprisonment and shall, if there was such a prior conviction, impose a term of supervised release of at least 4 years in addition to such term of imprisonment'';

(2) in paragraph (2) by—

(A) striking ''3 years'' and inserting ''5 years'';

(B) striking ''6 years'' and inserting ''10 years'';

(C) striking ''after one or more prior convictions'' and all that follows through ''have become final,'' and inserting ''after a prior conviction for a felony drug offense has become final,''; and

(3) in paragraph (3) by—

(A) striking ''2 years'' and inserting ''6 years'';

(B) striking ''after one or more convictions'' and all that follows through ''have become final,'' and inserting ''after a prior conviction for a felony drug offense has become final,''; and

(C) adding at the end the following ''Any sentence imposing a term of imprisonment under this paragraph may, if there was a prior conviction, impose a term of supervised release of not more than 1 year, in addition to such term of imprisonment.''

(g) OFFENSES INVOLVING DISPENSING OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET.—Section 401 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 841) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(g) OFFENSES INVOLVING DISPENSING OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET.—(1) Except as authorized by this title, it shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly or intentionally cause or facilitate the delivery, distribution, or dispensing by means of the Internet of a controlled substance.

''(2) Violations of this subsection include—

''(A) delivering, distributing, or dispensing a controlled substance by means of the Internet by a pharmacy not registered under section 303(i);

''(B) writing a prescription for a controlled substance for the purpose of delivery, distribution, or dispensation by means of the Internet in violation of subsection 309(e);

''(C) serving as an agent, intermediary, or other entity that causes the Internet to be used to bring together a buyer and seller to engage in the dispensing of a controlled substance in a manner not authorized by sections 303(i) or 309(e); and

''(D) making a material false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation in the submission to the Attorney General under section 311.

''(3) This subsection does not apply to—

''(A) the delivery, distribution, or dispensation of controlled substances by nonpractitioners to the extent authorized by their registration under this title;

''(B) the placement on the Internet of material that merely advocates the use of a controlled substance or includes pricing information without attempting to propose or facilitate an actual transaction involving a controlled substance; or

''(C) any activity that is limited to—

''(i) the provision of a telecommunications service, or of an Internet access service or Internet information location tool (as those terms are defined in section 231 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 231)); or

''(ii) the transmission, storage, retrieval, hosting, formatting, or translation (or any combination thereof) of a communication, without selection or alteration of the content of the communication, except that deletion of a particular communication or material made by another person in a manner consistent with section 230(c) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(c)) shall not constitute such selection or alteration of the content of the communication.

''(4) Any person who knowingly or intentionally violates this subsection shall be sentenced in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.''.

(h) PUBLICATION.—Section 403(c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 843(c)) is amended by—

(1) designating the text as paragraph (1); and

(2) adding at the end the following:

''(2)(A) It shall be unlawful for any person to use the Internet, or cause the Internet to be used, to advertise the sale of, or to offer to sell, distribute, or dispense, a controlled substance except as authorized by this title.

''(B) Violations of this paragraph include causing the placement on the Internet of an advertisement that refers to or directs prospective buyers to Internet sellers of controlled substances who are not registered under section 303(i).

''(C) This paragraph does not apply to material that either—

''(i) advertises the distribution of controlled substances by nonpractitioners to the extent authorized by their registration under this title; or

''(ii) merely advocates the use of a controlled substance or includes pricing information without attempting to facilitate an actual transaction involving a controlled substance.''.

(i) INJUNCTIVE RELIEF.—Section 512 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 882) is amended by adding to the end of the section the following new subsection:

''(c) STATE CAUSE OF ACTION PERTAINING TO ONLINE PHARMACIES.—(1) In any case in which the State has reason to believe that an interest of the residents of that State has been or is being threatened or adversely affected by the action of a person, entity, or Internet site that violates the provisions of section 303(i), 309(e), or 311, the State may bring a civil action on behalf of such residents in a district court of the United States with appropriate jurisdiction—

''(A) to enjoin the conduct which violates this section;

''(B) to enforce compliance with this section;

''(C) to obtain damages, restitution, or other compensation, including civil penalties under section 402(b); and

''(D) to obtain such other legal or equitable relief as the court may find appropriate.

''(2)(A) Prior to filing a complaint under paragraph (1), the State shall serve a copy of the complaint upon the Attorney General and upon the United States Attorney for the judicial district in which the complaint is to be filed. In any case where such prior service is not feasible, the State shall serve the complaint on the Attorney General and the appropriate United States Attorney on the same day that the State's complaint is filed in Federal district court of the United States. Such proceedings shall be independent of, and not in lieu of, criminal prosecutions or any other proceedings under this title or any other laws of the United States.

''(B)(i) Not later than 120 days after the later of the date on which a State's complaint is served on the Attorney General and the appropriate United States Attorney, or the date on which the complaint is filed, the United States shall have the right to intervene as a party in any action filed by a State under paragraph (1).

''(ii) After the 120-day period described in clause (i) has elapsed, the United States may, for good cause shown, intervene as a party in an action filed by a State under paragraph (1).

''(iii) Notice and an opportunity to be heard with respect to intervention shall be afforded the State that filed the original complaint in any action in which the United States files a complaint in intervention under clause (i) or a motion to intervene under clause (ii).

''(iv) The United States may file a petition for appeal of a judicial determination in any action filed by a State under this section.

''(C) Service of a State's complaint on the United States as required in this paragraph shall be made in accord with the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(i)(1).

''(3) For purposes of bringing any civil action under paragraph (1), nothing in this Act shall prevent an attorney general of a State from exercising the powers conferred on the attorney general of a State by the laws of such State to conduct investigations or to administer oaths or affirmations or to compel the attendance of witnesses of or the production of documentary or other evidence.

''(4) Any civil action brought under paragraph (1) in a district court of the United States may be brought in the district in which the defendant is found, is an inhabitant, or transacts business or wherever venue is proper under section 1391 of title 28, United States Code. Process in such action may be served in any district in which the defendant is an inhabitant or in which the defendant may be found.

''(5) No private right of action is created under this subsection.''.

(j) FORFEITURE OF FACILITATING PROPERTY IN DRUG CASES.—Section 511(a)(4) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 881(a)(4)) is amended to read as follows:

''(4) Any property, real or personal, tangible or intangible, used or intended to be used to commit, or to facilitate the commission, of a violation of this title or title III, and any property traceable thereto.''.

(k) IMPORT AND EXPORT ACT.—Section 1010(b) of the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act (21 U.S.C. 960(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (4) by—

(A) striking ''or any quantity of a controlled substance in schedule III, IV, or V, (except a violation involving flunitrazepam and except a violation involving gamma hydroxybutyric acid)'';

(B) inserting '', or'' before ''less than one kilogram of hashish oil''; and

(C) striking ''imprisoned'' and all that follows through the end of the paragraph and inserting ''sentenced in accordance with section 401(b)(1)(D) of this title (21 U.S.C. 841(b)(1)(E)).'';

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(5) In the case of a violation of subsection (a) of this section involving a controlled substance in schedule III, such person shall be sentenced in accordance with section 401(b)(1)(E).

''(6) In the case of a violation of subsection (a) of this section involving a controlled substance in schedule IV (except a violation involving flunitrazepam), such person shall be sentenced in accordance with section 401(b)(2).

''(7) In the case of a violation of subsection (a) of this section involving a controlled substance in schedule V, such person shall be sentenced in accordance with section 401(b)(3).''; and

(3) in paragraph (3), by striking '', nor shall a person so sentenced be eligible for parole during the term of such a sentence'' in the final sentence.

(l) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this Act shall become effective 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(m) GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General may promulgate and enforce any rules, regulations, and procedures which may be necessary and appropriate for the efficient execution of functions under this subtitle, including any interim rules necessary for the immediate implementation of this Act, on its effective date.

(2) SENTENCING GUIDELINES.—The United States Sentencing Commission, in determining whether to amend, or establish new, guidelines or policy statements, to conform the guidelines and policy statements to this Act and the amendments made by this Act, may not construe any change in the maximum penalty for a violation involving a controlled substance in a particular schedule as requiring an amendment to, or establishing a new, guideline or policy statement.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, after working together with Senator FEINSTEIN, I am pleased to help introduce the Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2007. I have worked to take the lead in protecting consumers specifically as it relates to the sale and distribution of controlled substances over the internet and holding liable those who do so via unregistered online pharmacies. I commend Senator FEINSTEIN for her leadership on this issue and look forward to working with her to pass this important piece of legislation.

This bill would prohibit the distribution of controlled substances by means of the Internet without a valid prescription and provides for the legitimate online distribution of those drugs in certain circumstances. This past January, Attorney General Gonzalez testified to the Judiciary Committee that abuse of controlled substances is being fed by ''the proliferation of illicit Web sites that offer controlled substances for sale, requiring little more than a cursory online questionnaire and charging double the normal price.'' Gonzales further testified that ''[w]e must preserve legitimate access to medications over the Internet while preventing online drug dealers from using cyberspace as a haven for drug trafficking. I look forward to working with the Congress to ensure that controlled substances are dispensed over the Internet only for legitimate medical purposes.'' The sale and distribution of controlled pharmaceuticals on the Internet of great concern because is gives those who abuse drugs the ability to circumvent the law, and sound medical practice. This bill would go a long way in addressing the concerns expressed by Attorney General Gonzalez by reigning in a practice that has gone unregulated for far too long.

Recently, there has been an explosion in the number of online pharmacies that provide controlled substances to users without valid prescriptions. Most illegal drug abuse involving prescription drugs is associated with Internet purchases, where users are given a prescription without ever seeing a doctor. The most prominent abuse occurs with regard to controlled substances such as Hydrocodone, Valium, Xanax, OxyContin, and Vicodin.

A 2006 study reported that ''a staggering 89 percent of sites selling controlled prescription drugs have no prescription requirements.'' According to the study, 15.1 million adults admitted to abusing prescription drugs, including 2.3 million abusers between the ages of 12 and 17. Currently, there is no way to police this illegal activity.

The ease with which consumers may purchase controlled substances from online pharmacies without a prescription is shocking. Often consumers can obtain a prescription from physicians employed by the online pharmacy by simply filling out a brief questionnaire on the pharmacy's website. Most online pharmacies have no way to verify that the consumer ordering the prescription is actually who they claim to be, or that the medical condition the consumer describes actually exists. Thus, drug addicts and minor children can easily order controlled substances and prescription drugs over the internet simply by providing false identities or

describing non-existent medical conditions.

In 2001, Ryan Haight, a California high school honors student and athlete, died from an overdose of the painkiller hydrocodone that he purchased from an online pharmacy. The doctor prescribing hydrocodone had never met or personally examined Ryan. Ryan simply filled out the pharmacy's online questionnaire, and described himself as a 25-year-old male suffering from chronic back pain. Ryan's death could have been avoided. I believe that Congress is in the best position to help prevent teenagers from purchasing controlled substances and prescription drugs from online rouge pharmacies.

I also believe that Congress has the ability to help prevent adult prescription drug abuse by making it harder to purchase these drugs online without a valid prescription. The Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act would: (1) provide criminal penalties for those who knowingly or intentionally (unlawfully) dispense controlled substances over the Internet, (2) give state attorneys general a civil cause of action against anyone who violates the Act if they have reason to believe that the violation affects the interests of their state's residents, and (3) allow the Federal Government to take possession of any tangible or intangible property used illegally by online pharmacies.

The Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act would also require online pharmacies to: (1) file a registration statement with the Attorney

General and meet additional registration requirements promulgated by him/her, (2) report to the Attorney General any controlled substances dispensed over the Internet, and (3) comply with licensing and disclosure requirements.

The Online Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2007 takes a substantial step towards plugging a loophole in our drug laws by regulating the practice of distributing controlled substances via the internet.

By holding unregistered online pharmacies accountable for their activity, we are ensuring that those who seek to purchase prescription drugs by using the internet are protected from those engaged in reprehensible business practices.

Once again I thank Senator FEINSTEIN for her leadership in addressing this serious issue. I commend this bill to my colleagues for study and I urge them to support this important legislation.

By Mrs. CLINTON (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 982. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for integration of mental health services and mental health treatment outreach teams, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, today, Senator COLLINS and I are reintroducing the Positive Aging Act, to improve the accessibility and quality of mental health services for our rapidly growing population of older Americans. I want to thank Senator COLLINS for her leadership on aging issues, and for partnering with me on numerous pieces of legislation and initiatives related to these and other important health issues.

We are pleased to be reintroducing this important legislation in anticipation of reauthorization of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

I want to acknowledge and thank our partners from the mental health and aging community who have collaborated with us and have been working diligently on these issues for many years, including the American Psychological Association, the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry, the National Association of Social Workers, the Alzheimer's Association, the New York City Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Mental Health Counselors Association, the American Society on Aging, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, the Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York, the Gerontological Society of America, Mental Health America, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, the National Council on Aging, Psychologists in Long Term Care, the Older Women's League, the Society of Clinical Geropsychology, the Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, and all the other groups who have lent their support.

American society today has benefited tremendously from advances in medical science that are helping us to live longer than ever before. In New York State alone, there are an estimated two and a half million citizens aged 65 or older. And this population will only continue to grow as the first wave of Baby Boomers turns 65 in less than ten years.

According to a December 2006 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of older Americans aged 65 and over is expected to double over the next 25 years, and nearly 20 percent of citizens will be 65 years or older by the year 2030. Further, the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population is the age group of Americans who are 85 and older.

Although it is encouraging that our Nation's citizens are living longer than ever before, mental and behavioral health challenges accompany this increased longevity. So as we look forward to leading longer lives, we must also acknowledge the challenges that we face related to the quality of life as we age.

Although most older adults enjoy good mental health, it is estimated that nearly 20 percent of Americans age 55 or older experience a mental disorder. In New York State alone, there are an estimated 366,000 adults aged 55 or older with mental health or substance abuse disorders. Nationally, it is anticipated that the number of seniors with mental and behavioral health problems will almost quadruple, from 4 million in 1970 to 15 million in 2030.

Among the most prevalent mental health concerns older adults encounter are anxiety, depression, cognitive impairment, and substance abuse. When left untreated, these problems can have severe physical and psychological implications. In fact, men age 85 and older have the highest rates of suicide in our country and depression is the foremost risk factor.

The physical consequences of mental health disorders can be both expensive and debilitating. Depression has a powerful negative impact on ability to function, resulting in high rates of disability. The World Health Organization projects that by the year 2020, depression will remain a leading cause of disability, second only to cardiovascular disease. Even mild depression lowers immunity and may compromise a person's ability to fight infections and cancers. Research indicates that 50–70 percent of all primary care medical visits are related to psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Further, evidence suggests that an estimated 75 percent of seniors who commit suicide have visited a primary care professional within a month of their death.

Mental disorders do not have to be a part of the aging process because we have effective treatments for these conditions. But despite these effective treatments, too many American seniors go without the services they need and deserve because of poor integration of physical and mental health care. As of 2006, only 37 percent of New Yorkers who suffer from depression had obtained mental health treatment.

The current divide in our country between health care and mental health care manifests itself in many ways. Too often physicians and other health professionals fail to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems. Even more troubling, knowledge about treatment is simply not accessible to many primary care practitioners. As a whole, we have failed to fully integrate mental health screening and treatment into our health service systems.

These missed opportunities to diagnose and treat mental health disorders are taking a tremendous toll on seniors and increasing the burden on their families and our health care system.

It is within our power and our responsibility to bridge the gap between physical and mental health care and help promote the well-being of older Americans.

In last year's reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, Senator COLLINS and I successfully enacted Title I of the Positive Aging Act of 2005, which authorized grants for the delivery of mental health screening and treatment

services for older adults and grants to promote awareness and reduce stigma regarding mental disorders in later life.

While this took an important step toward improving mental health services for older adults, significant efforts are necessary to ensure comprehensive geriatric mental health care.

That is why I am reintroducing the Title II provisions of the Positive Aging Act of 2005 as the Positive Aging Act of 2007 with my cosponsor Senator COLLINS. This legislation would amend the Public Health Service Act to improve access to mental health services for our nation's seniors by integrating mental health services into primary care and community settings.

Specifically, the Positive Aging Act of 2007 would fund demonstration projects to support integration of mental health services in primary care settings.

It would fund grants for community-based mental health treatment outreach teams to improve older Americans' access to mental health services.

This legislation would also ensure that these geriatric mental health programs have proper attention and oversight by: mandating the designation of a Deputy Director for Older Adult Mental Health Services in the Center for Mental Health Services; including representatives of older Americans or their families and geriatric mental health professionals on the Advisory Council for the Center for Mental Health Services; and requiring state plans under Community Mental Health Services Block Grants to include descriptions of the states' outreach to and services for older individuals.

And because substance-related disorders require the same attention as mental health conditions, the Positive Aging Act of 2007 will target substance abuse in older adults in projects of national significance.

Today, we are fortunate to have a variety of effective treatments to address the mental health needs of American seniors. I believe that we owe it to older adults in this country to do all that we can to ensure that they have access to high quality mental health care, so they can enjoy their golden years.

The Positive Aging Act of 2007 takes a critical step in this direction, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this legislation during the upcoming SAMHSA reauthorization.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that letters of support be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2007

SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC.
Senator SUSAN M. COLLINS,
Dirkson Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS CLINTON AND COLLINS: The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest professional social work organization, with 150,000 members nationwide. NASW promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers, while enhancing the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its work, service, and advocacy.

NASW fully supports the Positive Aging Act of 2007, which you are introducing today, along with Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-MA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL). Many older adults are currently unable to obtain much-needed mental health services for a variety of reasons, including lack of access and the stigma attached to mental illness. The Positive Aging Act of 2007 will help integrate primary care with mental health care for older adults, particularly those with low incomes, living in community settings.

Social workers are aware of the problems older people encounter in obtaining necessary mental health care. Frequently, they are called upon to address older adults' mental health needs only after crises arise, when the emotional toll on clients and their families is much higher, and the costs to Medicare are much more significant.

Clinical social workers assess and treat many older Americans with mental health needs. In fact, more than 39,000 social workers now participate in Medicare, delivering mental health services and enabling many thousands of older beneficiaries to lead more fulfilling and healthier lives.

NASW is particularly supportive of the multidisciplinary teams of mental health professionals envisioned in this bill as an integral part of primary care services. These teams, which include professional social workers, will have the training and competence to meet older Americans' diverse physical and behavioral health needs. The Association commends the senators and representatives for raising these vital health issues, and urges Congress to move quickly to enact this legislation.

Thank you for your leadership on this vital health care issue.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN POLOWY,
General Counsel.

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION,
March 23, 2007.

Hon. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.
Hon. SUSAN M. COLLINS,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS CLINTON AND COLLINS: On behalf of the 148,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to applaud your ongoing commitment to the mental and behavioral health needs of older Americans and express our strong support for the Positive Aging Act of 2007. This important legislation will improve access to vital mental and behavioral health care for older adults by supporting the integration of mental health services into primary care and community settings.

An estimated 20 percent of community-based older adults in the U.S. have a mental health problem. These disorders can have a significant impact on both physical and mental health, often leading to increases in disease, disability, and mortality. Evidence suggests that up to 75 percent of older adults who commit suicide have visited a primary care professional within 30 days of their death. Although effective treatments exist, the mental health needs of many older Americans go unrecognized and untreated because of poorly integrated systems of care to address the physical and mental health needs of seniors.

The Positive Aging Act of 2007 takes an important step toward improving access to quality mental and behavioral health care for older adults by integrating mental health services into primary care and community settings where older adults reside and receive services. By supporting collaboration between interdisciplinary teams of mental health professionals and other providers of health and social services, this legislation promotes an integrated approach to addressing the health and well being of our nation's growing older adult population.

We commend you for your leadership and commitment to the mental and behavioral health needs of older adults and look forward to working with you to ensure enactment of the Positive Aging Act. If we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact Diane Elmore, Ph.D., in our Government Relations Office at (202) 336–6104 or *delmore@apa.org.*

Sincerely,

GWENDOLYN PURYEAR KEITA,
Executive Director,
Public Interest Directorate.

POSITIVE AGING ACT OF 2007 ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS—MARCH 2007

Alzheimer's Association; Alzheimer's Association, New York City Chapter; American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry; American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging; American Association of Pastoral Counselors; American Group Psychotherapy Association; American Mental Health Counselors Association; American Occupational Therapy Association; American Psychological Association; American Psychotherapy Association; American Society on Aging; Anxiety Disorders Association of America; Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare; Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law; Clinical Social Work Association; Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU; Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance; Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York; Gerontological Society of America.

Kansas Mental Health and Aging Coalition; Mental Health America; Mental Health and Aging Coalition of Eastern Kansas; National Alliance for Caregiving; National Association for Children's Behavioral Health; National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils; National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems; National Association of Social Workers; National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors; National Council on Aging; Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition; Older Adult Consumers Alliance Older Women's League; Pennsylvania Behavioral Health and Aging Coalition; Psychologists in Long Term Care; Society of Clinical Geropsychology; Suicide Prevention Action Network USA.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRY,
Bethesda, MD, March 20, 2007.

Hon. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR CLINTON: The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP) is

pleased to endorse the ''Positive Aging Act of 2007.''

The ''Positive Aging Act'' will improve the accessibility and quality of mental health services for the rapidly growing population of older Americans. Through projects administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, this legislation will integrate mental health services with other primary care services in community settings that are easily accessible to the elderly.

Dementia, depression, anxiety and substance abuse among Americans over age 65 are growing problems that result in functional dependence, longterm institutional care and reduced quality of life. Missed opportunities to diagnose and treat mental diseases are taking a tremendous toll on the elderly and increasing the burden on families and the health care system. The ''Positive Aging Act'' will increase opportunities for effective diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders among the elderly.

AAGP is a professional membership organization dedicated to promoting the mental health and well-being of older people and improving the care of those with late-life mental disorders. AAGP's membership consists of 2,000 geriatric psychiatrists, as well as other health professionals who focus on the mental health problems faced by senior citizens. In addition, AAGP has an active Foundation which focuses on reducing the stigma of mental disorders in the aging population.

AAGP appreciates your leadership in addressing the mental health needs of older Americans, and we look forward to working with you on this legislation.

Sincerely,

CHRISTINE DEVRIES,
Executive Director.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 121—TO DIRECT THE SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL TO APPEAR AS AMICUS CURIAE IN THE NAME OF THE SENATE IN SUPPORT OF THE APPELLEE IN OFFICE OF SENATOR MARK DAYTON V. BRAD HANSON

Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 121

Whereas, in the case of Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson, No. 06–618, pending in the Supreme Court of the United States, the application of the Speech or Debate Clause, Article I, section 6, clause 1 of the Constitution to suits brought under the Congressional Accountability Act, Pub. L. No. 104–1,109 Stat. 3 (1995), has been placed in issue; and

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(c), 706(a), and 713(a) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. 288b(c), 288e(a), and 288*l*(a), the Senate may direct its counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in any legal action in which the powers and responsibilities of Congress under the Constitution are placed in issue: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate Legal Counsel is directed to appear as amicus curiae on behalf of the Senate in support of Appellee Brad Hanson in Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson, to protect the Senate's interest in the proper application of the Speech or Debate Clause to civil actions brought under the Congressional Accountability Act.

SENATE RESOLUTION 122—COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. HAGEL (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. CLINTON, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DODD, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. REED, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. VITTER, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BURR, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SPECTER, MRS. MCCASKILL, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. SUNUNU, Mr. TESTER, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. BYRD, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. BAUCUS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. CORKER, Mr. MCCONNELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. LOTT, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. ENZI, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mr. BUNNING) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 122

Whereas 2007 marks the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.;

Whereas the memorial displays the names of more than 58,000 men and women who lost their lives between 1956 and 1975 in the Vietnam combat area or are still missing in action;

Whereas every year millions of people in the United States visit the monument to pay their respects to those who served in the Armed Forces;

Whereas the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been a source of comfort and healing for Vietnam veterans and the families of the men and women who died while serving their country; and

Whereas the memorial has come to represent a legacy of healing and demonstrates the appreciation of the people of the United States for those who made the ultimate sacrifice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its support and gratitude for all of the men and women who served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States in defense of freedom and democracy during the Vietnam War;

(2) extends its sympathies to all people in the United States who suffered the loss of friends and family in Vietnam;

(3) encourages the people of the United States to remember the sacrifices of our veterans; and

(4) commemorates the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 24—AUTHORIZING THE USE OF CAPITOL GROUNDS FOR THE LIVE EARTH CONCERT

Mr. REID (for himself and Ms. SNOWE) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. CON. RES. 24

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF USE OF CAPITOL GROUNDS FOR LIVE EARTH CONCERT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Live Earth organization and the Alliance for Climate Protection (in this resolution referred to as the ''sponsors'') may sponsor the Live Earth Concert (in this resolution referred to as the ''event'') on the Capitol Grounds.

(b) DATE OF EVENT.—The event shall be held on July 7, 2007, or on such other date as the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate jointly designate.

SEC. 2. TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Under conditions to be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol and the Capitol Police Board, the event shall be—

(1) free of admission charge and open to the public; and

(2) arranged not to interfere with the needs of Congress.

(b) EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES.—The sponsors shall assume full responsibility for all expenses and liabilities incident to all activities associated with the event.

SEC. 3. EVENT PREPARATIONS.

(a) STRUCTURES AND EQUIPMENT.—Subject to the approval of the Architect of the Capitol, the sponsors may cause to be placed on the Capitol grounds such stage, seating, booths, sound amplification and video devices, and other related structures and equipment as may be required for the event, including equipment for the broadcast of the event over radio, television, and other media outlets.

(b) ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS.—The Architect of the Capitol and the Capitol Police Board may make any additional arrangements as may be required to carry out the event.

SEC. 4. SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT OF RESTRICTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), the Capitol Police Board shall provide for—

(1) all security related needs at the event, and

(2) enforcement of the restrictions contained in section 5104(c) of title 40, United States Code, concerning sales, displays, advertisements, and solicitations on the Capitol Grounds, as well as other restrictions applicable to the Capitol Grounds in connection with the event.

(b) AGREEMENT FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF SECURITY RELATED COSTS .—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The sponsors shall enter into an agreement with the Architect of the Capitol and the Capitol Police Board under which the sponsors agree to—

(A) reimburse the United States Capitol Police for all costs incurred (including additional personnel costs and overtime) in meeting the security related needs at the event, and

(B) comply with the requirements of this section.

(2) FAILURE TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT.—If the sponsors fail, or are unable, to enter into the agreement under paragraph (1) before the date which is 14 days before the scheduled date of the event, the authority under section 1 to hold the event on the Capitol Grounds is revoked.

(3) TREATMENT OF REIMBURSED AMOUNTS.—Any amounts received by the Capitol Police for reimbursement under paragraph (1) shall be credited to the accounts established for the expenses that are being reimbursed and shall be available to carry out the purposes of such accounts.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 621. Mr. BUNNING submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

SA 622. Mr. GREGG proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 623. Mr. CONRAD proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 624. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 625. Mr. GREGG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 626. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mr. PRYOR) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 627. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 628. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 629. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mr. ROCKEFELLER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 630. Ms. SNOWE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 631. Mr. GREGG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 632. Mr. LEVIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 633. Mrs. DOLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 634. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 635. Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. VITTER, and Mr. THUNE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 636. Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. SPECTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 637. Mrs. DOLE (for herself and Mr. ROBERTS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 638. Mr. GREGG (for himself and Mr. CONRAD) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 639. Mr. CONRAD (for Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. GREGG, and Mrs. CLINTON)) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

SA 640. Mr. CONRAD (for Mrs. DOLE) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 621. Mr. BUNNING submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC.____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR REPEAL OF THE 1993 INCREASE IN THE INCOME TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution by the amounts provided by a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would repeal the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security benefits, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SA 622. Mr. GREGG proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

SEC.____. POINT OF ORDER—20% LIMIT ON NEW DIRECT SPENDING IN RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION.

(a) (1) In the Senate, it shall not be in order to consider any reconciliation bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or any conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a reconciliation bill pursuant to section 310 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, that produces an increase in outlays, if—

(A) the effect of all the provisions in the jurisdiction of any committee is to create gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee; or

(B) the effect of the adoption of an amendment would result in gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee.

(2)(A) A point of order under paragraph (1) may be raised by a Senator as provided in section 313(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(B) Paragraph (1) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under paragraph (1).

(C) If a point of order is sustained under paragraph (1) against a conference report in the Senate, the report shall be disposed of as provided in section 313(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

SA 623. Mr. CONRAD proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

On page 36, line 15, strike beginning with ''If'' through line 19 and insert ''When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.''.

On page 39, line 19, strike beginning with ''If'' through line 23 and insert ''When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.''

SA 624. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $17,300,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $15,570,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $1,730,000.

On page 9, line 8, decrease the amount by $17,300,000.

On page 9, line 9, decrease the amount by $15,570,000.

On page 9, line 13, decrease the amount by $1,730,000.

SA 625. Mr. GREGG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 41, strike lines 9 through 11 and insert the following:

(2) for fiscal year 2008,

(A) for the National Defense function (050) and the Veterans function (700), $541,899,000,000 in new budget authority and $549,693,000,000 in outlays; and

(B) for all other functions, $400,413,000,000 in new budget authority and $471,714,000,000 in outlays.

On page 62, insert after line 7 the following new section:

SEC. ____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR GI BILL OF RIGHTS AND BENEFITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would enhance benefits and rights for returning members of the military serving in wars and all other military personnel who have provided a service to their country, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation is deficit-neutral over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SA 626. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mr. PRYOR) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ____. ESTATE TAX REFORM INITIATIVE.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would provide for estate tax reform legislation that addresses the current flaws in the estate tax law by establishing an estate tax exemption level of $5,000,000, an estate tax rate of 35 percent, and a 5 percent surcharge on the largest estates, provided that such legislation does not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SA 627. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

On page 18, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 13, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 16, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 17, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 20, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 21, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 24, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 18, line 25, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 19, line 3, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 19, line 4, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

SA 628. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 50, line 8, insert ''and including the reduction of the income threshold for the refundable child tax credit under section 24 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to $10,000 with no inflation adjustment'' after ''refundable tax relief''.

SA 629. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mr. ROCKEFELLER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

On page 50, line 8, insert ''and including the reauthorization of the new markets tax credit under section 45D of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for an additional 5 years and $17,000,000,000 in tax credit authority'' after ''refundable tax relief''.

SA 630. Ms. SNOWE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 50, line 8, insert ''and including the creation of SIMPLE cafeteria plans as provided in section 2 of S. 555 of the 110th Congress'' after ''refundable tax relief''.

SA 631. Mr. GREGG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 31, after line 11, insert the following:

(d) APPLICATION TO APPROPRIATIONS.—For the purposes of enforcing this resolution, notwithstanding rule 3 of the Budget Scorekeeping Guidelines set forth in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference accompanying Conference Report 105–217, provisions of any appropriations bill, act, joint resolution, an amendment thereto, or a motion or a conference report thereon (only to the extent that such provision was not committed to conference), that would have been estimated as changing direct spending or receipts for any fiscal year after 2008 under section 252 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (as in effect prior to September 30, 2002) were they included in an Act other than an appropriations Act shall be treated as direct spending or receipts legislation, as appropriate, under this section.

SA 632. Mr. LEVIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. _____. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR MANUFACTURING INITIATIVES.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, motions, or conference reports, including tax legislation, that would revitalize the United States domestic manufacturing sector by increasing Federal research and development, by expanding the scope and effectiveness of manufacturing programs across the Federal government, by increasing support for development of alternative fuels and leap-ahead automotive and energy technologies, and by establishing tax incentives to encourage the continued production in the United States of advanced technologies and the infrastructure to support such technologies, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SA 633. Mrs. DOLE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

On page 16, line 10, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 11, increase the amount by $7,500,000.

On page 16, line 14, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 15, increase the amount by $15,000,000.

On page 16, line 18, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 19, increase the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 16, line 22, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 16, line 23, increase the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 17, line 2, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 17, line 3, increase the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $7,500,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $15,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $30,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $40,000,000.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $50,000,000.

SA 634. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 23, line 12, increase the amount by $17,300,000.

On page 23, line 13, increase the amount by $15,570,000.

On page 23, line 17, increase the amount by $1,730,000.

On page 9, line 8, decrease the amount by $17,300,000.

On page 9, line 9, decrease the amount by $15,570,000.

On page 9, line 13, decrease the amount by $1,730,000.

SA 635. Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. VITTER, and Mr. THUNE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE HEALTH INSURANCE.

If a Senate committee reports a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, reduces growth in the number of uninsured Americans, improves access to affordable and meaningful health insurance coverage, improves health care quality, or reduces growth in the cost of private health insurance by facilitating market-based pooling, including across State lines, and a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, provides funding for State high risk pools or financial assistance, whether directly, or through grants to States to enhance the effectiveness of such pooling or to provide other assistance to small businesses or individuals, including financial assistance, for the purchase of private insurance coverage, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may make appropriate adjustments in allocations and aggregates for fiscal year 2007 and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SA 636. Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. SPECTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the end of title III, insert the following:

SEC. ___. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE MEDICARE HOSPITAL PAYMENT ACCURACY.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) addresses the wide and inequitable disparity in the reimbursement of hospitals under the Medicare program;

(B) includes provisions to reform the area wage index used to adjust payments to hospitals under the Medicare hospital inpatient prospective payment system under section 1886(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)); and

(C) includes a transition to the reform described in subparagraph (B); and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SA 637. Mrs. DOLE (for himself and Mr. ROBERTS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 20, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 13, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 16, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 20, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 20, line 21, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 20, line 24, increase the amount by $0.

On page 20, line 25, increase the amount by $0.

On page 21, line 3, increase the amount by $0.

On page 21, line 4, increase the amount by $0.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 24, decrease the amount by $0.

On page 26, line 25, decrease the amount by $0.

On page 27, line 3, decrease the amount by $0.

On page 27, line 4, decrease the amount by $0.

SA 638. Mr. GREGG (for himself and Mr. CONRAD) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows:

At the end of Title II insert the following:

SEC. ___. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST PROVISIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION THAT CONSTITUTES CHANGES IN MANDATORY PROGRAMS WITH NET COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any appropriations legislation, including any amendment thereto, motion in relation thereto, or conference report thereon, which includes one or more provisions that would have been estimated as affecting direct spending or receipts under section 252 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (as in effect prior to September 30, 2002) were they included in legislation other than appropriations legislation, if such provision has a net cost over the total of the period of the current year, the budget year, and all fiscal years covered under the most recently adopted concurrent resolution on the budget.

(b) DETERMINATION.—For purposes of this section, the determination of whether a provision violates paragraph (a) shall be made by the Committee on the Budget of the Senate.

(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—This section may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the chair on a point of order raised under this section.

(d) GENERAL POINT OF ORDER.—It shall be in order for a Senator to raise a single point of order that several provisions of a bill, resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report violate this section. The Presiding Officer may sustain the point of order as to some or all of the provisions against which the Senator raised the point of order. If the Presiding Officer so sustains the point of order as to some of the provisions (including provisions of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Senator raised the point of order, then only those provisions (including provision of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Presiding Officer sustains the point of order shall be deemed stricken pursuant to this section. Before the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may move to waive such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions against which the point of order was raised. Such a motion to waive is amendable in accordance with rules and precedents of the Senate. After the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may appeal the ruling of the Presiding Officer on such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions on which the Presiding Officer ruled.

(e) FORM OF THE POINT OF ORDER.—When the Senate is considering a conference report

on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report or amendment shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.

SA 639. Mr. CONRAD (for Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. GREGG, and Mrs. CLINTON)) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows;

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. ___. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) creates a framework and parameters for the use of Medicare data for the purpose of conducting research, public reporting, and other activities to evaluate health care safety, effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and resource utilization in Federal programs and the private health care system; and

(B) includes provisions to protect beneficiary privacy and to prevent disclosure of proprietary or trade secret information with respect to the transfer and use of such data; and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008, and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SA 640. Mr. CONRAD (for Mrs. DOLE) proposed an amendment to the concurrent resolution S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012; as follows;

On page 20, line 12, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 13, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 16, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, increase the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 20, line 20, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 20, line 21, increase the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 12, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 13, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 16, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 17, decrease the amount by $10,000,000.

On page 26, line 20, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

On page 26, line 21, decrease the amount by $3,000,000.

NOTICES OF HEARINGS/MEETINGS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL, WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia be authorized to meet on Monday, March 26, 2007 at 2:30 p.m. for a hearing entitled, Understanding the Realities of REAL ID: A Review of Efforts to Secure Drivers' Licenses and Identification Cards.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, FEDERAL SERVICES, AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services and International Security be authorized to meet on Thursday, March 29, 2007 at 10 a.m. for a hearing entitled, Eliminating and Recovering Improper Payments.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. CON. RES. 24

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Con. Res. 24, and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration; that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Reserving the right to object, and I will object, I don't believe the Rules Committee has had a chance to review this yet. So for the time being, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Republican Leader, pursuant to Public Law 100–696, announces the appointment of the Senator from Colorado, Mr. ALLARD, as a member of the United States Capitol Preservation Commission.

The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, pursuant to Public Law 100–696, appoints the following Senators as members of the United States Capitol Preservation Commission: the Honorable RICHARD J. DURBIN of Illinois, the Honorable MARY L. LANDRIEU of Louisiana.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed en bloc to consideration of the following calendar items: Calendar No. 28, S. Res. 47; Calendar No. 29, S. Res. 49; Calendar No. 62, S. Res. 78; Calendar No. 63, S. Res. 84; and Calendar No. 64, H. Con. Res. 44.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions and concurrent resolution be agreed to en bloc, the preambles be agreed to en bloc, the motions to reconsider be laid on the table en bloc, that the consideration of these items appear separately in the RECORD, and that any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF GEORGE C. SPRINGER

The resolution (S. Res. 47), honoring the life and achievements of George C. Springer, Sr., the Northeast regional director and a former vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, was considered and agreed to. The preamble was agreed to. The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 47

Whereas George C. Springer, Sr., formerly Northeast regional director of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), president of AFT Connecticut, and AFT vice president, was an accomplished union leader, a pillar of the civil rights community, a high school teacher and athletics coach, and a dedicated family man and devoted friend;

Whereas George Springer was known by those who worked with him as a generous mentor, a conciliator, and a skilled problem-solver;

Whereas George Springer, as president of AFT Connecticut, helped strengthen and expand the statewide organization to include not only teachers but also paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel, higher education faculty, healthcare professionals, and public employees, and united them around his vision of a shared destiny and a common commitment to quality services and professional integrity;

Whereas George Springer was an AFT vice president for 13 years and served for 4 years as the chair of the AFT's human rights and community relations committee;

Whereas George Springer cared deeply about the cause of civil rights, was a leader in the National Commission for African American Education, a board member of Amistad America, Inc., vice president of the John E. Rogers African American Cultural Center, and president of the New Britain, Connecticut chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People;

Whereas George Springer was born in the Panama Canal Zone in 1932, attended Central Connecticut State University, formerly Teachers College of Connecticut, and received a graduate degree from the University of Hartford;

Whereas George Springer was a union activist throughout his 20-year teaching career in New Britain;

Whereas George Springer succumbed on December 19, 2006, at the age of 74, after a long battle with cancer; and

Whereas George Springer is survived by his wife, Gerri Brown-Springer, 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate honors George C. Springer, Sr. as a dedicated and pioneering leader, and a man of generous spirit who took on tough challenges with courage and compassion.

RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING ALASKA STATEHOOD

The resolution (S. Res. 49), recognizing and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the entry of Alaska into the Union as the 49th State, was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 49

Whereas July 7, 2008, marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Alaska Statehood Act as approved by the United States Congress and signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower;

Whereas the Alaska Statehood Act authorized the entry of Alaska into the Union on January 3, 1959;

Whereas the land once known as ''Seward's Folly'' is now regarded as critical to the strategic defense of the United States and important to our national and economic security;

Whereas the people of Alaska remain committed to the preservation and protection of the Union, with among the highest rates of veterans and residents in active military service of any State in the Nation;

Whereas Alaska is the northernmost, westernmost, and easternmost State of the Union, encompassing an area one-fifth the size of the United States;

Whereas the State of Alaska has an abundance of natural resources vital to the Nation;

Whereas Alaska currently provides over 16 percent of the daily crude oil production in the United States and has 44 percent of the undiscovered oil resources and 36 percent of undiscovered conventional gas in the United States;

Whereas Alaska's 34,000 miles of shoreline form a gateway to one of the world's greatest fisheries, providing over 60 percent of the country's commercial seafood harvest;

Whereas over 230 million acres of Alaska are set aside in national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, and other conservation units for the benefit of the entire country;

Whereas over 58 million acres are designated wilderness in Alaska, representing 55 percent of the wilderness areas in the United States;

Whereas Alaska Natives, the State's first people, are an integral part of Alaska's history, and preserving the culture and heritage of Alaska's Native people is of primary importance;

Whereas the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 signaled a new era of economic opportunity for Alaska Natives;

Whereas Alaska's Native people have made major contributions to the vitality and success of Alaska as a State;

Whereas the people of Alaska represent the pioneering spirit that built this great Nation and contribute to our cultural and ethnic diversity; and

Whereas the golden anniversary, on January 3, 2009, provides an occasion to honor Alaska's entry into the Union: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Congress recognizes and celebrates the 50th anniversary of the entry of Alaska into the Union as the 49th State.

NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

The resolution (S. Res. 78), designating April 2007 as ''National Autism Awareness Month'' and supporting efforts to increase funding for research into the causes and treatment of autism and to improve training and support for individuals with autism and those who care for individuals with autism, was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 78

Whereas autism is a developmental disorder that is typically diagnosed during the first 3 years of life, robbing individuals of their ability to communicate and interact with others;

Whereas autism affects an estimated 1 in every 150 children in the United States;

Whereas autism is 4 times more likely to occur in boys than in girls;

Whereas autism can affect anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, or other factors;

Whereas it costs approximately $80,000 per year to treat an individual with autism in a medical center specializing in developmental disabilities;

Whereas the cost of special education programs for school-aged children with autism is often more than $30,000 per individual per year;

Whereas the cost nationally of caring for persons affected by autism is estimated at upwards of $90,000,000,000 per year;

Whereas despite the fact that autism is one of the most common developmental disorders, many professionals in the medical and educational fields are still unaware of the best methods to diagnose and treat the disorder; and

Whereas designating April 2007 as ''National Autism Awareness Month'' will increase public awareness of the need to support individuals with autism and the family members and medical professionals who care for individuals with autism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2007 as ''National Autism Awareness Month'';

(2) recognizes and commends the parents and relatives of children with autism for their sacrifice and dedication in providing for the special needs of children with autism and for absorbing significant financial costs for specialized education and support services;

(3) supports the goal of increasing Federal funding for aggressive research to learn the root causes of autism, identify the best methods of early intervention and treatment, expand programs for individuals with autism across their lifespans, and promote understanding of the special needs of people with autism;

(4) stresses the need to begin early intervention services soon after a child has been diagnosed with autism, noting that early intervention strategies are the primary therapeutic options for young people with autism, and that early intervention significantly improves the outcome for people with autism and can reduce the level of funding and services needed to treat people with autism later in life;

(5) supports the Federal Government's more than 30-year-old commitment to provide States with 40 percent of the costs needed to educate children with disabilities under part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.);

(6) recognizes the shortage of appropriately trained teachers who have the skills and support necessary to teach, assist, and respond to special needs students, including those with autism, in our school systems; and

(7) recognizes the importance of worker training programs that are tailored to the needs of developmentally disabled persons, including those with autism, and notes that people with autism can be, and are, productive members of the workforce if they are given appropriate support, training, and early intervention services.

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The resolution (S. Res. 84), observing February 23, 2007, as the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, honoring the distinguished life and legacy of William Wilberforce, and encouraging the people of the United States to follow the example of William Wilberforce by selflessly pursuing respect for human rights around the world, was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 84

Whereas, at the age of 21, William Wilberforce was elected to the House of Commons of Great Britain;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce and his colleagues actively engaged in many initiatives with the sole purpose of renewing British culture at the turn of the 19th century in order to bring about positive social change;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce advocated prison reform that equally respected justice and human dignity, and encouraged reconciliation;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce sought to improve the conditions for, and minimize the use of, child laborers;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce dedicated his life to ending the British slave trade and the abolition of slavery despite forceful opposition;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce was mentored by former slave trader and author of the hymn ''Amazing Grace,'' John Newton, on the horrors and inhumanity of the slave trade;

Whereas approximately 11,000,000 human beings were captured and taken from Africa to the Western Hemisphere to be sold as commodities and forced into slavery and bondage;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce fought for 20 years in the House of Commons to pass legislation banning the slave trade;

Whereas, on February 23, 1807, Parliament passed a bill banning the slave trade in the British Empire as a direct result of the efforts of Mr. Wilberforce;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce inspired and encouraged those who opposed slavery in the United States, including political leaders like John Quincy Adams, and spread a message of hope and freedom throughout the United States;

Whereas Mr. Wilberforce labored for 46 years to abolish the institution of slavery in

the British Empire, ceaselessly defending those without a voice in society;

Whereas, in 1833, Mr. Wilberforce was informed on his death bed that the House of Commons had voted to abolish slavery altogether;

Whereas section 102(a) of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7101(a)) states that human trafficking is ''a contemporary manifestation of slavery whose victims are predominantly women and children'';

Whereas the scourge of human slavery continues to pollute our world and assault human dignity and freedom;

Whereas, in 2006, the United States Department of State estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 men, women, and children were trafficked across international borders for use as bonded laborers or sex slaves, or for other nefarious purposes;

Whereas the International Labour Organization estimates that there are more than 12,000,000 people in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, and sexual servitude around the world, a number that is greater than the number of slaves that existed at the time of Mr. Wilberforce's death;

Whereas all people must continue to fight, as Mr. Wilberforce fought, for the true abolition of slavery and for respect for human dignity in all aspects of modern culture; and

Whereas the people of the United States should carry on the legacy of William Wilberforce by working to end the modern slave trade, human trafficking, and the degradation of human dignity: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) observes February 23, 2007, as the 200th anniversary of the ban of the slave trade in the British Empire;

(2) recognizes the positive impact William Wilberforce had on renewing the culture of his day and ending the inhumane practice of human slavery;

(3) commends to the people of the United States the example of William Wilberforce and his commitment to the values of inherent human dignity and freedom, which reside in each and every human being;

(4) encourages the people of the United States to—

(A) observe the 200th anniversary of the ban of the slave trade in the British Empire;

(B) reflect on William Wilberforce's selfless dedication to the fight against slavery and his commitment to the neediest in society; and

(C) commit themselves to recognize the value of human life and human dignity; and

(5) unequivocally condemns all forms of human trafficking and slavery, which are an assault on human dignity that William Wilberforce would steadfastly resist.

HONORING THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

The resolution (H. Con. Res. 44), honoring and praising the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on the occasion of its 98th anniversary, was considered and agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

DIRECTING SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 121 that was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 121) to direct the Senate Legal Counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in support of the appellee in Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this resolution concerns an appeal pending before the Supreme Court of the United States in an action brought by a former Senate employee against his employing office, the Office of former Senator Mark Dayton. In 2003, the former employee sued the office under the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995. As a defense to the suit, the office asserted that the Speech or Debate Clause of the Constitution barred a suit by the employee, because during his time with the office his job included legislative duties.

The lower courts denied this argument and refused to dismiss the suit on that ground. The office has now appealed this case to the Supreme Court, placing directly before the High Court the question of the application of the Speech or Debate Clause to suits brought under the Congressional Accountability Act.

As the scope of the Speech or Debate Clause will now be considered in the merits of an appeal by the Supreme Court for the first time in almost 30 years, it is important that the Senate as an institution have a voice in those proceedings to protect the Senate's interests in that important constitutional privilege that secures the independence of this body from the other branches of Government.

It is also important that the legal counsel appear on the Senate's behalf in this action so that the Court can be presented with the Senate's understanding of the proper application of the Speech or Debate Clause to the Congressional Accountability Act. Congress passed the act to apply to Congress the same Federal workplace and employment laws that applied to the private sector and the executive branch, giving our employees the same protections enjoyed by employees elsewhere. That was done with the understanding that suits by congressional employees, even employees with legislative duties, were not automatically barred by the Speech or Debate Clause privilege of Members.

Accordingly, as the Supreme Court is now being urged to bar all Congressional Accountability Act suits that are brought for adverse personnel actions by employees with any legislative duties, it is important that the Senate present to the Court the position that suits under the Congressional Accountability Act can proceed consistent with the Speech or Debate Clause. While that Clause would provide Members with a robust evidentiary and testimonial privilege concerning their legislative activities in these lawsuits and may limit permissible relief, it does not automatically block all such suits at the outset.

In addition, the Supreme Court has directed the parties to brief the additional questions of whether the case has become moot because Senator Dayton has left office, and whether the office of Senator Dayton could appeal the case directly to the Supreme Court. On these questions, the legal counsel will describe why suits brought under the Congressional Accountability Act against the office of a Member of Congress do not become moot after the Member departs from Congress. Indeed, the contrary position would undermine the act's important protections for employees whose Members are soon to end their congressional service. The legal counsel will also argue that the appeal is not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court as the provision of the Congressional Accountability Act that provides for direct appeal to the Supreme Court is not satisfied here.

In sum, this resolution would direct the Senate legal counsel to appear in this action on behalf of the Senate to protect the Senate's interests in the proper application of the Speech or Debate Clause to civil suits brought under the Congressional Accountability Act.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; and that any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 121) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 121

Whereas, in the case of Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson, No. 06–618, pending in the Supreme Court of the United States, the application of the Speech or Debate Clause, Article I, section 6, clause I of the Constitution to suits brought under the Congressional Accountability Act, Pub. L. No. 104–1, 109 Stat. 3 (1995), has been placed in issue; and

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(c), 706(a), and 713(a) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978,2 U.S.C. 288b(c), 288e(a), and 288*l*(a), the Senate may direct its counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in any legal action in which the powers and responsibilities of Congress under the Constitution are placed in issue: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate Legal Counsel is directed to appear as amicus curiae on behalf of the Senate in support of Appellee Brad Hanson in Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson, to protect the Senate's interest in the proper application of the Speech or Debate Clause to civil actions brought under the Congressional Accountability Act.

COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 122.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 122) commemorating the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 122) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 122

Whereas 2007 marks the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.;

Whereas the memorial displays the names of more than 58,000 men and women who lost their lives between 1956 and 1975 in the Vietnam combat area or are still missing in action;

Whereas every year millions of people in the United States visit the monument to pay their respects to those who served in the Armed Forces;

Whereas the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been a source of comfort and healing for Vietnam veterans and the families of the men and women who died while serving their country; and

Whereas the memorial has come to represent a legacy of healing and demonstrates the appreciation of the people of the United States for those who made the ultimate sacrifice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its support and gratitude for all of the men and women who served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States in defense of freedom and democracy during the Vietnam War;

(2) extends its sympathies to all people in the United States who suffered the loss of friends and family in Vietnam;

(3) encourages the people of the United States to remember the sacrifices of our veterans; and

(4) commemorates the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 545

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that H.R. 545 has been received from the House and is at the desk. I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 545) to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask for its second reading but then object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will receive its second reading on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 2:30 p.m. Monday, March 26; that on Monday, following the prayer and the pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed to have expired; that the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that there then be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that at 3 p.m., the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1591, the supplemental, as provided under a previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is no further business today, I turn to the Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I think we completed the week's business. As the majority leader indicated, we will turn to the supplemental appropriations bill for the troops in Iraq next Monday, and hopefully we will be able to wrap that bill up next week.

Mr. REID. The distinguished Republican leader and I have talked on a number of occasions. We have a divided Government, with a Republican in the White House and a Democratic Senate and House. Divided Government oftentimes has allowed us to get a lot done. The Republican leader and I hope that is the case, and we will continue to try to work with the White House and accomplish things. We have been able to do a pretty good job the first 3 months. We have a lot more to do. Hopefully, what the Republican leader and I have talked about will allow us to get a lot more done.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007, AT 2:30 P.M.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:25 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 26, 2007, at 2:30 p.m.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO TRACEY A. LYNCH

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Tracey A. Lynch, of Bronx, NY. Ms. Lynch is being honored for her leadership and service to the community by the Committee for Effective Leadership and the New York State Democratic Committee. Born and raised in the Throgs Neck/Silver Beach community, Ms. Lynch has been an active member of the community for over twenty-five years. She is a graduate of St. Helena's Business School, The Wood Secretarial School, and attended Pace University as an undergraduate. She has been married to Thomas Lynch for 20 years and is the proud mother of three.

Ms. Lynch has been the President of the Silver Beach Association (SBA) for the past 12 years and has coordinated a number of activities within the community to bring families together. Some of those events have included Irish step dancing classes, sign language classes, chess clubs, book clubs, and arts and crafts. Other organizations with which Ms. Lynch is involved are Throgs Neck Community Action Partnership, the Throgs Neck Homeowners Association, the Schuyler Hill Civic Association, and the 45th NYPD Precinct.

Ms. Lynch has been working for the Department of Education since 2003 and is a Parent Coordinator for P.S. 14, the Senator John D. Calandra High School. In this role she serves as a liaison between the Department of Education and parents and guardians and assists parents with education, social, medical and community needs. Ms. Lynch also organizes and facilitates workshops and meetings in conjunction with the principal, teachers, staff and community-based organizations.

Madam Speaker, I join to wish Ms. Lynch best wishes and good fortune in her future projects.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. SIMPSON. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 177, passage of H.R. 1130—Judicial Disclosure Responsibility Act, I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CELEBRATING MASTERFOODS USA GREENVILLE FACILITY EXPANSION

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I would like to commemorate the $15 million expansion of the Masterfoods USA Mississippi Delta facility located in Greenville, Mississippi.

For nearly 30 years, the Greenville facility has produced America's favorite branded rice, Uncle Ben's®, in its many variations. This facility currently produces more than 100,000 tons of rice per year. As part of the expansion, Masterfoods USA will install state-of-the-art processing equipment which will improve capacity to produce the line of Uncle Ben's® 90-second microwaveable Ready Rice®.

The facility is a significant contributor to the state and local economy, employing approximately 200 associates and contributing millions of dollars in salaries and taxes. Moreover, each year, Masterfoods USA purchases and processes more than 156,000 tons, or $18 million, of Delta-grown rough rice through this facility.

Of equal importance is the commitment of Masterfoods USA and the Greenville facility to local community and charitable endeavors. For many years the company has been actively involved with the Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce and many local charities including, the United Way, the American Heart Walk, the March of Dimes, the Salvation Army, the Boys and Girls Club, and America's Second Harvest. Through its long-standing partnership with the Mississippi Area Food Network, Masterfoods USA donates a large number of Uncle Ben's® products to regional food banks. For example, following Hurricane Katrina, Uncle Ben's® donated 150 tons of food to support relief efforts in the Gulf Region.

Through its partnership with America's Second Harvest, the company recently agreed to co-sponsor the construction of a Kids Café at the local Boys and Girls Club. Kids Café, the most expansive child feeding program in the United States, provides free meals and snacks to low-income children through a variety of existing community locations. In addition to providing hot meals to hungry kids, some Kids Cafe programs also offer a safe place, where under the supervision of trustworthy staff, a child can get involved in educational, recreational and social activities that draw on existing community programs and often include family members.

I am honored that the Masterfoods USA Greenville facility is located within my district. I ask you, Madam Speaker, and my colleagues to join me in commending Masterfoods USA, and in particular, its Greenville facility and its officials, for their many years of service and commitment to the Mississippi Delta region. I look forward to applauding their continued growth and success for many years to come.

HONORING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COUNCIL'S SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS PROGRAM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 25th Anniversary of the Hispanic Community Affairs Council's Scholarship Awards Program. On May 3, 2007, members of the community will gather at Chabot Community College in Hayward, California to honor this milestone achievement.

The Hispanic Community Affairs Council (HCAC) is a community-based organization in Alameda County, California. It was organized in 1978 by a group of individuals interested in providing a forum to debate issues of interest to the Latino/Hispanic communities, to share information regarding employment opportunities and to develop a broad network of concerned individuals. The overall purpose of HCAC is to promote the value of education, cultural diversity, community involvement and political awareness.

A primary focus of the HCAC is the promotion of higher education in the Hispanic community through its annual Scholarship Awards Program. Since the establishment of this program, HCAC has awarded more than one million dollars to over 1,200 students for their pursuit of higher education. Scholarship recipients will attend 4-year colleges and universities, community, colleges, vocational training schools, or engage in graduate studies.

In 1983 HCAC awarded two scholarships. As the program continued to progress, HCAC celebrated its 20th year by awarding 100 scholarships. In 2005 HCAC awarded over 1,000 scholarships and in 2006, the organization reached a milestone of over one million dollars in scholarship awards.

One hundred percent of the money HCAC raises goes into its scholarship program. The organization does not have paid staff and everyone working on the scholarship program is a volunteer. Scholarships of $1,500 to students attending a 4-year college or post graduate program and $750 awards to students attending a community college are based on academic achievement, financial need, and a commitment by the students to give back to their respective communities after completing their education and achieving their career goals.

The Hispanic Community Affairs Council is an exemplary non-profit organization providing invaluable opportunities for Hispanic students to pursue their higher education. I applaud the efforts of the partners of HCAC who contribute

financially to the scholarship program and the volunteers who also work tirelessly to ensure the success of this model scholarship awards program.

TRIBUTE TO AUTUMN NICOLE MITCHELL OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding young woman, Autumn Nicole Mitchell. Audi, as she is known to her friends and family, made a decision about 18 months ago to help support the Wigs 4 Kids cancer support network by growing her hair and then donating it to other children without hair of their own.

Wigs 4 Kids is a charitable organization that provides wigs and services to children who have lost their hair due to illness or disease. Wigs 4 Kids' main focus is on cancer patients, but also includes other young people who face similar challenges that cause hair loss, including: alopecia, trichotillomania, lupus, hydrocephalus, burns and other disorders. When donating their hair, young girls like Audi must go to special salons that know how the hair must be cut in order to be made into wigs for others.

Audi is a typical, healthy young girl who genuinely cares about her friends and neighbors. Hearing about the thousands of other children who lost their hair to cancer and other diseases, Audi decided on her own that she would grow out her hair so that she could donate it to Wigs 4 Kids. It takes an exceptional type of young person to recognize the needs of others, and then to take affirmative action to help them in their time of need.

Madam Speaker, I have seen the before and after photos of young Audi. Once her long, straight hair is made into a wig, I know that her beautiful hair will look great on another young child looking to regain some of their self-esteem following their hair loss. Audi is to be commended for her selfless act and for being an example to other children in her school and neighborhood. I know that her generosity will be appreciated by the Wigs 4 Kids program, and trust that this act of compassion will follow Audi throughout her life.

TRIBUTE TO BISHOP ANGELO ROSARIO

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Bishop Angelo Rosario, of Bronx, NY. Bishop Rosario is being honored for his leadership and service to the community by the Committee for Effective Leadership and the New York State Democratic Committee. Bishop Angelo M. Rosario has been in pastoral ministry for the past 44 years and embarked on this path at the age of 18 while working with youth at a storefront church in the South Bronx. His ministerial work was guided by the leadership of the late Rev. Clemente Repollet. Bishop Rosario was the youngest person to be ordained at the Assembly of Christian Churches and remained there for over 25 years. He studied and eventually taught at the A.I.C. Theological Institute and the Latin American Bible Institute.

Bishop Rosario and his wife, Rev. Nancy, founded and presently preside over Church of God's Children in the highly populated housing complex of Co-Op City in the Bronx. This institution presents a wide variety of year-round educational, spiritual and community-minded programs ranging from quality after-school care and pastoral counseling to job placement and health services. Bishop Rosario has organized many activities in the Co-Op City and Bronx Community, among them the Somalia Relief Fund, United Day of Prayer, Youth Day, and job and health fairs.

He is a co-chair of Community Board 10 in the Bronx and is the CEO of the Borough President's Bronx Clergy Task Force whose mission is to bring all faiths together to work for the betterment of the community through quality education health care and financial stability through the houses of worship and community organizations.

From the streets of South Bronx to the pulpit, Bishop Rosario has dedicated himself to helping the community. He is an advocate for community development according to biblical principles. He believes in one race—the human race.

Bishop Rosario and his wife share a family of 10 children and 22 grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I join to wish Bishop Rosario best wishes and good fortune in his future projects.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. SIMPSON. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 176, passage of H.R. 1284—Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007, I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea".

COMMENDING WEYERHAEUSER'S DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Weyerhaeuser Corporation and its wonderful community service in assisting in the relief efforts and the rebuilding of the gulf coast that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. This outstanding company has gone well beyond the call of duty, truly exemplifying what community service is.

The Weyerhaeuser Company was incorporated in 1900, and is one the world's largest integrated forest product companies, headquartered in Federal Way, Washington, employing over 49,000 people in 18 countries. In 2005, they recorded sales of $22.6 billion, and the company manages more than 6.5 million acres of timberlands in nine States. I am pleased to note that 14 locations of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation are in Mississippi including several around the Second District.

In recognition of their outstanding community service and dedication to helping those who need it most, Weyerhaeuser Corporation has been recognized with the Ron Brown Award. This is the only Presidential award to honor companies "for their exemplary quality of their relationships with employees and communities." This award is presented to companies that have set forth strong initiatives to strengthen their employees and the community that surrounds them, as well as promote pioneering business initiatives. The Ron Brown Award was originally established by President Bill Clinton after the late Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, who believed that "businesses do well by doing good." In my opinion, there is no better choice for this award than the Weyerhaeuser Company for its outstanding work and dedication to our country.

On November 29, 2006, chairman, president and CEO of Weyerhaeuser, Steve Rogel, accepted the Ron Brown Award from U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez at a ceremony at the White House. Mr. Rogel accepted the award and dedicated it to Weyerhaeuser's disaster relief coordinator, Katy Taylor, along with the partners and volunteers who attended the ceremony.

Also recognized in the White House ceremony was the North Carolina Baptist Builders, with whom Weyerhaeuser teamed up in the gulf coast relief efforts. The North Carolina Baptist Builders is a faith-based organization that set forth a large mission to rebuild 600 homes along the coast. To the credit of the Baptist Builders, the Weyerhaeuser Company recognized their "smoothly run rebuilding operation to keep projects moving." It is this kind of forward thinking and teamwork that makes the Weyerhaeuser Company so deserving of the Ron Brown Award.

I am honored to have such a wonderful and dedicated company that operates in Mississippi in places such as Magnolia, Philadelphia, and Richland. Weyerhaeuser Company has been operating in Mississippi since 1956 with approximately 1,700 employees and 776,000 acres of timberland.

The dedication of Weyerhaeuser to the community is astounding and sets a shining example to other businesses about the importance of community service and helping the less fortunate. To date, over 300 employees and retirees from across the United States and Canada have volunteered more than 42,000 hours of their time and helped rebuild 50 plus homes. Weyerhaeuser has a truly generous policy of allowing employees 2 to 4 weeks' paid leave to help volunteer in the rebuilding efforts of the gulf coast. Not only does it pay its employees while they are volunteering their time, but it also pays their way and their spouses' way for the rebuilding efforts. Now, over a year later, Weyerhaeuser employees are still participating in reconstruction efforts and have contributed a combined disaster relief to date totaling more than $2.8 million. This is nothing short of extraordinary.

While I can only mention some of the accomplishments of Weyerhaeuser Company's contribution, it is the people of Weyerhaeuser have that truly made the difference to individuals, families and the community as a whole. As one family wrote in response to the help from Weyerhaeuser volunteers, ''Because of all your efforts, we are home! Words cannot truly express the outpouring of love we have received. We are eternally grateful to our Weyerhaeuser family.'' This shows how the assistance of strangers can surely touch one's life and make their life better and give true meaning for caring in the community.

A sign of the high caliber of individuals Weyerhaeuser employs is some of the comments that went to the gulf coast to help. One man noted, ''The days were long and hot, the work was intense, but the rewards were immeasurable. This has been an experience I won't soon forget.'' Another volunteer employee commented, ''This experience was such a blessing. I got so much more from it than I felt I gave.'' Even Weyerhaeuser's retirees participated and one reflected of the occasion to assist those in need saying, ''Having once more the opportunity to work side by side with other Weyerhaeuser employees and retirees made me realize anew why I enjoyed working for Weyerhaeuser so much. It's all about the people and the values the company ascribes to. Thanks again.''

Testimonies such as these speak volumes of Weyerhaeuser Company and its dedication to its employees and others. It goes beyond helping those who are under its employment, but it extends a helping hand to strangers to make the world a better place to live.

I am pleased that Weyerhaeuser has had a long standing tradition in Mississippi and especially in the Second District. It is without question an admirable and outstanding company that lives up to the highest meaning of community service.

Weyerhaeuser's dedication to helping others is immeasurable and I cannot thank the company enough for the work they have done and continue to do. It is truly deserving of such a prestigious award, and I am delighted to see Weyerhaeuser's efforts have been recognized by the administration. The work of their employees and retirees shows that there is no one more deserving.

HONORING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EDEN AREA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Eden Area League of Women Voters celebrating their 50th Anniversary on April 13, 2007. The Eden Area League serves the communities of Castro Valley, Hayward, San Leandro and San Lorenzo, California.

The Hayward Area League joined with the San Leandro League in 1988 to become the Eden Area League of Women Voters.

The Hayward Area League of Women Voters was founded in 1957 by a group of Hayward, California women interested in non-partisan study of local and broader issues, and non-partisan voter education. The Hayward Area League is an expression of the National League of Women Voters founded in 1920. The League is dedicated to enfranchising all voters, educating its members and the public on local, state and national issues, providing non-partisan public forums for candidate interviews and ballot measure discussions.

Members of the Eden Area League have devoted thousands of hours to their communities to improve voter knowledge of local, state and national issues. The members encourage community members to become involved with a special focus on educating voters on state ballot propositions, local issues and understanding governance structures.

The League, at all levels, has a well-deserved reputation for educating themselves and the public about critical public policy issues and events that shape our democratic process.

Over its 50 years of existence, the Eden Area League of Women Voters can point to a number of successful projects with pride. They have become an integral part of the cities they serve and provide an invaluable public service to our communities.

I express my heartiest congratulations to the Eden Area League of Women Voters on reaching a milestone 50th Anniversary.

RECOGNIZING MRS. CAROL AYER OF SPRING HILL, FLORIDA ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Carol Ayer, the outgoing director of the Nature Coast Festival Singers in Spring Hill, Florida. Carol has served the Singers for nearly 6 years with honor and distinction. Soon, she is leaving Florida to retire with her family in Wisconsin.

Carol Ayer has dedicated her life to music. After earning her degree in Music Education, Music Performance, and English Literature from Beloit Fine Arts College in Beloit, Wisconsin, Carol taught English and music to students of various ages throughout her career. First moving to Hernando county in 1990, Mrs. Ayer joined the alto section of the Nature Coast Festival Singers in 1996. The Singers were originally founded to sing The Messiah at Christmas pageants, but have since expanded to perform Christian music throughout the year.

Carol's late husband Peter served as director and conductor from 1998 until his tragic death in an airplane crash in 2001. Following his death, Carol was named the Director and Conductor of the Nature Coast Festival Singers, and during her tenure, the number of members increased every year, with nearly one hundred members performing in this spring's concert. As Conductor the musical emphasis on The Messiah maintained the sacred or classical nature of the Nature Coast Festival Music's charter.

The Nature Coast Festival Singers also established a scholarship in memory of Peter in thanks to Carol for her years of dedication. The group adds to this scholarship fund through the generous offerings made at concerts. The singers fund three types of scholarships, two in conjunction with the Chocochatti Magnet School and the Brooksville Music Club, and one related to the members of the Nature Coast Festival Singers. These scholarships provide funds for the study of music to elementary age children, and high school and college students.

Madam Speaker, Carol Ayer's dedication to music and the community has served as an inspiration to thousands throughout Hernando County. It is clear from the attendance at local performances that Carol's love of music has been shared by many others. Carol is to be commended for her years of service, her commitment to the Lord, and for giving back to the community and its musically inclined children. Carol Ayer is a shining example of the good that serving Jesus Christ can bring to our friends and families, and she will be sorely missed.

TRIBUTE TO YETTA G. KURLAND

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Yetta G. Kurland, of Bronx, NY. Ms. Kurland is being honored for her leadership and service to the community by the Committee for Effective Leadership and the New York State Democratic Committee. She has been an active proponent of civil rights in the New York City area for over a decade and is a lawyer who has dedicated her life to righting wrongs and truly creating a society based on ''equal justice for all.'' The founder of her own law firm, Ms. Kurland has won some landmark victories, including those that deal with family child protections as well as a settlement against a major airline company for HIV discrimination.

She currently serves as Vice President for Communications for the Stonewall Democrats of New York City and chaired their First Annual Women's Event in June 2006. She has worked with many other organizations including the Gay Men's Chorus, Live Out Loud, and Gay Officers Action League and also sits on the executive committee of the National Lawyers Guild.

Ms. Kurland is involved in many legal associations, including the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Law Association of New York (LeGaL), the American Bar Association (ABA), the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), the New York County Lawyers Association (NYCLA), and the City Bar of New York. Additionally, she is the founder of Hello World Language Center, an alternative language and culture resource center, and is an adjunct professor at New York University where she teaches at the Steinhardt School of Education.

Madam Speaker, I join to wish Ms. Kurland best wishes and good fortune in her future projects.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 178, passage of H.R. 740—Preventing Harassment through Outbound Number Enforcement (PHONE) Act of 2007, I was unavoidably detained and unable to vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I was not able to attend a number of votes that took place March 21, 2007 on the House floor. I take my responsibility to vote very seriously and had I been present I would have voted: ''Yea'' on rollcall 167, Motion to Permit to Proceed in Order on This Day; ''Nay'' on rollcall 168, Neugebauer of Texas Amendment; ''Nay'' on rollcall 169, Price of Georgia Amendment; ''Yea'' on rollcall 170, Al Green of Texas Amendment, as Modified; ''No'' on rollcall 171, On Motion to Recommit with Instructions; ''Aye'' on rollcall 172, On Passage, Gulf Coast Hurricane Housing Recovery Act of 2007; ''Yea'' on rollcall 173, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act; ''Yea'' on rollcall 174, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act; ''Yea'' on rollcall 175, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, Dr. James Allen Veteran Vision Equity Act; ''Yea'' on rollcall 176, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007; ''Yea'' on rollcall 177, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, Judicial Disclosure Responsibility Act; and ''Yea'' on rollcall 178, On Passage, Preventing Harassment through Outbound Number Enforcement (PHONE) Act of 2007.

IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP FUELS AMERICAN ECONOMIC GROWTH

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, the Center for an Urban Future recently released a report titled, ''A World of Opportunity.'' The ''report reiterates the fact that immigrant entrepreneurs are key engines of growth for many cities in the United States. Every census taken from 1880 to 1990 has revealed that immigrants were self-employed significantly more than American-born natives. The number of immigrant entrepreneurs in 2005 was 350 out of 100,000, compared to 280 of 100,000 for those born in the United States. Research maintains that immigrant entrepreneurs have made positive contributions to the U.S. economy for more than a century.

Nowhere are the contributions of self-employed immigrants, to urban economies, more visible than in New York City, where people migrate from almost every part of the world. Despite ethnic differences, New York City immigrants often arrive with an entrepreneurial determination. Over the past 10 to 15 years, immigrant entrepreneurs have fueled much of the overall growth in new businesses across the City and have triggered dramatic turnarounds in neighborhoods. Communities such as Sunset Park, Flushing, Richmond Hill and Washington Heights have all reaped from the seeds of growth powered by immigrant owned businesses. There is no doubt that Immigrants will continue to make significant contributions to the City's economic growth in the future.

There are several reasons why immigrants start their own businesses and in such record numbers. The risk of a business venture appears comparatively minimal to the surmountable risk immigrants have already taken when packing up their homes and moving to a country where the majority of the people do not speak their native language. Another motivation for immigrants to open up their own businesses is the recognition that they can offer a variety of products and services that many other entrepreneurs cannot. Similarly, many immigrants prefer the solace that comes with owning a business instead of having to deal with the numerous struggles and frustrations of participating in the large business work force where immigrants are often discriminated against, paid unfairly and required to work uncommon hours.

The stereotype that immigrant businesses represent small ''mom-and-pop shops'' such as restaurants and local grocery stores no longer holds true. Immigrant entrepreneurs have a growing presence in several vital sectors of the New York City's economy such as: biotechnology, construction, food manufacturing, mass transportation, telecommunications and restaurant equipment sales. Every year, Inc. Magazine publishes what they call the ''Inc. 500,'' a list of America's fastest growing privately owned businesses. In 2005, 55 of Inc. Magazine's 500 business owners were immigrants. Collectively their companies employed more than 14,000 individuals and contributed almost $1.4 billion to the U.S. economy.

At a time in which outsourcing and corporate mergers are on the rise, it is likely that small, home-grown businesses will only become more integral to New York City's future economic success. However, while celebrating these successes and contributions it is important to remember that many immigrants face considerable challenges when deciding to open a business. New York's regulatory environment can be daunting to any entrepreneur. The addition of language and cultural barriers, in many cases, exacerbate this process. Nonetheless, there are numerous organizations dedicated to educating entrepreneurs about how to start a business and overcome obstacles to growth, such as Seedco and the Economic Development Corporation, which offer classes on how to start a business, in Spanish and Chinese.

I commend all of those who have migrated to the United States in search of the American dream, pursuing happiness by establishing their own businesses and contributing positively to the fabric of our country's economy.

TRIBUTE TO PAMELA BATES

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Pam Bates, of Bronx, NY. Ms. Bates is being honored for her leadership and service to the community by the Committee for Effective Leadership and the New York State Democratic Committee. Ms. Bates is the mother of one daughter and two sons and the grandmother of nine wonderful additions to her family. She is a Graduate Student at Queens College pursuing a Master's Degree in Political Science and belongs to the CUNY Coalition for Disabled Students and the Queens College Committee for Disabled Students.

Ms. Bates is president of 504 North Star Democratic Club and sits on the executive board of the 504 Democratic Club which focuses on disability issues and rights. She is also on the Board of Directors of Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York and is a member of the executive board of Disabled in Action.

Ms. Bates serves on the Paratransit Advisory Committee and the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Commission, two positions which are appointed by the New York City Council. She is a member of the Manhattan Borough President's Disability Task Force and the Disability Network of New York City where she devotes much of her time conducting press conferences and attending hearings concerning disability rights and issues. She has testified at all levels of government on issues impacting the rights of the disabled. Additionally, Ms. Bates lobbies in Albany on behalf of the rights of disabled students.

Ms. Bates is a devout activist and advocate for the rights of people with mobility, sight, hearing, and mental impairments. As a result of her personal experiences as an African American, a woman, and a wheelchair user, she has given public lectures and written papers on the topics of disability and activism and our legislative process.

Madam Speaker, I join to wish Ms. Bates best wishes and good fortune in her future projects.

INTRODUCTION OF FEDERAL HOMELAND SECURITY PROCUREMENT LEGISLATION

HON. CHRISTOPHER P. CARNEY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. CARNEY. Madam Speaker, as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight, I am very concerned with the potential for waste, fraud and abuse at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

As we have heard all too often in recent months, the Department is spending increasing amounts of its resources on outside contractors to help fulfill its job of preparing, preventing and mitigating any future large-scale catastrophic events on our soil.

Unfortunately, the contracts are numerous, as are the dollars being doled out. Congress

has discovered that, government-wide, Federal agencies have had help developing requests for proposals (RFPs) for any number of goods and services from industry insiders, all in the interest of expediency.

While it is certainly reasonable for the government to consult with industry insiders during RFP development, it is deplorable for these industry insiders to make recommendations to the government that would result in only one selectable proposal: that from the company of the insider who assisted with the initial RFP.

Such action is wrong, yet it has happened on numerous occasions.

For example, starting in late 2003, DHS issued an RFP for ''eMerge2,'' an effort to finish the consolidation of all of the financial systems of the DHS components into one new system. The eMerge2 RFP was drafted in large part by a single contractor. When the contract was awarded, it was split between two contractors, one of them being the company that helped write the RFP. Long story short: eMerge2 was a failure.

The questions raised by eMerge2 run deeper than ''just'' the federal dollars that were doled out without seeing any return. Indeed, the eMerge2 fiasco raised serious questions about whether more needs to be done, both by DHS and by contractors, to ensure that the ''firewalls'' contractors are using are actually working. This legislation answers some of those questions.

Similarly, when the Coast Guard (USCG) realized that the majority of its marine and aviation fleet was in desperate need of upgrade, it relied upon only two contractors to design the entire Deepwater project, without nearly enough consultation from USCG personnel. Now the Coast Guard has had to pull ships from service and is borrowing boats from the Navy. Our waters are less secure now than before 9/11 because of the fiasco that is Deepwater.

Surely, there have been examples of unnecessary government largesse resulting in waste. That said, while private industry as a contracting partner can save taxpayer dollars, I am skeptical that a business that helped to write an RFP and was the only business qualified to receive it really has the taxpayers' best interests in mind. In fact, this type of malfeasance is criminal, in my opinion.

This legislation seeks to eliminate the potential for future abuses of Federal homeland security procurement dollars. It would require that any contract entered into after May 1, 2007 is not awarded to companies who played a role in constructing the RFP for said contract. If the company is awarded the contract, the Secretary of Homeland Security must certify to Congress that the contract was issued through a competitive process and that DHS took all appropriate measures to ensure that during the RFP design stage, any potential contractor could not influence the RFP to favor itself. Additionally, it would allow for contractors who had input in the process to be hired as subcontractors if they had input designing the RFP but were not ultimately selected as the lead contractor.

I would encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this necessary legislation, which has the potential to save the Federal Government hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more annually. The financial resources of the Federal Government are limited. It should not be as easy as it currently is to game the system and bilk tens of millions of dollars at a time out the Department of Homeland Security's budget.

A TRIBUTE TO MR. JOHN S. NIGRELLI, SR.

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Mr. John S. Nigrelli, Sr., Chairman of the United Savings Bank. Mr. Nigrelli has been chosen as the recipient of the 2007 Achievement Award sponsored by the Association Regionale Calabrese of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Nigrelli's lifetime of excellence and achievement began at the Lawrence Savings and Loan Association. During his time there, he began night school to further his education and completed an Associate degree in business administration from the Wharton School of The University of Pennsylvania.

While attending night school, Mr. Nigrelli dedicated himself to Albert Lawrence Savings and Loan in an effort to continue his advancement through the bank. These tremendous efforts, both educational and professional, were recognized. In 1963, Mr. Nigrelli was elected as an officer of the bank. Throughout his career, he continued to conquer his professional goals and continued his quest for education and knowledge. In 1970, he was elected Executive Vice President and in 1977, he was named President and C.E.O. He continued to hold that position until 2006 when he was named Chairman and C.E.O. As Albert Lawrence Savings and Loan transformed into United Savings Bank throughout the years, Mr. Nigrelli's experience has always guided the bank to unparalleled success.

The bank flourished under Mr. Nigrelli's leadership, knowledge, and experience. His efforts were recognized not only by the community of Philadelphia but by several publications, as one of the most established and stable banks in the city.

Even today, Mr. Nigrelli's kindness is felt through the organizations and charities in which he is a part. Throughout his professional success, this great man was supported by his wife, Marie Pedano. Although she passed away in August 10, 2002, her inspiration continues to contribute to Mr. Nigrelli's continued success. John's endeavors have also been supported by his four beloved children and seven grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and my distinguished colleagues join me in congratulating Mr. John Nigrelli, Sr. on his 2007 Achievement Award sponsored by the Association Regionale Calabrese. This great honor could not go to a better man.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, March 20, 2007, I was traveling with the President of the United States to attend a meeting back in the district and thus missed rollcall votes #160 through 163. Had I been present, I would have voted ''Yea'' on rollcall votes 161 and 162 and ''Nay'' on rollcall votes 160 and 163.

RECOGNIZING THE 42ND ANNIVERSARY OF MAUI ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, INC.

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. HIRONO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 42nd Anniversary of Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO), which was chartered as a community action agency on March 22, 1965, by Federal mandate under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

The motto of MEO is ''Helping People. Changing Lives.'' And for these past 42 years, MEO has maintained a successful record of service by providing basic tools for living, for earning, for self-reliance, and for community involvement.

MEO has initiated many important programs on the Valley Isle, which include specialized bus transportation for seniors, persons with disabilities, and youth; Head Start; Enlace Hispano; community reintegration of prison former inmates; micro-enterprise loans; business education for low income entrepreneurs; employment training and placement programs; Low Income Home Energy Assistance; and energy conservation and home energy assistance for low-income persons. Most impressively, MEO is able to serve all three islands that comprise the County of Maui: Maui, Lanai, and Molokai.

MEO is one of only a handful of agencies—out of over 1,000 community action agencies nationwide—selected by the National Community Action Partnership to receive an Agency of Excellence Award, highlighting superior administrative operations and program excellence. This translates into advocacy and outstanding services tailored to the needs of the Maui community.

I would like to extend a sincere mahalo nui loa (thank you very much) to the staff of MEO for their hard work and dedication. May the next four decades prove to be as successful.

HONORING THE LIFE OF CHRISTOPHER JAMES CEPEDA FERNANDEZ

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I rise with heavy heart to mourn with my constituency the loss of Guam, Army National Guardsman Specialist Christopher James Cepeda Fernandez.

On March 5, 2007, Specialist Fernandez, a 28-year-old father of one, was killed while serving on deployment in support of the Combined Joint Task Force in the Horn of Africa. Due to Christopher's patriotism and sacrifice to our country, he was posthumously promoted to Sergeant.

Service men and women from Guam have always been willing and ready to answer the call to arms to defend this great Nation, and we—their families, friends and neighbors—have always supported them, knowing the risk. As people of a small island community, the ties among us are very deep.

Sgt. Chris Fernandez was the son of Joseph Mendiola Fernandez and Marie Cepeda Fernandez of the ''Golo'' and ''Chungi'' clans. He was the brother of John, Carmela, Stephanie and Michelle Fernandez, and the doting father of six-year-old Kaenani Lei Guyal Fernandez, whom he adored. According to his family, Chris loved to take Kaenani to the movies, shopping—almost everywhere she wanted to go. He made the most of the time he could spend with her.

When not with Kaenani, Chris enjoyed playing basketball and baseball, among other sports. He also liked fishing, drag-racing, and barbequing with friends. He attended John F. Kennedy High School and graduated from Guam Community College. Madam Speaker, I offer these bits of personal information because Sergeant Christopher James Cepeda Fernandez deserves to be remembered as more than a name on a casualty list. He was a son of Guam, a proud soldier, willing and prepared to defend his country and his home island, no matter what the price. And he paid that price.

Christopher James Cepeda Fernandez lost his life in the noble effort to rebuild a nation in freedom so that others might some day know the joys of liberty and justice.

With heavy but proud hearts, I extend heartfelt condolences and profound sympathy to Chris's family on behalf of the People of Guam and a grateful nation. Chris was a caring son, a loving brother and friend, a devoted father, and a proud American patriot.

TRIBUTE TO THE LIBRARY OF THE CHATHAMS

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the Library of the Chathams serving Chatham Borough and Chatham Township, Morris County, New Jersey, vibrant communities that I am proud to represent! On June 9, 2007, the good citizens of the township and borough will celebrate their library's 100th Anniversary with an old fashioned ice cream social.

On June 1, 1907, the Chatham Public Library opened in the new Borough Hall and Fire House at 10 Fairmount Avenue and the first library card was issued. In 1920, the library moved to the corner of Fairmount Avenue and Main Street because there was a trolley stop there and display windows for books. The library moved again in 1924, this time to the Fairview Hotel site, where it remains today.

By 1932, there were 2,415 registered borrowers, more than 50 percent of the population. In 1957, the library held 27,500 books, 100 periodicals, foreign language records, musical and dramatic recordings, art reproductions, a Great Books Club, Horne Reader service, Storyhour, Storytime, and a playpen.

Two wings were added to the original 1924 building in the early sixties, the first was the west wing to house the Children's collection and the second was the east wing to house the Adult and Young Adult collections.

A major change took place in 1975. After several years of discussions, meetings and presentations, a referendum was placed on the November, 1975 ballot, asking for approval of jointure—to form a library serving both towns. It passed and on January 1, 1975, the Chatham Public Library became the Joint Free Public Library of the Chathams. All residents and those working in the Chathams are entitled to free borrowing privileges. The Library is tax supported on a per capita basis by both municipalities, and administered by six jointly appointed trustees with five year terms, a representative of the school system and both mayors or their representative.

1985 saw the Library become fully automated in MAIN (Morris Automated Information Network) which joins all Morris County libraries by computer database. Renovations and additions have occurred on a regular basis, the last being one for more than $4 million, which opened to the public on January 11, 2004. Today approximately 182,000 items are circulated annually, and 9,668 cards are in existence!

Madam Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Library of the Chathams on the celebration of its 100th Anniversary!

TRIBUTE TO SPECIALIST BRYAN ANDERSON

HON. RICK RENZI

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. RENZI. Madam Speaker, a good friend of mine, Neill Sachs, recently wrote me about a co-worker of his, an Iraq veteran, Specialist Bryan Anderson. In late 2005, Specialist Anderson's Humvee was struck by a roadside bomb while driving in Baghdad. Specialist Anderson lost both of his legs and most of his left arm as a result of the blast.

Anderson was sent to Walter Reed Army Medical Center for rehabilitation. After spending over a year of intensive and grueling 6 hours a day, 5 days a week therapy sessions, Specialist Anderson has returned home to Illinois to a heartfelt hero's welcome.

He will undoubtedly require treatment for the rest of his life, and he will need our financial and medical support. As we begin our work in the 110th Congress, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together and ensure that our servicemembers, such as Specialist Anderson, are given the medical care, benefits, and the tools they need to succeed in civilian life.

I am deeply grateful for Specialist Anderson and the other men and women in our Armed Services.

HONORING ALEX HALBERSTEIN

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Southeast Region of the Boys Town Jerusalem for their initiative to honor Alex Halberstein. I am very pleased that on March 28, 2007 we will express our respect and appreciation for the one of the most outstanding members of the Greater Miami Jewish community.

More than 32 years ago, Alex Halberstein immigrated to the United States. He started working for the Pan Amco Finance Cooperation that is involved in transactions on behalf of Florida/Latin American importers and exporters. Following, he became the head of the International Division and Executive Vice President of Capital Bank. Alex is currently an International Bank Consultant.

Throughout his career, Alex has always been active in community service. Alex gives much of his time and energy to enrich the lives of the members of our community. He serves as a member on the boards of the Jewish Community Services, Florida Friends of Hebrew University; Hillel Council and the greater Miami Jewish Federation. He also serves as a member of the National Executive Board and the Miami Dade County Executive board of AIPAC. In addition, Alex is the chairman of the Florida Congressional Committee, co-chair of the North Dade Campaign, chairman of the Latin America Migration Campaign and vice president of the international division of the Israel and Overseas, and Allocation Committee past treasurer and secretary.

In addition to his tremendous service to our community, Alex also demonstrates a passionate commitment to make the lives of economically disadvantaged Israelis better and their futures brighter. By embracing the mission of the Boys Town Jerusalem Foundation, he enables many young Israelis to become leaders in the fields of technology, commerce, education, the military and public service.

As Americans and citizens of humanity, we owe a debt of gratitude for his invaluable contributions to build a better future for our Nation and our world. Alex is leading an example for others in our community. He is a successful banker and a truly remarkable community leader. But above all else, Alex Halberstein is a wonderful human being.

Without reservation, I support the Southeast Region of the Boys Town Jerusalem in recognizing the great honor being bestowed upon Alex Halberstein and wish him continued happiness in the future.

TRIBUTE TO JUNE BUCHANAN CRUSADERS

HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the players and coaches of the 2006–2007 June Buchanan Crusaders basketball team.

In Kentucky, basketball is something of an institution. It embodies a tremendous spirit of

teamwork and dedication, and the Crusaders have shown that they possess both characteristics. The Bluegrass State is widely known for producing great basketball teams, and the June Buchanan Crusaders are no exception. Making it to the state tournament marks a tremendous milestone in their journey for excellence, and I am proud of their accomplishment.

June Buchanan School is located in the small town of Pippa Passes, Kentucky and has 74 students in grades 9 through 12. After winning the regional championship in Southern Kentucky (26–6), the team is playing in the first round of the Kentucky state basketball tournament at Rupp Arena tonight.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the Crusaders for their tremendous success throughout the entire season and wish them the best in the boy's state basketball tournament. Through their hard work, determination, and skill they have made Southeastern Kentucky very proud. I ask each of my colleagues to join me in honoring the June Buchanan basketball team.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, since the United States embarked on a mission to rid the world of terrorism, many of our friends around the world have distanced themselves from America, hoping that will shield them from the wrath the terrorists will one day bring to their countries. Indonesia has done the opposite: the government of the country home to the world's largest population of Muslims has instead forged stronger ties with the United States.

Recognizing Indonesia's importance on the global stage, its government—first under Megawati Soekarnoputri, and since then, under the leadership of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono—has worked closely with the United States to fight terrorism, and the spread of radical Islamism. This alliance has come at no small cost to the Indonesians, as terrorists have repeatedly punished Indonesia by targeting hotels, nightclubs and other tourist attractions with deadly acts of terrorism. Nevertheless, the government of Indonesia has not wavered in its commitment, and has proven itself to be a great friend to the United States.

As Indonesia has supported the United States in our Global War against Terrorism, it is important that the United States continues to support Indonesia by recognizing its sovereignty, and that it doesn't intervene into Indonesia's internal matters. The government of Indonesia has proven itself to be more than sufficiently mature and responsible to handle its own internal issues, which relate only to Indonesians, and the United States should respect its abilities. The government of Indonesia has shown America that respect, and I believe we owe it to them to do the same.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PENSION ADJUSTMENT EQUITY ACT OF 2007

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, along with my colleague from Pennsylvania, Mr. PLATTS, I am proud to I introduce the Federal Law Enforcement Pension Adjustment Equity Act of 2007. I am also very pleased to have other distinguished members of this body as original cosponsors of this important bipartisan legislation, including Mr. STUPAK of Michigan and Ms. JO ANN DAVIS, Mr. MORAN and Ms. DRAKE of Virginia.

Retirees of the United States Park Police and the Secret Service Uniformed Division who began their careers before January 1, 1984, were promised that, upon retirement, the would receive increases in their annuities proportional to pay increases for active duty servicfmen and women. However, language included into the 2001 Consolidated Appropriations Act specifically denied this promise to this group of retirees as a cost-saving measure.

As a consequence, these retirees have been denied an annuity increase at great personal financial cost, even though they entered federal uniformed service with the promise that these annuities would be there for them upon retirement. This is a gross injustice to those who put their lives on the line every day in service to their country.

That is why we are introducing the Federal Law Enforcement Pension Adjustment Equity Act of 2007, to ensure that Congress does what is right, what is just and what is fair. This legislation is bipartisan and should not be controversial. It is my hope that this body can move this bill expeditiously through the legislative process and correct an injustice against uniformed federal personnel who have been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Madam Speaker, today is National Agriculture Day. National Agriculture Day occurs every year on the first day of Spring. This is a week when we honor agriculture for providing safe, abundant and affordable products, a strong economy, a source of renewable energy, and a world of job opportunities.

It goes without saying that agriculture is tremendously important to my district and the nation as a whole, and I hope you join me in celebrating everyone who works so hard to provide for the world.

The Third District of Nebraska is one of the largest agricultural districts in the country. Our district ranks first in the value of sales of grains and oilseeds, second in total value of agricultural products sold, and first in cattle and calve inventory.

Simply put: Agriculture matters. National Agriculture Week is about celebrating the impact the industry has on our State, our Nation, and our everyday lives. I'm proud to represent the Third District of Nebraska, a district that truly embodies the spirit of this celebration.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MAIL-IN-BALLOT TRACKING ACT OF 2007

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Mail-In Ballot Tracking Act of 2007—a bill to implement procedures for tracking the growing number of ballots in States throughout the country that are transmitted through the mail.

Although voters across the Nation are increasingly choosing to cast their ballots by mail because it is more convenient and they have more time to study their choices, many voters have been hesitant to do so because, quite frankly, they are worried that they cannot determine for certain where their mail ballots are in the system and whether they were actually received and counted.

In most cases, the fears of one's mail-in ballot somehow being lost in the system are unfounded—but we all know the fear is still there. Our Nation's voters deserve electoral procedures that are transparent and which strengthen their faith in democracy.

Sometimes there is reason for concern. I have heard horror stories from people who simply did not receive a ballot they requested.

Other voters have called their overwhelmed elections offices and waited on hold for too long trying to find out whether their ballot has been mailed or received. Even when they get to speak with an informed elections official, that official often cannot tell the voter where the ballot is because it is somewhere in the postal system.

The good news is that it is possible and practical to track mail ballots.

We have been tracking the process of overnight packages for years by using the Internet and the telephone. There is no reason why we cannot track ballots using similar technology.

In fact, some jurisdictions such as San Mateo County, CA are already tracking ballots with great success.

The United States Postal Service is currently introducing an ''Intelligent Mail'' system which, if applied to election mail, will allow voters to find out via the Internet or the telephone which postal processing facility last handled their ballots and when they were handled there.

Quite simply, the technology will soon exist to seamlessly track ballots from the time they are sent out from the appropriate elections office to the time they are received back and include all the key postal points along the way.

Implementing ballot tracking systems will bring voters peace of mind and reduce the burden on elections offices which are often barraged with phone calls from voters trying to determine the status of their ballots.

This legislation will also allow a voter to know whether his or her ballot passed the verification stage and will be counted.

Not only is mail ballot tracking feasible and helpful, but it is also affordable.

Setting up systems at an elections office can be as simple as redesigning a website.

Adding barcodes to envelopes already going through the postal process can cost tiny fractions of a penny per piece.

Purchasing any additional scanning or telephone equipment is also relatively inexpensive for election technology.

Mail ballot tracking could even help elections offices save money in the long run as call volumes will likely go down and the strain on staff declines.

Mail ballot tracking is a win-win for all.

I believe it will increase voter participation as it increases peace of mind.

We should follow the lead of the trailblazers who are already tracking mail ballots and ensure this level of security, transparency, and accountability to all voters who either choose to vote by mail or who live in one of the growing number of localities holding all-mail elections.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this effort to strengthen the democratic process and give American voters the electoral certainty they deserve.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I was not present for votes on Monday, March 19 and Tuesday, March 20, 2007 because I was meeting with British Members of Parliament in an effort to build an international coalition to end the Iraq War. If I was present, I would have voted:

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 157 (H.R. 138, Recognizing the importance of Hot Springs National Park on its 175th anniversary);

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 158 (H.R. 658, Natural Resource Protection Cooperative Agreement Act);

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 159 (H.R. 839, Arthur V. Watkins Dam Enlargement Act);

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 160 (H. Res. 254, Providing for consideration of the bill [H.R. 1227] to assist in the provision of affordable housing to low income families affected by Hurricane Katrina);

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 161 (H. Con. Res. 42, Honoring the heroic service and sacrifice of the 6,500 glider pilots of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II);

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 162 (H.R. 759, Redesignating the Ellis Island Library on Ellis Island, NY as the ''Bob Hope Memorial Library'');

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 163 (On approving the Journal);

''No'' on rollcall No. 164 (Hensarling Amendment to H.R. 1227, to require recipients of rental assistance under the bill to perform 20 hours per week of approved work activities);

''No'' on rollcall No. 165 (Biggert Amendment to H.R. 1227, to require that, instead of replacing all pre-Katrina public housing units, only the number of public housing units occupied pre-Katrina be replaced); and

''Aye'' on rollcall No. 166 (Al Green Amendment to H.R. 1227, to extend FEMA housing assistance for evacuees of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma until December 31, 2007 and provide tenant-based voucher assistance upon termination of FEMA housing assistance for eligible families)

PREVENTING HARASSMENT THROUGH OUTBOUND NUMBER ENFORCEMENT (PHONE) ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 740, because it is important that we broaden the scope of current law to prohibit a person from engaging in ''spoofing,'' which is the use of incorrect, fake or fraudulent caller identification—caller ID—to hide their identity in order to facilitate a fraudulent telephone call to the recipient. In addition, the bill provides the tools needed for the Department of Justice to prosecute and protect against criminals who engage in spoofing.

H.R. 740, the Preventing Harassment through Outbound Number Enforcement—PHONE—Act of 2007, is intended to help protect consumers from harassment, identity theft, and other crimes. The legislation creates a new Federal crime to prohibit using or providing, in interstate or foreign commerce, false caller ID information with the intent to defraud.

Recently, the technology needed to spoof has become readily available, either through the purchase of Internet telephone equipment or through Web sites specifically set up to spoof. For example, Voice-over-Internet-Protocol—VOIP—equipment can easily be configured to populate the caller ID field with information of the user's choosing. Some of the technology can block any back technology such as the star symbol or dash 69.

Caller ID spoofing is a form of identity theft that can cause damaged credit and financial ruin. Call recipients sometimes divulge personal and private information to the spoofer, under the mistaken belief that the caller is a legitimate caller. For example, the AARP—formerly the American Association of Retired Persons—has reported cases in which people received calls that made false claims that they missed jury duty. To avoid prosecution, these individuals were told they needed to provide their Social Security number and other personal information. The phone number that appeared on their caller ID was from the local courthouse, so people assumed the caller was telling the truth.

In addition to identity theft, spoofing invades the privacy of those individuals whose caller ID is used to mask fraudulent calls and can be used as a form of aggressive harassment. The use of this technology has been linked to fraud, prank telephone calls, political attacks, and telemarketers who attempt to avoid the current ''do not call'' limits.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 740 and urge my colleagues to join me in voting for its passage.

186TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in acknowledgement of last week's consideration and passage of H. Res. 228, a bill recognizing the 186th anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating Greek and American democracy.

I am honored to have supported a bill whose significance is so extensive and which has such enormous personal meaning to me.

My paternal grandfather emigrated from Greece in the early 20th century and earned his citizenship in his new country by fighting in World War I. My father, Socrates, continued the Space family's patriotic tradition by serving in the Marines during the Korean War. After the war, my father attended Ohio State's law school, thanks to the GI Bill.

I am immensely proud of my Greek heritage, but I'm also proud of the Greek American community. In fact, I'm proud of the symbiotic relationship between my Greek heritage and the Greek-American legacy.

The opportunities afforded to my father and my father's father in America were—in my opinion—a result of the democratic by-products of freedom and liberty that Americans enjoy, thanks to the Greeks.

Early on, America's Founding Fathers looked to the ancient Greeks and their enlightened society for inspiration in forming a new government. In fact, American representative democracy, as we know it, is rooted in the philosophy and ethos of the Greeks.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of this wonderful Nation's independence, it's important that we continue to recognize the significance of Greek contributions to the global society. As an American, and as a Greek, I very much support the sentiment of H. Res. 228.

HONORING U.S. NAVY COMMANDER CAROL BOHN

HON. JERRY McNERNEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. McNERNEY. Madam Speaker, I ask my Colleagues to join me in honoring Commander Carol Bohn, U.S. Navy, Retired.

Commander Bohn provided outstanding service to our country as a commissioned officer, and in retirement, she continues to provide exceptional service to the Tri Valley community and to our men and women in uniform.

Commander Bohn's family instilled in her a deep-rooted sense of commitment to public service. Her late mother and father were World War II veterans, her sister currently serves as a Captain in the U.S. Navy and her brother serves as a Captain in the Navy Reserve.

Commander Bohn gave 25 years of exemplary service to our country in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corp. This included a tour aboard the Hospital Ship USNS Mercy during Operation Desert Storm, when she provided care and comfort to wounded service members.

A member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) for approximately fifteen years, Commander Bohn now serves as Chaplain for the VFW Pleasanton Post #6298. In the course of her service with the VFW, Commander Bohn has participated in numerous color guards for various community groups and organizations. She was also instrumental in leading drives to obtain phone cards and other essential items for our nation's troops. Her efforts not only won her Post an award, but more importantly, they improved the morale of our men and women in uniform deployed overseas. On March 17, 2007, Commander Bohn's Post presented her with a special award for her unquestioned patriotism and continued diligence to recognize and honor all veterans.

Commander Bohn has resided in Pleasanton for the past 20 years. Each year, Pleasanton hosts a Veterans Day Parade honoring those who have served and continue to serve our great nation. Commander Bohn is instrumental in the planning and implementation of this event, which honors the many sacrifices made by our fighting men and women. Through Commander Bohn's tireless efforts, the people of Pleasanton and the 11th Congressional district are assured that our veterans will not be forgotten.

Equally committed to public service and to her family, Commander Bohn is a dedicated wife, mother and grandmother. She is married to a retired Navy Commander, and together they have two children and four grandchildren.

Commander Bohn's dedication is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States and serves as an example to all. For that reason, I ask my Colleagues to join me in recognizing this outstanding citizen and leader.

PERMITTING USE OF ROTUNDA FOR A CEREMONY COMMEMORATING THE DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 66, which authorizes the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was not a random act of mass murder but a systematic campaign of genocide carried out by the Nazis against the Jews. The world must never forget the more than six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. In total, the victims accounted for more than 60 percent of the pre-World War II Jewish population of Europe.

We must never forget the evil acts that happened during that era and continue the fight against racism, intolerance, bigotry, prejudice, discrimination and anti-Semitism in every form today.

More than 60 years later, the Holocaust is still a presence, and there are living memorials all over the world dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives in one of history's darkest hour and to the continuing education to conquer prejudice, hatred, and injustice.

As we authorize the rotunda of the Capitol to be used on April 19, 2007 for a ceremony as part of the commemoration for the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust, let us also be careful not to repeat history. We remember the atrocities that surround us today in the Darfur region of Sudan. It is right that we should gather at the rotunda to remember a period of such unspeakable horror that it will never be forgotten and which we must never again allow to happen.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 66 and authorize the use of the rotunda of the Capitol to commemorate those who perished in the Holocaust.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1284, a bill that will increase the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and also increase the rates of dependency and indenmity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and as the son and grandson of American veterans, I fully support the implementation of this bill. Passing H.R. 1284 is a matter of fairness to our veterans. These brave men and women sacrificed the best years of their lives in service to our nation, and they deserve all the resources they were promised and have earned.

As the cost of living increases each year, so should the funds set aside for our nation's wounded warriors. It is unreasonable to ask our veterans to pay out of pocket for the services that they were promised, but that is unfortunately what happens when day-to-day living costs exceed veterans' disability compensation. For many veterans living on fixed incomes, they need the annual cost of living adjustment. Congress has an obligation to pass a cost of living adjustment measure to ensure that these veterans can continue their current standards of living and cover the costs of their basic needs.

H.R. 1284 also makes certain that the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of disabled veterans keep pace with annual inflation. The spouses and children of veterans often suffer silently on the sidelines as their loved ones struggle with combat-related disabilities. We owe it to veterans' strongest support network—the families of veterans—to meet their needs when addressing a cost of living adjustment.

I believe that Members on both sides of the aisle can and should rally behind this bill, as well as H.R. 327, the Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act, and H.R. 797, a bill to improve vision compensation benefits for veterans.

I urge the speedy passage of all three of these bills on behalf of Ohio 18's 66,000 veterans and all of America's veterans,

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I was granted a leave of absence. Had I been present, I would have voted in the following manner:

Rollcall No. 157 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to H. Res. 138)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 158 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H. R. 658)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 159 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 839)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 160 (On Agreeing to the Resolution on H. Res. 254)—"Nay";

Rollcall No. 161 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to H. Con. Res. 42, as amended)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 162 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 759)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 163 (On Approving the Journal)—"No";

Rollcall No. 164 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Mr. Hensarling of Texas) "Aye";

Rollcall No. 165 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Ms. Biggert of Illinois) "Aye";

Rollcall No. 166 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Mr. Al Green of Texas) "Nay";

Rollcall No. 167 (On the Motion to Permit to Proceed in Order on This Day)—"Nay"; .

Rollcall No. 168 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Mr. Neugebauer of Texas) "Aye";

Rollcall No. 169 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Mr. Price of Georgia) "Aye";

Rollcall No. 170 (On Agreeing to the Amendment to H.R. 1227 by Mr. Al Green of Texas) "Nay";

Rollcall No. 171 (On the Motion to Recommit H.R. 1227 with Instructions)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 172 (On Passage of H.R. 1227)—"Nay";

Rollcall No. 173 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 835, as amended)—"Nay";

Rollcall No. 174 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 327, as amended)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 175 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 797)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 176 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R.1284)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 177 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 1130)—"Aye";

Rollcall No. 178 (On the Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass H.R. 740)—"Aye".

IMPROVING COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR VETERANS IN CERTAIN CASES OF IMPAIRMENT OF VISION INVOLVING BOTH EYES

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 797, to amend

title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation benefits for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes. I strongly support veterans and more specifically blind veterans. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation. A few weeks ago I introduced H.R. 1240, the ''Vision Impairment Specialist Training Act'' to help our Nation's blind veterans.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 797 modifies the standard of awarding disability compensation to veterans for loss of vision to require payment of compensation for impairment of vision involving both eyes due to a service-connected and non-service connected disability.

There are 160,000 legally blind veterans in the United States, but only 44,000 are currently enrolled in Veterans Health Administration services. In addition, it is estimated that there are over 1 million low-vision veterans in the United States, and incidences of blindness among the total veteran population of 26 million are expected to increase by about 40% over the next few years. This is because the most prevalent causes of legal blindness and low vision are age-related, and the average age of the veteran population is increasing; the current average age is about 80 years old.

Members of the armed forces are important to our Nation and we show them our appreciation by taking care of them after they no longer serve. It is important to amend title 38 to ensure that our veterans are taken care of and that they receive the compensation that they deserve. Their service to this nation could never be repaid my monetary means, but we can ensure that the veterans that faithfully served our country are taken care of and amending this legislation sends a message to our veterans that we care about their health and well being long after their duty has expired.

In addition to enhancing compensation benefits for veterans, H.R. 797 requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide the Secretary of Health and Human Services with information for comparison with the National Directory of New Hires to determine eligibility for certain benefits and services. This process ensures that the proper protocol is followed in issuance of these benefits and that the benefits are distributed to the proper recipients.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 797 and I urge all members to do likewise.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ''RE-EMPOWERMENT OF SKILLED AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES AND CONSTRUCTION AND TRADES WORKERS (RESPECT) ACT.''

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. ANDREWS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to fight for middle class Americans by introducing the ''Re-empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction and Tradesworkers (RESPECT) Act.'' Day after day, middle class families are struggling to survive as their real incomes decline and the costs of basic necessities increase. A major contributor to this middle class squeeze is the decline in workers' freedom to organize and collectively bargain. Organized workers earn more, have greater access to healthcare benefits, and are more likely to have guaranteed pensions than unorganized workers. When workers get their fair share, the economy benefits and the middle class grows stronger.

Yet the freedom to organize and collectively bargain has been under severe assault in recent decades, thanks to weak federal labor laws in dire need of reform. It has also been rolled back by a number of misguided decisions by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in the last few years. These decisions have operated to strip millions of workers entirely of their freedom to organize. The RESPECT Act serves to restore that freedom by addressing a series of decisions which stray dramatically from and undermine the original intent of the National Labor Relations Board and which fly in the face of common sense. This bill provides clarity in the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) on one aspect of the fundamental question of coverage: who is an employee and who is a supervisor.

Last year, the NLRB issued a trio of decisions, collectively often referred to as the ''Kentucky River'' decisions, which eviscerated the meanings of ''employee'' and ''supervisor'' under the NLRA. The NLRA protects employees' freedom to organize and collectively bargain. Supervisors are not considered employees and are therefore not covered by the Act's protections. If an individual is determined to be a supervisor, she has no right to organize, no right to engage in concerted activity with her fellow employees, and no right to collectively bargain. Every fundamental right protected by the Act may turn on this question of whether she is a supervisor or an employee. The Kentucky River decisions dramatically expanded the definition of supervisor far beyond the limits that the framers of the Act intended and far beyond the limits of common sense. In so doing, it stripped an estimated 8 million workers—particularly skilled and professional employees—of the freedom to organize.

In the workplace, people know who the supervisor is. A supervisor has the power to discipline, reward, promote, hire, and/or fire employees. The legislative history of the NLRA reflects these common sense understandings of who is or is not a supervisor. Congress drafted the NLRA to exclude from its protections only genuine supervisors with true management prerogatives, not minor supervisory employees, professionals, or skilled workers.

Yet the NLRB ignored common sense and legislative history in the Kentucky River decisions. For professional and skilled employees, who often provide direction to other employees, the NLRB's action is devastating. A nurse who directs another person to conduct a single, discrete task, such as clipping a patient's toenails, would be considered to have supervisory authority under these recent decisions. So would a nurse who assigns a patient to a nurse for a single shift.

A carpenter who tells an apprentice how to form a joint would also be considered to have supervisory authority. These skilled and professional workers have no power to promote, discipline, reward, hire, or fire—and yet they would be supervisors, according to the NLRB, even if they only held the authority to ''direct'' a person on single, discrete tasks just 10 percent of the time. Having been classified as a supervisor without realizing it, these employees may be subject to lawful discipline for trying to organize a union when they thought they were employees with every right to organize.

Because of these decisions, over 8 million American workers are denied their fundamental freedom of association today. As the dissent pointed out in one of the decisions, 34 million Americans may fall into this category of workers stripped of their statutory rights by 2012.

The impact of the Kentucky River decisions is already being felt, particularly in the health care industry, where respect for workers' rights is critical to efficient health care delivery and high quality patient care. In a case in Utah, an NLRB Regional Director, applying the NLRB's new definition of ''supervisor,'' found that virtually all of the registered nurses in a potential bargaining unit, 64 out of 88, were designated as supervisors, with the remaining 24 nurses excluded only because they had less than one year's service. Those remaining nurses will likely qualify as supervisors after they have completed their first year of nursing. Absurd decisions breed absurd results. As the New York Times explained in an October 7, 2006 editorial: ''[R]esponsibilities like making out a schedule do not amount to management. If they did, interns would be the only non-managers in many of today's workplaces.''

The Kentucky River decisions are not an anomaly for the current Board. In the last five years, the Board has repeatedly ruled to deny or restrict the fundamental rights of entire categories of workers. These include 45,000 disabled workers who lost their right to organize; 51,000 teaching and research assistants who lost their right to organize; and 2 million temporary workers who have had their right to organize severely curtailed.

The RESPECT Act will make two simple and clarifying changes to the definition of supervisor under the NLRA. It will: (1) eliminate the terms ''assign'' and ''responsibility to direct'' from the list of supervisory duties; and (2) require that employees possess supervisory duties during a majority of their work time in order to be excluded from coverage under the Act as a supervisor. Eliminating ''assign'' and ''responsibility to direct'' from the supervisor definition will effectuate Congress' intent to define supervisors as only those individuals who have genuine management prerogatives and the real authority to affect employees' terms of employment. As the NLRB has proven, these terms are open to abuse and misinterpretation, far afield from their common-sense and originally intended meanings, by those seeking to roll back workers' freedoms.

Requiring that employees possess supervisory duties for a majority of their work time will create a fair, bright-line rule when determining whether an individual is a supervisor. Someone who possesses a modicum of supervisory authority a minority of the time should not be denied their fundamental rights.

Madam Speaker, the NLRA guarantees the freedom to organize and collectively bargain for America's private sector workforce. That freedom is a fundamental human right and a proven key to a strong middle class. It is unconscionable that the rights of an estimated 8 million Americans—and many more in coming years—be put at risk by such deeply flawed decisionmaking as we have seen in the Kentucky River line of cases. The RESPECT Act does nothing more than clarify the law to ensure it is not misinterpreted or undermined on

a fundamental question of coverage. All workers, including skilled and professional workers, have the right to organize. The RESPECT Act does not allow true supervisors to engage in organizing or collective bargaining. But it ensures that those individuals who are excluded from the NLRA's protections due to their supervisory status do indeed carry the genuine prerogatives of management. I urge all of my colleagues to stand with me as we fight to return these fundamental protections to millions workers who deserve the chance to win livable wages, fair benefits, decent working conditions, and a brighter future for their families.

HONORING STEPHEN TRACHTENBERG AS HE STEPS DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, when I graduated from George Washington, I like to sometimes think only a few years ago, I did not realize that I would be so involved with the school later in my life. President Trachtenberg has made these efforts a joy and an honor, and we will miss his leadership.

His tenure as president transformed the university, marking major advancements across the board. Since taking the helm in 1988, the academics of GW have skyrocketed. The SAT scores of incoming students rose by 200 points and a significant percentage of students are now drawn from the top 10 percent of high school classes.

While enriching the academic environment at George Washington, President Trachtenberg also enhanced the financial situation. The school enjoyed a balanced budget under each year of your tenure, generating an endowment of nearly $1 billion, up almost $800 million since you started in 1988.

As Steve has often noted, GW has eight schools, over 100 programs, and nearly 20,000 students. And he adds, ''GW is more than a university, it is also a community.'' Through his outstanding efforts, the university encompasses academics, research, entertainment, and an enjoyable experience for students, faculty and staff.

In total, 30 years of his amazing career went into leading a major university. He deserves more time at home, applying his energy and talents to his personal life. I understand his wife Francine is retired, but still very active in promoting the community's interest, and I bet she could use his help.

It has been an honor to work with President Trachtenberg on behalf of George Washington University—his tireless efforts have yielded immeasurable results—the school, Washington, D.C., our nation, and the world are better because of them.

JUDICIAL DISCLOSURE RESPONSIBILITY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 1130, the ''Judicial Disclosure Responsibility Act,'' because it extends until December 31, 2009, the authority conferred by the Congress on the Judicial Conference to redact personal and sensitive information from the published financial disclosure reports of judges and judiciary employees who have been threatened or otherwise have particular security risks.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated, H.R. 1130 would temporarily extend the authority of the Judicial Conference to withhold from disclosure certain personal and sensitive information of judges and judicial employees. In addition, the bill expressly provides that concern for the safety of a judge's family as well as that of the judge is sufficient grounds to exercise the authority given. The bill, however, requires the Judicial Conference to provide detailed reports regarding such redactions to Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the financial disclosure requirements were imposed by Congress in 1978 in response to the constitutional issues surrounding the Watergate crisis and the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon. The Ethics in Government Act was passed in 1978 and promotes ethics and openness in government by establishing rules of conduct for federal employees to reduce corruption and prevent the improper use of knowledge gained while employed by the government, and more broadly to prevent the appearance of impropriety.

The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (''Act'') applies to all branches of government, including the federal judiciary. Persons covered by the Act are required to disclose personal and financial information each year, including the source and amount of income, other than that earned as employees of the United States government received during the preceding calendar year. They must also disclose the source, description, and value of gifts for which the aggregate value is more than a certain minimal amount received from any source other than a relative; the source and description of reimbursements; the identity and category of value of property interests; the identity and category value of liabilities owed to creditors other than certain immediate family members; and other financial information. Under the Act, these reports are made public.

Among the types of sensitive personal information that might be disclosed in these reports are personal residences, the workplace of spouses, the name and location of a child's school; and an employee's vacation home.

In 1998, 20 years after the enactment of the Ethics in Government Act, the potential of these types of disclosures to place individual judges at serious risk of personal harm had become manifest. In 1979, U.S. District Court Judge John Wood, Jr., was fatally shot outside of his home by assassin Charles Harrelson. The murder contract had been placed by Texas drug lord Jamiel Chagra, who was awaiting trial before the judge.

In 1988, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Daronco was murdered at his house by Charles Koster, the father of the unsuccessful plaintiff in a discrimination case. The following year, U.S. Circuit Court Judge Richard Vance was killed by a letter bomb sent to his home. The letter bomb was attributed to racist animus against Judge Vance for writing an opinion reversing a lower-court ruling to lift an 18–year desegregation order from the Duval County, Florida schools.

In light of these and other tragedies, Congress responded by adding a new subsection to the Ethics in Government Act temporarily authorizing the Judicial Conference to redact information from judges' financial disclosure reports under certain circumstances. Under that subsection, a report may be redacted ''(i) to the extent necessary to protect the individual who filed the report; and (ii) for as long as the danger to such individual exists.'' The Act further charged the U.S. Judicial Conference, in consultation which the Department of Justice, with the task of submitting to the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary an annual report documenting redactions.

In 2001, the House of Representatives approved a bill striking the sunset clause and making the redaction authority permanent but the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee did not concur. The Senate was concerned that such authority could hamper the effectiveness of the judicial confirmation and oversight process by unwarranted reliance on the redaction authority to avoid revealing stock holdings and other financial assets, and in some cases, the complete withholding of all financial information contrary to the intent of the statute. Ultimately, Senate recommended extending the redaction authority for 4 more years, until December 31, 2005. This authority has now expired and necessitates the extension provided by H.R. 1130.

Mr. Speaker, the Judiciary Committee considered and properly rejected permanently granting this authority to the Judicial Conference because of the legitimate concern that such authority could be abused in such a way as to withhold information that properly should be disclosed. A temporary 4-year extension, on the other hand, would effectively allow for a more in-depth investigation of areas of concern before Congress must decide whether to make the authority permanent. I believe this is the most prudent way to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1130 because it preserves an important means of protecting the safety of those who work in the federal judiciary. Particularly in this age of the global war on terror, the danger faced by federal judges, judicial officers, and court personnel is real, as illustrated by the three murders noted above. The recent and tragic murder of U.S. District Court Judge Joan Humphrey Letkow's husband and mother reminds us that the danger has not abated.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1130 and urge by colleagues to do likewise.

186TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. THELMA D. DRAKE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 186th Anniversary of Greek Independence Day.

After nearly four centuries of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, Greece declared her independence on March 25, 1821. This was not only a victory for the people of Greece but it was a victory for democracy.

Ancient Greece was the cradle of democracy, free thought, and free will. Our Founding Fathers modeled our nation's first laws after the teachings of such influential Greek scholars as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. Greece's liberation in 1821 ensured that these democratic ideals would survive for perpetuity.

Today, we honor the ancient Greek influence on our country and we celebrate the mutual respect and beneficial relationship between our two nations. In every war in the 20th century, our countries fought side by side because we both understood the importance of spreading freedom throughout the world.

Because of our common history, shared values and commitment to democratic principles, the friendship between the U.S. and Greece will continue to grow.

I am proud to be able to honor Greece today as she celebrates 186 years of renewed freedom and I look forward to working with this spirited nation in the years to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, I missed rollcall vote 178 on H.R. 740, the Preventing Harassment through Outbound Number Enforcement (PHONE) Act of 2007. Had I voted, I would have voted ''yea.''

NATIVE AMERICAN METHAMPHETAMINE ENFORCEMENT AND TREATMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 545 because it corrects an inadvertent oversight in the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 and strengthens the arsenal available to Native American tribes as they combat the scourge of methamphetamine. I thank the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee for his work in expediting this legislation, the ''Native American Methamphetamine Enforcement Act of 2007.''

Mr. Speaker, last year Congress enacted the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 as Title VII of the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005. Included in the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act were provisions that authorized funding for three important grant programs within the Department of Justice: (1) The COPS Hot Spots Program; (2) the Drug-Endangered Children program; and (3) the Pregnant and Parenting Women Offenders program. Although Indian tribes and territories were included as eligible grant recipients under the Pregnant and Parenting Women Offenders program, they were unintentionally left out as possible grant recipients under the COPS Hot Spots Program and the Drug-Endangered Children Program. H.R. 545 allows Indian tribes and territories to combat the methamphetamine epidemic by applying for and receiving funding under all three of these grant programs.

Mr. Speaker, as great a threat as it is to the Nation at large, the methamphetamine threat is even greater in Native American communities. Studies of past year methamphetamine use have shown that Native American communities have more than double the methamphetamine use rate of other ethnicities. According to surveys performed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Office of Law Enforcement Services, over 70 percent of Indian tribes identified methamphetamine as the drug that posed the greatest threat to their reservation and also estimated that at least 40 percent of violent crime cases investigated in Indian Country involve methamphetamine in some capacity. That is why we must act to ensure that Native American tribes are eligible to apply for and receive funding to protect their communities from methamphetamines.

The COPS Hot Spots Program authorized $99 million in funding to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to assist State and local law enforcement agencies in combating methamphetamine production, distribution, and use, and to reimburse the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) for properly removing and disposing of hazardous materials from clandestine methamphetamine laboratories. This funding may also be used to clean up methamphetamine laboratories, support health and environmental agencies, and to purchase equipment and support systems.

The Drug-Endangered Children Program authorized $20 million in funding to provide comprehensive services and training to law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, child protective services, and health care services to assist children who live in a home in which methamphetamine has been used, manufactured, or sold. The specific dangers faced by children who live at or visit drug-production sites or are present during drug production include:

Inhalation, absorption or ingestion of toxic chemicals, drugs or contaminated foods or drink that may result in respiratory difficulties, nausea, chest pain, eye and tissue irritation, chemical burns and death;

Fires and explosions resulting from dangerous methamphetamine production processes;

Abuse and neglect by parents who often binge on methamphetamine and traumatic consequences that result; and

Hazardous living conditions (firearms, code violations, poor ventilation and sanitation).

The Pregnant and Parenting Women Offenders Program authorized as much funding as may be allocated to facilitate collaboration between the criminal justice, child welfare, and substance abuse systems in order to reduce the use of drugs by pregnant women and those with dependent children. While Indian tribes and territories were included as eligible applicants, clarifying language is needed to ensure that there is adequate coordination with Tribal service providers.

Mr. Speaker, surveys conducted by the BIA also revealed that too often Tribal police forces that are underfunded and understaffed. According to the same survey, 90 percent of Tribal police forces indicated that they needed additional drug investigation training, while 69 percent of Tribal respondents indicated that they had no access to, or funding for, methamphetamine treatment resources or facilities.

The Native American Methamphetamine Enforcement and Treatment Act of 2007 seeks to ensure that, consistent with tribal sovereignty, Indian tribes and territories can apply for the COPS Hot Spots and Drug-Endangered Children grant programs, just as states can, and also ensures adequate coordination with tribal service providers for tribes receiving funds under the Pregnant and Parenting Women Offenders Program.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 545 corrects an inadvertent oversight in the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 and strengthens the arsenal available to Native American tribes as they combat the scourge of methamphetamine. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MARK KEESECKER

HON. DAVID DAVIS

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a true friend of the First District of Tennessee, Mark Keesecker, who passed away Saturday, March 17.

Mark Keesecker lived a life that was filled with entrepreneurship, enthusiasm, and compassion.

Mark was a member of First Baptist Church in Erwin and attended Christ Fellowship in Kingsport.

After graduating from East Tennessee State University, Mark made remarkable achievements in real estate sales, and was an example of professionalism for all of his colleagues. Mark attained some of the highest awards in the Nation for his work in real estate, which included the Century 21 Corporate Centurion Award that is earned by only 5 percent of agents in the Century 21 system.

Throughout all of his success, he was a humble and gracious gentleman. Mark was known for giving supplies to local schools and giving money to various charities.

He left a positive impression on those that he encountered. Mark was a very close personal friend of mine and his unexpected passing is a great loss to the First District.

Madam Speaker, I ask that the House join me this evening in offering our sympathies to the family and friends of Mark Keesecker. He was an illustration of determination, purpose, and kindness.

His friendship and dedication is greatly appreciated, and he will be deeply missed.

TRIBUTE TO DR. AND MRS. JAMES DOBSON

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Mr. LAMBORN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Dr. and Mrs. James

Dobson, the founders of Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs. For 30 years Dr. and Mrs. Dobson have nurtured and defended not only families in Colorado, but families worldwide.

Focus on the Family has been a tireless champion in the fight to protect and preserve the sanctity of human life in all stages. In addition, Focus on the Family strives to preserve the institution of marriage while simultaneously battling the rising scourge of judicial activism. This invaluable organization informs and inspires those who care deeply about the family, rallying them to become involved in the moral, cultural, and political issues that threaten the core principles of our great Nation. I applaud their work around the world.

It is selfless individuals like the Dobsons upon whom this great Nation has been built. It gives me great comfort to know that such people are still working to defend and expound American values.

FSA CLOSURE MORATORIUM LEGISLATION

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. HERSETH. Madam Speaker, recently, in my home state of South Dakota, the state executive director of the USDA Farm Service Agency announced a plan to eliminate at least six county FSA offices that currently serve South Dakota farmers and ranchers. I think this plan is ill-timed and unnecessary. It will require many producers to travel greater distances to receive necessary services including critical price support, conservation, and disaster programs. If carried out, this consolidation would force considerable hardship and expense on all affected farm and ranch families, especially considering the fact that some of the counties targeted are among South Dakota's most rural. Even by USDA's own admission, the plan will result in almost no savings of taxpayer dollars, but it will certainly result in increased inconvenience, travel time and cost to producers. Local FSA offices are a lifeline to farmers and ranchers in South Dakota and some at USDA apparently do not fully recognize their value to our state.

Moreover, because we are just beginning debate on a new farm bill, it makes no sense to implement major changes to our FSA county office system at this time. We don't yet know what the next farm bill will look like and, therefore, we don't know what the demands on local FSA offices are going to be. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee and its subcommittees for Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research and General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, this legislation is necessary to protect family producers that rely on their local offices for timely and personal access to USDA's farm programs.

This bill will simply require that USDA postpone any FSA county office closures until well after Congress has finished its work of reauthorizing the Farm Bill and we know what the personnel demands on local offices will be. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

TRIBUTE TO THE HEBREW IMMIGRANT AID SOCIETY AND THE COUNCIL MIGRATION SERVICE OF PHILADELPHIA ON THEIR 125TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2007

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Council Migration Service of Philadelphia on their 125th anniversary.

Since 1882, HIAS and Council have resettled and aided over 125,000 immigrants and refugees in their quest for safety and opportunity in our great Nation. Originally formed to serve the Jewish community, this charitable organization provides vital social and legal services to individuals representing 100 nationalities.

The work of HIAS and Council to ensure that refugees and immigrants assimilate, and become permanent residents and citizens, is truly commendable. As the largest provider of citizenship application assistance in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, HIAS and Council uphold our tradition as a Nation of immigrants.

In honor of this special anniversary, HIAS and Council are posthumously paying tribute to Daniel Aaron. The Aaron family is among those who have been served by HIAS and Council. In 1937, as a child, Daniel came to the United States from Germany, overcoming many obstacles to become one of the founders of Comcast, a Fortune 100 company.

My mother, Renee Perl, was one of many who had to flee their homeland during the Holocaust. Those who survived and came to America could not hide their deep gratitude and love for this country. My own love and respect for our country and belief in responsibility to each other stems from my mother's strong sense of patriotism.

I am proud to represent such an exemplary organization as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Council Migration Service of Philadelphia, as well as so many Americans assisted by this organization.

BENTON CARDINALS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize the outstanding achievement of the Benton Cardinals Girls High School Basketball team on defeating Farmington Knights, by a score of 52–37, to win the school's first ever state championship in girls' basketball.

The Cardinals finished their incredible season by posting an unblemished record of 30–0 this season in Class 4A girls' basketball and an overall amazing record of 77–6 over the past three seasons.

The Cardinals consist of 14 tremendous young women, including Chelsie Strong, Holly Switzer, Jenni Musser, Blair Brown, Alicia Bell, Nicole Wilkinson, Melissa McIntosh, Nicole Wilkenson, Charnelle Starling, Delissa Hall, Hannah Moore, Karli Sample, Meghan Curtis, and Claire Bowman.

Also, I want to recognize the great leadership of the team including Head Coach Brett Goodwin, who was assisted by Adam Willard. I also want to acknowledge the work of school administrators, Superintendent Melody Smith, Principals Jeanette Westfall and Jeff Modis, and Athletic Director Mike Ziesel, as additional keys to success.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to join me in congratulating the achievement of the Benton Cardinals girls High School Basketball team on their perfect season and state championship. It is an honor to represent this team in the United States Congress.

CONGRATULATING PAGE AND JONES INC. IN MOBILE, ALABAMA ON RECEIVING THE 2007 GOVERNER'S TRADE EXCELLENCE AWARD

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor Page and Jones, Inc., located in Mobile, Alabama, for winning the Governor's Trade Excellence Award, as presented each year by Governor Bob Riley.

Two years ago, Governor Riley established the Governor's Trade Excellence Award to honor businesses of all sizes—and from all regions of the state of Alabama—for their excellence in exports. The goals of the award are to identify Alabama businesses making significant contributions to the export business and to promote Alabama exporters as role models and supporters to the Alabama business community, while encouraging even more businesses to become involved in the global marketplace. The award also aims to increase awareness of the impact of exports on Alabama's economy.

The eight winners of the award are chosen by a panel from the Export Alabama Trade Alliance that judges the businesses on a wide range of criteria. Criteria include the level of export sales as a proportion of total sales and innovations in exporting. I am proud to recognize that two out of the eight winners of the Governor's Trade Excellence award are located in Alabama's First Congressional District.

One of the eight recipients of this year's award, Page and Jones, Inc., is a customs broker specializing in international trade logistics for both small and large companies. Page and Jones was recognized for being an excellent role model for the Alabama business community, for its continuous strong support of the broader export community, for its active involvement at the international level, and for its continued growth as a small business.

Starting in the 1970s with only 15 employees, Page and Jones, Inc. now has over 60 employees with 12 locations in six states. They handle approximately $75 million in transactions a year, and they encourage Alabama businesses to get involved globally by offering free services and advice to their fellow businessmen and women as well as cosponsoring various global events.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating Page and Jones, Inc., for receiving the Alabama Governor's Trade Excellence Award. I know the company president, Mike Lee, the company employees, their friends, families, and members of the community also join with me in praising Page and Jones, Inc., for their many accomplishments and for extending thanks for their continued service to the Alabama business community, the First Congressional District, and to the international business community.

IN RECOGNITION OF JULIAN H. ''PETE'' BOOKER

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to Julian H. ''Pete'' Booker for receiving the 2007 New Castle County Chamber of Commerce Wallace M. Johnson Community Service Award. This great honor has been bestowed upon Mr. Booker for his commendable efforts to reduce teen automobile crashes in my home state of Delaware as well as for his dedication to numerous other philanthropic causes.

Julian, better known as Pete, created Delaware's SMARTDRIVE program, which educates high school students about safe driving techniques. Through this program nearly a dozen local agencies are partnered with more than two dozen high schools in order to ensure young drivers are able to safely handle the challenges of being behind the wheel. The program has achieved great success and has largely impacted many people in Delaware. This success was recognized in 2006 when the program received a national safety award.

Pete is currently finishing his second three-year term on the United Way of Delaware's Board of Directors, where he has volunteered since 1994. His talents and tireless dedication to such a worthy cause have facilitated and enhanced much needed programs in Delaware communities.

Pete further demonstrates commitment to his community by volunteering a great deal of time and resources to numerous other charities. The American Red Cross of the Delmarva Peninsula, the Delaware Association of Non-Profit Agencies, and Catholic Charities are but a few causes he has volunteered to assist.

Pete has also utilized his professional success to further the many causes he champions. As the president and CEO of Delmarva Broadcasting Company, he is able to donate generous portions of air-time to campaign thank-you ads as well as underwrite a portion of United Way's public events. The state of Delaware is greatly indebted to Mr. Booker for his selfless efforts. He has created a charitable legacy that has, and will continue to, touch many. I would like to congratulate Pete for receiving the Wallace M. Johnson Community Service Award, I cannot think of a more deserving recipient.

TRIBUTE TO GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I am honored to rise today and join the millions of my fellow Americans in commemorating Greek Independence Day which, on March 25th celebrates the 186th anniversary of the rebellion and the struggle of the Greek people against the Ottoman Empire.

Thomas Jefferson referred to ancient Greece as the ''light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness.'' What makes Greek Independence Day so special here in America is that it reminds us of the strong principles and bonds that the U.S. and Greece share. In looking into the struggles of our two nations, we realize how much our struggles have in common, and how much each country has been influenced by the other.

Greece and the United States are bound by an absolute commitment to the democratic ideals of justice and freedom and continue to be strong allies. By commemorating Greek Independence Day, we also celebrate the strength and the resolve of the human spirit that has been the inspiration of us all.

On the occasion of the anniversary of Greek independence, I join all Americans in wishing the people of Greece congratulations and best wishes. We will remain eternally grateful to the Greek people and the legacy of ancient Greece for the shining example it set for democracies the world over.

CHRISTIAN ANDRICK II FOR THE AWARD OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Christian Andrick II, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 603, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Christian has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the years Christian has been involved in scouting and has held numerous leadership positions. He has served as Senior Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, and Troop Bugler. Christian is in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say and in the Order of the Arrow.

For his Eagle Scout project, Christian completed a landscaping beautifications project in front of the First Christian Church in Blue Springs, Missouri.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Christian Andrick II for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

TRIBUTE TO DELORES FREENY MAYES

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, the city of Mobile, Alabama, and indeed the entire First Congressional District, recently lost a dear friend, a talented journalist and a lovely lady, and I rise today to pay tribute to her memory.

Delores Freeny Mayes—or ''Lowey'' as she was known to her many friends—was reared in Mobile and graduated from Bishop Toolen High School.

After working for many years at Mobile's Brookley Field, Delores went on to write for the Mobile Beacon, where she spent the past 25 years providing unique insights to her many faithful readers.

Dubbed the ''Helen Thomas'' of the south Alabama press corps by my predecessor, former Congressman Sonny Callahan, Delores was always fair to those she interviewed and covered. Although she was proud of her chosen profession, she was first—and foremost—always a lady.

Over the years, Delores had the opportunity to interview former President Ronald Reagan, former Alabama Governor George C. Wallace, Mississippi Senator TRENT LOTT, former Congressman Callahan, as well as his predecessor, former Congressman Jack Edwards, not to mention a host of other local, state and national political figures.

While she wrote about a wide-array of issues affecting Mobile and south Alabama, politics was never far from Delores' mind, and she was someone that public officials from all walks of life knew they could trust.

In recent years, Delores turned her love for writing into a celebration of her many other talents when she learned to draw and paint. I am the proud beneficiary of a number of her original etchings and paintings, and at this particular time when we are celebrating her life, each one carries a special meaning to me.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me today in recognizing this beloved member of the Mobile community.

Delores Mayes will be deeply missed by her sister, Jeanne Phillips; three brothers, Tommy Cain, Hubert Cain, and John Cain; many nieces and nephews; as well as countless friends she leaves behind.

Above all else, Delores was a devoted daughter, sibling, wife and mother. Moreover, she epitomized what a ''true friend'' really is.

Our thoughts and prayers are with her family during this difficult time.

IN RECOGNITION OF CHRISTINE CARZO

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to Ms. Christine Carzo for receiving the 2007 New Castle County Chamber of Commerce William V. Roth Citizenship Award. I can think of no one more deserving of this prestigious

award which was created in honor of the late Senator Roth.

During her academic career at St. Elizabeth's High School, Christine has continually distinguished herself as a stellar student. Hard work and dedication paid off during her freshman year when she received the second highest GPA in her class. Since then she has been inducted into the National Honor Society, which she was secretary of for the 2006–07 school year. Christine is also a National Merit Commended Scholar and ranks third in her class.

While remaining committed to her academics, Christine has also been able to pursue a rich variety of extracurricular activities. She has spent over 185 hours performing charitable services for her community, many of which were at the Ronald McDonald House of Delaware. Christine is copy editor of her high school year book in addition to participating in mock trials, playing volleyball, and, interestingly enough, playing bass guitar in a local band.

I commend this extraordinary young women for her many great accomplishments. She serves as an example to others and an asset to our community. I would like to congratulate her for receiving the William V. Roth Citizenship Award and wish her the best of luck in the future.

CONGRESS MUST STOP ATTACK ON IRAN

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I am placing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD this op-ed by my constituent Leonard Weiss. Mr. Weiss is a senior science fellow at the Center for International and Security Cooperation (CISAC) at Stanford University and a consultant to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. His research at CISAC includes an assessment of the impact on the non-proliferation regime of nuclear trade with non-signers of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

This piece, written with his colleague Larry Diamond of Stanford's Hoover Institution, recommends that Congress hold hearings to examine U.S. policies regarding Iran and suggests a number of options available to Congress to address the troubling issue of Iran's nuclear activities. We must conduct a healthy debate of all the options at our disposal. This article contributes to that important discussion.

[From Los Angeles Times.Com, Feb. 5, 2007]

CONGRESS MUST STOP AN ATTACK ON IRAN

(By Leonard Weiss and Larry Diamond)

Despite anguish and anger over the Bush administration's decision to escalate its failing war in Iraq, Congress is unlikely to cut off funding. Even most opponents of the war fear that they could be blamed for not supporting the troops in the field and for a possible descent into even greater catastrophe in the face of a precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

But nothing prevents Congress from using its power of the purse to prevent an American attack on Iran. President Bush's neoconservative advisors and pundit supporters have been beating the drums of war with Iran since 2003, when the president declared Iran to be part of an ''axis of evil.'' Recall that a senior administration official told The Times that Iran should ''take a number'' in the wake of the invasion of Iraq. In his recent address to the nation on the troop surge in Iraq, Bush issued more threats to Iran. Now the president has named a Navy admiral to head the U.S. Central Command and dispatched a second aircraft carrier and minesweepers to the Persian Gulf, presumably to prevent Iran from closing the Strait of Hormuz in the event of conflict.

These developments and other administration moves could presage an air attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Iran is not innocent of dangerous and provocative behavior. Tehran has supported insurgent groups in Iraq, including helping to provide sophisticated explosives that have killed U.S. soldiers. And Iran's continued development of a nuclear enrichment facility is in defiance of the international community's demand to halt those actions. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's repulsive statements about the Holocaust and Israel add to the nervousness about Iran's future actions.

But war is not yet justified, except in the minds of those who have been lobbying for it for years. Iran is still years away from being a nuclear threat, and our experience with ''preventive war'' in Iraq should teach us a thing or two. Launching another such war without international approval would leave us even more politically isolated and militarily overstretched. Attacking a Middle Eastern country—one much stronger than Iraq and with the ability to cut off oil supplies from the Strait of Hormuz—could inflame the region, intensify Shiite militia attacks on our soldiers in Iraq and stimulate terrorist attacks on Americans and U.S. interests worldwide.

But recklessness, not prudence, has been the hallmark of this administration's foreign policy. Beyond this, the president and vice president subscribe to what some call the ''unitary executive,'' which is a fancy way of saying they believe that Congress cannot prevent the president from doing almost anything he wants. The 1973 War Powers Act, passed in the wake of our disastrous war in Vietnam, allows the president to put U.S. troops in a combat situation under certain conditions before obtaining any congressional authorization to do so. When Bush signed the Iraq war resolution, he issued a statement challenging the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, indicating that he could take the nation to war without obeying its restrictions. Unfortunately, even if the president were to agree to the act's restrictions, he could still attack Iran and have up to 90 days before being required to get congressional authorization for the attack.

What to do? Congress should not wait. It should hold hearings on Iran before the president orders a bombing attack on its nuclear facilities, or orders or supports a provocative act by the U.S. or an ally designed to get Iran to retaliate, and thus further raise war fever.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has warned the administration that it had better seek congressional authorization for any attack on Iran. But we need Senate and House hearings now to put the Bush administration on notice that, in the absence of an imminent military attack or a verified terrorist attack on the United States by Iran, Congress will not support a U.S. military strike on that country. Those hearings should aim toward passage of a law preventing the expenditure of any funds for a military attack on Iran unless Congress has either declared war with that country or has otherwise authorized military action under the War Powers Act.

The law should be attached to an appropriations bill, making it difficult for the president to veto. If he simply claims that he is not bound by the restriction even if he signs it into law, and then orders an attack on Iran without congressional authorization for it, Congress should file a lawsuit and begin impeachment proceedings.

It is, of course, possible that the president's truculent language and actions toward Iran are a bluff, an attempt to rein in its irresponsible behavior.

But the administration's mendacious and incompetent course of action in taking the nation to war with Iraq gives us no reason to provide the president with the benefit of any doubt. And stiffening economic sanctions—at a time when Iran's economy is ailing and the regime is losing popular support—offers a better and safer prospect of exerting leverage.

Another war of choice would only pour fuel on the fires of the Middle East. And the history of this administration shows that if Congress does not constrain this president, he could well act recklessly again, in ways that would profoundly damage our national interest.

TRIBUTE TO KENNETH DAVID LEHMAN FOR THE AWARD OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Kenneth Lehman, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 397, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Kenneth has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the years Kenneth has been involved in scouting, he has earned 40 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, serving as Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, OATR, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, and is currently the Senior Patrol Leader. In 2006, Kenneth carried on the family tribal name started by his Grandfather Russell Lehman by becoming Brave Young Sure Footed Running Elk in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say. Kenneth is also a Brotherhood member in the Order of the Arrow. Kenneth has earned the God and Life Award.

For his Eagle Scout project, Kenneth planted 15 Northern Red Oak trees in front of and around Westbrook Care Center.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Kenneth Lehman for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATIONS TO INDEPENDENCE RENEWABLE ENERGY CORPORATION FOR BEGINNING PRODUCTION IN ALABAMA

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Independence Renewable Energy Corporation on the occasion of the opening of its Alabama biodiesel plant. After breaking ground in October 2006, Independence Renewable Energy Corporation produced its first gallon of biodiesel earlier this month.

From this first trickle of biodiesel, the plant is in the process of increasing its capacities and will soon boost production to 40 million gallons a year by May 2007, making it not only the largest producer in the State, but the largest producer in the Southeast.

Located in the town of Claiborne, in Monroe County, this plant currently converts soybean oil into biodiesel fuel, although its design flexibility provides for the use of alternative feedstocks. Independence Renewable Energy Corporation will use more than 27 million bushels of soybeans a year, which is nearly 1 million acres worth of soybeans.

The plant currently employs seven and will employ ten when at full operation in May. These 10 jobs will support up to an additional 150 jobs in agriculture, as well as an estimated 100 jobs in transportation and petroleum blending industries. The biodiesel plant is expected to generate annual revenue of $120 million by distributing fuel to markets in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, and Louisiana.

This new facility is not only important for the economic impact that it will have on the State and region, but also for leading the way in the development of alternative fuels that are less harmful to the environment, while reducing our dependence on foreign oils and gas. Biodiesel, when blended with conventional fuels, reduces greenhouse gas and toxic emissions associated with petroleum derived diesel. This facility will benefit not only the people of Alabama but the entire Nation.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Independence Renewable Energy Corporation. The people of Claiborne—and Monroe County—are extremely proud to be part of the solution to our Nation's energy crisis.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO KUUMBA HOUSE DANCE THEATRE FOR ITS 25 YEARS OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a Houston cultural treasure, the Kuumba House Dance Theatre. For 25 years of artistic excellence, the Kuumba House has been dedicated to ensuring that African dance forms thrive and grow both artistically and professionally in the city of Houston as well as throughout Texas and the United States.

It has been said that the mind may know the steps, but only the spirit can dance. Dance is a transcendent expression of mind, body, and soul intertwined that when executed, captivates its audience and pulls them into its resplendent world of free flowing and creative aesthetics. The Kuumba House Dance Theatre has been enthralling its audiences with its high-energy, high-octane performances for the past 25 years in Houston, Texas.

The Kuumba Dance Theatre reflects its name well, which means "creativity" in Swahili. Through the art form of African dance, the body is allowed to creatively express and reflect the mood of its dancer while bending, jumping, and undulating gracefully to the rhythm and beat of the African drum. African dance reflects the rich culture and joy of the African people, and I applaud Kuumba House for having achieved international recognition by bringing African dance to Houston and the world.

Madam Speaker, we need to encourage creativity in this day and age, especially in our youth. For over two decades, the Kuumba House Dance Theatre has worked diligently in Houston and all over the U.S. to facilitate quality dance education and performances as well as promoting understanding of African cultural art forms and creative expression. I commend Kuumba House for not only teaching this beautiful cultural art form to our youth, but for also hosting educational activities, concerts, and community outreach events to all audiences that support and appreciate the beautiful art form of dance.

On behalf of the constituents of the 18th Congressional district of Texas, I commend this group on their faithful service to the Houston community and join them in the celebration of their 25th Anniversary. I am honored and humbled to be Co-Chairing Kuumba House's March 23rd, 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner with Global Energy Limited CEO Mr. Kenneth Yellowe.

The gala will feature such dignitaries as featured speaker Dr. Barbara Masekela, who has been a devoted member of the African National Congress for over three decades and is currently the South African Ambassador to the United States. An African luminary and personal friend who will be presented with the "Legend of Africa" award is NBA superstar and humanitarian Dikembe Mutombo. I am proud to say that I was more than glad to assist Dikembe who through his foundation has donated $15 million to construct and open the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital and Research Center, a $29 million, 300-bed hospital in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, the Kuumba House Dance Theatre would not be where it is today without the steadfast dedication of its Founder and Artistic Director, Lindi Yeni. I thank Lindi for her vision, hard work, and wholehearted commitment to Kuumba House and in this evening's auspicious gala. Once again, I pay tribute to the Kuumba House Dance Theatre and look forward to many more decades of thrilling and creative dance performances, which contribute to the rich diversity of our community.

TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPHER WAYNE MUILLER FOR THE AWARD OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Christopher Muiller, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 397, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Christopher has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the years Christopher has been involved in Scouting, he has earned 32 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, serving as Troop Librarian, Patrol Leader, and Troop Guide. Christopher has earned numerous awards such as the Top Gun Award for being the best shooter in the Explorer Post and the H. Roe Bartle Heritage Award. Christopher is currently a Brave in the tribe of Mic-O-Say. His tribal name is "He Who Walks Like Thunder."

For his Eagle Scout project, Christopher painted fire hydrants for the city of Kearney, Missouri.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Christopher Muiller for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING AIRINC/FOKKER SERVICE IN FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA, ON RECEIVING THE 2007 GOVERNOR'S TRADE EXCELLENCE AWARD

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor AIRINC/Fokker Services located in Fairhope, Alabama, for winning the State of Alabama's Governor's Trade Excellence Award.

Two years ago, Alabama Governor Bob Riley established the Governor's Trade Excellence Award to honor businesses of all sizes—from all regions of the State of Alabama—for their excellence in exports. The goals of the award are to identify Alabama businesses making significant contributions to the export business and to promote Alabama exporters as role models and supporters to the Alabama business community, while encouraging businesses to become involved in the global marketplace. The award also aims to increase awareness of the impact of exporting on Alabama's economy.

The eight winners of the award are chosen by a panel from the Export Alabama Trade Alliance who judge the businesses on a wide range of criteria. Criteria include the level of export sales as a proportion of total sales and innovations in exporting. I am proud to announce that two out of the eight winners of the Governor's Trade Excellence award are located in Alabama's First Congressional District.

One of the eight recipients of this year's award, AIRINC/Fokker Services, specializes in the maintenance, repair, and overhaul work for aircraft including Airbus and Boeing airplanes. AIRINC was recognized by the award for being an excellent role model to the Alabama business community, for its continuous strong support of the entire Alabama export community, for its involvement at the international level, and for its continued growth as a business themselves. With a 26,000 square foot facility and 65 employees, AIRINC brings in approximately $13.5 million in revenue each year, and regularly sends employees on business to parts of Europe and Asia.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating both the employees and management team at AIRINC/Fokker Services for receiving the Alabama Governor's Trade Excellence Award. I know the employees, their friends, families, and members of the community join with me in praising AIRINC/Fokker Services for their many accomplishments, and I extend my thanks for their continued service to the Alabama business community, the First Congressional District, and to the international business community.

IN TRIBUTE TO GWEN JACKSON

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a compassionate leader and volunteer from the Fourth Congressional District, Gwen T. Jackson. Her involvement in the voluntary and nonprofit arena has been a lifelong pursuit: she has served on the board of over 50 different organizations in the Milwaukee metro area. Mrs. Jackson is a recognized leader at the national, regional and local level for her work in the community.

Mrs. Jackson was a pioneer for women in management and executive business positions and was vice president of human resources when she elected for early retirement in 1981 from BRILLS, Inc. where she worked for over 30 years.

Mrs. Jackson is well known as the consummate volunteer and her commitment to civic involvement includes the following leadership roles: chairman, Women's Fund of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation; United Way of Greater Milwaukee; Volunteers of America of Wisconsin; Alliance for Children and Family; Milwaukee County Department on Aging; African American Women's Project and chapter chair and chairperson emeritus of the red cross of greater Milwaukee among others. Mrs. Jackson's over 40-year tenure of volunteering at the Red Cross is held as her signature volunteer service. Further, she served as the national chairman of volunteers and part of the senior management team for the American National Red Cross in Washington D.C.

Mrs. Jackson's advocacy and leadership on a myriad of issues including the fields of aging, health, women and youth has earned her the respect and heartfelt admiration of Milwaukeeans. She has not only been the recipient of countless awards including an Honorary Doctorate from Cardinal Stritch University and Outstanding Citizen Award from the National Council of Christians and Jews, but she has also had awards and scholarships named in her honor including the Gwen T. Jackson Angel Fund to provide quality of life assistance to frail elderly and mentally challenged adults who live in Volunteers of America of Wisconsin group homes.

Madam Speaker, for these reasons, I am honored to pay tribute to Mrs. Jackson's contributions to the Fourth Congressional District. She is a community treasure and the many honors and awards she has received are a testament to the positive impact she has had on Milwaukee.

TRIBUTE TO DMITRY A. BROWN FOR THE AWARD OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Dmitry Brown, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 397, and by earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Dmitry has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the years Dmitry has been involved in scouting, he has earned 41 merit badges and held numerous leadership positions, serving as Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Scribe, and Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. Dmitry is a brotherhood member in the Order of the Arrow and a Brave in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say. Dmitry has earned numerous awards such as the Leave No Trace Award, World Conservation Award, God and Life Award, and the Bartle Heritage Award.

For his Eagle Scout project, Dmitry constructed a sandbox and bench for the students of Dogwood Elementary School.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Dmitry Brown for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING ABRAHAM MITCHELL FOR BEING NAMED MOBILIAN OF THE YEAR

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise today to honor Mr. Abraham Mitchell on the occasion of being named Mobilian of the Year for 2006 by the Mobile Civitan Club.

The Mobilian of the Year is the city's most prestigious civic honor, and Abe is most deserving of his award. With his brother Mayer, Abe co-founded the Mitchell Company in the 1950's, which would go on to become one of the southeast's largest real-estate companies before being sold in 1985. After his retirement from real estate, Abe became co-owner of another endeavor, Mitchell Brothers, Inc., which has focused on investments and philanthropic support.

Abe is not only a very successful businessman, but he and his family have set a new standard in the state of Alabama for their philanthropic endeavors. Abe has always believed that education is paramount to the improvement of the human condition and, to that end, he has been extremely supportive of Mobile's institutes of higher education.

According to the University of South Alabama, Abe has donated at least $4 million personally, providing for three endowed chairs in the College of Medicine and the soon to be opened Resources Learning Center in the Mitchell College of Business.

Moreover, he has funded the largest private scholarship program at USA, which provides 20 full academic scholarships each year. Abe has also supported the University of Mobile, Springhill College, Bishop State Community College, among others. He has also been heavily involved in philanthropic support of numerous cultural endeavors and community health and human service programs.

Madam Speaker, I would like to offer my personal congratulations to Mr. Abraham Mitchell for being named the Mobilian of the Year for 2006 and in so doing recognize him for his many outstanding professional and philanthropic accomplishments.

Abe's enormous generosity not only benefits the students of the University of South Alabama but our entire community, State and Nation. His extraordinary positive impact has set an exemplary example for young and old alike in Mobile. I know that my colleagues will join me in commending him for his commitment to improving the lives of so many others.

INTRODUCTION OF DIVIDENDS PROPOSAL

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, since 2003, certain qualified dividends from corporations have been eligible for a lower rate of tax. This lower rate of tax is 15 percent for higher income taxpayers and 5 percent for lower income taxpayers, specifically those in the 10 and 15 percent brackets. The rate of tax for lower income taxpayers becomes zero in 2008 and beyond. At the end of 2010, these special rates expire and dividends will be once again taxed as ordinary income.

This special rate was first proposed by President Bush on January 7, 2003. The proposal was described in a document released later that month by Treasury entitled, ''Eliminate the Double Taxation on Corporate Earnings.'' Treasury explained the reason for the change was the double burden of a corporate level tax on top of the individual tax on dividends. The proposal would apply only to income that had been subject to U.S. income tax at the corporate level. But the proposal was terribly complicated.

The House then proposed a simpler cut in the dividend rate to 15 percent for any dividends received from domestic corporations. However, the final conference report did allow some dividends from foreign corporations to

qualify as well. In a statement on the Senate floor, one of the Senate negotiators, Finance Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, expressed reservation that shareholders of foreign corporations that had completed inversions to tax havens would benefit from this new rate.

I share that reservation. That is why today I am filing legislation to close several loopholes in this provision.

My legislation would amend Section 1 of the Internal Revenue Code to provide that dividends from certain foreign corporations which are not subject to an entity-level tax would not be eligible for the special, lower rate of tax. Since 2003, some banks have promoted ''hybrid'' debt instruments from foreign corporations as they may qualify for the special rate. Now, these hybrid instruments appear to be debt in the host foreign country, so the entity actually takes a deduction as if it was an interest payment. But in the U.S., they are classified as equity so the ''dividend'' may be eligible for the special, lower rate of tax. Clearly, this was not intended by Congress and needs to be shut down.

My bill also disallows the preferential dividend rate if the payment is received from an entity not subject to or is exempt from corporate tax in the foreign country. And, if the entity is a passive foreign investment company, or PFIC, this bill would not allow the special dividend rate even if the entity was also classified as a controlled foreign corporation, or CFC. Currently, another section of the Code treats a foreign corporation that is both a CFC and a PFIC as only a CFC, inadvertently undermining the current PFIC limitation in Section 1. My bill would ensure that this tightener works as intended.

Finally, the current law allows dividends from foreign corporations with stock registered on a U.S. exchange to be eligible for the enhanced dividend rate. Of course, if companies are headquartered in a tax haven, then there is little or no corporate level tax paid. So, my bill would provide that only dividends from foreign companies which are located in countries with a comprehensive income tax and which are traded on a U.S. exchange may qualify. This section is modeled after another section in current law providing the special rate for dividends from companies located in countries which the Secretary of Treasury determines has a comprehensive income tax treaty.

I believe these changes carry out the original intent of the President and Congress in attempting to limit double taxation. In each of these circumstances, double taxation does not exist. Whether one supported the 2003 rate cut on dividends or not, we should all support reasonable changes to current law to make sure tax benefits only accrue to those intended. I urge my fellow colleagues to support this bill.

ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION ENFORCEMENT ACT—SUPPORT

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my full support for H.R. 137, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act. I join my other colleagues from both sides of the aisle, animal rights organizations, and local law enforcement agencies to address the inhumane treatment of animals.

This bill has received widespread support for several reasons. First, animal fighting is terribly wrong. It is simply inappropriate and unacceptable for animals to be trained to attack and kill each other for the sole purpose of entertainment and illegal gambling. Use of animals in this manner is not only inhumane, but downright primitive and ugly. People who participate in these unlawful activities should be caught and punished.

Second, this bill will help to deter animal fighting by strengthening the penalties for those who are involved in the various aspects of animal fights. For too long the punishment has been too lenient. It is important to send a message that these cruel acts against animals will not be tolerated.

Third, the State laws will be in alignment with Federal laws. Progress has been made since the enactment of federal animal fighting laws in 1976. Currently, dog fighting is a felony in 48 States and cockfighting a felony in 33 states. Laws are needed at both the State and local levels to ensure decreases in dog fighting and animal cruelty.

I urge other colleagues to support this bill. I applaud the work done by animal rights organizations and law enforcement agencies to assist with protecting animals from inhumane treatment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, due to sickness, I was unable to vote during the following rollcall votes, had I been present I would have voted: ''yea'' on rollcall No. 179, On Ordering the Previous Question, Providing for the consideration of H.R. 1433 District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act; ''aye'' on rollcall No. 180, On Agreeing to the Resolution, Providing for the consideration of H.R. 1433; District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act; ''yea'' on rollcall No. 181, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree, Use of Rotunda for Holocaust Days of Remembrance Ceremony; ''yea'' on rollcall No. 183, On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended, Native American Methamphetamine Enforcement and Treatment Act of 2007; and ''aye,'' on rollcall No. 184, On Approving the Journal.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VOTE BY MAIL ACT OF 2007

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Vote by Mail Act of 2007—a bill to provide grants to states to help them offset the costs of adopting Vote by Mail election systems and to study the benefits of those Vote by Mail election systems.

While I love the ritual of going to the polls to vote, I know that getting to the polls on Election Day is often difficult. For some, it's impossible. And for some elections, it simply does not make sense to open the polls.

That is why I have introduced a bill that builds upon the growing trend of states to bring the polls to the voters. I believe we should try to meet our constituents halfway by increasing access to the electoral process.

Oregon, the only State to adopt Vote by Mail, historically has one of the highest voter participation rates in the country. Oregon has also dramatically decreased its costs.

Under current law, certain States and jurisdictions may conduct certain elections by mail but only under limited circumstances and they are not given Federal funding to make that adjustment to vote by mail.

This bill would help States who want to conduct Vote by Mail elections by creating an $18 million, 3-year grant program to provide a portion of the funds they need.

Under this bill, States would have the option of adopting Vote by Mail statewide, within a group of selected counties, or even in a single county.

Further, this bill instructs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a very important study.

With the popularity of Vote by Mail increasing dramatically, it is crucial that we invest in some valuable research to learn about its benefits, find remedies for any problems and share best practices.

This bill will instruct the GAO to compare traditional voting methods with Vote by Mail with respect to: the likelihood of fraud and misconduct; the accuracy of voter rolls and election results; voter participation in urban and rural communities and by minorities, language minorities, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are homeless, and individuals who move frequently; residual vote rates, broken out by voter age, education, income, race, or ethnicity or whether a voter lives in an urban or rural community, is disabled, or is a language minority; public confidence in the election system; and cost savings.

As the former president of the League of Women Voters of San Diego, I care deeply about the integrity of our electoral system and the rate of participation among our citizens.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this effort to strengthen the democratic process and give elections officials and voters the options and support they deserve.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF GARRETT W. WALTON

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it is an honor for me to rise today to recognize the significant impact Garrett W. Walton has made on the communities of northwest Florida.

In 1977, Garrett Walton moved to Pensacola, Florida, where his law career commenced as an associate and then a principal with the law firm of Emmanuel, Sheppard, and Condon. After 17 years, Mr. Walton retired from law practice, but he has continued fulfilling his passion for serving the community through his widespread involvement.

Garrett Walton has participated in numerous charitable and civic organizations, which include: the Pensacola Area Chamber of Commerce, the Girl Scouts of Northwest Florida, the Sacred Heart Foundation, the United Way, and the Homebuilders Association of West Florida. He was a founding director/organizer of Northwest Florida Legal Services, Toy Soldiers, Sea Plane Foundation and the Armed Services Council for the Pensacola Area Chamber of Commerce.

To many Americans, September 16, 2004, is a date that has come and gone, but to those in northwest Florida and South Alabama, September 16, 2004, is a date that will never be forgotten. It was on that day that Hurricane Ivan washed up on the shores of Alabama and Florida and became the fourth-worst natural disaster in United States history. Not being one to sit on the sidelines and watch as others suffered, Mr. Walton founded Rebuild Northwest Florida in November 2004. Rebuild Northwest Florida, a not-for-profit disaster recovery organization that assists need-based hurricane victims, was founded on this man's vision and spirit during a time when it was needed most. Because of the optimism and efforts of Mr. Walton and the many volunteers of northwest Florida, coupled by the support of the entire community, including local homebuilders, contractors, and charitable organizations, Rebuild Northwest Florida has brought hope to many families whose lives were forever changed on that September morning.

Mr. Walton's local efforts now extend statewide. On February 6, 2007, Florida Governor Charlie Crist appointed Garrett Walton as chairman of the Windstorm Mitigation Study Committee, a statewide committee whose focus is to make recommendations on existing and proposed programs and initiatives for mitigating windstorm damage.

Garrett Walton has proudly served northwest Florida over the past 30 years through his leadership, optimism and dedication. But he is also a dedicated husband, a loving father, a mentor of young professionals, and a slightly above average goose hunter. Pensacola is truly honored to have him as one of her own.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am proud to recognize the achievements of Garrett W. Walton and his exemplary service to the communities of northwest Florida.

IN HONOR OF WEST BERGEN MENTAL HEALTHCARE'S DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDEES, THE HONORABLE MICHAEL A. CHAGARES AND MARGARET M. CHAGARES

HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, this weekend, West Bergen Mental Healthcare will honor the Honorable Michael A. Chagares and Mrs. Margaret M. Chagares for their distinguished service on behalf of the mental health community in Bergen County, New Jersey.

The Chagares' have a long and proud history of service to their community, both as attorneys and as citizens. Michael Chagares has served as a Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit for the past year. Prior to that, he had served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Civil Division, where he was the Director of the Affirmative Civil Enforcement Unit and later Chief of the whole division. Judge Chagares also served as a hearing officer for the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund.

Peggy Chagares is also an attorney and volunteers her considerable legal talents to representing the underserved. A mother of four young children, she also volunteers her time to educational activities. For instance, she chairs the Sicomac School's Fifth Grade Activities Board and the school's Art Docent program. She has also served as chairperson of the Parents' Board of Grace Church Nursery School. And, Peggy Chagares has been a coach, a Sunday School teacher, and a Brownie and Girl Scout Leader.

They've put tremendous energy and time into helping West Bergen Mental Healthcare fulfill its mission of serving the community with compassion and quality care. It began as a Child Guidance Clinic more than 40 years ago. Today it offers a full range of services to over 2,000 people a year. They are a model of volunteerism and professionalism, and I applaud their commitment to the community.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF JACK SEBOLKA

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Mr. John "Jack" Andrew Sebolka, as he celebrates his 100th birthday.

Jack was born on March 21, 1907, in Wilkes-Barre, PA, and was one of four children born to John and Anne Sebolka. Inspired by his father, Jack went to work in the local coal mines upon his graduation from St. John's University. Realizing that mining was not his calling, he began helping his grandparents with their farm. Throughout the Roaring Twenties and Great Depression, he dove into a myriad of professions including construction, selling furniture, and the gold business. In 1939, Jack became a sales representative for the United Furniture Manufactures, where he worked until his retirement in 1982.

Jack married Marie Bombick on November 21, 1936, in Lake Silkworth, PA. The couple had two children, Ronald and James. The family made their home on a 15-acre farm in Jackson Township, PA, where Jack spent his "leisure time" growing vegetables on the farm. Tragically, Marie passed away from cancer in 1967, but Jack never left her side.

In June 1972, Jack remarried to Mary Laux. After their wedding they took a honeymoon trip around the world. They stopped in Bangkok, Thailand, where they spent 5 weeks with his son, James, who was then an advisor to the Thai Government. Mary was struck by cancer in 1976. Once again, Jack helped nurse his wife through treatment, but she passed in 1977.

Jack pressed on with work at United until his diagnosis with Guillian-Barre Syndrome, GBS, which is found in approximately 1 out of every 100,000 persons. Jack was faced with immediate paralysis from the neck down, and remained hospitalized for several months. Through sheer determination and the loving support of his family, Jack beat the odds and began taking small steps after just 7 months of rehabilitation. Doctors called him "Miracle Man."

Jack currently resides at the Goodwin House in Alexandria, VA. He enjoys weekly bingo and group crossword puzzle sessions with his friends. Jack has lived a life by the Golden Rule: Give unto others as you would have them give unto you. He demonstrates great faith, patriotism, a strong work ethic and a genuine love for other people.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to Mr. Sebolka on this special occasion. I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating his 100th birthday and in wishing him the very best on this day and every day that follows.

CELEBRATING BISHOP SYLVESTER MORTON, SR., OF GREATER ST. STEPHEN FULL GOSPEL BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker:

Whereas Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., was born in Ontario, Canada, July 30, 1950, to Bishop Clarence L. Morton, Sr., and Mother Matilda E. Morton;

Whereas Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., was called to enter the ministry on February 24, 1967;

Whereas Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., in 1975 was installed as Senior Pastor of Greater St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church to shepherd the flock;

Whereas Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., with his wife Debra at his side, grew that ministry of 647 believers into a 20,000 member congregation with five places of worship now called St. Stephens Full Gospel Baptist Church;

Whereas Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., is dedicated to winning souls to the Lord, whether from the pulpit or as a world renowned author and singer of the gospel;

Whereas Bishop Morton's sole purpose has always been to help people to reach their ultimate potential spiritually by teaching them how to develop a personal relationship with God and showing them how to operate in "spirit over mind". Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr.'s commitment to God is evident;

Now, therefore I, HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, Jr., United States Representative of the Fourth Congressional District of Georgia, do hereby recognize the celebration of service to God on this 25th day of March year 2007 with Bishop Paul Sylvester Morton, Sr., and the membership of St. Stephens Full Gospel Baptist Church.

CONGRATULATING THE ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL LADY JACKETS

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the players and coaches of the 2007 Rockwall High School Lady Jackets. On March 3, the Lady Jackets became the third girls team in State history to complete a 40–0 season when they won the Texas 5A championship. Joining this exclusive club with the 1980 South Oak Cliff team and Duncanville's 1997 squad was even more exciting since it marked the first-ever State basketball title for Rockwall's girls. By defeating Houston Cypress Fairbanks 59–54 in the State championship and thereby finishing a 40 and 0 season, the Lady jackets made an unprecedented achievement that certainly merits recognition.

With both Houston Cypress Fairbanks and Rockwall holding pristine 39–0 records prior to the championship game, the State championship promised to be an exciting match. However, by games end the Lady Jackets scored their 40th victory in overtime. Having won the silver medal last year against Plano West, the team was well motivated to come back this year and win gold, and with their championship victory they did just that.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the Rockwall Lady Jackets for their tremendous success, not only in tournament play but also throughout the entire season. Through their hard work and dedication they have made Rockwall very proud. I ask each of my colleagues to join me in honoring Rockwall High School. Finally, I want to commend Superintendent Dr. Gene Burton, Principal Dr. Mark LeMaster, Athletic Director Mark Elam, Athletic Coordinator Scott Smith, Head Coach Jill McDill, Varsity Assistant Casey Reeves, JV Coach Brad Blalock, and Freshman Coach Cody Christenberry for helping to lead the Lady Jackets on to victory. I'd like to congratulate each of the talented players on the 2007 Championship Lady jacket team: Shelby Adamson, Emily McCallum, Arielle Andres, Haley Day, Peyton Adamson, Samantha Shaw, Meredith Gordon, Sunny Satery, Brittany Coleman, Kayla Kimmons, Ariel Coleman, Genevieve Campbell, Lindsay Wack, and Kiara Slayton. I'd also like to honor Ashlie Strange, Rebekah Jones, Lauren Hurt, Nichole Schueneman, and Taylor Whitehead who all served as managers for the team.

I especially salute head coach Jill McDill on her devotion to duty, her super guidance of our girls, never looking ahead but taking the games one at a time. Coach McDill is a thorough coach where every detail is practiced over and over by her girls. Just as this stellar group of players took its schedule one game at a time, so too have they been taught to live life. Coach McDill has instilled in them the desire to live every day doing their best, to be unafraid of the future, and be loyal to your goals, your school, your family, and your God.

The combination of a talented group of girls, a head coach who has previously won State titles at other schools, a Superintendent and faculty who fully supports, and parents and loyal Yellow Jacket supporters yielded a Rockwall girls Basketball State 5A Championship and a number 3 national ranking.

Girls, coaches, parents, faculty, and student body—you made Rockwall, Texas, smallest county of 254 counties, very proud.

God bless all of you and thank you again! As we close and leave this floor of Congress on this 23rd day of March, let us do so in respect and recognition that the Rockwall Girls Basketball team is the champion of the largest State in the union—the State of Texas.

INTRODUCING THE MEDICARE MENTAL HEALTH MODERNIZATION ACT

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues JIM RAMSTAD of Minnesota and PATRICK KENNEDY from Rhode Island to introduce the Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act, a bill to provide mental health parity in Medicare. I have introduced a version of this bill in every Congress since 1994. Perhaps this time we can actually enact it.

Medicare's mental health benefit is fashioned on treatments provided in 1965, but mental health care has changed dramatically over the last 42 years. Medicare limits inpatient coverage at psychiatric hospitals to 190 days over an individual's lifetime. In addition, beneficiaries are charged a discriminatory 50 percent coinsurance for outpatient psychotherapy services, compared to 20 percent for physical health services.

The Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act eliminates this blatant mental health discrimination under Medicare and modernizes the Medicare mental health benefit to meet today's standards of care.

This bill is long overdue. One in five members of our senior population displays mental difficulties that are not part of the normal aging process. In primary care settings, more than a third of senior citizens demonstrate symptoms of depression and impaired social functioning. Yet only one out of every three mentally ill seniors receives the mental health services he/she needs. Older adults also have one of the highest rates of suicide of any segment of our population. In addition, mental illness is the single largest diagnostic category for Medicare beneficiaries who qualify as disabled.

There is a critical need for effective and accessible mental health care for our Medicare population. Recent research has found a direct relationship between treating depression in older adults and improved physical functioning associated with independent living. Unfortunately, the current structure of Medicare mental health benefits is inadequate and presents multiple barriers to access of essential treatment. This bill addresses these problems.

The Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act is a straightforward bill that improves Medicare's mental health benefits as follows:

It reduces the discriminatory co-payment for outpatient mental health services from 50 percent to the 20 percent level charged for most other Part B medical services.

It eliminates the arbitrary 190-day lifetime cap on inpatient services in psychiatric hospitals.

It improves beneficiary access to mental health services by including within Medicare a number of community-based residential and intensive outpatient mental health services that characterize today's state-of-the-art clinical practices.

It further improves access to needed mental health services by addressing the shortage of qualified mental health professionals serving older and disabled Americans in rural and other medically underserved areas by allowing state licensed marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors to provide Medicare-covered services.

Similarly, it corrects a legislative oversight that will facilitate the provision of mental health services by clinical social workers within skilled nursing facilities.

It requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study to examine whether the Medicare criteria to cover therapeutic services to beneficiaries with Alzheimer's and related cognitive disorders discriminates by being too restrictive.

In April 2002, President Bush identified unfair treatment limitations placed on mental health benefits as a major barrier to mental health care and urged Congress to enact legislation that would provide full parity in the health insurance coverage of mental and physical illnesses. We've made important strides forward for the under-65 population. Twenty-six states have enacted full mental health parity. The Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) was improved in 2001 to assure that all federal employees and members of Congress are provided parity for mental health and substance abuse treatment. This month, Representatives KENNEDY and RAMSTAD intoroduced H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, to provide full parity for mental health and substance abuse in the private insurance market nationwide. I'm proud to join them in support of this legislation, which was introduced with 256 cosponsors—well more than the 218 majority needed to pass the House of Representatives.

While some in the business community are concerned about increased costs associated with providing these benefits, a recent study of the FEHBP mental health coverage concluded that implementation of parity benefits led to negligible cost increases. In fact, some businesses are now embracing parity because they recognize the increased productivity from workers over the long run and how improving access to mental health services has the potential to avoid other additional costly care.

I am similarly sure that modernizing the Medicare mental health benefit will reduce unnecessary spending. Medicare mental health expenses have historically been heavily skewed toward more expensive inpatient services, with 56 percent of the total going to inpatient care and only 30 percent toward outpatient services in 2001. This relationship is in contrast to national trends showing a reversal in inpatient and outpatient spending over the past decade. In the last 10 years, inpatient spending declined from 40 percent to 24 percent, while outpatient spending increased from 36 percent to 50 percent of all mental health spending. In addition, improving beneficiary access to timely mental health care could well yield savings by minimizing the need for other services.

Science has demonstrated that mental illness and substance abuse are manifestations of biological diseases. It is long past time for

us to take action with regard to Medicare's inadequate mental health benefits and structure. Over the years, Congress has updated Medicare's benefits for treatment of physical illnesses as the practice of medicine has changed. The mental health field has undergone many advances over the past several decades. Effective research-validated interventions have been developed for many mental conditions that affect stricken beneficiaries. Most mental conditions no longer require long-term hospitalizations, and can be effectively treated in less restrictive community settings. This bill recognizes these advances in clinical treatment practices and adjusts Medicare's mental health coverage to account for them.

The Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act removes discriminatory features from the Medicare mental health benefits while facilitating access to up-to-date and affordable mental health services for our senior citizens and people with disabilities. I urge my colleagues to join Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. KENNEDY, and myself in support of this important legislation and to work with us to improve mental health coverage for everyone.

TRIBUTE TO PHYLLIS MAKI

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary woman who has made tremendous contributions to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, to the County and City of Marquette and to Northern Michigan University.

A Marquette native, Phyllis Maki is a graduate of Bishop Baraga High School. She has spent nearly her entire life in Marquette and, over the years, Ms. Maki has involved herself in countless local community organizations, winning the admiration of her friends and neighbors as someone upon whom her community could always depend.

Phyllis Maki is active on the Board of the Lake Superior Community Partnership, which fosters economic growth throughout Marquette and surrounding, smaller communities. She was Treasurer of the Lake Superior Community Partnership and Lake Superior Jobs Coalition. She represented the interests of Marquette City by serving as a ''Marquette County Ambassador,'' traveling to Lansing to advocate for the community before the state House and Senate and to bring money back from the state capital to invest in important programs in the Marquette area. She further helped drive economic growth in the area by serving on the board of the Economic Club of Marquette County.

She has served on the boards of the Marquette County YMCA, the KI Sawyer Heritage Museum and the Northern Michigan University Centennial Committee. She has worked towards access to healthcare for my constituents by serving on the Marquette Community Access to Health Care Finance Committee. She has served as a member of the U.S. Olympic Education Committee and the Michigan Department of Transportation Focus Group. As one of her friends recently commented, ''She is involved in everything!''

She has been recognized with multiple awards in the past, including the Athena Award in 1998, which recognizes excellence of female leaders in their profession. She herself served for several years on the Athena Board Steering Committee. She also received the Paul Harris Fellow Award, an International Rotary Award for assisting others in the community to reach their goals.

An honorary alumna of Northern Michigan University (NMU), Ms. Maki's ties to Northern Michigan University run deep. She has served many years on the Northern Michigan University Foundation Board of Trustees and as past president of this Board of Trustees for 11 years. She was also a member of NMU's Golden Wildcat Club, Blue Line Club and a member of NMU's Forest Roberts Theater.

Ms. Maki can perhaps best be described as ''tireless.'' In all areas of her life, Phyllis Maki exhibits a tenacious, irrepressible spirit. While her involvement in her community demanded much of her time, she also made time for family: a single parent, she raised two children largely on her own.

She is known for waking early in the morning to tackle the day. She would start almost every morning with a 4:30 a.m. run, finishing in time to be in her office or in meetings as early as 6 a.m. Her runs were so notoriously early that one morning, she is said to have encountered a moose. She was up so early that the only living creatures up with her at that hour were wildlife!

While she has given freely of her personal time and raised a family, Ms. Maki was also able to lead a rich and rewarding career in the private sector. In February of this year, she retired as the Chief Financial Officer of a local car dealership. During her 37 years of work there, she was the driving force in building the company's philanthropic activities, encouraging them to regularly donate vehicles to various charities and non-profits. Coincidentally, the name of her long time employer reflects Ms. Maki's altruistic spirit: the car dealership is called Public Service Garage.

An active member of St. Peter's Catholic Church, Ms. Maki's faith has always been a strong foundation in her life, providing her the spiritual endurance to give so much to so many.

Tomorrow, Phyllis Maki will receive the Northern Michigan University President's Lifetime Achievement Award. This prestigious honor is bestowed upon men and women whose lives are truly outstanding. As the citation for this award reads, ''A beautiful person inside and out, she leads with strength and vision and lives with a kind heart and generous soul. She is the best kind of friend—the forever kind.''

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and the entire U.S. House of Representatives join me in saluting my friend, Ms. Phyllis Maki, for her lifetime of contributions and in wishing her, Carlo, Deborah, David and Michael all the best on this momentous occasion.

PUT ASIDE PARTISANSHIP TO PASS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

HON. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. GIFFORDS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased that we in the House of Representatives finally have a comprehensive immigration reform bill that we can debate, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bipartisan legislation authored by Congressman GUTIERREZ and Congressman FLAKE.

Members in this chamber now have the opportunity to pass a bill that will secure the border and end our nation's illegal immigration crisis.

Given that the challenge of illegal immigration is complex, the solution must address all aspects of this problem—border security, the hiring of illegal immigrants, labor shortages in certain sectors of our economy, and the millions of illegal immigrants currently living in the United States.

A piecemeal approach will simply not work. If we truly want to end illegal immigration, the only option is to pass a comprehensive bill that is tough, practical, and effective.

I stand here today ready to work with members of both parties, ready to listen to everyone's concerns, and steadfast in my conviction that, if we can put aside partisanship and compromise with each other, we can reach an agreement.

In my district in southern Arizona, the need for reform is critical. In 2006, 4,000 illegal immigrants a day crossed the border into Arizona. Our schools, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies are overwhelmed. Our environment and homeland security are threatened.

In the weeks ahead, I will be holding several forums on this legislation in my district, so I can receive feedback from the folks on the front lines of the immigration crisis. After listening to a range of experts and local residents, I will recommend possible improvements before we vote on this bill.

WOODROW WILSON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that will establish the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library in Staunton, Virginia. In studying the life and times of the 28th President, we see how Woodrow Wilson affected and continues to influence how the United States responds to national and international crises. This bill is identical to legislation that passed on the House floor by Voice Vote in the 109th Congress September 28, 2006.

As a statesman, scholar, and President, Woodrow Wilson faced economic crisis, democratic decay, and a world war. Presidential historians agree that World War I, and President Wilson's leadership, radically altered the role of diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy—a policy that established a new path for America's role in promoting democracies throughout the world. So too did Wilson's high-minded ideals craft a legacy that shaped the powers and responsibilities of the executive branch in times of war.

As a professor and president of Princeton University, Wilson created a more selective and accountable system for higher education. By instituting curriculum reform, Wilson revolutionized the roles of teachers and students and quickly made Princeton one of the most

renowned universities in the world. Due to Wilson's legacy at Princeton, I am pleased to have the support of the current president, Shirley Tilghman, as we seek to establish a Presidential library and museum at Wilson's birthplace in Virginia.

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to seek a declaration of war against Germany, for ''The world must be safe for democracy.'' Ninety years later, we continue to champion that right of mankind.

Specifically, this legislation will make grants from the National Archives and Records Administration for the establishment of a Presidential library to provide educational and interpretive services to honor the life of Woodrow Wilson. To ensure that a public-private partnership exists, my legislation also mandates that no grant shall be available for the establishment of this library until a private entity has raised at least twice the amount to be allocated by the Congress. Finally, once the library is complete, this legislation states that the Federal Government shall have no role or responsibility for the operation of the library.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT STEPHEN JOEL TRACHTENBERG

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to an exceptional man who is retiring in July after 19 years of impeccable service to The George Washington University (GW).

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, 68, became the 15th president of GW on August 1, 1988. A native of Brooklyn, NY, Trachtenberg earned a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University in 1959, the Juris Doctor from Yale University in 1962, and the master of public administration degree from Harvard University in 1966. In 1968, he was selected as a Winston Churchill Traveling Fellow for study in Oxford, England.

He came to GW from the University of Hartford (CT), where he had been president for 11 years. Before assuming the presidency of Hartford, Trachtenberg served for 8 years at Boston University as vice president for academic services and academic dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Earlier, in Washington, DC, he was a special assistant for 2 years to the U.S. Education Commissioner, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He has been an attorney with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and a legislative aide to former Indiana Congressman John Brademas.

Just a few of the highlights in his career include the following: Trachtenberg was named one of the Top 100 Leaders in the American Academy in a 1978 Change magazine poll. He received a 1987 Human Relations Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In 1988 the Connecticut Bar Association honored him with its Distinguished Public Service Award, and he was recognized by the Hartford NAACP for his contributions to the education of minority students. In 1992 he received The Hannah G. Solomon Award from the National Council of Jewish Women. In 1993 the Washington, DC Urban League named him ''Father of the Year.'' And in 1992 and 2007 he received the Martin Luther King, Jr. awards.

President Trachtenberg has served the GW community as a drum major for change and has lead by example a commitment to public, civic and personal service. Throughout the years, he has worked tirelessly in honoring and enhancing the symbiotic relationship between the University and the District of Columbia, supporting and mentoring students, and leading and advocating for re-invention, change and civic engagement. He has worked successfully for almost two decades to propel GW further into the first ranks of world-class institutions of higher learning. I would like to boast some of the national rankings that GW has earned in recent years:

Foreign Affairs magazine ranked GW's Master's in International Affairs program number 7 in the top 20, and the undergraduate program number 10 out of the top 20.

For 2007, U.S. News and World Report ranks GW's Law School #19.

In 2006, GW is ranked #3 in intellectual property law.

Princeton Review ranks GW's Law School #10 for Best Career Prospects.

U.S. News & World Report, in August 2006, ranked 42nd Undergraduate Business Program which was GW's Seventh consecutive year in the top 50.

GW ranked 70th in Full-Time MBA Programs by U.S. News & World Report, in April 2006.

Also U.S. News & World Report, in April 2006, ranked GW one of the Top 25 Graduate Business Specialties in International Business, and in August of that year ranked GW's undergraduate specialty program in International Business.

As a result of President Trachtenberg's efforts the number of applications for undergraduate admission more than tripled (from 6,000 in 1988 to almost 20,000 in 2006) while the University's acceptance rate of these applicants was reduced by two-thirds. President Trachtenberg made financial aid for students a priority so that today the University offers nearly nine times ($113 million) as much financial aid to incoming students as was offered in 1988.

It can confidently be said that the University's faculty now comprises experts on topics ranging from administrative law to zoology and contribute to scholarly journals, law reviews, and media outlets on a regular basis. The University's sponsored research enterprise has quadrupled from $33 million in expenditures in 1988 to $132 million in expenditures in 2006. Through President Trachtenberg's efforts, GW has significantly upgraded its information technology and library system which now contains more than 2,000,000 volumes and is a member of the prestigious Association of Research Libraries.

Under President Trachtenberg's unprecedented leadership, the University robustly developed academic, residential, and recreational facilities on campus—including the opening of the Media and Public Affairs Building and the establishment within of the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery (2001), the Annette and Theodore Lerner Health and Wellness Center (2001), GW Hospital (2002), 1957 E Street, the new home of GW' s Elliott School of International Affairs and Geography Department (2002), and Ric and Dawn Duques Hall, the new home of GW' s Business School (2006)—in a way that served the institution's scholarly and other programmatic needs while respecting the interests of its Foggy Bottom neighbors. A few years ago, the Washington Post Magazine featured a cover story on President Trachtenberg, focusing on his expansionist visions, and skillful negotiations with the local residents. While every university President at one time or another finds him or herself embroiled in ''town versus gown'' dealings, President Trachtenberg has such a presence that he has earned himself the nickname ''Hurricane Steve''. I think that he appreciates the appellation, because it signifies that in a town with many egos and agendas, and a lot of talk not always accompanied by action, he is able to get things done.

President Trachtenberg's commitment to the enhancement of academic and other space on campus supported the renovation and expansion of the Law School complex (begun in 2000 and completed in 2006), the renovation of Morton and Norma Lee Funger Hall (dedicated in February 2006), and improvements of the Cloyd Heck Marvin Center including the addition of the Marc C. Abrahms Great Hall (dedicated in December 2002) and the renovation of J Street dining facilities (opened August 2004).

President Trachtenberg also spearheaded a campus beautification effort that transformed a series of city streets into a cohesive and vibrant urban campus with the addition of the Mid-Campus Quad, Kogan Plaza, pocket parks, and outdoor sculptures.

President Trachtenberg presides over the District of Columbia's largest private employer. And to support all the foregoing, President Trachtenberg oversaw two decades of balanced budgets, and the increase in the University endowment from $200 million in 1988 to more than $1 billion in 2007.

In 1989, President Trachtenberg created the 21st Century DC Scholars Program (now the Stephen Joel Trachtenberg Scholars), which has granted almost 100 full scholarships, representing over $13 million, to students from the DC Public Schools to attend GW. Under Trachtenberg's leadership, GW's Multicultural Student Services Center was named, and has become a strong center for cultural awareness and celebrations, student development, and diversity training. Additionally, the Office of Community Service was created in 1992 and has become a focal point for civic engagement for the Washington, DC community. His dedication to civic service is reflected throughout the University, which was named a ''college with a conscience'' in 2005 by Princeton Review, and most recently in the top 10 schools sending students to the Peace Corps.

His passion and demonstrated commitment to DC—the city, the schools, the business community and its residents—are unparalleled and have been recognized on several occasions by the District of Columbia Mayor, City Council and Chamber of Commerce. President Trachtenberg has received numerous accolades from across the nation and abroad for his service, vision, intellect, wit and compassion. Thanks to President Trachtenberg, GW went from being one of the best-kept secrets in town to being one of the best-known and most admired global universities.

FREEDOM FOR FRANCISCO HERODES DÍAZ ECHEMENDÍA

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Francisco Herodes Díaz Echemendía, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Díaz Echemendía is a member of the respected Pedro Luis Boitel organization named for Pedro Luis Boitel, a heroic, legendary Cuban political prisoner who died in a hunger strike in 1972. This organization, based in Placetas, Villa Clara, with provincial delegations throughout Cuba, has the primary objective of urging the Cuban tyranny to grant amnesty to all political prisoners and to abolish the indefensible ''political'' crimes in totalitarian Cuba. Well aware of the consequences associated with his involvement in Cuba's pro-democracy movement, Mr. Díaz Echemendía has never relinquished his dream that the men and women of Cuba deserve freedom, democracy, and fundamental human rights.

Because of his belief in these inalienable rights, Mr. Díaz Echemendía was arrested by the dictatorship on August 9, 1990 on absurd charges of ''enemy propaganda, sabotage, and disrespect'' which amounted to nothing more than his decision to voice the truth about totalitarian Cuba. For his supposed ''crime'' Mr. Díaz Echemendía was wrongfully and cruelly ''sentenced'' to twenty years and ten months in the totalitarian gulag.

On September 10, 1997, after being held in a subhuman dungeon for seven years, over thirty of the tyrant's security thugs savagely attacked Mr. Díaz Echemendía and other incarcerated human rights activists. Mr. Díaz Echemendía was mercilessly punched and kicked on the neck, ribs, back and face. By the time the thugs ceased committing their crimes against him he had suffered severe injuries to his left arm and his nose and lips had been split wide open. To add insult to injury he and his fellow political prisoners were handcuffed and unable to defend themselves against their attackers throughout the entire brutal assault.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Díaz Echemendía languishes in conditions that according to Amnesty International are rat infested and crawling with mice and cockroaches, with nothing but a small hole in the ground as a ''bathroom''. In prison Mr. Díaz Echemendía has been beaten and tortured at the orders of a racist, brutal, maniacal tyrant, simply for dreaming that the Cuban people must have basic and fundamental universal human rights.

Madam Speaker, this is only one of the abhorrent episodes of violence that are continually carried out on countless innocent Cuban men and women languishing in the darkness and infernal hell that is Castro's gulag. Let me be clear, Mr. Díaz Echemendía suffers cruel and malignant acts of hatred and horror, which have often left him, like many others on that oppressed island, in critical condition without any access to medical care. And yet, though the tyranny has attempted to destroy Mr. Díaz Echemendía, he will never cease in his commitment to freedom for Cuba.

My colleagues, it is unconscionable that just 90 miles from our shores Mr. Díaz Echemendía is languishing in a totalitarian gulag for his belief in freedom. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Francisco Herodes Díaz Echemendía and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

TRIBUTE TO ED BRADLEY

HON. DIANE E. WATSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I would like to submit the following poem for the RECORD, written by Albert Carey Caswell:

AT A WAY ED

At A Way Ed,
To our world you so gave, all in what you said!
In how you so searched for the truth, for in your heart we so found the proof . . . as you read!

A—pioneer
Who to all hearts so endeared, a man who knew no fear!
For your mission was so clear, with your words of wisdom here . . . to enlighten all, so very clear!

A man of color, of Great Hue!
Who lived & fought for what is right & what is true! An inspiration, a hero for our children to view!
Another great American, in this our great land . . . of That Old Red, White, and Blue!

A tall man,
Of kind voice, of quiet warm grace the peoples choice . . . who above all others would so stand!
With his beard and ear ring, to the cause of truth himself he would bring . . . this man!

Ed, you had such charm . . . in your own soft grace!
The coolest of cool, that's what we'll remember whenever we hear your voice and see your face!
For in the world of journalism, you shall always hold such this your fine high place!

From the jungles of Nam,
With Bob Dylan your lyrics were on, With The King Ali . . . all hearts were so touched so warm!
As forever in our hearts, you shall now live on!

For Life is so short,
But, in your Sixty Minutes . . . In your time, here on earth are so many magic moments to report!
You were Champion, A Fine Man . . . a great work of art, who now so stands . . . you were that sort!

At A Boy Ed,
You made it iook so easy, a bright ray in the light of truth . . . in all you did and what you said . . .
How you taught so many, all in this . . . the fine life you led!

Ed . . . You've got one more exclusive,
You've got one last bag to pack, One last plane to catch . . . as an Angel who'll now so etch!
God's waiting in Heaven for you, for that greatest of all interviews . . . we'll miss you, God Bless!
At A Way Ed

TRIBUTE TO DIXIE LOUCKS

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Madam Speaker, I rise tody to honor Dixie Loucks of Fort Collins, CO. She has led a life of service to her family, community and country.

Dixie was the third of nine children born to Charles and Netha McFarlane. She was raised on the family farm in Chugwater, WY, where she learned the value of family and hard work.

Dixie's family moved to Cedaredge, CO, when she was sixteen. It was there Dixie met the love of her life, her husband Jack Loucks. He was the boy next door and they married on February 22, 1948.

Jack joined the Air Force in 1949 and left for Korea in 1951 as an F–80 fighter/bomber pilot. He flew 101 missions. During this time Mrs. Loucks continued to live on the family farm and raised their daughter, Cristine. She provided support to her husband by sending him letters and pictures of their new daughter. These letters were a constant inspiration for Jack.

Throughout Jack's military career, Mrs. Loucks served her family and community. She began her community service at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey at the local hospital, coordinating Red Cross blood drives. As their daughters Cristine and Erylene began school, Mrs. Loucks was a tireless volunteer at their school and with Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls. When the family as stationed in Tripoli, Mrs. Loucks made dresses for the local girls from flour sacks provided through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

After Jack's retirement the family moved to Fort Collins. Mrs. Loucks worked in the Public Trustee's office and served on the U.S. military academy selection committees. Additionally, she served as a volunteer at the family's church, Harbor Hope First Free Methodist Church. She has served as a Sunday School teacher, a nursery leader and as a member of the leadership council.

For the last 2 years Mrs. Loucks has been a member of the 'Knit and Knot' group who make fleece blankets, hats and layettes for babies of mothers in the Alpha Center for Women.

Madam Speaker, our country is certainly better because of Mrs. Loucks' commitment to her family and the years of volunteer service within the military, her community and her church. Hers is a life well lived and a pattern for others to follow. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing Dixie Loucks.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR. EMMA MORAN

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of the Third Congressional District of Florida as I pay tribute to the life of Dr. Emma Moran.

There are those who pass this way and touch lives, and there are those who make lives better for having been in our midst. The depth and breath of the life of Dr. Emma Moran can be summed in one phrase—she loved, she cared and she taught us how to live through the giving of our talents.

Dr. Moran was an educator, activist, advocate, and a believer in the sanctity and importance of education. She had this embracing personality that while in her presence she made you feel that your words and thoughts were important to her, and that she listened and cared. This great woman of faith, tenacity and boundless energy embodied the better qualities of human existence, and she demanded no less from each of us. Dr.

Moran was and is a true inspiration.

Rest now, my friend, for your work here is done and your life shall live on forever in each of us.

IN RECOGNITION OF 40 YEARS OF SERVICE BY REV. ALVIN R. KOLB

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it is with great honor that I rise today to extend my congratulations to Rev. Alvin R. Kolb for having served as the minister to the Assemblies of God for 40 years.

Since 1967, Reverend Kolb has led the spiritual growth of so many people looking to him for guidance in their faith. At the age of 15, he held his first cottage prayer meeting, and soon after, he began organizing church revivals. It was at one of his revivals that he met his wife, Maralyn Enfinger Kolb. They married in 1971, raised 5 children, and are the proud grandparents of 11 grandchildren.

Reverend Kolb pastored his first church in 1973; the Harold Assembly of God began with a congregation of just five widowed women. From there his ministry grew and he went on to pastor the Assemblies of God at Cedar Springs, Calvary Full Gospel, Bay Springs, Whitfield, Bradley, and East Milton. So many have come to know and love the Lord through Reverend Kolb, and his ministry has prompted others to become pastors and ministers themselves, such as his youngest son, Robert.

For the past 10 years, Reverend Kolb has served as the pastor of the East Milton Assembly of God. Both his family and the members of his congregation value his committent to the church and are grateful that he will continue to serve as the leader in their thriving place of worship for years to come.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to a man who has served as a role model to us all. A deep sense of personal service to congregations for 40 years is something to truly be admired and I am thankful for his dedication to the East Milton Assembly of God.

COMMEMORATION OF THE MORNING STAR MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church has been a historic and cultural landmark of Portland ever since May 17, 1959, when the congregation marched from their temporary home on North Fargo Street to their new home at 106 Northeast Ivy Street. It was there that Reverend O.B. Williams of Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church preached the first sermon as Morning Star's guest for the afternoon service.

The Church building, constructed in 1919, and inhabited by Morning Star for the past 48 years, has come to represent not only a historic landmark, but a lively center of worship. The church also embodies an important part of the modern-day tradition, culture, and fabric of the community. Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church has helped to meet the needs of the community by providing important assistance to those around them who are in need. In addition, the church offers a venue for a vital spiritual and social community network.

The Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church has endured much restoration and growth in the past, but no one in the community was prepared for the tragic burning to the ground of this historic building on February 6, 2007. In a show of support, many individuals, churches, community organizations and local businesses have offered thousands of dollars in donations in support of the eventual reconstruction of the church. We thank them for their generosity.

It is with admiration and respect that the long history of the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church be honored. By commemorating this historic fire and the eventual reconstruction, Portland can help to keep the memory and present duty of this church alive.

We stand with Pastor A. Wayne Johnson, the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church congregation and their respective communities in solidarity during this trying time. We recognize the sense of loss that all associated must feel surrounding this unexpected fire, and we extend our best wishes to the congregation for the church's recovery and restoration. We only hope that the church's capacity to help the community it has reached out to over its many esteemed years of service will soon be restored to its fullest.

TRIBUTE TO THE POTH HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the women of the Poth High School Girls Basketball Team in their stunning 72–70 double-overtime victory against the top-ranked Winnsboro in the Class 2A championship game.

The story of the Poth High School Girls Basketball team is of a team that fought against the odds to achieve one of the best high school sports victories in Texas history. The team had lost in the semifinals each of the previous three years, and their game against Winnsboro was not one in which they were expected to win. The excitement of the crowd exploded when Whitney Wehymeyer scored thirty points and Lauren Waclawcyzk added sixteen points in the second overtime's final seconds to send Poth to the Class 2A state championship with their 72–70 win.

Theirs was a story that echoed the classic underdog against the presumptive winner, but due to their remarkable team spirit and strong determination to win, they came out on top. I am very proud that these remarkable women have won the state championship, and that they are from Poth, a city in my congressional district. The city has shown strong support of women's sports teams in their community.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to recognize the women of the Poth High School Girls Basketball team, and I thank you for this time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I will like to submit this statement for the RECORD and regret that I was unavoidably detained with legislative business on March 20, 2007 on the vote for rollcall vote No. 164 and on March 22, 2007 on the vote for rollcall No. 181.

Had I been present, I would have voted:

''No'' on rollcall No. 164 on the amendment to H.R. 1227 that would require recipients of rental assistance under the bill—those displaced from their homes, many of whom lost their jobs as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—to perform 20 hours per week of approved work activities.

''Yea'' on rollcall No. 181 on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H. Con. Res. 66, permitting the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony as part of the commemoration of the days of remembrance of victims of the Holocaust.

CONGRATULATING THE 2007 WE THE PEOPLE NATIONAL FINALS

HON. HENRY C. ''HANK'' JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, from April 28–30, 2007, more than 1200 students from across the country will visit Washington, DC, to take part in the national finals of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, the most extensive educational program in the country developed to educate young people about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, the We the People program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress.

I am proud to announce that the State of Georgia will be represented by a class from

Chamblee Charter High School from Atlanta at this prestigious national event. These outstanding students, through their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, won their statewide competition and earned the chance to come to our Nation's Capital and compete at the national level.

While in Washington, the students will participate in a 3-day academic competition that simulates a congressional hearing in which they ''testify'' before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles as they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues. It is important to note that results of independent studies of this nationally acclaimed program reveal that We the People . . . students have knowledge gains that are superior to comparison students. Students also display a greater political tolerance and commitment to the principles and values of the Constitution and Bill of Rights than do students using traditional textbooks and approaches. With many reports and surveys indicating the lack of civic knowledge and civic participation, I am pleased to support such a superb program that is producing an enlightened and engaged citizenry.

Mr. President, the names of these outstanding students from Chamblee Charter High School are: Sara Arment, Teresa Bardagiy, Amee Chowdhury, Carol Coleman, Carson Dance, Petra Ehlert, Savannah Fox, Samuel Franklin, Elizabeth Hogan, Joseph Hutton, Martin Hwang, Jasmine Johnson, Jason King, Duncan Lien, Sang Oh, Laura Ownbey, Sally Phipps, Daniel Sok, Alexander Vidor, Kayla Vinson, and Xi Wang.

I also wish to commend the teacher of the class, Stephen J. Rubino, who is responsible for preparing these young constitutional experts for the national finals. Also worthy of special recognition is John D. Hoge, the State coordinator, and John Carr, the district coordinator, who are among those responsible for implementing the We the People program in my State.

I wish these students much success as they prepare to compete at the We the People national finals and applaud their exceptional achievement.

A TRIBUTE TO THE USS ''JOHN F. KENNEDY''

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. CRENSHAW. Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding leadership Captain Zecchin and the past commanding officers of the USS *Kennedy*, including Captain Dennis Fitzpatrick and Captain Harv Henderson, have provided to the sailors and this great Nation.

Naval leadership depends on two core military values—cohesiveness and mission. Orchestrating 3,500 sailors to pull together to accomplish a mission, whether that mission is war, training, repair or preparing to decommissioning, is a monumental task. The *Kennedy*'s 39 years of outstanding service is due to the series of leaders who stood at her helm and kept her ready at a moment's notice. I wish Captain Zecchin well on his next tour as the Commanding Officer of the USS *Kitty Hawk;* we will miss him here in Mayport.

The *Kennedy* has seen many farewells—from the spouses and family of its crew and from Navy servicemen seeing her off on various deployments. Just think, how many loved ones have proudly watched their son or daughter sail off to gloriously defend our freedom and preserve our way of life. But at the end of each deployment there has always been a welcome home. Today, we say goodbye for the last time.

We are here today to say farewell to a ship that has symbolized so much to so many.

To the sailor, the *Kennedy* has been a home away from home on many deployments. She represents small town America, where many of her sailors are from. Her population is a little over 5,000 and she boasts a post office, doctors' offices, a place of worship, restaurants that serve over 15,000 meals a day and employment opportunities for all. She has elevators, runways, and a busy airport.

This ''carrier'' town represents the best of America. All the sailors work together toward a common goal, never separated by race or class or gender. Ships are steel, they are not alive. It is the crew who bring a ship to life. The stories that emerge from her sailors will keep her spirit alive. The *Kennedy* will continue to live in the lives of the thousands of sailors who manned her rail, flight crews who donned a rainbow of colored shirts and made her flight deck roar to life, and aviators who were catapulted into the sky and prayed to catch her hook on their return.

To the Jacksonville community, the *Kennedy* will always be a symbol of our great city. She has meant so much to this community and this community has meant so much to her. Here on this pier where you sit today, the sailors of the *Kennedy* and the men and women of our local ship-repair companies worked long hours on grueling jobs to complete the largest pier-side availability ever accomplished in the Navy. The skills of the artisans from these Jacksonville companies have kept the boilers and propulsion plant working during the *Kennedy*'s time in Mayport.

Big John's connection to our community is more than just the economic base she provides. We will miss her sailors and their wives and husbands. We will miss the children in our local schools and athletic clubs. We will miss their involvement in the Mayport community.

To our country, the *Kennedy* has been part of our history for 39 years. She is one of the finest ships in the world's finest Navy. As our country continues to fight the war on terror, we must remember the role the *Kennedy* played in the earliest counter-terrorist actions.

Even though she entered active duty during the height of the Vietnam War, she soon found herself in a role more familiar to today—spending the first of several deployments in the Mediterranean to help deal with a deteriorating situation in the Middle East. In the 1980's, she responded to the growing crisis in Lebanon, and in 1988 F–14 Tomcats launched from the *Kennedy* intercepted and downed two hostile Libyan MiGs in response to Libya's terrorist activities. On the *Kennedy*'s most recent deployment, the air wing dropped more than 64,000 pounds of ordnance on Taliban and al Qaeda targets.

To me personally, I share many of the same memories as the Jacksonville community, but the *Kennedy* also provided me with the great honor of joining the national debate on how the Navy is going to meet the threats of tomorrow while fighting the budget pressures of today. The discussion that followed the announcement that the *Kennedy* would be decommissioned was good for our Navy, good for our Congress and good for our Nation.

We must be keenly aware of how important our aircraft carrier fleet is to this Nation's ability to counter current threats and deter future aggression. Carriers are mammoth cities, and are not constructed in a single day. We cannot take lightly the decision to take an aircraft carrier out of service; that decision cannot be reversed. The discussion will continue well past the final days of the *John F. Kennedy*, and I will remain an active member of any debate on the size and shape of our Navy fleet, and for this I thank the *John F. Kennedy*.

To Mayport, the *Kennedy* has been the symbol of this national treasure. This Naval Station is defined not only by the ships that are home ported here, but also by its strategic location to counter the ever growing threats in South America and the Caribbean. If we do not deter the aggression and narco-terrorist threats today, South America could very well become the next Afghanistan. Terrorist training camps would be dangerously close to our own shores.

I will continue to work with our Navy leadership to make sure that we have the right ships in the right places for the right missions. The Navy needs Mayport even more now than it did when the Kennedy battle group called her home.

The *Kennedy* is a great and noble ship and when this day is done, she will cease to be four and a half acres of sovereign U.S. territory that can launch an array of fighter aircraft and precision weapons which strike terror in the hearts of America's enemies. She will be stripped, docked and viewed by most as just a great mass of steel. Her dedicated crew will be dispersed to other carriers and they will continue to perform their duties. And as those who served aboard her and as those in our community who loved her, remember the glory of the USS *John F. Kennedy*—then our ship, the sacrifices of her crew and the freedom she fought to defend will continue to live on and on.

Daily Digest

HIGHLIGHTS

Senate agreed to S. Con. Res. 21, Congressional Budget Resolution.

The House passed H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S3659–S3725

Measures Introduced: Eight bills and three resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 975–982, S. Res. 121–122, and S. Con. Res. 24. **Page S3706**

Measures Passed:

Congressional Budget Resolution: By 52 yeas and 47 nays (Vote No. 114), Senate agreed to S. Con. Res. 21, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012, after taking action on the following amendments proposed thereto: **Pages S3659–S3702**

Adopted:

Gregg Amendment No. 622, point of order against using reconciliation to create new mandatory programs and 20% limitation on spending reconciliation. **Page S3662**

Pryor/Nelson (FL) Amendment No. 601, to establish a reserve fund to provide additional training for physicians and attract more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians in training. **Page S3663**

Brownback Amendment No. 581, to provide funds for a Commission on Budgetary Accountability and Review of Federal Agencies. **Page S3663**

Conrad Amendment No. 623, to clarify the treatment of certain provisions in conference reports. **Pages S3663–64**

Bunning Amendment No. 621, to provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund for a repeal of the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security Benefits. **Page S3665**

Dole Amendment No. 553, to extend financial relief for our reservists and national guard deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq by allowing them to make penalty-free withdrawals of their retirement funds through the year 2012. **Page S3665**

Feinstein/Boxer Amendment No. 574, to provide an additional $543,000,000 for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. **Page S3666**

By 59 yeas and 40 nays (Vote No. 105), Smith Modified Amendment No. 510, to provide for the consideration of an increase in the tobacco products user fee rate, but only to the extent that such rate increase does not result in an increase of more than 61 cents per pack of cigarettes, with all revenue generated by such increase dedicated to the reauthorization and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. **Pages S3672–73**

Conrad (for Lieberman/Collins) Amendment No. 519, to increase funding for vital first responder homeland security programs, including $400,000,000 to establish a dedicated interoperability grant program and $331,000,000 for Emergency Management Performance Grants. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Burr) Amendment No. 499, to develop biodefense medical countermeasures by fully funding the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) in a fiscally responsible manner. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Biden) Amendment No. 528, to increase funding by $100 million for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs administered by the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, with an offset of an unallocated reduction to non-defense discretionary spending and/or reduction to administrative expenses. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Thune) Amendment No. 546, to provide for a total of $99,000,000 in COPS Hot Spots funding, as authorized in the Combat Meth Act. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Kennedy) Amendment No. 602, increase funding for drug safety oversight at the Food and Drug Administration by $40,000,000 in fiscal year 2008. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Chambliss) Amendment No. 619, to provide Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program funding, as authorized in the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005. **Page S3673**

Conrad (for Reid/Sanders) Modified Amendment No. 490, to provide funding to eliminate the offset between military retirement pay and disability compensation for America's veterans. **Pages S3673, S3678**

Conrad (for Kerry/Snowe) Amendment No. 616, to increase funding for small business programs at the Small Business Administration such as microloans, Women's Business Centers, and Small Business Development Centers. **Pages S3673, S3675–77**

Conrad (for Warner) Amendment No. 620, to provide funding for NASA aeronautics at the fiscal year 2007 levels.

Conrad (for Kerry/Rockefeller) Amendment No. 615, to include in the veterans' reserve fund services for low-vision and blinded veterans. **Page S3674**

Conrad (for Graham) Amendment No. 614, to increase the budgetary totals for the Department of Commerce to provide additional trade enforcement capability and to provide an offset. **Pages S3674–75**

Specter Modified Amendment No. 613, to create a deficit-neutral reserve for asbestos reform legislation. **Pages S3677–79**

Gregg (for Thune) Amendment No. 465, to provide for a budget point of order against legislation that increases income tax rates on small businesses, family farms, or family ranches. **Page S3679**

By 65 yeas and 33 nays (Vote No. 110), Biden Amendment No. 529, to increase funding for the COPS Program to $1.15 billion for FY 2008 to provide state and local law enforcement with critical resources necessary to prevent and respond to violent crime and acts of terrorism and is offset by an unallocated reduction to non-defense discretionary spending and/or reduction to administrative expenses. **Pages S3682–83**

DeMint Amendment No. 530, to save Social Security first, not discretionary spending. **Page S3683**

DeMint Amendment No. 534, to prevent the adding of earmarks for spinach producers to an emergency war supplemental appropriations bill. **Page S3683**

Coleman Amendment No. 522, to extend a provision allowing veterans to qualify for low interest mortgage programs. **Page S3685**

Conrad (for Gregg/Conrad) Amendment No. 638, to create a point of order against increasing mandatory spending in appropriation bills. **Pages S3686–87**

Conrad (for Smith) Amendment No. 518, to fund the State Department, USAID, and other foreign affairs agencies and their programs at the level requested by the President. **Pages S3687–98**

Conrad (for Obama) Amendment No. 599, to add $200 million for Function 270 (Energy) for the demonstration and monitoring of carbon capture and sequestration technology by the Department of Energy. **Page S3698**

Conrad (for Nelson (FL)) Amendment No. 580, to make funds available to ensure that Survivor Benefit Plan annuities are not reduced by the amount of veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation received by military families. **Page S3698**

Conrad (for Levin) Amendment No. 632, to provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund for manufacturing initiatives. **Page S3698**

Conrad (for Casey) Amendment No. 617, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund for extending preschool opportunities to children. **Pages S3698–99**

Conrad (for Carper/Coburn) Amendment No. 540, to reduce the deficit through the use of recovery audits. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Pryor) Modified Amendment No. 611, to increase the budgeting totals for the National Nanotechnology Initiative for environmental, health, and safety research and development for fiscal years 2008 through 2012. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Dorgan) Amendment No. 544, to provide for the use of the deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax relief for enhancing charitable giving from individual retirement accounts. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Obama) Amendment No. 524, to provide $100 million for the Summer Term Education Program supporting summer learning opportunities for low-income students in the early grades to lessen summer learning losses that contribute to the achievement gaps separating low-income students from their middle-class peers. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Reed) Amendment No. 596, to increase LIHEAP spending by $703 million in FY2008 for a total LIHEAP level of $3.2 billion, divided between the regular and contingency grant funds at FY2006 levels. **Pages S3698, S3699, S3701**

Conrad (for Bingaman) Amendment No. 600, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to provide for a delay in the implementation of a proposed rule relating to the Federal-State financial partnerships under Medicaid and SCHIP. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Webb) Amendment No. 537, to include in the veterans' reserve fund a provision for GI educational benefits. **Pages S3698, S3699**

Conrad (for Pryor/Klobuchar) Amendment No. 627, to provide additional funding for the Consumer Product Safety Commission to enhance its mission of

protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from consumer products.

Pages S3698, S3699

Conrad (for Baucus) Amendment No. 639, to establish a reserve fund to improve the health care system. **Pages S3698, S3699–S3700**

Conrad (for Dorgan/Snowe) Amendment No. 589, to establish a reserve fund for the safe importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs.

Pages S3698, S3700

Conrad (for Voinovich) Modified Amendment No. 470, to require disclosure of the interest costs of legislation. **Pages S3698, S3700**

Conrad (for Coleman) Amendment No. 572, to increase funds for the implementation of the forest management plans developed for the States of Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin, with an offset.

Pages S3698, S3700

Conrad (for Murkowski/Stevens) Modified Amendment No. 551, to increase funding for geothermal, ocean (wave, current, tidal) and small hydroelectric energy assistance. **Pages S3698, S3700**

Conrad (for Snowe/Rockefeller) Modified Amendment No. 629, to provide the use of the deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax relief for reauthorizing the new markets tax credit for an additional 5 years.

Pages S3698, S3700

Conrad (for Grassley) Amendment No. 636, to establish a reserve fund to improve payment accuracy for hospitals under the Medicare program.

Pages S3698, S3700

Conrad (for Dole) Amendment No. 633, to provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the necessary funding to effectively address the critical water and waste water needs of rural communities in the United States. **Pages S3698, S3700**

Conrad (for Enzi) Amendment No. 635, to provide for a deficit-neutral reserve fund to improve health insurance. **Pages S3698, S3700, S3701–02**

Conrad (for Specter) Amendment No. 506, to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the health professions. **Pages S3698, S3700**

Conrad (for Grassley) Amendment No. 548, to ensure that Medicare payments to physicians include incentives to improve the quality and efficiency of care furnished to Medicare beneficiaries.

Pages S3698, S3700

Conrad (for Dole) Amendment No. 640 , to provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the necessary funding to implement a pilot program authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to study the elimination of the reduced-price category for school lunches. **Pages S3698, S3700–01**

Rejected:

By 38 yeas and 61 nays (Vote No. 99), DeMint Amendment No. 513, to provide for true deficit reduction in appropriations bills. **Pages S3664–66**

By 46 yeas and 53 nays (Vote No.100), Sessions/DeMint Amendment No. 473, to save families from the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) first by permitting a deduction for personal exemptions for purposes of computing the AMT. **Pages S3666–67**

By 25 yeas and 74 nays (Vote No. 101), Nelson (NE) Amendment No. 626, to reform the estate tax to avoid subjecting thousands of families, family businesses, and family farms and ranches to the estate tax, and to promote continued economic growth and job creation. **Pages S3667–68**

By 48 yeas and 51 nays (Vote No. 102), Kyl/Thune Amendment No. 583, to reform the death tax by setting the exemption at $5 million per estate, indexed for inflation, and the top death tax rate at no more than 35% beginning in 2010, to avoid subjecting an estimated 119,200 families, family businesses, and family farms to the death tax each and every year, to promote continued economic growth and job creation, and to make the enhanced teacher deduction permanent. **Pages S3668–69**

By 49 yeas and 50 nays (Vote No. 103), Hatch Amendment No. 508, to establish a reserve fund for protecting coverage choices, additional benefits, and lower cost-sharing for Medicare beneficiaries.

Pages S3670–71

By 39 yeas and 59 nays (Vote No. 106), Thomas Amendment No. 515, to prevent the adding of extraneous earmarks to an emergency war supplemental. **Page S3677**

By 46 yeas and 52 nays (Vote No. 107), Graham Amendment No. 478, to extend the 35, 33, 28, and 25 percent income tax rate structure and protect nearly 28,000,000 families and individuals, including small business owners, from having their tax rates increase to 39.6, 36, 31, or 28 percent.

Page S3678

By 44 yeas and 53 nays (Vote No.108), Grassley Amendment No. 471, to amend the budget resolution for fiscal year 2008 in order to accommodate the full repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax preventing 23 million families and individuals from being subject to the AMT in 2007, and millions of families and individuals in subsequent years.

Pages S3679–80

By 44 yeas and 55 nays (Vote No. 109), DeMint/Kyl Amendment No. 578, to repeal the death tax.

Pages S3681–82

By 44 yeas and 55 nays (Vote No. 111), Bunning Modified Amendment No. 594, to provide a deficit-neutral reserve fund for protecting State flexibility in Medicaid. **Pages S3683–84**

By 44 yeas and 55 nays (Vote No. 112), Chambliss/Isakson Amendment No. 536, to provide a deficit-neutral reserve fund for the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that eliminates enhanced Federal matching payments for coverage of nonpregnant adults and permits States to offer supplemental dental and mental health benefits for children enrolled in SCHIP.

Pages S3684–85

By 49 yeas and 50 nays (Vote No. 113), Lott Amendment No. 606, to repeal section 13202 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 by restoring the Alternative Minimum Tax rates that had been in effect prior thereto. **Pages S3685–86**

Withdrawn:

Bingaman Amendment No. 587, to prohibit the scoring of any amount realized from the sale or lease of land or interests in land that are part of the National Park System, the National Forest System, or the National Wildlife Refuge System. **Pages S3680–81**

DeMint Amendment No. 576, to prevent the adding of earmarks for farmland damaged by freezing temperatures to an emergency war supplemental appropriations bill.

During consideration of this measure today, the Senate also took the following action:

By 39 yeas to 60 nays (Vote No. 104), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, not having voted in the affirmative, Senate rejected the motion to waive pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, with respect to Allard/Gregg Amendment No. 521, to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of Federal programs and reduce the Federal debt by eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse. Subsequently, the point of order that the amendment was in violation of section 305(b)(2) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, was sustained, and the amendment thus fell.

Pages S3671–72

Honoring George C. Springer, Sr.: Senate agreed to S. Res. 47, honoring the life and achievements of George C. Springer, Sr., the Northeast regional director and a former vice president of the American Federation of Teachers. **Pages S3722–23**

50th Anniversary of Alaska's Statehood: Senate agreed to S. Res. 49, recognizing and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the entry of Alaska into the Union as the 49th State. **Page S3723**

National Autism Awareness Month: Senate agreed to S. Res. 78, designating April 2007 as "National Autism Awareness Month" and supporting efforts to increase funding for research into the causes and treatment of autism and to improve training and support for individuals with autism and those who care for individuals with autism.

Page S3723

Abolition of British Slave Trade Anniversary: Senate agreed to S. Res. 84, observing February 23, 2007, as the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, honoring the distinguished life and legacy of William Wilberforce, and encouraging the people of the United States to follow the example of William Wilberforce by selflessly pursuing respect for human rights around the world. **Pages S3723–24**

NAACP 98th Anniversary: Senate agreed to H. Con. Res. 44, honoring and praising the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on the occasion of its 98th anniversary. **Page S3724**

Senate Legal Counsel: Senate agreed to S. Res. 121, to direct the Senate Legal Counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in support of the appellee in Office of Senator Mark Dayton v. Brad Hanson. **Page S3724**

Vietnam Veterans Memorial 25th Anniversary: Senate agreed to S. Res. 122, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. **Pages S3724–25**

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at 3 p.m., on Monday, March 26, 2007, Senate begin consideration of H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

Page S3725

Appointments:

United States Capitol Preservation Commission: The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, pursuant to Public Law 100–696, appointed the following Senators as members of the United States Capitol Preservation Commission: Senators Durbin and Landrieu. **Page S3722**

United States Capitol Preservation Commission: The Chair, on behalf of the Republican Leader, pursuant to Public Law 100–696, announced the appointment of Senator Allard as a member of the United States Capitol Preservation Commission.

Page S3722

Messages From the House: **Page S3705**

Measures Referred: **Page S3705**

Measures Placed on the Calendar: **Page S3705**

Measures Read the First Time: **Page S3705**

Petitions and Memorials: **Pages S3705–06**

Executive Communications: **Page S3705**

Additional Cosponsors: Pages S3706–08

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: Pages S3708–18

Additional Statements: Pages S3704–05

Amendments Submitted: Pages S3719–22

Notices of Hearings/Meetings: Page S3722

Record Votes: Sixteen record votes were taken today. (Total—114) Pages S3664–65, S3667, S3668, S3669, S3671, S3672, S3672–73, S3677, S3678, S3680, S3682, S3682–83, S3684, S3685, S3686, S3702

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9 a.m., and adjourned at 4:25 p.m., until 2:30 p.m. on Monday, March 26, 2007. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S3725.)

Committee Meetings

No committee meetings were held.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 13 public bills, H.R. 1662–1674; and 3 resolutions, H. Res. 263–265 were introduced. Pages H3016–17

Additional Cosponsors: Pages H3017–18

Reports Filed: Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 1562, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and expand certain rules with respect to housing in the GO Zones, with an amendment (H. Rept. 110–66);

H.R. 1429, to reauthorize the Head Start Act, to improve program quality, to expand access, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 110–67);

H.R. 1538, to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 110–68, Pt. 1); and

H. Con. Res. 99, revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for the fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012 (H. Rept. 110–69). Page H3016

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein she appointed Representative Hooley to act as Speaker Pro Tempore for today. Page H2959

Chaplain: The prayer was offered by the guest Chaplain, Dr. Alan Keiran, Senate Chaplain's Office. Page H2959

Journal: The House agreed to the Speaker's approval of the Journal by a yea-and-nay vote of 263 yeas to 146 nays, with 2 voting "present", Roll No. 185. Pages H2959, H2961

Making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007: The House passed H.R. 1591, amended, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, by a yea-and-nay vote of 218 yeas to 212 nays, with 1 voting "present", Roll No. 186. Debate began on Thursday, March 22nd. Pages H2961–99

H. Res. 261, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to on Thursday, March 22nd.

Meeting Hour: Agreed that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, March 26th for Morning Hour debate. Page H3001

Calendar Wednesday: Agreed by unanimous consent to dispense with the Calendar Wednesday business of Wednesday, March 28th. Page H3001

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H2961 and H2999. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 9 a.m. and adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Committee Meetings

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

Committee on Armed Services: Held a hearing on the Second Report to Congress by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves. Testimony was heard from MG Arnold Punaro, USMC (Ret.), Chairman, Commission on the National Guard and Reserves.

DEFENSE SPACE ACTIVITIES BUDGET

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces held a hearing on Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Budget Request and the status of space activities. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Defense: Ronald Sega, Under Secretary and GEN J. Kevin Chilton, USAF, Command, Air Force Space Command; and Donald Kerr, Director, National Reconnaissance Office.

GENETIC INFORMATION NONDISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2007

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Ordered reported, as amended, H.R. 493, Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Committee on Education and Labor: Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education held a hearing on Impact of NCLB on English Language Learners. Testimony was heard from Cornelia M. Ashby, Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues, GAO; and public witnesses.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Committee on Financial Services: Held a hearing on the Role of Public Investment in Promoting Economic Growth. Testimony was heard from Andrew F. Haughwout, Research and Statistics Group, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Federal Reserve System; and public witnesses.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

Committee on Homeland Security,: Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, hearing entitled ''Foreign Ownership: Discussion of Challenges Posed by Foreign Ownership To Using Critical Infrastructure.'' Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Homeland Security: Stewart A. Baker, Assistant Secretary, Policy; COL Robert B. Stephan, USAF (Ret.) Assistant Secretary, Infrastructure Protection; and Gregory Garcia, Assistant Secretary, Cyber Security and Telecommunications; and Ann Calvaresi Barr, Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management, GAO.

ELECTION REFORM—VOTER CONFIDENCE AND INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY ACT OF 2007

Committee on House Administration: Subcommittee on Elections continued hearings on Election Reform, H.R. 811, Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007. Testimony was heard from Representatives Holt and Petri; Charlie Cast, Governor of Florida; Debra Bowen, Secretary of State, California; Chris Nelson, Secretary of State, South Dakota; and public witnesses.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRAM AHEAD

Week of March 26 through March 31, 2007

Senate Chamber

On *Monday,* at 3 p.m., Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 1591, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations.

During the balance of the week, Senate may consider any cleared legislative and executive business.

Senate Committees

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Committee on Appropriations: March 26, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for mind, brain and behavioral research at the National Institutes of Health, 3:30 p.m., SD–116.

March 28, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Department of Labor, 9:45 a.m., SD–124.

March 28, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, to hold hearings to examine the proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the United States Agency for International Development and foreign assistance programs, 10 a.m., SD–138.

March 28, Subcommittee on Defense, to hold hearings to examine the proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the United States Navy, 10:30 a.m., SD–192.

March 28, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for United States Forest Service, 2:30 p.m., SD–124.

March 28, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, to hold hearings to examine the proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Department of the Treasury, 3 p.m., SD–192.

March 30, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, and the United States Capitol police, 10 a.m., SD–138.

Committee on Armed Services: March 26, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, to receive a briefing on the reorganization of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 2 p.m., SR–232A.

March 27, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine the nominations of James R. Clapper, Jr., of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; Claude

M. Kicklighter, of Georgia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense; S. Ward Casscells, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; and William Charles Ostendorff, of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, 9:30 a.m., SH–216.

March 27, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, to receive a closed briefing on Special Operations Command's global operation, 3:30 p.m., S–407, Capitol.

March 28, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, to hold hearings to examine the Strategic Forces Program in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, 9:30 a.m., SR–232A.

March 28, Subcommittee on Personnel, to hold hearings to examine active component, reserve component, and civilian personnel programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, 3:30 p.m., SR–232A.

March 29, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine the Department of the Navy in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, 9:30 a.m., SH–216.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: March 27, to hold hearings to examine competition and consumer choice relating to exclusive sports programming, 10 a.m., SR–253.

March 28, Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, to hold hearings to examine the future of the Coast Guard Dive Program, 10 a.m., SR–253.

March 28, Subcommittee on Space, Aeronautics, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine transitioning to a next generation Human Space Flight System, 2:30 p.m., SR–253.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: March 26, to hold hearings to examine the progress of the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme and to receive information on lessons learned for policymakers who want to better understand how a market-based trading program could operate efficiently and effectively in the United States, 2 p.m., SD–G50.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: March 28, to hold hearings to examine reducing government building operational costs through innovation and efficiency, focusing on legislative solutions, 10 a.m., SD–406.

Committee on Finance: March 27, to hold hearings to examine opportunities and challenges in the U.S.–China economic relationship, 10 a.m., SD–215.

March 28, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine risks and reform, focusing on the role of currency in the U.S.–China relationship, 10 a.m., SD–215.

March 29, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine clean energy from the margins to the mainstream, 10 a.m., SD–215.

Committee on Foreign Relations: March 28, business meeting to consider S. 193, to increase cooperation on energy issues between the United States Government and foreign governments and entities in order to secure the strategic and economic interests of the United States, S. 613, to enhance the overseas stabilization and reconstruction capabilities of the United States Government, H.R. 1003, to amend the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 to reauthorize the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, S. Res. 30, expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the need for the United States to address global climate change through the negotiation of fair and effective international commitments, S. Res. 65, condemning the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights advocate Hrant Dink and urging the people of Turkey to honor his legacy of tolerance, S. Res. 76, calling on the United States Government and the international community to promptly develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive regional strategy in Africa to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian operations, contain and reduce violence, and contribute to conditions for sustainable peace in eastern Chad, and Central African Republic, and Darfur, Sudan, and the nominations of Katherine Almquist, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Paul J. Bonicelli, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Curtis S. Chin, of New York, to be United States Director of the Asian Development Bank, with the rank of Ambassador, Eli Whitney Debevoise II, of Maryland, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Sam Fox, of Missouri, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belgium, Zalmay Khalilzad, of Maryland, to be the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations, Margrethe Lundsager, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund, and Douglas Menarchik, of Texas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (Reappointment), 11:45 a.m., SD–419.

March 29, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine an update on Iran; may be followed by a business meeting to consider pending calendar business, 9:30 a.m., SD–419.

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: March 27, to hold hearings to examine the Employee Free Choice Act, focusing on restoring economic opportunity for working families, 9:30 a.m., SD–430.

March 27, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine ensuring safe medicines and medical devices for children, 1 p.m., SD–430.

March 28, Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine No Child Left Behind Reauthorization, focusing on effective strategies for engaging parents and communities in schools, 3 p.m., SD–430.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: March 26, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, to hold hearings to examine a review of the

Real ID Act of 2005 and the proposed regulations released by the Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2006, implementing Act, focusing on efforts to secure drivers' licenses and identification cards, 2:30 p.m., SD–342.

March 29, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security, to hold hearings to examine eliminating and recovering improper payments, focusing on the Office of Management and Budget report entitled ''Improving the Accuracy and Integrity of Improper Payments'', 10 a.m., SD–342.

Committee on Indian Affairs: March 29, to hold an oversight hearing to examine Indian trust fund litigation, 9:15 a.m., SR–485.

Committee on the Judiciary: March 26, Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law, to hold hearings to examine the problem of human trafficking and the legal options to stop the problem, 3 p.m., SD–226.

March 27, Full Committee, to hold oversight hearings to examine the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 9:30 a.m., SD–106.

March 29, Full Committee, to continue hearings to examine Department of Justice hiring and firing of United States Attorneys, focusing on preserving prosecutorial independence, 10 a.m., SD–226.

March 29, Full Committee, business meeting to consider S. 236, to require reports to Congress on Federal agency use of data mining, S. 376, to amend title 18, United States Code, to improve the provisions relating to the carrying of concealed weapons by law enforcement officers, S. 849, to promote accessibility, accountability, and openness in Government by strengthening section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as the Freedom of Information Act), S. 119, to prohibit profiteering and fraud relating to military action, relief, and reconstruction efforts, S. 621, to establish commissions to review the facts and circumstances surrounding injustices suffered by European Americans, European Latin Americans, and Jewish refugees during World War II, and S. Res. 108, designating the first week of April 2007 as ''National Asbestos Awareness Week'' and to discuss the possibility of the issuance of certain subpoenas in connection with investigation into replacement of United States Attorneys, 2 p.m., SD–226.

Committee on Rules and Administration: March 28, business meeting to consider S. 223, to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form, 10 a.m., SR–301.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: March 29, business meeting to mark up S. 163, to improve the disaster loan program of the Small Business Administration, 9:30 a.m., SR–428A.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: March 27, to hold an oversight hearing to examine Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense cooperation and collaboration, focusing on health care issues, 9:30 a.m., SR–418.

March 29, Full Committee, to hold joint hearings with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of AMVETS, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Gold Star Wives of America, Fleet Reserve Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, Military Officers Association of America, and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, 9:30 a.m., SD–106.

Select Committee on Intelligence: March 27, to hold closed hearings to examine intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

March 29, Full Committee, closed business meeting and hearing regarding certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

Special Committee on Aging: March 28, to hold hearings to examine affordable drug coverage that works for Wisconsin, focusing on preserving senior care, 10:30 a.m., SD–562.

House Committees

Committee on Agriculture, March 27, Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research, hearing to review credit availability in rural America, 10 a.m., 1302 Longworth.

March 28, Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, hearing to review proposals to amend the program crop provisions of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, 10 a.m., 1302 Longworth.

March 29, Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, hearing to review colony collapse disorder in honeybee colonies across the United States, 10 a.m., 1302 Longworth.

Committee on Appropriations, March 26, Subcommittee on Select Intelligence Oversight, executive, on National Security Agency, 5 p.m., H–140 Capitol.

March 27, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, on Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, 1 p.m., 2362A Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, on State and Local Grants, 10 am., and on Bureau of Prisons, 2 p.m., H–309 Capital.

March 27, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, on SEC, 10 a.m., 2220 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, on Priorities in Enforcing Immigration Laws and Temporary Worker Program, 2 p.m., 2358 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, on National Park Service, 9:30 a.m., B–308 Rayburn.

March 27, 28 and 29, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, on public witnesses, 10 a.m., and 2 p.m., on March 27, and 2 p.m., on March 28 and 29, 2359 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Government Printing Office: Budget/Printing Technology in the 21st Century, 1:30 p.m., H–144 Capitol.

March 27, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, on International Organizations and International Peacekeeping Programs, 10 a.m., 2362B Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies,

on Housing Needs of Special Populations, 10 a.m., 2358 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, on Department of Energy: Nuclear Energy/Office of Civilian Nuclear Waste/Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 10 a.m., 2362B Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, on Secretary of the Treasury, 10 a.m., 2359 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, on Ensuring That the Department of Homeland Security's Research and Technology Investments Pay Off, 10 a.m., 2362A Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Department of Interior: Office of Insular Affairs/Departmental Management/Office of the Solicitor, 9:30 a.m, B–308 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, on Latin America and Caribbean, 10 a.m., 2362A Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies, on Federal Railroad Administration/National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK), 10 a.m., 2358 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies, on Marketing and Regulatory Programs, 1 p.m., 2362A Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, on Commission on Civil Rights/Legal Services Corporation/State Justice Institute, 10 a.m., and on U.S. Trade Representative/International Trade Commission, 2 p.m., H–309 Capitol.

March 29, Subcommittee on Defense, on Secretary of Defense, 10 a.m., 2359 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, on Weapons Activities Oversight, 10 a.m., and on Department of Energy: Weapons Activities and Naval Reactors, 2 p.m., 2362B Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Financial Services, General Government, and Related Agencies, on IRS, 10 a.m., 2220 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, on Bioterrorism Preparedness and the Role of Department of Homeland Security Chief Medical Officer, 10 a.m., 2362A Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, on Bureau of Indian Affairs/Office of the Special Trustee, 3 p.m., B–308 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, on House of Representatives, 10 a.m., H–144 Capitol.

March 29, Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Related Agencies, on Air Force Budget, 1:30 p.m., H–143 Capitol.

March 29, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, on Public Witnesses, 10 a.m., B–308 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, on Transportation Safety: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration/Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration/Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration/National Transportation Safety Board, 10 a.m., 2358 Rayburn.

Committee on Armed Services, March 27, Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces, hearing on Army ground force acquisition programs, 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, hearing on the state of the military health care system, 9 a.m., 2212 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Readiness, hearing on the readiness of the Army and Air National Guard, 3 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, hearing on the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Budget Request for missile defense programs, 3 p.m., 2212 Rayburn.

March 28, and 29, full Committee, hearings on the Military Commissions Act and the continued use of Guantanamo Bay as a detention facility, 9:30 a.m., on March 28 and 10 a.m., on March 29, 2118 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, hearing on outside perspectives on transitioning security to the Iraqi security forces, 1:30 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, hearing on the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Budget Request on information technology, 2 p.m., 2212 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, hearing on overview of morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) programs, 2 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and Labor, March 26, hearing on How Effective Are Existing Programs in Helping Workers Impacted by International Trade? 1 p.m., 2175 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, hearing on Providing Fairness to Workers Who Have Been Misclassified as Independent Contractors, 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

March 28, full Committee, hearing on Protecting the Health and Safety of America's Mine Workers, 10:30 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, hearing on How NCLB Affects Students With Disabilities, 10:30 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, March 27, Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, hearing entitled "Climate Change—International Issues, Engaging Developing Countries," 10 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled "Insuring Bright Futures: Improving Access to Dental Care and Providing a Healthy Start for Children," 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, hearing entitled "Status of the Digital Television Transition," 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, hearing entitled "Climate Change: Lessons Learned From

Existing Cap and Trade Programs,'' 10 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, March 27, Subcommittee on Financial Institutions, hearing entitled ''Subprime and Predatory Lending: New Regulatory Guidance, Current Market Conditions, and Effects on Regulated Financial Institutions,'' 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, hearing entitled ''Perspectives on Natural Disaster Insurance,'' 2 p.m., 2128 Rayburn.

March 28, full Committee, to mark up the following: H.R. 1515, to amend the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to treat certain communities as metropolitan cities for purposes of the community development block grant program; H.R. 1427, Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007; the Preservation Approval Process Improvement Act of 2007; and the Native American Home Ownership Opportunity Act of 2007 and to continue mark up of H.R. 1257, Shareholder Vote on Executive Compensation Act, 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 26, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, hearing on Iraqi Refugees: What Is America's Obligation? 3:30 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 27, full Committee, to markup the following measures: H.R. 982, ADVANCE Democracy Act of 2007; H.R. 1405, Wildlife GAINS Act of 2007; H.R. 1469, Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007; H. Res. 100, Expressing the sympathy of the House of Representatives to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala and encouraging the Government of Guatemala to bring an end to these crimes; H. Res. 158, Observing the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade and encouraging the people of the United States, particularly the youth of the United States, to remember the life and legacy of William Wilberforce, a member of the British House of Commons who devoted his life to the suppression and abolition of the institution of slavery, and to work for the protection of human rights throughout the world; and H. Res. 196, Supporting the goals and ideals of World Water Day, 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, hearing on U.S.–China Relations, 2 p.m., 2200 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, joint hearing on Can Iraq Pay for Its Own Reconstruction? 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Europe, hearing on Opening Up of the Bad Arolsen Holocaust Archives in Germany, 1:30 p.m., 2255 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Africa, and Global Health, joint hearing on African Opinion on U.S. Policies, Values and People, 2 p.m., 2200 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade, hearing on Trade, Foreign Policy and the American Worker, 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, hearing on Poverty and Inequality in the Americas: The Unaddressed Problem, 3 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 29, full Committee, hearing on the 2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the Promotion of Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy, 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, hearing on the Ongoing Crisis in Somalia: Where Do We Go From Here? 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, March 28, to mark up a measure authorizing appropriations for the Department Security for fiscal year 2008, 10 a.m., 311 Cannon.

Committee on the Judiciary, March 27, Subcommittee Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, hearing on Criminal Justice Responses to Offenders With Mental Illness, 1 p.m., 2141 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law, hearing on Ensuring Executive Branch Accountability, 1 p.m., 2141 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, hearing on the Appropriate Use of the Presidential Pardoning Power, 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, March 27, oversight hearing on Access Denied: The Growing Conflict Between Fishing, Hunting, and Energy Development on Federal Lands, 10:30 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

March 28, full Committee, oversight hearing on Royalties at Risk?, 11 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

March 29, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, hearing on the following bills: H.R. 189, Paterson Great Falls National Park Act of 2007; H.R. 359, Cesar Estrade Chavez Study Act; and H.R. 1080, Grand Teton National Park Extension Act of 2007, 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth.

March 29, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans, oversight hearing on ocean policy priorities in the United States, 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, March 26, hearing on Safe and Affordable Biotech Drugs—The Need for a Generic Pathway, 10 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, to consider pending business, 2 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.

March 28, full Committee, hearing on Allegations of Misconduct at the General Services Administration, 10 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

March 29, to consider pending business, 9:30 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Domestic Policy, hearing on Build It and They Will Come: Do Taxpayer-financed Sports Stadiums, Convention Centers and Hotels deliver as promised for America's Cities, 10:30 a.m., 2247 Rayburn.

Committee on Rules, March 26, to consider H.R. 1401, Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007, 5:30 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

March 27, to consider the following: H.R. 1538, Wounded Assistance Act of 2007; and a resolution Establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, 4 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Science and Technology, March 28, to mark up the following measures: H.R. 362, 10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds, Science and Math Scholarship Act; H. Con. Res. 76, Honoring the 50th anniversary of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) and its past contributions to space research, and looking forward to future accomplishments; and H. Res. 252, Recognizing the 50th anniversary of John Herschel Glenn, Jr.'s, historic achievement in becoming the first United States astronaut to orbit the Earth, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, hearing on Shaping the Message, Distorting the Science: Media Strategies To Influence Science Policy, 2 p.m., 2318 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, hearing on JPDO and the Next Generation Air Transportation System: Status and Issues, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

March 29, Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, hearing on reauthorizing the National Science Foundation, Part 2, 2 p.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Small Business, March 28, Subcommittee on Regulation, Health Care and Trade, hearing entitled ''The Value of Health IT to Solo and Small Medical Practices,'' 10 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

March 29, full Committee, hearing entitled ''The Importance of Patent Reform on Small Businesses,'' 10 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, March 27, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, hearing on Crimes Against Americans on Cruise Ships, 10 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

March 27, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, hearing on the Structure of the Federal Fuel Tax and the Long-Term Viability of the Highways Trust Fund, 2 p.m., 2167 Rayburn.

March 28, Subcommittee on Aviation, hearing on the FAA's Airport Improvement Program, 10 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, March 28, Subcommittee on Health, hearing on Mental Health Services, 2 p.m., 334 Cannon.

Committee on Ways and Means, March 27, Subcommittee on Health, hearing on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity, 10 a.m., 1100 Longworth.

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, March 27, executive, hearing on Integration of Domestic Intelligence, 2 p.m., H–405 Capitol.

March 28, hearing on National Security Letters, 9 a.m., 2212 Rayburn.

March 29, executive, hearing on Research and Development/Systems Acquisition, 9:30 a.m., H–405 Capitol.

Joint Meetings

Joint Economic Committee: March 28, to hold hearings to examine the current economic outlook, 9:30 a.m., SH–216.

Joint Hearing: March 29, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to hold joint hearings with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of AMVETS, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Gold Star Wives of America, Fleet Reserve Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, Military Officers Association of America, and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, 9:30 a.m., SD–106.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

2:30 p.m., Monday, March 26

Senate Chamber

Program for Monday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond 3 p.m.), Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 1591, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

12:30 p.m., Monday, March 26

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Program for Monday: To be announced.

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