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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. BALDWIN).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 28, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY BALDWIN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Rabbi Paul Silton, Temple Israel, Albany, New York, offered the following prayer:

May the author of liberty and equality, who created all human beings in His image, bless all of you who have been chosen by the citizens of this great bastion of democracy to represent them.

May He grant all of you the privilege of discovering His will and doing it wholeheartedly. May He touch your lives with the spirit of wisdom and insight. May He grant all of you the ability to make wise decisions and the satisfaction of doing a multitude of good deeds. May He strengthen you to walk in paths of honesty, to courageously meet every challenge, and to overcome all obstacles.

May you be blessed with long and peaceful lives, lives free from shame and reproach, lives filled with many years of physical vitality, so that you may see all your heart's desires for goodness fulfilled and the work of your hands established.

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.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PASCRELL 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.

WELCOMING DR. RABBI PAUL SILTON

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

Mr. MCNULTY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome my very dear friend, Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton, and to thank him for offering the opening prayer this morning for the United States House of Representatives.

Rabbi Silton has served the community of New York's Capital Region for over 30 years as Rabbi of Temple Israel, the largest conservative synagogue in northeastern New York. He began his career at Temple Israel as the education director where he was responsible for fostering growth at every education level, including the addition of an adult education program.

Rabbi Silton has made enormous contributions not just to Temple Israel, but to the entire community. He founded the Holocaust Survivors and Friends in Pursuit of Justice. He also hosted a 3-day National Holocaust Conference for 1,500 participants at Temple Israel.

He has also organized a multitude of services for the community Kristallnacht and the Holocaust Memorial commemorations.

Through the efforts of Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton, Temple Israel has received numerous awards from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, in addition to education awards for programming, high school education, and the Framework for Excellent Synagogue School Program Award.

I am proud to welcome my very dear friend, Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton this morning, and to thank him on behalf of the entire United States House of Representatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will recognize up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT RAISING TAXES

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

Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Speaker, rather than pulling out the tired old talking points of ''tax and spend,'' I wish my colleagues and my good friends on the other side of the aisle would actually read the Democratic budget resolution. Really, it makes for pretty good reading.

If they did, they would see that nowhere in the budget do we call for any increase in taxes; nowhere.

In fact, if the Republicans read our budget, they would see that it actually directs the Ways and Means Committee, of which I am a member, to come up with immediate relief for middle-income families who would otherwise be subject to the alternative minimum tax. Unless we reform that tax, 19 million families will have to pay higher taxes in 2007.

The President played games with this tax, coming up with only a 1-year fix.

Printed on recycled paper.

You hear it in your own districts. Democrats are committed to coming up with a permanent solution.

Our budget allows the Ways and Means Committee to extend other middle-income tax relief, including the child tax credit and marriage penalty relief, while remaining true to the PAYGO principle.

Madam Speaker, this is a good budget that provides tax relief to middle-income families, and at the same time, finds balance within the next 5 years. I suggest we take a look at it.

DEMOCRAT BUDGET

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, in all my years of public service, I have never had a constituent tell me that they are taxed too little. Whether it is income taxes, property taxes, estate taxes, capital gains taxes, car taxes or some other tax, Americans give plenty of money to the government.

But for House Democrats, it seems that is not enough. How else do you explain a budget resolution that proposes the largest tax increase in American history by letting all of the tax cuts expire?

Their budget plan will deliver a hard blow to working families in our vibrant economy. By bringing back the marriage penalty, 23 million taxpayers will see their tax bill go up. By cutting the child tax credit in half, 31 million taxpayers will pay an average of $850 more a year.

In all, House Democrats are asking hardworking Americans to fork over an extra $400 billion over 5 years.

Madam Speaker, the other side will try to sell this budget, but don't be fooled, this is tax-and-spend politics at its worst, and it should be rejected.

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

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

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 80th birthday of an American hero, the late César Chávez.

For 7 years, I have fought for a national holiday to honor César Chávez, a man who not only carried the torch for justice and freedom, but was the hope of thousands of impoverished people. César Chávez believed in ''la causa,'' the cause; and he believed in ''la huelga,'' the struggle.

As we approach his birthday, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 76, a resolution that educates our youth about his heroic life, celebrates his accomplishments and honors him with a national holiday.

The battle for social justice is far from over. But in the words of César Chávez, ''si se puede.''

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BROWN

(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. Madam Speaker, what can brown do for you? You may be familiar with this phrase because it is the new UPS advertising slogan. During the past 100 years, UPS has done much for American workers and the American economy.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, UPS employs more than 427,000 people and is the world's largest package delivery company. It is incredible to know that this global behemoth began in Seattle, Washington, as a messenger service by a 19-year-old teenager who borrowed $100.

Throughout 2007, UPS is celebrating its milestone 100th birthday by hosting employee events around the world. The celebration in more than 55 U.S. cities will revolve around the arrival of a mobile centennial exhibit. I was pleased South Carolina's Second Congressional District had the opportunity to participate in UPS's success when the birthday celebration came to the Midlands, and Rich McArdle was introduced as the new district manager.

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

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 76, which would establish a national holiday in honor of César Chávez.

César Chávez dedicated his life to teaching others that persistence, hard work, faith, and willingness to sacrifice oneself breaks down barriers. He committed himself to achieving justice and equality for all farm workers, and paved the way for momentous social change.

In 1962, César Chávez formed what is known as the United Farm Workers. His efforts initiated one of the greatest social movements of our time. He dedicated himself to fighting for safe working conditions, reasonable wages, decent housing and the outlawing of child labor for farm workers everywhere.

Mr. Chávez embraced nonviolent tactics to help focus national attention on the problems that existed for farm workers. Mr. Chávez was said to have given his last ounce of strength defending the farm workers before he died in his sleep on April 23, 1993.

César Chávez is honored throughout America for his tireless work to help those who could not help themselves.

In my hometown of Houston and my district every year we celebrate the life and times of César Chávez by holding a Hispanic heritage parade and day of celebration. A national holiday in honor of César Chávez would serve as an inspiration to those who seek to create a better world in the legacy of one who served to remind us that together all things are possible; in Spanish, ''si se puede.''

2008 DEMOCRATIC BUDGET

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

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, this week, the Democrats will bring to the floor their budget, fiscal year 2008, that they passed out of committee. This budget promises to do two things: Raise taxes and increase spending.

My Republican colleagues and I will put forth a substitute that uses common sense to balance the budget in 5 years. It lowers spending, reforms unsustainable entitlement programs, and encourages economic growth without raising taxes.

Madam Speaker, as a result of the Republican supported tax policies passed in 2001 through 2005, every taxpayer who paid income taxes this year will get tax relief. My Republican colleagues and I believe government should limit taxing and spending and ease the burden on the economy. Let the country grow. The difference between the two budgets are plain and simple: The Democrats trust government, the Republicans trust people.

I urge my colleagues to support the fiscally responsible Republican substitute when it is brought to the floor later this week.

HONORING FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOHN BRADEMAS

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

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of my distinguished predecessors in representing the district I am now privileged to serve in Congress and to celebrate his recent 80th birthday.

Dr. John Brademas served the then-Third District of Indiana in the House of Representatives for 22 years, from 1959 until 1981. While in Congress, Dr. Brademas played a leading role in writing most of Federal legislation enacted concerning schools, colleges and universities, services for the elderly and the disabled, libraries, museums, the arts and humanities.

During his last 4 years on Capitol Hill, John Brademas served as House majority whip under Speaker Tip O'Neill. Our distinguished former colleague was a dedicated and highly effective legislator and shaper of national policy. He has also been president of the Nation's largest private university, New York University.

Madam Speaker, many Members of both this Chamber and the Senate on both sides of the aisle served with Dr. Brademas. I believe they will share my sentiments in expressing our admiration for his outstanding public service and join me in wishing him well.

□ 1015

SAY ''YES'' TO THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET RESOLUTION

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

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, when it comes to the new Democrat Congress, it is the 1970s all over again. Think about it. We have hostages in Iran, Congress is making plans to withdraw from another unpopular war, and the Democrats return to the floor of Congress with plans to tax and spend once again. Higher taxes for working families, small businesses and family farms to finance billions of dollars in new spending with absolutely no reform of entitlements, the real threat to our children and grandchildren.

The GOP budget alternative will balance the budget by the year 2012 without tax increases, without raiding Social Security and with truly historic entitlement reform.

I say, Madam Speaker, say ''no'' to bell bottoms, disco and the tax-and-spend politics of the 1970s. Say ''yes'' to the Republican budget resolution.

DEMOCRATIC BUDGET GETS RAVE REVIEWS FROM BROAD VARIETY OF OUTSIDE GROUPS

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

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, the Democratic budget is receiving rave reviews from a broad variety of outside groups. Here are just some of the examples of what Democrats are hearing.

The American Legion praised our budget because it includes $3.3 billion more for veterans than the President's budget, making it the largest veterans increase in 77 years. In the letter, the American Legion writes: ''As a Nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families.''

The American Academy of Pediatrics writes: ''This budget includes a significant commitment to infants, children, adolescents and young adults through its funding of SCHIP and Medicaid.''

And the watchdog group OMB Watch writes: ''We applaud its commitment to restoring fiscal responsibility by seeking to eliminate the Federal budget deficits by 2012, adopting the pay-as-you-go principle requiring that any new tax cuts and mandatory spending be paid for.''

Madam Speaker, the Democratic budget shows that we can fiscally be responsible while also meeting the critical needs of the American people. This budget deserves strong support.

DEMOCRAT TAXES—ONCE AGAIN!

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to warn all Americans of the looming taxation tidal wave that is coming under this new Democrat majority.

Democrats have unveiled their tax-and-spend budget proposal which will bring upon the American people the largest tax increase in our Nation's history.

Rather than allow Americans to make choices about how best to spend their own money, it is clear that Democrats feel they and Washington bureaucrats better understand what is good for American families.

Our Democrat colleagues repeatedly claim that the Republican tax cuts only benefit the wealthy. Well, Madam Speaker, the lowest-income Americans are about to find out just how untrue that tired rhetoric is.

The tax hikes will hit all Americans in every tax bracket, the middle class, low-income families and small businesses.

But there is an alternative. House Republicans have vowed to not just extend but make permanent the pro-growth low-tax policies that have brought recovery to our economy.

Madam Speaker, we can move away from this tired trend of big and bigger government. We can return money back to the rightful owner, the American taxpayer; and we should start right now.

DEMOCRATIC BUDGET PROTECTS MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES FROM A TAX INCREASE

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, when I ran for Congress, I ran for the rest of us, the bottom 99 percent of us who as a social worker I knew were not getting a fair shake under this administration and its followers. I knew they had created the greatest deficits in American history and that it was the middle class who had been harmed.

I stand here with great pride to ask my colleagues in the House to pass this Democratic budget which actually finally represents the middle class.

What does this budget do? Unlike the President's own budget proposal, the Democrats' House budget protects middle-class families from a tax increase. Our resolution protects 19 million families against the alternative minimum tax this year and creates a reserve fund accommodating a permanent fix. The reserve fund also will accommodate other middle-class tax cuts, including extending the child tax credit, marriage penalty relief, the extension of the 10 percent individual tax credit and the elimination of most estate taxes.

Compare these middle-class tax cuts to the $500 billion tax increase the President proposed in his budget over the next 10 years.

Madam Speaker, this Democratic House is committed to balancing the budget in the next 5 years without raising taxes, and that is what we are going to do here.

FREEWAY HOMICIDES AND AN ILLEGAL

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, as Maria Ortiz and her daughter Vanessa were driving down the Eastex Freeway in Kingwood, Texas, on Sunday afternoon, they were probably talking about the upcoming birth of Vanessa's baby boy Nathaniel.

Ignacio Gomez-Gutierrez was blasting down that same freeway in his pick-up truck. He came up behind Maria and Vanessa and slammed his truck into the back of their car, smashing the trunk into the front seat, killing them both, Maria, Vanessa and also Nathaniel.

Gomez-Gutierrez was three times the legal limit drunk. Witnesses who were following him driving stated that he was so drunk he could barely hold his head up.

After this coward killed the Ortizes, he fled from his pick-up and ran, but he was finally captured and held for the police by a bystander.

Gomez-Gutierrez had already been convicted three times for drunk driving, and he was an illegal from Mexico. But he had been never been deported after any of his convictions. If he had, Maria, Vanessa, and the baby would still be here.

How many more Americans and legal immigrants need to be killed before the Feds start deporting these criminal illegals?

And that's just the way it is.

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

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

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the life of César Chávez, to commemorate his life, to ask for a national holiday. He would have been 80 years old this Saturday, and I guess the most personal thing I can say is how he affected my life and the lives of countless people. He gave voice to the powerless in this country. He gave voice to the issues of the environment, human rights, labor rights, education and turned a whole generation and a whole community to look forward to opportunity and to stand up and protect the very fundamental rights that each one of us as an American holds true.

César Chávez is not just an icon. César Chávez is a living legacy of what this country's unfinished business is, the unfinished business of giving worth to each human being in this country.

I would end with a quote by César Chávez: ''We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children.''

That is the greatest opportunity we have.

DEMOCRAT LEADERSHIP PUSHING MICHIGAN IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

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

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, my home State of Michigan is currently experiencing really hard economic times. We have the highest unemployment in the Nation. We have the lowest personal income growth in the Nation, dropping home values, tightening family budgets.

Government overspending, combined with declining revenue from the soft job market, has forced my State into a fiscal crisis, and our Democrat Governor thinks that the way to solve the problem is by raising taxes and increasing government spending.

Here in Washington, we also have a spending problem and a deficit that is too large. So what do the Democrats offer? The largest tax increase in American history, almost $400 billion, and massive new government spending.

The Democrats are also pushing arbitrary and draconian fuel economy standards that could decimate our domestic auto industry and cost even more Michigan jobs.

Madam Speaker, the people of Michigan just cannot take it anymore. They do not need bigger government. They need bigger paychecks, and I ask the Democrat leaders to take pity on the citizens of Michigan. Please just give Michigan a break.

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ NATIONAL HOLIDAY

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning in strong support of H. Res. 76, a resolution to create a national holiday in honor of a great human being, César Chávez.

Madam Speaker, already nine States celebrate his life. The legacy that he left on the history of this Nation must be recognized. He made a difference not only for Latinos, not only for migrant workers, but for the poor and the working poor, and he also built a coalition of conscience across racial and economic boundaries.

I am reminded today of the political support César provided to me during my first campaign for the California legislature. He truly helped me win my very first election, and for that I am deeply grateful.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting the movement for a national holiday in honor of this great civil and human rights leader and such an important historical figure of our Nation.

Feliz cumpleanos, César.

Si se puede.

CELEBRATING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to recognize and celebrate the 80th birthday of César E. Chávez.

César Chávez was born in Yuma, Arizona, and grew up in migrant labor camps, into the poverty of the migrant worker's life. He became an historical figure who embodied humility and extraordinary strength during his peaceful struggle towards social justice.

He was an individual who represented the ones who had less and had no representation whatsoever. He dedicated his entire life to tirelessly championing the rights of the farm laborers; and along with him was Dolores Huerta, also founder of the United Farm Workers union, fighting for better wages and conditions for those individuals that pick our fruit and feed our Nation.

César Chávez has been an extraordinary icon in my home State of Texas. In San Antonio, we honor his legacy during the annual César Chávez march to recognize those individuals that labor picking up our food.

Additionally, we cannot travel anywhere in the United States without seeing a town or street named after this amazing individual. We in San Antonio, Texas, have César Chávez Boulevard as well as others throughout the country.

I hope that his legacy will continue to remain, and I rise today to encourage my colleagues, urging the President and the Congress to establish a national holiday for César Chávez and encourage them to support H. Res. 76.

HAWAIIAN HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. BALDWIN). Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution 269, proceedings will now resume on the bill (H.R. 835), to reauthorize the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing assistance for Native Hawaiians.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed on Tuesday, March 27, 2007, 10 minutes of debate remained on the bill.

The gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) each have 5 minutes remaining.

Who yields time?

□ 1030

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. We are virtually at the end of our remarks, so it would probably be useful, Madam Speaker, to reiterate from last evening's proceedings.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. I thank the gentleman from Hawaii.

Madam Speaker, I do claim the time in opposition. However, I do think the arguments relative to the bill were made last night.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I will just recapitulate for a couple of moments, then perhaps we can move to the conclusion.

I indicated last night, and I think it was agreed to by Mr. BACHUS of Alabama and others, by way of material that has been entered into the RECORD, like Mr. RENZI of Arizona, that this should not be a partisan fight. In fact, ''fight'' probably is the wrong word, but, I mean, even a disagreement here.

The reason that this bill passed overwhelmingly last week, with significant support from the Republican side of the aisle, was that it was supported in committee by Republicans and Democrats. The bill is here before the Congress as a result of a request by Hawaii's Republican Governor, and the former Chair of the Hawaii Republican Party, who is now the head of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

We have always had legislation in this area based on the underlying law, which was passed in 1921, by the Congress, setting aside certain lands for Hawaiians. The issue before us is about refinancing of home mortgages. This is not about whether the original law, under which the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands was established, it is constitutional.

On the contrary, that issue has been raised, and it perhaps should be raised in another context; namely, if someone wants to change the underlying law. But we should not punish my constituents or anybody's constituents for the fact that they appear before us in the form of a bill trying to carry forward on the admonitions required of them, in this instance, by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to get their mortgages refinanced.

Let me say, just as recently as February 9 of this year, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against a group of individuals who came before the court, saying that funding for programs that benefit Hawaiians, in this instance, of this bill, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, constitutes an unconstitutional discrimination against non-Hawaiians.

The Federal appeals court ruled that was not the case. In fact, they returned it to the U.S. District Court to see if the plaintiffs were eligible ''in any

other capacity.'' That is to say, other than whether it was constitutional.

So we have, as recently as the last 30 days, appeals court admonitions that the constitutionality of having programs for Hawaiians is, in fact, constitutional.

If someone wants to argue that, please let's argue it on the basis of a bill that addresses that itself, rather than the bill which is before us, which has to do with the refinancing of mortgages. Please don't punish people that are trying to own their own homes, to keep their own homes, because of some ideological difference that we might have.

Mr. RENZI. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 835, the Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007.

This bill is a reauthorization of Title 8 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act—commonly known as NAHASDA.

H.R. 835 reauthorizes the program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development that provides low-income Native Hawaiian families the opportunity for homeownership on their Hawaiian home lands.

Back in 1996, Congress passed NAHASDA—which reorganized the system of housing assistance provided to tribes through HUD.

The Indian Housing Block Grant program was created to provide funds directly to tribes for housing services as determined by the tribes themselves.

In 2000, NAHASDA was amended to include Title 8 so that Native Hawaiians could receive block grant funding as well through a separate grant program—the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant program.

This program funds housing programs on Hawaiian Home Lands—through the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, a Federal agency established by Congress in 1921 to administer trust land in Hawaii.

Title 8 funding has allowed the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to target housing assistance to families at or below 80 percent of median income.

This funding is used for such assistance as infrastructure development, downpayment assistance, self-help home repair programs, and financial literacy programs.

Additionally, Habitat for Humanity has also received funding through this program.

Title 8 of NAHASDA was originally authorized for 5 years, through 2005, and has not been formally reauthorized since, although appropriations acts have continued to provide de facto 1-year reauthorizations for the program.

This bill would reauthorize the program through fiscal year 2012.

In addition to reauthorization, the bill makes two changes to existing law.

First, it makes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands eligible for loan guarantees authorized under Title 6 of NAHASDA. Giving the Department Title 6 access would allow the Department to help more low-income families become homeowners without a large increase in Federal appropriations by partnering with the private market.

Second, this legislation allows Native Hawaiians the use of HUD's Section 184(a) guaranteed loans for refinancing in addition to construction. Adding the refinance authority reduces the cost of homeownership for low-income families and can also reduce risk by lowering monthly mortgage payments.

Congress must continue to embrace initiatives such as the one we are considering today that encourage Americans to own a home.

Last week, this bill failed to receive the two-thirds majority necessary to pass under the suspension calendar, although the majority of members voted to approve the bill.

I believe that the bill's failure to pass was the result of misconceptions about this bill that I would like to address.

This is not a bill about Native Hawaiian sovereignty.

The subject of Native Hawaiian sovereignty is a separate issue altogether and is not addressed in this legislation.

This bill simply reauthorizes and makes some small improvements to an existing program. It does not confer any special rights to the Native Hawaiians—nor does the bill suggest that Native Hawaiians should be given a status equal to that of Native Americans.

It simply reauthorizes a program created by Congress in the year 2000, just 7 years ago.

At that time, Congress chose to establish a housing program to benefit poor Native Hawaiians living on their home lands—200,000 acres scattered throughout the islands of Hawaii.

In the 7 years since the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant program has been in place, it has enabled thousands of Hawaiians to live in decent, safe, and sanitary housing and helped thousands to achieve the dream of homeownership.

This program is a model for Federal-State cooperation and also an example for how Federal resources can support the efforts of the private market in providing the capital necessary for homeownership.

Yesterday, Hawaiians celebrated Prince Kuhio Day, a State holiday recognizing the contributions of a great leader who was a leading member of the Republican Party in Hawaii and a delegate to the House of Representatives for nearly 20 years.

I ask my colleagues that we honor the memory of Representative Kuhio, and that we continue to support the Native Hawaiians living on the Home Lands.

I would like to recognize Mr. ABERCROMBIE for introducing this legislation.

Also, I thank Chairman FRANK and Ranking Member BACHUS of the Financial Services Committee for working to bring this bill to the floor, which was approved by the Financial Services Committee by voice vote.

I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation to reauthorize a program to help Native Hawaiians living in poverty.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support the final passage of H.R. 835, the Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007.

Opponents of this bill believe this program may be unconstitutional based upon a mistaken interpretation of Rice v. Cayetano. But Rice v. Cayetano was a voting rights case. The question put to the Court was whether limiting the right to vote for trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to Native Hawaiians violated the 15th amendment. The court in Rice specifically declined to rule on the status of Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian programs created by Congress.

Moreover, this bill and these programs have never been a partisan issue in the past. This reauthorization and improvements were requested by Hawaii's Republican administration and Governor Linda Lingle. The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is chaired by the former head of Hawaii's State Republican Party. This bill was introduced last year by Congressman Bob Ney and was reported out of the Financial Services Committee by voice vote and without amendment. Last Congress's Republican chairman of the Financial Services Committee, Mike Oxley, cosponsored this bill.

I mention these pieces of background information to illustrate the wide support for the program and the fact that it has been both Democratic and Republican. Last week, when this bill was up for consideration in the House under a suspension of the rules, the GOP leadership issued a statement just hours before the vote, calling the bill ''unconstitutional'' and charged that it would ''confer on Native Hawaiian an arrangement like that between the federal government and American Indian tribes.'' Despite these charges, the bill was able to garner 34 Republican votes.

The status of Native Hawaiians needs to be debated and should be debated in the House. However, this is the wrong venue for that. I have another bill pending in the House of Representatives that would establish a process for the Federal recognition of Native Hawaiians. I hope to have this legislation considered by the House Natural Resources Committee and will gladly debate these issues at that time.

This measure is about helping low-income Native Hawaiians own their own home. The programs reauthorized by H.R. 835 simply provide funds for infrastructure, helps Native Hawaiians obtain mortgages and allows for refinancing to lower the cost of homeownership. This bill is about assisting Native Hawaiians to reach the American dream of owning their own home.

I believe this bill can, and should, pass with overwhelming bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to vote for final passage of this bill and support efforts to get more low-income people into their own homes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 269, the bill is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

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.

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

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

□ 1045

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 99, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 275 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution as follows:

H. RES. 275

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) 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. The first reading of the concurrent resolution shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the concurrent resolution shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the concurrent resolution are waived. General debate shall not exceed four hours, with three hours confined to the congressional budget equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Budget and one hour on the subject of economic goals and policies equally divided and controlled by Representative Maloney of New York and Representative Saxton of New Jersey or their designees. After general debate the concurrent resolution shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The concurrent resolution shall be considered as read. No amendment shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, and shall not be subject to amendment. All points of order against the amendments printed in the report are waived except that the adoption of an amendment in the nature of a substitute shall constitute the conclusion of consideration of the concurrent resolution for amendment. After the conclusion of consideration of the concurrent resolution for amendment, the Committee shall rise and report the concurrent resolution to the House with such amendment as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the concurrent resolution and amendments thereto to final adoption without intervening motion except amendments offered by the chairman of the Committee on the Budget pursuant to section 305(a)(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to achieve mathematical consistency. The concurrent resolution shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question of its adoption.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of House Concurrent Resolution 99 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the concurrent resolution to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

(Ms. SUTTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 275.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 275 provides for consideration of H. Con. Res. 99, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008 under a structured rule.

The rule provides for 4 hours of general debate, three to be controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on the Budget and one to be controlled by Representative MALONEY of New York and Representative SAXTON of New Jersey.

The rule also makes in order three substitute amendments by Representative SCOTT of Virginia, Representative WOOLSEY and Representative RYAN of Wisconsin.

Madam Speaker, budgets, more than anything else this government produces, are a statement of what matters to us and what does not. They are moral documents. They tell us to what degree we care to look after the old and protect the young. They indicate our responsibilities to commitments both abroad and here at home. They give life to our greatest dreams as a Nation. They are the hope we leave for our children and become the legacy we bestow upon our people.

And they can be examples of great courage, or an absolution of Congress's responsibility to set priorities consistent with strengthening our people and our communities.

Madam Speaker, as it concerns the budget, it has been a long 6 years for this Nation. The budget has been out of balance fiscally, and it has been out of balance with the needs of the American people.

Just 6 years ago, we were looking at a projected $5.6 trillion surplus. That has collapsed into a $9 trillion deficit. For every American in this country, there is $29,000 worth of debt.

And to add insult to injury, most of the debt we have taken on in recent years will be sent to investors in foreign countries.

It goes far beyond having been drunk at the wheel. Our predecessors in the majority not only crashed the car into a ditch, they accelerated after landing there, allowing mud to cave in on top of it.

That was the fiscal situation Democrats found when we arrived here a few months ago in the majority.

Since President Bush took office in 2001, my home State of Ohio alone has lost over 200,000 manufacturing jobs; and 3 million have been lost nationwide.

Job growth overall has slowed to a significantly slower pace in recent years than under the Clinton administration, at a rate even below the level necessary to keep pace with population growth. Sadly, our families have even less purchasing power today than they did in January of 2001.

And the debt has continued to pile up, with no accountability, no fiscal responsibility, no effort to place priorities in the right places, to curb wasteful spending, to do what needs to be done to make sure that the programs consistent with the values of this Nation, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, SCHIP and Community Block Grants continue to be able to survive.

In short, the policies enacted in recent years will have devastating effects on our future competitiveness and standard of living if we continue down the same destructive road.

But it is a new day, and we have a new path to follow, one that says that it is more important to take care of our wounded veterans than it is to take care of oil companies, one that says that kids cannot grow up to thrive and give back to this great Nation if they do not have the health care when they are young, one that says that a measure of a Nation can be taken in small things like heating assistance for the elderly and nutrition programs in local schools and special assistance for those with disabilities.

Indeed, it is in the small print of the Federal budget that we find our worth as a government, which is why I am proud, both as a member of the Budget Committee, and as a Member of Congress, to support this Democratic budget.

It is the first time in a very long time that Congress has before it a budget that is fiscally responsible and in line with the needs of the American people.

□ 1100

This budget makes critical investments in education, health care, our veterans, our communities and our economy while at the same time adhering to PAYGO principles and returning our budget to balance by 2012. The reckless economic policies of the last 6 years have been immensely damaging to our economy's long-term global competitiveness and particularly to our workers.

The Democratic budget will strengthen middle-class families by providing funding for job training programs,

health care, and education, particularly in math and science. These are all essential investments in our workforce that will lay a solid foundation for a growing economy and improve our competitiveness. The Democratic budget rejects the President's draconian cuts to programs that provide health care to the poor, to our children, and our seniors. Nine million of the neediest children in this country and 242,000 in the State of Ohio lack health insurance coverage, and the funding levels in the President's budget put as many as 1 million of these children at risk to fall off the SCHIP program by 2012. In contrast, the Democratic budget provides for a $50 billion increase to SCHIP, allowing us to reach millions more children than we reach right now, making our children's health care needs a Federal Government priority.

The Democratic budget also rejects the $300 billion in Medicare and Medicaid cuts proposed by the administration. Access to health care should be a right, not a privilege, in this Nation and it does not serve any of us to roll back the clock on the health care initiatives that have served us so well up until now.

The Democratic budget is also about investing in our communities. It provides for increased funding for Community Development Block Grants, the Social Service Block Grants, and it saves Community Services Block Grants which was zeroed out in the President's budget. I have personally spoken with a number of the community officials in my own district that would have been affected by the proposed cuts in block grant programs and I will tell you that at the local level, these programs are lifelines for our neighborhoods and towns. They address needs in affordable housing, education and nutrition. They promote financial literacy and assist with child care needs and special services to children with disabilities. And in our cities, the CDBG funds help provide affordable housing and services to our most vulnerable populations. In short, we should not be trying to do away with programs that work.

The Democratic budget also makes education a priority, from early childhood to lifelong learning. To that end, our budget provides $3 billion over the current services level for education, training and social services. These increases are an investment in our future and will be vital to our global competitiveness. We have increased funding for those just beginning their education, like the 38,000 children in Head Start in Ohio, and we have taken steps to make college education more affordable through Pell Grants and a higher education reserve fund. We have included funds to train more math and science teachers.

Finally, the Democratic budget reflects a major shift in priorities by providing for a $5.4 billion increase in the Veterans Affairs budget which is an 18.1 percent increase over 2007 levels and the largest increase in history. Recently it has become clear that the needs of our brave men and women who have served our country so honorably have not been met. We have heard heartbreaking stories of wounded veterans who must wait up to 6 months for disability determinations and about VA facilities that are in disrepair. The more than 1 million veterans in Ohio and the more than 24 million nationwide deserve nothing less than our full support. Anything less is simply unacceptable.

A budget reflects the soul of a nation. It can give life to our most honorable pursuits and provide proof of the best of our intentions. It is the Rosetta Stone which those who look upon us from the present and from the future can decipher our worth and our courage.

It is with those thoughts in mind that I am proud to present this budget for consideration by the House.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this rule and to the unprecedented tax increase that the Democrat majority is bringing to the House floor today. The massive and irresponsible tax increase included in this budget would be the largest in American history, weighing in at a shocking $392.5 billion over the next 5 years. This Democrat budget, which is balanced on the backs of everyday taxpayers, will be used to finance bloated new government spending that my colleague just spoke about that will be well above the rate of inflation through 2012 while ignoring the brewing entitlement crisis. Spending, more spending, and more spending rather than worrying about the brewing entitlement crisis that faces this Nation. Around 77 million baby boomers will be retiring in the near future and will begin collecting Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare. Funding this new spending represents the greatest economic challenge of our era and is a challenge the Democrat budget has chosen to completely ignore while going on a spending spree everywhere else.

If fiscal discipline is what the Democrats promised voters this past fall, then by my count it took all of about 3 months for the Democrat candidates to abandon their campaign trail promises and show their true tax-and-spend stripes here again on the floor today.

This deeply flawed budget would increase taxes on almost 8 million taxpayers in my home State of Texas, costing each of them an average of $2,755 per year. It would collect these taxes by allowing the 2001 and 2003 tax relief provided by the Republican Congress to expire. In real terms, for every taxpayer, this means reducing the child tax credit for working families so that government can collect $27 billion more to finance the new spending that the Democrat majority chooses. It means reinstating the marriage penalty and the death tax to collect an additional $104 billion so that the majority can kick that further down the road rather than reforming and strengthening our Nation's entitlement programs. And it means completely ignoring the alternative minimum tax crisis which is projected to hit 23 million middle-class families if not dealt with quickly.

Madam Speaker, I believe the voters watching this debate on C–SPAN understand what these tax increases mean for our economy and our ability to compete globally, for, you see, I remember just a few short years ago when America was shipping thousands and thousands of jobs overseas and then the tax cuts took place and now we can't find enough workers in America. Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you, that is the way to be globally competitive, when you have plenty of jobs in America. But the voters and those people watching this debate may not realize that for a family of four with $60,000 in earnings, it would mean a tax increase of some 61 percent. It means that a single parent with two children and $30,000 in earnings would see a tax increase of 67 percent. And it means that an elderly couple with $40,000 in income would see their taxes increased by a whopping 156 percent.

Now, one would think that a tax increase of almost $400 billion impacting every American taxpayer would be enough to finance the Democrats' appetite for big government programs. But hold on. This is just the start. There's more to come. This budget also contains 12 reserve funds, or pet initiative IOUs, which set the stage for more than $115 billion in future higher spending which will have to be financed by, let me say, you guessed it, the taxpayer. Higher taxes.

For the last 4 years, responsible budgets passed by the Republican Party kept discretionary spending at or below inflation for all non-defense, non-homeland security spending. This budget plan brought forward by the Democrats brings this tradition to a screeching halt by allowing about $25 billion more in discretionary spending than requested by President Bush or even the spendthrift Senate, which asks for about $7 billion less than the House.

Thankfully, it is not too late to stop this fiscal train wreck. My friend, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, PAUL RYAN, has proposed an alternative budget that achieves balance by 2012 and ends the raid on Social Security without raising taxes. The Republican alternative maintains our strong economy, reforms and strengthens entitlement programs, and does this while keeping in place the tax relief that has contributed so much to our economy since 2001.

Without meaningful tax relief passed by recent Republican Congresses, our economy would not have seen the massive job growth—with 7.6 million new jobs or roughly 170,000 per month—and

economic growth of 3.5 percent a year that it has experienced over the last 15 quarters.

The Republican budget contains no increase in marginal rates and leaves in place the 10 percent bracket for low-income filers. It includes no reduction in child tax credit, no rollback of the marriage penalty or death tax relief, and no increase in capital gains or dividend tax rates. It provides for an extension of alternative minimum tax relief, the research and development tax credit, and the State and local sales tax deduction that is so important to people all across this country, including the 17 States that it benefits. It ends the raid on Social Security and fully funds the President's request for national defense and the war on terrorism. It also makes important budget reforms, such as a legislative line-item veto; earmark transparency; requiring PAYGO to be offset by spending reductions, not tax increases; discretionary spending caps; requiring a vote on any debt limit increase; and requiring a vote on any bill that seeks to spend or authorize more than $50 million.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to listen very carefully today about what the choices are that are on the floor of the House of Representatives and what they can support and to stand up for fiscal discipline, economic growth and responsible budgeting by opposing this rule and the underlying legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), a distinguished member of the Rules and Budget Committees.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of this rule and in support of this budget resolution. It provides our families, seniors and children with economic security, health care, and nutrition.

Madam Speaker, 5.4 million more people live in poverty today than in the year 2000. That is over 35 million total, and 12.4 million are children. One in every eight Americans is hungry. One in eight does not know whether they will be able to put food on the table. Madam Speaker, every single Member of this Congress should be ashamed of these statistics. The United States is the only wealthy industrialized nation in the world that tolerates widespread hunger amongst its people, including its children.

□ 1115

The decision to tolerate hunger in America has serious costs for us as a Nation. We constantly hear that we are a Nation committed to leaving no child behind. But children who are hungry, who live in poverty, cannot keep up. They cannot develop and thrive. They cannot learn or play with energy and enthusiasm.

Hunger stunts the physical, mental and emotional growth of millions of our children. When these children become adults, they are more likely to have low earnings and low productivity in the workforce. Their poor health means more illness that requires large health care expenditures. Their early mortality robs our economy of their labor and consumption. They are more likely to engage in crime, which results in monetary and personal cost to their victims and to the taxpayers for the cost of our criminal justice system. And, sadly, they are also more likely to be victims, resulting in similar costs.

In other areas, we see the difficulties faced by our seniors, who are dehumanized and demoralized when they have to choose between utilities and food. Many need special diets and adequate nutrition for their medications to work effectively. But, unfortunately, hundreds of thousands lack adequate food. And when we fail to end hunger among our elderly, we choose to add to their immediate and long-term health care costs, even while we hasten their deaths.

These are some of the priorities addressed in the Democratic budget resolution.

This budget resolution recognizes the burden faced by families when they are forced to choose between rent, food, heat and medicine, and provides funding for children's health care and provides funding for programs like LIHEAP, Head Start and low-income housing.

I want to thank Chairman SPRATT for holding a budget hearing on hunger and inviting Boston pediatrician Deborah Frank and South Carolina food banker Denise Holland to testify about the urgent need to address hunger in America. I only wish more of my colleagues attended that hearing.

We heard how food stamp benefits provide a first defense against hunger but are too meager to solve the problem, how food stamp benefits average just $1 per person per meal, how the minimum monthly benefit is stuck at the decades-old level of $10, and how the program is missing four in every 10 eligible people.

Madam Speaker, it is unconscionable that the programs proven to attack hunger in America are continually under attack. The Commodity Food Supplemental Program is continually zeroed out by the Bush administration. The Food Stamp Program is constantly derided, with fraud, waste and abuse cited, when, according to the GAO, it is running at the most productive levels in the history of the program.

It is unconscionable, Madam Speaker, that legal immigrants, people here legally with proper documentation, must wait 5 years for the food stamps they may need today, simply because they happen to be newcomers to our Nation. This is simply bad policy, and it needs to be fixed immediately. And it is unconscionable that children in need who receive breakfast and lunches during the school year are denied food during the summer months simply because school isn't in session.

The next farm bill needs to invest the additional Federal resources to improve these Federal anti-hunger programs. It should improve the food stamp benefit, open eligibility to vulnerable and underserved groups, and adequately fund and fully utilize USDA resources to support emergency food assistance and other commodity assistance programs that serve the needy.

This budget resolution, by providing a $20 billion reserve fund for the farm bill and by rejecting the President's arbitrary eligibility cuts to food stamps and the elimination of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, not only makes a strong statement on the need to combat hunger in America, it actually takes concrete steps to do so.

This resolution deserves support for the economic and food security it provides all our people, but, and let me stress, it is only a beginning. Ending hunger is not and should not be a partisan issue. The moral and economic costs affect every community in America. There is not a single community in America that is hunger-free.

So I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together here in the Congress and in our communities to create the sustained and comprehensive investment necessary to end hunger and to make us a stronger Nation. One step in this path is to pass the budget resolution before us.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from San Dimas, California (Mr. DREIER).

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, as I listened to my colleague on the other side of the aisle, the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), speak about the need to expand spending in a wide range of areas, I could not help but think about why it is that I chose to run for Congress and why I know my Republican colleagues stepped up to the plate to run for Congress. We want a defense capability that is second to none, but we also, Madam Speaker, want to do everything that we possibly can to reduce the size and scope of government, encouraging individual initiative and responsibility.

One of the things that troubles me as I listen to the arguments propounded by so many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that they talk about a need that is there. We all want to make sure that we address the very important societal needs that are there. We want to put into place entitlement reform in the area of both Medicare and Medicaid. Why? Not only so we can save taxpayer dollars but so that we can ensure that the Medicare and Medicaid programs are more effective and provide needed assistance to those who are out there who truly are in need.

The problem that I have is, as they talk about all of these programs, it undermines, it undermines initiative and responsibility. What we want to do with our budget, Madam Speaker, is everything within our power, as Mr. SESSIONS said so well, to make sure that we keep taxes low.

One of the things that I find to be very troubling is that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle hate most, hate most the taxes that have actually created a surge in revenues to the Federal Treasury.

We all know that the budget that they are going to be bringing forward puts into place the largest tax increase in American history. We always held up the 1993 Clinton tax increase, that not one Republican voted for, as the largest increase in history; and I am proud that when we won our majority in 1994 we brought about major changes that, in fact, repealed large parts of that 1993 tax increase. But, Madam Speaker, that 1993 tax increase, which has been held up as the model, as the largest tax increase in American history, pales in comparison to this $392.5 billion tax increase that they are advocating in this budget.

Madam Speaker, when I say that they hate most the tax cuts that have created the greatest surge in revenue, I am referring, of course, to capital gains. I have been one who has long advocated a zero capital gains tax rate. One of the things that we found is that reducing the top rate on capital gains has not done what virtually every green eyeshade prognosticator looked at as what happened. They said there would be a loss in revenues to the Federal Treasury.

We found, of course, that there has been a surge in revenues to the Federal Treasury. Why? Because it has encouraged economic growth to the point where the deficit this year is actually $73 billion lower than it was last year. And that is as we have cut taxes, met the very important funding priorities of homeland security and national security, and we still have been able to actually reduce the Federal deficit. As a percentage of our Gross Domestic Product the deficit today, which everyone decries, Democrats and Republicans alike decry, is in fact lower as a percentage of the GDP than almost ever.

In light of that, Madam Speaker, I think it is very important for us to recognize we have a strong, vibrant, growing economy today.

I was very surprised when the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules last night, late last night when we were reporting out this rule, talked about how devastating the economy is.

Madam Speaker, I will tell you it is a devastatingly good economy. Just this morning, we got the report that there has been an increase in durable goods purchases. We have a 4.5 percent unemployment rate: 146 million Americans, more than ever in the history of our country, are working today. That is not an accident. We have gone through terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, the economic downturn; and, because of the policies that we put into place, we have the strongest, most dynamic, $13 trillion economy that we have ever seen in the history of the United States of America.

Madam Speaker, I talked to an economist last night who said to me, ''You know, I had no idea that they would move this quickly to increase spending and increase taxes.'' And that is exactly what they are doing, and that is why we need to reject this rule and clearly do everything that we can to reject the tax-and-spend budget that they have propounded and support Mr. RYAN's alternative.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, before I yield to my next speaker, I want to point out that the Democratic budget does not raise a single penny of taxes, period.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), a distinguished member of the Rules Committee.

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from Ohio for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support this rule and to enthusiastically support this solid and balanced budget resolution. It invests in strategic priorities for the future, while putting the Nation on the path to fiscal stability.

In approaching this debate, I would ask that Members and our constituents keep in mind that we are not starting from scratch. The previous leadership left us with a fiscal disaster that can't be repaired overnight. But this budget gets us on the right track in a responsible and strategic way.

That is governing. Governing is not easy. It requires making hard choices. But making hard choices today is better than Congress abdicating its responsibility to choose altogether. Because the alternative to making hard choices is passing debt on to tomorrow's decisionmakers, leaving our children and grandchildren, like my own Anna and Robby, with a diminished quality of life.

With PAYGO rules, the budget draws a line in the sand. If you want new mandatory spending or tax cuts, find a way to pay for it.

Shifting the burden on to the next generation is no longer an option under this budget. We are not going to eradicate the deficit as quickly as some would like, and we can't spend as much on domestic priorities as some would like. But this budget gives us the type of solid foundation that will allow us to tackle our fiscal challenges, while still investing in the most important priorities.

This budget recognizes that we need to invest in healthcare and education for our children. It recognizes that we must move to a clean energy economy by driving research and development and by promoting scientific innovation and that we must provide for our veterans, who have served honorably and deserve the best care possible. Finally, this budget recognizes that the Tax Code should be fair for hardworking families.

All of this is accomplished in a fiscally responsible manner, while ensuring the security of our Nation. That is a tremendous achievement, and I thank Chairman SPRATT for his diligence in achieving this excellent legislative product. I urge my colleagues to provide the type of broad and enthusiastic support that it deserves.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the favorite son from Pasco, Washington (Mr. HASTINGS).

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Texas for yielding.

Madam Speaker, there are two ways to balance a budget, whether it is your family budget or the Federal budget. You can either, one, reduce the amount of money being spent or, two, increase the amount of money coming in.

Madam Speaker, the Democrats have flat-out rejected option number one of spending less and declared their allegiance to option number two of raising taxes; and they have done both with a fervor that our country has never seen before.

The Democrat 5-year budget plan would spend more money each and every year and at a rate faster than the inflation rate. This means that each year the size of the Federal Government will grow bigger and more rapidly than the American economy. To pay for the record levels of spending in their budget, the Democrats plan to raise taxes on the American people more than at any other time in our country's history. That is right, raising spending to record levels and to pay for it with the largest tax increase in American history.

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This budget does not extend tax relief from the marriage tax penalty. It doesn't extend the $1,000 child tax credit that many young families use. It doesn't end the death tax. It doesn't fix the alternative minimum tax for middle-class families. It doesn't protect the lowest tax rate, and would again impose taxes on lower income Americans who right now pay no taxes, thanks to the 2001 tax relief law passed by the Republican Congress.

This tax relief should not be repealed or allowed to expire to pay for more government spending. This tax relief that was passed in 2001 and 2003 should remain permanent for the American people.

Madam Speaker, on important priorities for my State, like the extention of the State and local sales tax deduction from the Federal tax and county payments for rural schools, the Democrat budget falls short. It offers only promises, but no real action. The Republican plan, on the other hand, sets

aside real dollars to extend the State and local sales tax deduction for another year. So I encourage all Members who believe in sales tax fairness to think carefully about this when casting their vote.

On the issue of payment to rural schools in counties with Federal forests, this budget allows an extension, but it takes no real steps to make it happen. As I have said before on this issue, I am disappointed that the Democratic leadership denied the opportunity to attach an extension of this legislation to another bill, a bill that has, in fact, been signed into law.

Madam Speaker, the Republican plan I will be supporting holds the line on spending, sets priorities and allows taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money and invest it as they see fit, not how the Federal Government sees fit.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and the budget resolution offered by the Democrat majority and support the substitute offered by Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Oregon, a distinguished member of the Budget Committee (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy.

You can hear the drumbeat from our friends on the other side of the aisle about the largest tax increase in American history. Well, the fact is we are today going to be able to talk about the largest tax increase in American history, but it is not contained in the Democratic budget. The largest tax increase in American history is $1.8 trillion that the President's budget anticipates as a result of the collection of the alternative minimum tax.

It has never been a priority of the Republicans to deal with this looming disaster. Indeed, they squandered 8 years of hard-earned Democratic surpluses, unprecedented surpluses, squandered in a heartbeat in their relentless pursuit to give tax benefits for those who need them least.

There are a few items in there that would have broad bipartisan agreement, the 10 percent bracket, tax credit for families, making some reasonable adjustment in the inheritance tax. But no, they were not interested in dealing with areas of agreement and then solving the alternative minimum tax. Each year, they have kicked the millionaire tax down the road. It has long since morphed into something that is not a millionaire's tax. It is going to be a tax under the President's proposal, and with the Republican priorities, it is going to be a tax on every two-income working family in America with children that have any sort of middle income.

They are going to be paying the alternative minimum tax. And in fact, it is going to cost them more to compute in many cases than the actual tax. They get whacked twice.

In 2001, in 2003, the Republicans refused to deal with this looming challenge and instead gave all sorts of tax breaks to all sorts of people and avoided solving this problem.

In 2004, when we had a $4 billion problem with our overseas manufacturing tax credit, that morphed into a $137 billion tax grab bag and ignored the alternative minimum tax. I put forth to the administration in our hearings in both Ways and Means and in Budget to find out where their priority was. Well, their priority is not fixing the alternative minimum tax, just a 1-year patch. They want to extend all of these tax breaks, the good and, frankly, some of the bizarre, for people like Paris Hilton.

Well, Madam Speaker, the Democratic alternative is focusing on what the real problem is. What we are doing in Ways and Means, we have made a commitment. Our number one priority is to solve the alternative minimum tax. Theirs, as is evidenced in their substitute, is going to take all of the potential headroom to make that challenge in solving the problem even more difficult by permanently extending all of those tax increases without any offset.

The Democratic alternative is responsible, it speaks to the needs of working men and women, fiscal stability, and most important, our priorities stopping the looming tax tsunami of the alternative minimum tax, which will, in fact, be the largest tax increase in American history.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, by the way, I encourage the gentleman from Oregon to read the bill. The Democrat budget does not address the alternative minimum tax, as he stated.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Is the gentleman familiar with the provisions in our bill that set up the reserve fund so that it permits the opportunity for the Ways and Means Committee to be able to move forward, hopefully on a bipartisan basis, to be able to establish that within the pay-as-you-go rule?

Mr. SESSIONS. You know, a reserve fund out there in the future does not fix a darn thing.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 3 minutes to the chairman of the Suburban Caucus from Highland Park, Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Mr. KIRK. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Madam Speaker, the budget coming before this House does more than approve the largest tax increase in American history. That is what it includes. But what this budget is notable for is what it also does not include.

The leaders of the Republican Tuesday Group and the study committees came together to outline reforms to help the government spend less. And why should we do that? Let's note that in 1961, when President Kennedy took office, the Federal Government spent just $98 billion. We didn't hit our first trillion until 1987. We broke the second trillion in 2002, and in 2010, we will go above the $3 trillion level.

The Federal debt held by the public has climbed to over $3 trillion in 2006, a 300 percent increase in the last quarter century. This year, interest payments on our debt alone will top over $200 billion.

Now, last night I offered an amendment cosponsored by Congressmen DENT, PENCE and HENSARLING. We laid out some commonsense reforms that this budget should include, like statutory discretionary spending limits, like the kind approved by President Clinton that helped us spend less; like provisions to slow the growth of entitlement spending by requiring offsets for any new benefits allowed; like enforcement tools that restricted the definition of ''emergency spending'' that would have helped us not declare a spinach farmer bailout last week as a national security emergency, which we did in the supplemental appropriations bill; like accrual accounting, to show what the taxpayers' long-term obligations are, and to clearly lay out for the American people our financial position.

And finally, periodic audits and summaries updating the accounting rules we use so the American people always have the most transparent view of what their government is doing.

Unfortunately, last night the Rules Committee rejected this amendment. We will not even be allowed to vote on these commonsense reforms. Ironic because most of these reforms were taken from the Democratic Blue Dog group that has advocated strong financial controls, but somehow backed this effort to deny this amendment from even a vote.

I urge this House to reject this rule and allow these commonsense reforms to go through. If the past is our guide, even the budget that the Congress will consider today and tomorrow will be waived shortly because when the supplemental appropriations bill comes back from Congress, it will include a provision that says the budget act is entirely waived and $125 billion, $23 billion over the President's request, will be passed, waiving the budget that we even approve tomorrow.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, before I yield, I would just like to remind the public that those on the other side of the aisle who are here today preaching about fiscal responsibility are the same people who, when they were in charge for 6 years, took a projected $5.6 trillion surplus and collapsed it into a $9 trillion deficit.

Madam Speaker, with that, I would yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget requests funding for the Iraq war through 2009. The Democratic budget accepts that timeline. It includes $145.2 billion

for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as requested by the President for fiscal year 2008. It requests $50 billion for fiscal year 2009. That is in addition to the $510 billion we have already spent on the war and another $97 billion pending in the supplemental, according to the CRS. The total, if approved, would be over $800 billion for war, while our schools, our health care and the quality of our environment are in decline. The budget should reflect the mandate Democrats were given in November, yet we are mirroring the President's plan for the war and his budget request to fund the war.

The supplemental calls for withdrawal by August 2008. Why does the budget encourage the war to continue into 2009? If we were serious about trying to stop the war, the budget should not contradict the supplemental language.

This budget does not end the war, it continues it through the end of President Bush's term. The American people want the war to end now, not in 2008, not in 2009, but the people want the war to end now.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, at this time, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HELLER).

Mr. HELLER of Nevada. Thank you, to my colleague from Texas, I appreciate the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this rule on the budget. It is unfair, and it unnecessarily limits debate on middle-class tax cuts.

Together with a colleague from Pennsylvania, we offer an amendment to ensure that the child tax credit is included in the budget. But the majority won't allow us to offer that amendment today or even have a debate about it. It is a shame that this amendment in defense of the middle-class families was not allowed. The new majority must still be convinced it is their money and not the taxpayers'.

Thirty-one million taxpayers will see their taxes increase in 2011 when the per-child tax credit is cut in half, and that is just the start. The average tax hike on 975,000 middle-class families and taxpayers in Nevada will be almost $3,000. We will likely be told that the budget assumes the cost of this tax provision will be addressed, along with seven others, through some vague ''smoke and mirrors'' policy. My western values told me what happens when you assume. Instead, the Murphy-Heller amendment guaranteed that funds would be there for families instead of wishful thinking.

Madam Speaker, to my colleagues, do the middle-class families make too much money? Is a child born after 2011 somehow less expensive than a child born in 2010? Is the child tax credit a partisan issue? Have those colleagues of mine in the majority like the Blue Dogs lost their way, or have they just been muzzled?

We are going to hear a lot from the majority today about the children, but apparently that is only when it comes to government spending, not middle-class tax cuts. Their rhetoric on tax rings hollow when Congress is muzzled on such a critical debate. Don't assume. Vote this rule down and for middle-class tax cuts for families.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut, a distinguished member of the Budget Committee (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Let's be clear. The 2008 budget resolution, the Democratic proposal leaves the tax cuts in place, it plans for their extension, and it extends the child tax credit and will do that. If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle cared a whit about the child tax credit, they would entertain lowering the eligibility threshold so that families who make less than $10,500 a year in this Nation could be eligible for the child tax credit. They refuse to do that. So take their words with a grain of salt today, my friends.

As a nation, we face great challenges, challenges in education and in health care, challenges that the Federal Government has the ability, the capacity, the resources and the moral obligation to help us meet.

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Our job is to help create real opportunity, to give people the tools that they need to succeed. The budget that we consider today reflects our Nation's values and puts us on the right path to meet our obligations.

I am proud of the work that we have done with this budget because I believe it addresses our most urgent priorities, and for the first time in 6 years we have a budget that makes an investment in children and in families. It puts children first by addressing their health care needs. It rejects the inadequate funding level proposed by the President for the SCHIP, the children's health care program. Our Nation's health care problems have become increasingly desperate. SCHIP is virtually the only success story that we have, covering nearly 1 million more children and working families today than even President Clinton anticipated when he created it.

And Republicans agree. Recently, I received a letter from my Republican Governor from the State of Connecticut saying as much.

This expands coverage to the estimated 6 million children eligible but not currently enrolled in SCHIP.

This budget focuses on education. A quality education is more closely tied to our economic prosperity than ever. It is critical to staying competitive in today's global economy. The President's budget reduces our commitment to education investment for a third year in a row. As we face record school enrollments, the academic requirements under No Child Left Behind and rising college costs, to say nothing of increased competition from China and India, the President's budget takes us in the wrong direction for this country.

Now is the time to invest more in education and not less. The funding allows for an infusion of new resources for No Child Left Behind and IDEA, where the Federal Government has a promise to keep, and it works to make higher education more affordable through a commitment to the Pell Grants.

Madam Speaker, I support this rule. I support this budget. It represents a commitment to fiscal responsibility and a greater investment in our future.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, the Rules Committee does not charge for people to come and attend our meetings, and it seems like a good number of Members probably needed to be there last night.

The gentlewoman from Connecticut would have heard that this big increase that she is talking about in SCHIP is in a reserve fund. It is not paid for. As a matter of fact, it is going to have to find an offset somewhere if they are going to get to it. So it is not reserved in the budget as necessarily to be paid for; it is in a reserve fund.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the budget expert from the Republican Party from the Fifth District of Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank my good friend and the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule. It is anti-family, it is anti-tax, it is fiscally irresponsible. And I agree with my colleague from Texas. I can hardly believe some of the things I am hearing on the House floor.

The Democrats, Madam Speaker, obviously want to have it both ways. They claim on the one hand that they have done this incredible job of balancing the Federal budget, and then they claim that they actually preserve tax relief in the budget. But if anybody would bother to read the document, the only way they achieve balance is by taking away all of the tax relief that we have enjoyed in the last several years. They would bring forth the single largest tax increase in American history.

And guess what, Madam Speaker? Twelve years ago, the last time that they were in power, guess what they did? They brought forth the single largest tax increase in American history. Certainly they at least get an A for consistency, but you have to give them an F for fiscal responsibility.

I would point out to the preceding speaker, the gentlewoman from Connecticut, and I have the honor of serving with her on the Budget Committee, had the Democrats felt so strongly about preserving the tax relief, they had ample opportunity in committee to preserve the tax relief for American families, and they chose not to do it.

This is a budget which may be worthy of a Pulitzer Prize in fiction. It is full of Orwellian-speak. It is something that is worthy of the Twilight Zone. It makes no sense. You cannot claim that you are not reducing spending, you are

preserving tax relief, and you are balancing budget all at the same time. You are taking three different sides of the argument. It does not wash.

This Democrat budget is also silent, absolutely stone cold silent on the number one fiscal issue facing our Nation, and that is out-of-control entitlement spending. If we don't reform these entitlement programs, it will lead to a doubling of taxes on the American people, our children, and our grandchildren. The single largest tax increase in history will pale in comparison if we don't act today.

And this is a budget for the next election, it is not a budget for the next generation. You can't have a fiscally responsible budget and remain silent on the number one fiscal challenge facing the Nation today. If you want to save Medicare, if you want to save Social Security, if you want to save Medicaid, you have to reform these programs; and the Democrat budget, again, is stone cold silent.

They speak of their reserve funds, but, Madam Speaker, there is no reserve and there is no funds. Again, this is fiction. This is pure, unadulterated fiction.

What isn't fiction is the largest single tax increase in American history that is going to fall upon American families. It is going to fall upon them hard. Because every time the Democrats increase the Federal budget, they are cutting some family budget. They are taking away from a family's ability to send a child to college. They are taking away from a family's ability to help a parent with long-term health care. They are taking away a family's ability to buy that first home, make a down payment on their first home. Every time you take away, every time you increase the Federal budget, you are taking away from the family budget.

So these two documents stand in stark contrast. The Democrat budget, the single largest tax increase in history. Again, this contrast could not be more stark. The single largest tax increase in American history. And I remind my colleagues on the other side to please, please think about the families that are in your district that actually pay these taxes.

You may think we are having a debate on how much our society is going to spend on health care and housing and education. That is not the debate I think we are having. I think we are having a debate about who is going to do that spending. Is it going to be government bureaucrats, or is it going to be American families?

In my State of Texas, the average Texas family is going to have to pay an additional $2,700 a year under the Democrat plan to have the single largest tax increase in American history. I asked my constituents, Madam Speaker, what is this going to mean to you? And I heard from several of them.

I heard, for example, from Diana in Mesquite, Texas. She wrote, ''Dear Congressman, I wanted to let you know that I am a single mom that does not receive any type of child support, and an increase of this amount would break me. I would be at the risk of losing my home with this type of increase. I am writing to ask your help to keep this from happening. This would be devastating to middle-income families.'' That is what Diana in Mesquite wrote.

Brian in Dallas, ''This tax increase would affect our ability to pay tuition and books for our daughter to go to college. While she's a junior this year, we are trying to save money for her education. But as the cost of education increases this year, the loss of these funds, this increase in taxes, will have a negative impact on our ability to send her to college.''

Again, this largest single tax increase in American history will have devastating impacts on American families. So the two budgets sit in stark contrast. One preserves the tax relief that has helped bring down the deficit, has given us the most tax revenues we have ever had before. We are awash in tax revenues, because people rolled up their sleeves, they went out, they worked, they saved. And that is why we have to vote down this rule.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, before I yield, I would just like to respond.

Again, our budget resolution does not contain a single penny of tax increases, period. And I will tell you what does not wash to the distinguished gentleman who just spoke. What doesn't wash is that we are getting this lesson in fiscal responsibility from the party that took a projected $5.6 trillion surplus and collapsed it into a $9 trillion deficit.

Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the rule and the Democratic budget for fiscal year 2008. This measure provides robust funding for our most important programs, while maintaining our firm commitment to fiscal discipline.

Last year, Democrats promised to move the country in a new direction, and that is exactly what this budget does. This budget restores many programs the President proposed to cut, while achieving balance by 2012.

It meets our commitments to defense and homeland security by implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations and funding port security and first responders. It also recognizes those who have served our country with significant increases for veterans health care.

The resolution meets our domestic priorities by blocking proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, while providing funding to cover millions of children without health insurance, something particularly important to my constituents in Rhode Island.

It boosts funds for education programs such as Pell Grants and promotes investment in programs that helps us move closer to energy independence and improve our environment.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the Democratic budget so that we can meet the needs of all Americans and restore fiscal responsibility through this process.

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

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the debate today about this budget, about the priorities of the new Democrat majority, about how they have set aside all these 11 reserve funds; and we have seen Member after Member after Member from the new Democrat majority take credit for all these things that are going to be done. And yet, in fact, what they are is reserve funds set aside to find a way to either increase taxes or to find an offset.

We think that this is an irresponsible way to run the government. We think this is an irresponsible budget. We think raising taxes $395 billion, which is included in that budget; we heard the testimony last night from the chairman of the Budget Committee and the ranking member that the assumptions that are based on the Democrat budget are that the tax cuts will go away, that tax increases will fill their place. We disagree with that. We think that hardworking American families deserve the right and the opportunity to continue their best wishes for their families, for their children's education, and take care of their family needs through the hard-earned money that they earned, to be able to keep that rather than bringing it for more spending that this new Democrat majority has in mind.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking Members to oppose the previous question so that I may amend the rule to make in order a very thoughtful amendment offered by Mr. BRADY of Texas which was rejected by the Rules Committee last night. The Democrats in the committee voted down on party line.

Mr. BRADY's amendment would amend the budget resolution to add reconciliation instructions to the Committee on Ways and Means to extend the State and local sales tax deduction through 2012.

Currently, the Democrat budget resolution does not contemplate the extension of any meaningful tax relief provided by Republicans in 2001 or 2003. In fact, the Democrat budget resolution is relying on tax increases to reach this balance. As Americans make their household budgets, they should be able to rely on a consistent and fair Tax Code. The Democrat budget resolution will undermine this goal by imposing double taxation and will help eliminate the stability in the Tax Code that Americans deserve.

So even if all the substitutes are defeated, we will still be able to consider and debate this very important amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask unanimous consent to have the text of the amendment and extraneous material printed in the RECORD just prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BECERRA). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In a document released March 28, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities stated: ''Some are claiming that the budget plan adopted last week by the House Budget Committee, which the full House is expected to vote on this week, would constitute 'the largest tax increase in history.' This claim is incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.'' That is what the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities stated.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people made it clear they are ready for a government that will be fiscally responsible. This Nation spoke loud and clear when it put a new party in power in Congress, asking for responsibility and a new direction in our fiscal priorities. Education, health care, the care of our children and our seniors and our veterans, these are issues that Americans are concerned about.

Our budget restores common sense to our national spending and sanity to our national priorities. It restores the President's attempt to cut children's health care programs and Community Block Grants, and it puts forth the single largest increase in veterans spending in our Nation's history, and not a moment too soon.

It funds math and science programs for our kids, and programs like Head Start and Pell Grants that provide access to education that so many of our children need. And this budget concerns itself with the need to create jobs and build a bright economic future. It restores funding for job training programs.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to be accountable to American taxpayers once again. It is time for Congress to be accountable to our children's future once again. I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. SESSIONS is as follows:

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308–311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as ''a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge.'' To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that ''the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition'' in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R–Illinois) said: ''The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.''

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say ''the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adoptinlg the resolution . . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.'' But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's ''American Congressional Dictionary'': ''If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business.''

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled ''Amending Special Rules'' states: ''a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.'' (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the revious question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for detiate thereon.''

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 275

OFFERED BY REP. SESSIONS OF TEXAS

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, the amendment printed in section 4 shall be in order as though printed as the last amendment in the report of the Committee on Rules if offered by Representative Brady of Texas or a designee. That amendment shall be debatable for 30 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent.

SEC. 4. The amendment referred to in section 3 is as follows:

Reduce the amounts on page 3, lines 10 through 12, and page 4, lines 1 through 3, by the following amounts:

Fiscal year 2008: $300,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $1,800,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,100,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,400,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $3,800,000,000.

Amend page 4, lines 7 through 12 to read as follows:

Fiscal year 2008: $300,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $1,800,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,100,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,400,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $3,800,000,000.

Insert at the end of Title VI (page 61, line 10), the following section:

SEC. 602. RECONCILIATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAX FAIRNESS.

(a) IN THE HOUSE.—The House Committee on Ways and Means shall report a reconciliation bill not later than May 8, 2008, that consists of changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce revenues by not more than $10,400,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(b) PURPOSE.—The reconciliation legislation reported pursuant to subsection (a) shall make the changes in the Internal Revenue Code such that the deduction of State and Local Sales Taxes shall not decrease during the fiscal years covered by this resolution.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 274 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 274

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (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. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour and 20 minutes, with one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed

Services and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 1538 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

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

(Ms. CASTOR asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 274 provides for consideration of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour and 20 minutes of general debate with 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The rule waives all points of orders against consideration of the bill except clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI. The rule provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment and shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended.

The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in the Rules Committee report accompanying the resolution; in this case, eight Democratic amendments and four Republican amendments. The amendments may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against the amendment except for clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI are waived.

The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Finally, the rule permits the Chair, during consideration of H.R. 1538, to postpone further consideration to a time designated by the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and this new Congress demand, through this rule and this legislation, that the executive branch move beyond the rhetoric of ''support our troops'' to concrete actions that sustain our brave men and women in uniform and their families by providing the quality health care they deserve when they return from the battlefield.

Supporting our troops does not mean that you simply salute as you send them off to war, ask them to serve in sacrifice for our great country, but it also means that they are supported when they come home, their families are respected, and our wounded warriors receive superior health care for their physical injuries and mental scars.

This might sound familiar from the Washington Post: ''The conflict in Iraq has hatched a town of desperation and dysfunction, clinging to the pilings of Walter Reed. The wounded are socked away for months and years in random buildings and barracks in and around the military post. Mostly what the soldiers do together is wait: for appointments, evaluation, signatures and lost paperwork to be found. 'It's like,' one military wife said, 'if Iraq don't kill you, Walter Reed will.' While a part of Walter Reed has a full bar, there is not one counselor or psychologist assigned there to assist soldiers and families in crisis—an idea proposed by Walter Reed social workers but rejected by the military command that runs the post.''

To the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, I say what a shame that the American people had to have their eyes opened by two dedicated Washington Post reporters as to the treatment of our veterans, the incompetence and the profound disrespect. These reporters spent hundreds of hours documenting the intimate struggles of the wounded warriors who live at Walter Reed. Their stories triggered others from across the country, like in my hometown paper, the Tampa Tribune.

The Tampa Tribune last week told the story of soldier John Barnes who was injured by a mortar in Iraq just last year. Barnes was fortunate, he had a mother who was a dedicated nurse who stood by him during his days at Walter Reed.

Barnes, now 23, was frequently left unattended, his mother, Valerie Wallace said, even though he had a severe brain injury. He fell repeatedly. Orderlies failed to arrive on time to wheel him to appointments. Medicines were given in the wrong doses; paperwork was lost or never filed.

'' 'I don't think anybody planned this war far out,' said Wallace, an energetic woman who looks younger than her 45 years. 'If you are going to invade a country and you are expecting to be there for years, you've got to know there are going to be thousands of casualties,' she said. 'How are you going to take care of them? Where are you going to put them?'

''Wallace is a registered nurse who has worked for more than a decade at Tampa General Hospital. She wasn't intimidated by the staff at Walter Reed, and she knew what questions to ask. Still, the layers of bureaucracy were overwhelming. The need to remain constantly vigilant was exhausting. Trust quickly evaporated.

'' 'Nobody tells you anything,' Wallace said. 'Nobody prepares you for anything. You're very much on your own in a world you don't know or understand, and you are so overcome with grief and worry that you can't think straight anyway.' ''

Well, these and other stories emboldened military families across the country and all Americans to stand up and demand better treatment for our troops and families who have sacrificed so much.

As Speaker PELOSI reminds us often, the support provided to our troops by the Bush administration has not matched their sacrifice, and, Mr. Speaker, we will rectify that today.

I wish, back in late 2003, when an Army specialist from Tampa named Corey Magee contacted my office, because I was a county commissioner before I was elected to Congress. His family contacted me and said Corey has been shot in the fire fight in Fallujah after an IED blew up his tank. He was shot in the neck and paralyzed and eventually flown to Walter Reed. In some God-given circumstance, I happened to be traveling to Washington that weekend and was able to assemble a care package from his family to deliver to Corey. But they couldn't find out what his situation was. We called and called. We enlisted the help of a United States Senator at the time who was on the Veterans' Committee. We

still couldn't get through the bureaucracy.

I had to travel with the Senator's staff to Walter Reed Hospital, and track down the doctor to find out what brave Corey Magee's prognosis was. He was a brave young guy, and really in his condition couldn't ask for help on his own. And do you know, after that he thanked us profusely for contacting his family and filling them in. He said, ''I am sure we won't have to call you again. They are going to take good care of me.''

He returned to Tampa, and I was surprised a few weeks later to get a phone call from this brave Army specialist because he was having trouble getting his physical therapy appointments at the Veterans Hospital.

□ 1215

So this bill, though it is a step in the right direction today, comes a bit too late. I wish this bill and I wish the attention had been focused earlier and the respect paid to these families by the Bush administration.

As I visited the Bay Pines VA Medical Center in St. Petersburg just a few weeks ago, you see there are a few brave soldiers there who are very symbolic of soldiers across the country that are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

One of the soldiers was in his early 20s, had served in Iraq, come back, trying to get his life together, but it was too much. The mental scars were too much. The post-traumatic stress set in. His young marriage faltered. He lost his job, meaning he eventually lost his home, and ended up as an alcoholic, a homeless alcoholic in his early 20s because of post-traumatic stress disorder.

What he explained to me was what he needed when he came out of the service was a helping hand. He needed someone proactively to say, are you all right, son, rather than to give him a checklist to check off to make sure he was okay.

These are tough guys. They are not going to own up oftentimes to the fact that they cannot sleep at night and they want to drink their sorrows and memories away.

Fortunately, I think the American people can be very heartened today to know that this is a bipartisan effort. Under the leadership of our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, I am very fortunate to serve on the Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Chairman IKE SKELTON, and I salute him and the ranking member for moving this legislation quickly. We salute the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Chairman BOB FILNER but, mostly, the leadership of the American people who have cried out for change.

Through this rule and this bill, we are going to improve the health care and mental health for our wounded warriors. We are going to tackle the bureaucracy on their behalf. We are going to establish a toll-free hotline so that families and soldiers and anyone who cares about them can report deficiencies in our system. We are going to require expedited action.

Thanks to the leadership of subcommittee Chair VIC SNYDER, now Members of Congress that have desired information about the soldiers returning to their districts are going to be notified. Members of Congress oftentimes can be the best advocates for these returning soldiers, and now it will be a requirement in the law.

We are going to provide medical advocates to these soldiers. We are going to improve support services to families; and, rather than mismanage resources, we are going to turn the White House's privatization initiative around and require accountability.

Coming from Tampa, the home of the Haley VA Center and one of the four polytrauma centers in the country, I am especially heartened by the provisions in this bill that improve veterans health care by providing more physician residents in those polytrauma centers. ABC's News anchor, Bob Woodruff, brought this to life in his hour-long expose a few weeks ago. He visited the Haley Polytrauma Center in Tampa. These are where the most critically injured soldiers are sent for their health care, the brain injuries, the spinal cord injuries.

What Dr. Robert Scott, the medical director at that medical facility, told me a few weeks ago is, even though the polytrauma center is directly across the street from the University of South Florida College of Medicine, they cannot get the physician residents in training. The Feds are not providing enough. We need these doctors in training to learn and train about these critical war injuries and the physical therapy that our soldiers need.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge this new Congress to chart a new direction today and to erase the moral stain on our Nation's conscience.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding me the customary 30 minutes; and, Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform routinely risk their lives to protect ours. Along with their families, they make many sacrifices in service to America. There is no question that they deserve the very best care that our Nation can provide.

The situation at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center was unacceptable to all Americans, and I am encouraged that immediate steps have been taken to address the problems there. But it is just as important to take action to prevent similar problems from happening at any of our military health facilities.

Under Republican leadership, Mr. Speaker, recent Congresses have increased spending per veteran, expanded the concurrent receipt, written budgets that nearly doubled funding for veterans health care, and enhanced benefits for those returning from the war on terror.

Now, Congress is taking another step forward, and a proper step forward, in improving services for both our active military and our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, the underlying bill before us today makes commonsense improvements to ensure that our military men and women have access to the care that they have earned and to help maintain excellence throughout our military health system.

For example, this legislation creates a new toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies at military health care facilities, calls for a study to identify infrastructure needs, and authorizes funding to support wounded warriors and their families. It assigns a medical case manager and a patient advocate to each servicemember receiving outpatient care and makes sure that these professionals are properly trained.

The process currently used to determine if a soldier can return to active duty is improved so that wounded servicemembers are afforded an opportunity to have input into the decision on whether they should retire from the service. Provisions are included to provide those separating or retiring from service with a seamless transition into the VA system, and the number of doctors at VA hospital facilities is increased.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to talk about military and VA health care systems without mentioning the unique challenges faced by veterans in rural areas. My district in central Washington has one of the highest concentrations of rural veterans in the Northwest. Although I am working with the VA to get a new outpatient clinic up and running in the northern part of my district, access to health care remains an issue of concern for me and my constituents who all too often are forced to drive hours and sometimes wait months to even get the most basic care.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am particularly disappointed that an amendment offered by Mr. PEARCE of New Mexico was rejected last night in the Rules Committee and will not be allowed to be considered on the floor today. We are missing an opportunity to make a good bill even better by improving care for our rural veterans. The Pearce amendment is based on a bill that I have cosponsored that would enable the VA to partner with existing hospitals and local communities on a case-by-case basis so that veterans in many rural areas can be cared for closer to home. This to me, Mr. Speaker, is a commonsense approach to get top-notch care to veterans without delay. I am at a loss to understand why anyone would oppose this improvement to caring for our veterans.

Similarly, Mr. MORAN of Kansas had an amendment that I also support; and,

unfortunately, it, too, was rejected by Democrats on the Rules Committee.

Our support for improving veterans health care should not be a partisan issue. I am pleased that both Democrats and Republicans on the Armed Services Committee have made the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, a priority and that the committee approved it by unanimous vote.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the bill.

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

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. ARCURI), a member of the Rules Committee.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Rules Committee for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the rule and the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

Improvements in medical technology over the years allow for more servicemen and -women to survive injuries sustained in battle. During World War II, for every soldier that was killed, two were wounded. Now, this ratio is up to 16 to 1. These incredible medical developments allow many more men and women to return home to their families, but their injuries tend to be much more serious and, in many cases, require additional care for the rest of their lives.

Last month, I had the opportunity to visit with wounded soldiers recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center. I met several young men wounded in Iraq, one a constituent of mine from upstate New York. As I stood next to the mother of one of the soldiers, I saw a look of sadness on her face, and at that point it struck me, what if one of my two teenage children were lying in that bed? I know that I would want the absolute best treatment and care for my children, and our brave troops deserve nothing less.

Sadly, the administration's mismanagement of the war in Iraq has extended to the home front as well. The selfless men and women who volunteered to defend their country have been callously neglected and were not only sent into battle without adequate resources, they also returned home to inadequate resources. When they asked for help, no one answered.

We make a promise to our soldiers to provide for them when they return home from battle, and it is absolutely unacceptable that this promise has been broken.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act will ensure that more than 25,000 servicemembers who have sustained injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan receive the world-class treatment and care and services they have so bravely earned and deserve. This bill creates an efficient system for the transition of records from the Department of Defense to the Veterans Administration. It establishes a support system of counselors, advocates and case managers to ensure timely, comprehensive care; and it establishes a number to call to report problems in facilities so that when a soldier asks for help someone answers.

Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform deserve the absolute best care that this Nation has to offer. I urge my colleagues to renew our promise to our veterans by supporting this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER).

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the gentleman yielding; and although I do question as well this very restrictive rule, I rise to speak in very strong support of the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation is blessed, indeed blessed, that we have produced the incredible men and women who defend our freedom through their service and through their sacrifice in our military, and every one of those who serve do so voluntarily and out of a deep love of America and a commitment to the freedom that our Nation bestows. They deserve every last measure of support to ensure that when they are wounded they receive the best possible care.

And let me say this. The military medical corps has in large measure provided absolutely incredible care to those wounded in battle. The advancements in battlefield medicine and the care of our wounded warriors after they are removed from the battlefield has allowed countless of our soldiers to survive and to recover fully who in past conflicts may not have survived. In fact, the statistics that are coming out of theater are really a remarkable tribute to the doctors and to the nurses who are engaged there, and those who provide care to our soldiers deserve our thanks and our praise and our gratitude.

However, the recent discoveries at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital were disturbing and totally unacceptable. We cannot allow any more Building 18 incidents to occur, and we must do everything that we possibly can to ensure that it does not.

This legislation that we are going to be debating shortly is a huge step in the right direction. It will begin to streamline the bureaucracy of the military medical systems and lighten the caseload of case managers by providing more assistance. It will provide a hotline for those receiving substandard care to report the problems so that those situations can be dealt with quickly and that the patients receive the care that they deserve when they need it. And it will provide for a smooth transition from the Department of Defense health system to the Department of Veterans Affairs, cutting more red tape so that the focus can be on the patient and not on the paperwork.

We cannot allow those who have fought our foreign enemies in the defense of freedom to come home and fight the Federal bureaucracy to get the health care that they need.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am very proud to support this important piece of legislation that our committee produced in a bipartisan way, and I certainly want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER, who are both patriots and veterans who have served the cause of freedom, for their dedication to the care of our troops and for their work in bringing this legislation forward to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support passage of the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. Our brave men and women wounded in defense of liberty, democracy and freedom deserve no less.

□ 1230

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio and distinguished member of the Rules Committee, Ms. SUTTON.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time for her leadership on this rule and in the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. It is an outrage that our brave men and women, who have served our Nation so honorably, have returned home, as recent press accounts have revealed, and faced problems getting the care they so rightly deserve.

As I said before, our troops must have, and we must provide, that which they need for any mission upon which they are sent. They must have and we must provide that which they need when they return home.

My home State of Ohio has 6,347 brave soldiers currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. If they are injured in any way, they must have the care they need when they return home. The roughly 60,000 veterans in my congressional district and over 1 million veterans in Ohio and all of our veterans across this Nation deserve better support and assistance than many of them have received.

The legislation before us arose out of a lack of oversight and transparency that should have been in place, but was neglected by the administration and past Congresses. This bipartisan bill ensures that our wounded soldiers and their families can feel secure in the knowledge that they will now be properly cared for and treated with the respect and dignity that they have earned and most certainly deserve. This bill will ensure that all of our veterans get the care and assistance they need and improves the overall veterans health care system to make it easier for them to access and use.

Lastly, this bill puts in place strong oversight and inspection requirements to ensure that the events of Walter

Reed and other facilities around this Nation never, ever happen again.

Let's pass this rule and pass this very important bill.

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

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. MITCHELL).

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, just weeks ago an outraged Nation learned about the terrible conditions many of our wounded warriors had to endure as they recovered from battlefield injuries at Walter Reed Medical Center. We have all heard the sad stories of mold and rat droppings at Building 18.

Even worse, we have learned that these dilapidated conditions extend beyond Walter Reed to other military facilities and even veterans facilities where troops turned veterans face a long, complicated and confusing process to get the benefits and care they have earned. Conditions like these and miles of bureaucratic red tape rob our troops and veterans of what they deserve the most, dignity, respect and honor.

It is absolutely unacceptable, and I am proud that this Congress is taking action. Just last week, the House approved more than $20 million to clean up the mess at Walter Reed. We approved more than $550 million to get rid of the backlog of maintenance requests at veterans facilities. That is a good start.

Last month, I introduced the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act for 2007, which was the first legislation introduced in this House to prevent another episode like that of Walter Reed from ever happening again.

I commend the House Armed Services Committee for putting forward this legislation, which also establishes guidelines for how returning soldiers should be treated and measures of accountability. All of our troops, and all of our veterans, are entitled to quality health care and should be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. These are great first steps, but we still have a long way to go to ensure our troops and veterans are treated properly. They have my commitment that we will continue to take care of them just as they have taken care of us.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the bill that this rule makes in order is a good bill. It passed the Armed Services Committee unanimously. It is something that is needed now that we need are engaged in this war on terror. Bills like this, in my view, deserve an open rule, so that you can give the opportunity for Members on both sides of the aisle to try to improve this good product and make it better. I cited two examples for the Rules Committee to not make in order two bills that dealt specifically with our veterans in rural areas.

While I support the underlying bill, I am opposed to the rule, because I think the rule could have allowed more amendments to have been in order or, for that matter, have made this an open rule. I think that ought to be the standard when we have strong bipartisan support for legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, 4 years after the start of the war in Iraq, and less than 100 days since the swearing in of this new Congress, this Congress will act today.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and this legislation so we can pass the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. Let's send a message, let's stand up for our brave troops in the field, not just when they are serving on the battlefield, but when they return home. Let's give the families the respect they deserve and make sure that we are providing superior health care whether it's a physical injury or a mental scar.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will now put each question on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order: ordering the previous question on House Resolution 275; adopting House Resolution 275, if ordered; adopting House Resolution 274; and passing H.R. 835.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 99, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on ordering the previous question on House Resolution 275, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 225, nays 196, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 202]

YEAS—225

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
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 (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
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
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
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—196

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson

Davis (KY)
Davis, David
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
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
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
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
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—12

Bonner
Braley (IA)
Courtney
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Miller, George
Radanovich
Sullivan

□ 1302

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California and Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. CROWLEY, and Messrs. GORDON of Tennessee, JEFFERSON, and MEEHAN changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 202, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 202, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 229, nays 197, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 203]

YEAS—229

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
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)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
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 (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
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
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
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
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
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
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)
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
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Bonner
Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Rogers (MI)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1312

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on adoption of House Resolution 274 on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 243, nays 179, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 204]

YEAS—243

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Giffords
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)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Platts
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
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 (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—179

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Chabot
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
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 (TX)
Souder
Sullivan
Tancredo
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—11

Andrews
Bilbray
Bonner
Cardoza
Davis, Jo Ann
Emerson
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Moore (KS)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1319

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HAWAIIAN HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question of the passage of the bill, H.R. 835, on which further proceedings were postponed earlier today.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 272, nays 150, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 205]

YEAS—272

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Calvert
Cannon
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Dreier
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fortenberry
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hunter
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kucinich
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
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
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Rahall
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weller
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—150

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Baker
Barrett (SC)

Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cantor
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Duncan
Ehlers
English (PA)
Everett
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Kuhl (NY)
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pence
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Price (GA)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Terry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Bachus

NOT VOTING—10

Bonner
Davis, Jo Ann
Emanuel
Fallin
Kanjorski
Klein (FL)
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Thornberry

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The Speaker pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1328

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1538.

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

There was no objection.

WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 274 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1538.

□ 1329

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (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 Mr. BECERRA in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 1 hour and 20 minutes, with 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 30 minutes, and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

□ 1330

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to bring forward for consideration this bill, H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill is the House Armed Services Committee's first step to address the challenges and the obstacles that wounded and injured servicemembers face during their recovery at Walter Reed Medical Center, and at all military medical facilities around the world.

Mr. Chairman, I am glad this bill is a product of a strong bipartisan effort to support our troops. While recognizing the ranking member of the committee, DUNCAN HUNTER, and the House Veterans Affairs Chairman, BOB FILNER, and STEVE BUYER, the ranking member, for their support and contributions to this bill, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the substantial contributions of the Military Personnel Subcommittee chairman, VIC SNYDER, and JOHN MCHUGH, the ranking member, for their considerable help during the development of this bill in committee.

Their knowledge and insights and understanding of the complex medical and disability systems that our servicemembers and their families are undergoing help to ensure that the bill before us today will have an immediate and positive impact on the lives of the wounded servicemembers as well as their families.

Mr. Chairman, the committee moved expeditiously to make changes that can be adopted fairly quickly after hearing what our wounded soldiers and their families are continuing to face at Walter Reed Hospital. However, these soldiers were not alone. The committee has heard of similar challenges that other soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines that are experiencing the same type of treatment across the country.

Sadly, what happened at Walter Reed was more than just a leadership failure in the Army. It is symptomatic of the enormous and complex factors that affect military medicine.

Yet while those in military medicine provide outstanding quality health care to wounded and injured soldiers, other factors brought to bear on this system also contribute to the state of affairs at Walter Reed Hospital as well as other medical facilities throughout our Nation.

Over the past several years, military medicine has been forced to convert thousands of military medical positions to civilian positions. One could ask how this could have an impact on our wounded forces, and the answer is clear and simple; fewer uniformed medical providers means fewer providers left at military hospitals back home treating injured and treating the wounded servicemembers. It also means that those in uniform who do remain will continue to face a high and sustained operational tempo, greater deployments and more time away from home. And yet the Navy, for example, has proposed for fiscal year 2008 to cut an additional 900 medical providers, including, Mr. Chairman, 100 doctors that provide needed health care to servicemembers as well as their families. That is why the committee chose to move quickly on this bill that will provide quick and immediate help to our troops.

It is clear that continued and persistent problems that were highlighted at Walter Reed Hospital require closer inspection and may demand a significant and comprehensive overhaul of the entire process.

As the Armed Services Committee continues to work on the fiscal year 2008 Defense Authorization bill, we will continue our efforts to examine greater comprehensive reforms to ensure that our forces receive the high quality care that our Nation has an obligation to provide for those wonderful young people in uniform.

However, H.R. 1538 is vitally needed now to provide immediate support for our wounded warriors.

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to add my voice to the eloquent voice of the chairman, Mr. SKELTON. I want to thank him, and thank also Dr. SNYDER and JOHN MCHUGH, the chairman and ranking member of Personnel, for their hard work on this bill. And for all the other Members who worked on this, I know Mr. FILNER and Mr. BUYER were also architects of this bill. But especially our chairman, who has a heart

for the military and perhaps is the most adept custodian of the history of military personnel matters in the Armed Services Committee; a guy with a great eye and ear for history and for the sense of tradition that kind of brings us together on the Armed Services Committee to find common ground on important issues to the folks that wear the uniform. This is one of those issues, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, young people right now are serving this country in far away places like Ramadi and Fallujah and Mosul and Kabul, and many other places around the world where the war against terror brings them face to face with danger every day. Some of those, the great members of the U.S. military, give their last full measure of devotion. Some of them are wounded and come back through Landstuhl and then to Bethesda and Walter Reed.

And, Mr. Chairman, I am reminded of Ronald Reagan's speech in 1981, when he stood on the west steps of the Capitol and he gestured out to the west and he said, There's the Washington Monument, dedicated to the Father of our Country, and beyond that, the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated to the man who saved the Union. But beyond those monuments are thousands of monuments with crosses and Stars of David, dedicated to Americans who gave that full measure of devotion to the same degree that the Founding Fathers did, and that's Arlington Cemetery.

And he mentioned that under one of those markers lies a man named Martin Trepto, who was killed in World War I. He had gone to fight with the Rainbow Division in France, and after a few months or a few weeks in country, he was killed. When his friends found his body, they found that he kept a diary, and he had written these words, and I am paraphrasing: I must fight this war as if the success or failure of America depends on me alone.

I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, in going out to the warfighting theaters, that standard is the same standard that is carried by the young men and women of America's Armed Forces. And because of that, it is all the more compelling that we do everything possible to make sure that they have good care when they come home, and when they are wounded and when their families similarly are wounded by their wounds; and to make sure that we have a government which is friendly to them.

A lot of this problem at Walter Reed and Bethesda and the rest of our medical care apparatus is this; we need to have a system that is friendly, friendly to that 22-year-old marine wife who drives a couple hundred miles, maybe leaves the kids with the mother-in-law while she goes with her husband to undertake therapy at one of our hospitals. To be able to get in and get out without having to get bogged down in a mass of bureaucracy. It is toward those ends that we dedicated this bill.

And again, I think the chairman has done a great job, as have Mr. MCHUGH and Mr. SNYDER. And let me tell you a couple of the highlights here.

I like the idea that you have got a limitation on 17 cases per case manager. That means that each case manager is going to have a lot of time to spend with each case, with each individual. And you also have the family advocate who will help with housing and transportation and all those things. That is almost as important as the case manager, because that helps a family to be with their loved one while they are undertaking their treatment.

I also like this handoff between the VA and DoD. We now have a physical meeting where you don't have the bureaucracy finally telling us after 3, 4 or 5 months that the records have been lost, that they have been misplaced or that there are some missing. And lastly, when we do the evaluation, to have experts who will assist the servicemember in making sure that his or her file is complete when they go for disability. That means if you've got that frag wound in your left leg, you make sure that you've got a record of that in that disability packet when you go before the board.

Now, there are lots of other good language in this bill and good provisions in this bill that will accrue to the benefit of the servicemember and their family, but I think those are especially important.

Lastly, I think the hotline is important, Mr. Chairman, where people can call in and let the system know that it's messed up and that it's not serving them well. And I know that the wonderful men and women who serve our U.S. military will respond to that and will make things right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me speak for a couple of minutes about this bill.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I think our country was shocked at the revelation as to what the conditions were at that certain part of Walter Reed Hospital, and I am pleased that we, on a very bipartisan basis, have addressed this through the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, it was Presidents' Day weekend when The Washington Post story broke with the appalling and embarrassing story about the conditions under which our soldiers were living within the military health care system. I think as Americans, nothing could be more shocking and embarrassing than the notion that our own soldiers were isolated within the outpatient services of the military health care systems, in conditions with rotted walls, holes in the ceiling, mold growing. And I would give Mr. SKELTON and the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee all the credit because on March 8 the Armed Services Committee held a hearing, looked at the flaws that existed in the system and have come out with this legislation, which will do a lot to make sure that people will not be alone and isolated, with more case managers, with advocates that will be there, and a 1–800 emergency hotline to make sure they won't be, again, alone and isolated.

I do think, as Mr. HUNTER indicated, probably the biggest problem that is facing returning soldiers right now is the transition from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs. In the State of Connecticut today, the waiting period is over 600 days for over 2,500 veterans in the State of Connecticut trying to get their claims processed. And in section 10 of this bill, which will require a physical transfer of the files, the medical records of people leaving the Department of Defense system into the VA system will make sure that we are going to make a dent in reducing the length of time, which literally is threatening people's mortgage payments, their credit rating, and it is inexcusable that people who have served this country are being treated this poorly.

There was an amendment offered by myself on the Armed Services Committee which will also include State Veterans Affairs departments in that handoff because we have many benefits, property tax benefits, educational programs, preferential hiring within our State, like many other States, which returning veterans should be included and informed of immediately. I want to thank the chairman for including that language in the bill and strongly urge its passage.

Mr. HUNTER. I would like to yield 4 minutes to Dr. GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

This bipartisan bill was reported unanimously by the Armed Services Committee, and I am a proud, proud cosponsor, along with my friend, distinguished chairman, Mr. SKELTON, and my good friend, ranking member, Mr. HUNTER.

Mr. Chairman, we are debating this bill today because all of us here, Democrats and Republicans, want to ensure our soldiers are receiving the high quality care for which our military is known.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, as a physician, I can tell you that access to care is critical to the health and well-being of our military, active, reserve and veteran. While it was a condition of some housing facilities at Walter Reed that led us to examine our military health care system, the fundamental problems with military medical care cannot be fixed with paint, putty and plaster.

I am relieved to know the run-down rooms have been refurbished, but I am proud that this bill starts addressing the system's fundamental problem of

overcrowding, delayed paperwork and a shortage of human capital to oversee soldiers' continuing health care and quality of life needs.

Soldiers I met on a recent visit to Walter Reed were frustrated with lost medical records, dupes to forms, paperwork that took a week to make it from one office to another. This system greatly delays our soldiers' ability to meet with their doctors and to eventually, Mr. Chairman, be discharged.

□ 1345

In fact, the average stay at Walter Reed is 350 days, and many of those days are spent as an outpatient assigned to the medical hold unit waiting for the paper trail to catch up with patient care.

This legislation starts addressing these problems by giving soldiers a louder voice in their medical care. It increases the personnel assigned to each servicemember and his or her family so that our soldiers have advocates helping them set appointments and understand the prescribed course of their care. As a physician, I know that caseload greatly affects the personal attention delivered to each patient. More staff means more time for each soldier and their individual needs.

Mr. Chairman, another problem facing our military health system is the difficulty personnel face when they are transitioning from active duty to the retired status, and I am pleased that this legislation includes a pilot program to examine this critical need. A fully electronic and integrated records system would allow the Department of Defense and the VA to share information in a timely fashion.

I would also encourage the Department of Defense to automate all in-patient health records. We know that in the private sector switching from paper files to electronic medical records cuts down on medical errors, saves time, and saves money. Our military should fully realize these benefits as well.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is important to recognize that the Wounded Warrior Act fixes a process that isn't serving the best interest of our warfighters or our military medical personnel. Our military doctors and nurses are an invaluable resource for their expertise, bravery, and dedication. We want to make sure that the system benefits these heroes as well.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act represents a significant step toward ensuring our soldiers and veterans are treated with the dignity and respect that they have earned and fully deserve, and I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting this great piece of legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I am very, very pleased that this bill will directly address the transition between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration with the actual physical hand-off that is provided and required in this.

I yield now 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, today we have the opportunity to pass a bipartisan piece of legislation that will assist in correcting many of the wrongs that are rampant throughout our armed services health care system, as most recently illustrated in the reports and investigations surrounding Walter Reed.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in supporting this very vital piece of legislation that is an initial step, and I emphasize that, initial step in tearing down the bureaucratic red tape that can hold wounded service men and women in limbo for months and even years after they return home with injuries from the battlefield.

H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, ensures better access to health care, better conditions in outpatient and inpatient treatment, a better means to report substandard conditions and, finally, better oversight.

H.R. 1538 responds to concerns raised by the men and women of our armed services and does the following things that are so important: Providing them with an assigned medical care case manager and limiting their caseload in order to prevent extensive backlogs; providing medical advocates to stand with soldiers before medical evaluations boards; and I think this is so important, providing a toll-free hotline that soldiers and their families can use to report inadequacies in care; and establishing a pilot program to ensure that our servicemembers have a seamless transition from Armed Forces to the Veterans Affairs agency.

Finally, let me say this, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that our chairman, Mr. SKELTON, who has done an outstanding job, and Mr. HUNTER, our ranking member, were very significant, along with Mr. FILNER, in seeing that an amendment that I put forth was passed, and that was to give the head of Veterans Affairs two appointments to the Oversight Committee. So I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this very outstanding piece of legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) as much time as he desires. And I would just note that Mr. MCHUGH, along with Dr. SNYDER, are chief architects of this legislation; and Mr. MCHUGH is the guy I like to refer to as the guy from the 10th Mountain Division in New York, a guy with enormous dedication to the men and women who wear the uniform.

Mr. MCHUGH. I thank the gentleman both for yielding and for his very, very gracious comments, and I thank Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by giving thanks where thanks are certainly due. I want to express my particular appreciation to my chairman on the Personnel Subcommittee, a fellow I had the opportunity to work with when he was ranking member for a number of years when I had the opportunity to Chair that subcommittee, Dr. SNYDER; as well as and equally so with the chairman of the full committee, Mr. SKELTON; and, of course, my dear friend and such a great leader from the great State of California (Mr. HUNTER), for their leadership for recognizing the need to react to this, not in a bipartisan, not in a political way, but in a way that embodies the spirit of the Armed Services Committee.

One reason I am so proud and have been for now going on 15 years to serve on it and that is in the interest of those incredibly brave and unselfish men and women who don the uniform of the United States of America. We owe our thanks as well, as the gentleman from Maryland suggested, to the VA Committee, Mr. FILNER and Mr. BUYER, for their willingness to work together in addressing what we all recognize is a very, very serious problem.

This is not a perfect bill. It does not meet the entire range of challenges and problems that we know exist, the entire range and need of problems that, frankly, have been known to many of us for many, many years, particularly the disconnect between two very well-meaning systems, that of the Department of Defense, who cares for our wounded, and later, after retirement and disability ratings, the VA department, who cares for those who follow through.

Both of them tried to do the job, and they tried to do it in very distinct ways, and what we have understood now and what was demonstrated at least in part at Walter Reed is the challenges of helping those two well-meaning, independent agencies work better together.

But while it is not, Mr. Chairman, a perfect bill, it is a very, very good bill, an excellent first step, a place where we can put into effect mechanisms to better ensure the quality of service and, equally important, provide a continuum of care for the brave men and women who risk their lives in defense of our freedoms, of America's freedoms. And I think we can all agree as well we owe that to them. We owe it to their families. We owe them nothing less than the best that we can possibly provide, the absolute best; and this bill takes an important step towards effecting that kind of necessary change.

There will have to be things that follow. Once we hear from the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission and from the DOD and Military Services' reviews and analysis, we will be in an even better position to take whatever additional actions are necessary to bring it together.

But you have heard my colleagues here on the floor today speak about the important components of this bill. We have looked at the problems, we have looked at the challenges that these folks have faced, and we have tried to

respond to them. Everything from hotlines to actual human hand-offs between the two systems, more case managers, more personal face-to-face responsiveness to the problems they may encounter, this bill provides it, with more to follow.

I also want to add, Mr. Chairman, that without the hard work of the staff on both sides of the Armed Services Committee we would not have had this legislation. Our particular thanks to Mike Higgins, Debra Wada, John Chapla, and Jeanette James, amongst others, who took our concerns, who took our feedback and made them into the bill that we receive here today; and we owe them as well.

Before I yield back, on a last note, Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I didn't once again add my words of deep appreciation to those incredible military medical professionals who through their hard work, who through their dedication are solely responsible for the best quality care. We are experiencing survival rates today coming out of Afghanistan and Iraq that we have never experienced in any theater of war in the history of this Nation, in fact, in the history of mankind, and that is because of the wonderful job that they do.

This challenge has never been about them, and I want them most importantly to recognize we understand the differences of the system and, in fact, two systems that need correcting and better oversight from their valiant efforts. We all owe them our deepest appreciation.

So I am proud to be associated with this bill, a bill that will take a quantitative and qualitative step forward in providing the best possible care to our wounded and fallen warriors.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague, my friend, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

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

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I thank you; and I thank the chairman for yielding.

Chairman SKELTON and Chairman SNYDER, Ranking Member HUNTER, Ranking Member MCHUGH have shown great leadership on this bill; and I thank them for their efforts and salute them for their work. They led because they listened.

First of all, as my friend Mr. MCHUGH just said, it is important to note that the drafters of this bill listened to the good work that was being done by the many, many men and women in the military health care system, in the veterans health care system.

The system has been beleaguered lately with terrible news reports of intolerable treatment of the wounded warriors of this country. We deplore those reports. We deplore the facts that gave rise to those reports.

But we do want to commend the vast majority of people who work in each of these systems for the great work that they do and acknowledge the contribution they make to our country.

The leaders of this bill listened, and I think they have come up with a great work product that will help. They have listened to the family of the warrior who has sat for too long on a bed unattended, who has languished for too long in a bureaucracy, forgotten about, whose care and whose future situation has not been given the attention it deserves. And by requiring a medical case manager and an advocate for each one of those persons, I think we will find that fewer people will be forgotten about and more people will get top-quality care.

This bill shows that its drafters have listened to those who have experienced the gaps in care and the frustration where there has not been a continuity of care when they were in the military health care system and then moved over to the VA health care system; that the care they are receiving, the diagnosis, the treatment is not consistent of someone who has had a good quality of care for a period of time, finds that interrupted and finds that to be inappropriate. This bill will establish means by which we can merge the best qualities of both systems and address the needs of that wounded warrior.

Finally, this bill deals with the outrageous inconsistency that so many people have experienced in the disability system, where the same injury under the same circumstances is treated one way in one system and another way in the other and where it takes months or even years to find out what your final resolution is going to be. So this is a bill that shows that we can listen to those concerns and address them.

As Mr. MCHUGH says, the bill is not perfect, but the bill is sound, because it listens to the very real concerns of the wounded warriors. It addresses them in a way that puts aside politics. I am proud to support this bill, and I thank the authors for this opportunity.

Mr. HUNTER. I just want to take a second, Mr. Chairman, to thank the gentleman who just spoke as one of the finest members of our committee and to point out, too, and he went over a number of the high points in this bill, and this idea of having an independent medical officer who helps the service personnel, making sure that they have got in their files when they go before that evaluation board, making sure they have got that record of that shrapnel wound to the calf or to the side, that in cases in times past you would have service personnel who were highly frustrated because they have been wounded, they knew where the wounds were, and yet somehow the paperwork had disappeared. So having that professional to help prepare it is very, very important; and I thank the gentleman for his great service and work on putting this thing together.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of our time.

□ 1400

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) stated about the disparity between the treatment regarding the disability ratings made by the Department of Defense on the one hand, and the Veterans Administration on the other, we hope that disparity will be done away with by the legislation that we pass today.

I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on this issue, as well as the ranking member, Mr. HUNTER.

If you look back at what happened at Walter Reed, and it is on the outside of the care, not the inside care of the hospital that we are talking about, the Wounded Warriors Act certainly is a good first step.

One of the things that I want to address, I want to say thank you to Chairman MURTHA for the commitment he has made to our military as far as making sure the money is in there so that we can implement what we need to do.

As we all know, head trauma has become the focus of a lot of these veterans that are coming home. With the IEDs in Iraq, traumatic brain injury has become the signature wound of this conflict. Our soldiers receive outstanding acute medical care; but people have to understand, it used to be thought that after 6 months of treatment, someone with a head injury would be fine and they would just kind of let them go. That is not true.

Back in 1993, my son was shot in the head and he certainly sustained very traumatic head injury. It takes a long time, and we know that we can give treatment for years after. It is 13 years since my son's head treatment, and he is still receiving therapy. So this is a good first start, and I hope we continue with it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I am pleased to rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

When men and women go to war, they are willing to give their bodies and their lives to this country. When they return, if they are broken, we have the obligation to try to restore them and to care for them and their families as they go about the long process of rehabilitation.

Our soldiers deserve a lot more than phrases such as ''support the troops'' and yellow ribbons and visits from celebrities. They deserve the right medical care and a seamless transition going from a military hospital to a veterans hospital for their care.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. This is what we owe our soldiers and their families. When we talk about

supporting the troops, we honor our commitments to them, and this is a very solid bill that will do just that.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) 1 minute.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am deeply concerned about the lack of a seamless transition for our servicemembers into the VA health care system.

This bill changes that broken system by creating a pilot program within the Department of Defense requiring a more efficient movement of medical records and a better process for our separated or retiring troops.

It also provides soldiers and their families with a toll-free hotline for reporting problems. Complaints called into the hotline must be investigated and a plan to remedy them must be in place within 96 hours.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Defense and the Veterans' Administration to work together to improve their disability evaluation systems ending a lot of backlog.

Finally, this bill authorizes $50 million for wounded soldiers' support programs, ensuring that these soldiers don't fall through the cracks without any financial support. Our soldiers have fought bravely on the battlefield, and they shouldn't have to fight for the care they need and deserve. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this and other efforts to correct deficiencies in our military health care system and to ensure that the men and women of our Armed Forces get the attention and quality they deserve. This is not a partisan issue; as a matter of fact, this is a bipartisan effort, and I am glad to be a part of it as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs in the Appropriations Committee.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act is an important first step in improving the delivery of medical care and quality of life for our injured military personnel and their families. I say a first step, Mr. Chairman, because I hope it is the first of several to focus the necessary resources and enhance the facilities for overall delivery of service.

I am particularly interested in simplifying and speeding the paperwork process associated with both the initial care of these heroes and their transition to the programs administered through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our wounded warriors, their families and the dedicated health care professionals committed to serving their needs should not have to face bureaucratic stumbling blocks that prevent the timely administration of care and the processing of claims to help these heroes get back on their feet. I support provisions in this legislation that will provide more resources to address the problem, especially the medical evaluation delays. As the bill moves forward, I will say to the leadership of the full committee, I encourage the authors of this legislation to consider adding additional judge advocates to assist the medical evaluation process.

In conversations with soldiers at Walter Reed, I learned of a shortfall of properly trained full-time attorneys to assist and represent patients during the formal evaluations. This occurs during the process leading up to the board and during the board. In many instances, the backlog was so long that soldiers retained outside counsel for hearings at their own cost. Those who could not afford to do this were forced to wait. In fact, the March 12 inspector general report highlighted this problem and recommended an increase in trained attorneys.

I am grateful for the full committee leadership of the Appropriations Committee for accommodating me in my amendment in this regard. While we await the full Army Tiger Team report in May, I hope my colleagues will recognize the need and right of our wounded soldiers to proper representation.

I participated in hearings on this issue as ranking member of the MILCON VA Appropriations Subcommittee, and as a member of the Defense Subcommittee. I have visited Walter Reed Army Hospital and talked to soldiers receiving treatment there and elsewhere in our military and VA systems. While the recent problems have stained our military health care system, I have been encouraged by the bipartisan manner in which we have approached this issue. I have also been encouraged to hear very positive reviews also with regard to our VA health care system, and I know it can be improved on, but certainly we get very, very positive reviews from the constituents who actually use these facilities.

These oversight activities have been very helpful in identifying steps we can take immediately to put the focus back on caring for our wounded soldiers. I look forward to working with the chairman and others of my colleagues to advance this legislation as it moves through the process.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services.

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

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Chairman, today we begin the process of keeping our promise, our unique moral responsibility to the troops returning home to their families' arms.

Many of those warfighters are deeply wounded in body, mind and soul, and it is our responsibility to care for them, to treat their bodies and their minds.

I want to thank Chairman SKELTON for his work in marking this bill with great speed, also the ranking member, Mr. HUNTER, and the House leadership for moving this bipartisan bill so quickly.

This legislation provides more funding for caregivers at military hospitals along with training and oversight to guarantee that America's wounded troops will also receive committed quality care.

When we marked this bill in the Committee on Armed Services, I added an amendment which places a 1-year moratorium on all unannounced public-private competitions for work performed at medical facilities. It also requires a report from DOD on each competition still underway to allow Congress to understand the actual cost savings, and the effects of contracting on the quality of work and the workforce personnel before allowing the contracting to go forward.

Like many of my colleagues, I am a frequent visitor not only to Walter Reed, but to Bethesda as well. In the aftermath of the investigative series about the substandard services and housing at Walter Reed, it turns out that the mismanagement of the health care of our troops had much to do with a flawed contracting process.

This bill imposes a 1-year moratorium on future A–76 competitions at the Department of Defense for work at medical facilities. The problems we discovered with the contract at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are only the tip of the iceberg. At the moment Walter Reed should have been ramping up to care for the increased number of wounded warriors, they were single-sourcing a maintenance contract and watching some of their best talent walk out the door as they were caring for a large and growing number of patients.

In a September 2006 memo, the garrison commander admitted that he had difficulties in retaining and hiring skilled personnel.

This came about for several reasons: DOD wanted to contract out the maintenance work; the proposed firings of former workers; and, of course, BRAC.

We need to step back and review whether contracting is the right way to find cost savings and efficiencies for military medical facilities. And we must make certain that we have not sacrificed service or performance of the health care mission for our wounded fighters.

I urge my colleagues to pass this bill to reform the administrative process and restore the confidence in the integrity and efficiency of the disability evaluation system and begin a better transition of servicemembers to the Department of Veterans' Affairs programs.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) 4 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from San Diego for yielding me this time.

I rise in support of this legislation and want to highlight two key components of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act that have significant relevance to some of my own constituents who are currently recovering at Walter Reed Mologne House.

Section 101 of the bill concerns improving the medical and dental care for servicemembers assigned to hospitals in outpatient status. Under this section, medical care case managers will have the training and resources to enable them to work closely with servicemembers in managing patient care and ensuring that patients fully understand his or her status and has a realistic expectation of the process ahead.

One of my constituents has been at Walter Reed for close to 10 months now after being evacuated from Iraq. During this time, he has had challenges in knowing his status in the disability determination process. He has been told that he had anywhere from 30 to 60 days left, although Walter Reed is working hard to get him home sooner. He is eager to get back home to his family and employer. His employer is holding his job for him. It is difficult for him to plan accordingly, however, because without being fully informed of his status in the system, it makes his future uncertain.

This bill would ensure that going forward, this individual would have up-to-date information on his status so that he is no longer kept in the dark about when he can expect to go home.

Section 101 of the bill also includes the establishment of the service-member advocate who will assist the patient in ensuring quality of life issues are taken care of, assisting in resolving problems related to financial or administrative matters, and overall ensure the patient and the family members are informed of benefits and program issues.

□ 1415

Both of my constituents who are currently at Walter Reed could have benefited greatly from the servicemember advocate. They have both encountered various administrative problems that have since been resolved with the assistance of their chain of command. However, I believe these problems would have been avoided in the first place had they been in contact with an advocate mandated to assist in these types of issues.

During discussions with these two soldiers and Walter Reed officials, the pattern that I have seen is that the actual medical care these wounded warriors receive is actually quite outstanding. The problems have really occurred in the red tape and bureaucracy that surrounds the administrative requirements and disability process. It should not take 3 or 4 months to begin receiving combat-related injury rehabilitation pay, for example. Servicemembers should receive accurate information in a timely manner when they inquire about their recovery plan or about specific benefits for which they might be eligible.

It is difficult at best for care managers to provide the necessary attention to a patient when they are handling caseloads beyond their capability. This bill goes a long way towards addressing this problem by limiting the number of cases for managers to oversee.

This bill and any other actions that this Congress can do to improve this system to ensure servicemembers receive the attention they deserve merits our full support; and I, therefore, urge everyone to support this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, may I inquire as to the time remaining on each side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) has 11½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 5½ minutes remaining.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. SKELTON. Parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized to state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. SKELTON. As soon as the gentleman from California and I finish our allotted time, is it not correct that the Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman and ranking member will assume leadership on this bill?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A separate period of general debate is allocated to that committee.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The sad situation of Walter Reed hospital regarding the outpatients has alarmed all of us, whether we be in Congress or not, and this bill has some excellent provisions. It is truly a bipartisan effort. I thank Mr. HUNTER and Dr. SNYDER, our chairman of our Subcommittee on Personnel, JOHN MCHUGH from New York. All have done superb work on this bill.

It makes some improvements to the medical and dental care for members in an outpatient status.

It establishes a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities.

It requires Members of Congress to be notified of combat-wounded servicemembers who have been hospitalized.

It creates an independent medical advocate for members undergoing a medical evaluation board.

It improves the training and reduces the workload for Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers.

It standardizes the training program and curriculum for the Department of Defense Disability Evaluation System.

It enhances the training for health care professionals.

It would improve the transition for servicemembers between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It provides a $50 million fund to support programs and activities related to medical treatment and care.

It would create an Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors.

It requires an annual report of the state of military medical facilities.

It requires an evaluation and report on the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Evaluation Systems.

It requires a study of the support services available for families of recovering servicemembers.

And at the behest of Mr. ORTIZ, it places a 1-year moratorium on A–76 studies at any military medical facility.

It is clear, Mr. Chairman, that the continued and persistent problems that were highlighted at the Walter Reed Hospital require closer inspection and may demand a significant and comprehensive overhaul of the process.

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

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield as much time as he might consume to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), who has done an excellent job on this bill.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I thank Congressman HUNTER. I appreciate your service here in Congress, and I appreciate you being the parent of a veteran who has served in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, a bipartisan bill authored by Chairman IKE SKELTON.

Our men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces deserve the best medical care we can provide. As a 31-year veteran of the South Carolina Army National Guard, with four sons currently serving in the military, I was greatly concerned when learning of the inadequate living conditions our Nation's wounded veterans have been made to endure at Walter Reed Medical Center.

My eldest son served for a year in Iraq and came under enemy fire twice. Had he been injured, I would have expected him to receive top-notch health care which should be provided to every soldier.

While Walter Reed is renowned as a world-class facility, recent management neglected to provide adequate care. We have the best military medicine in world history, saving more lives than ever before and providing for the maximum recovery for patients.

I know firsthand from Major David Rozelle of the successes at Walter Reed Army Hospital for our amputees, where dedicated staff members are so caringly effective helping our troops recover. In fact, Major Rozelle wrote an excellent book, ''Back in Action,'' the inspiring true story of the first amputee to return to active command in Iraq.

I am pleased Congress is coming together to improve the paperwork complications and ensure our military medical system remains the best there is. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill and provide America's brave, injured warriors the care they so deserve.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would yield the balance of my time to any other Members that would like to speak on the majority side, and if there are not, Mr. Chairman, give the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee the option of us simply yielding back our time or if he would like to have some of our time, giving that to him.

Mr. SKELTON. On our time, I have no more speakers, and I would judge that any further speakers would be on the time of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of the Armed Services time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. For what purpose does the gentleman from California rise?

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, as the chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I rise in strong support of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act; and I yield to myself what time I might consume.

I want to thank Congressman SKELTON and Congressman HUNTER. This is a great bill. As a Nation and as a Congress, we were faced with a test, a real challenge, whether we can respond to the conditions of our Nation and of our veterans and our active duty troops. The revelations of what happened at Walter Reed presented us that challenge, gave us that test, and I say with confidence that this Congress is meeting that test.

This is step two in meeting that test. Step one was to make sure we had sufficient resources in the budget of this Nation to meet the needs not only of our existing veterans who have more and more need, whether they are from World War II or Vietnam or the first Persian Gulf war or the great influx of veterans that we are going to have from Iraq and Afghanistan. We already have over 700,000 returning troops who are now veterans, and we are going to get hundreds of thousands more.

In the so-called continuing resolution that was passed by this Congress a few weeks ago, the Veterans Administration was the only agency that got a significant increase from last year's budget; and this Congress added $3.6 billion to veterans in that one continuing resolution.

The supplemental for war that passed this House last week, led by Speaker PELOSI, Chairman SKELTON, Chairman OBEY, and Chairman EDWARDS, we said that the supplemental for war has to also have a supplemental for the warrior—for the health care of our returning veterans. Both in the Defense Department and the VA, we put in almost $3.5 billion; and in the budget resolution that we will be considering today and voting on tomorrow, the Democrats have put in $6.6 billion above the 2007 levels. That, in 90 days, is over $13.5 billion added to last year's budget for the care of our veterans.

George Washington said it very clearly, that the morale of our active duty troops is dependent on the sense of how they are going to be treated when they come home.

The first step of infusion of money, the second step of the Wounded Warrior Assistance bill, says that we are going to meet the challenge, that we understand that the costs of caring for our veterans is part of the cost of war, and that no matter what we think about the war in Iraq, we are united in this Congress and in this Nation that every returning young man and woman gets all the care and love and respect and honor that this Nation can deliver. That is what this bill says, that we are all committed to making sure that the care of these veterans is first in our consciousness.

Both the Defense health care system and the VA system is stretched to its limits. We have underfunded it over the years. We are asking from very dedicated professionals in the VA system to do more and more with less and less resources.

The strain is evident wherever you look. The strain is evident at Walter Reed. The strain is evident when a young Marine shows up at a VA hospital in Minnesota and says, I think I have PTSD and I am having thoughts of suicide, and he was told that you are 28th on the waiting list, come back in a few weeks or a few months, and he went home and he committed suicide. The strain on our system is shown by events like that, and we are committed to making sure that they do not continue.

So we have to live up to our responsibilities, both for the returning Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans and to those who have served our Nation going back to World War II.

In many instances, the problems are exacerbated because of jurisdictional and procedure roadblocks between the Defense and the Veterans Administration. So we have to remove those roadblocks; and, as chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I have worked closely with other members of our committee who will speak today, with Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER of the Committee on Armed Services, to make sure we are working off the same page.

This legislation takes important steps in making the servicemember's transition from the Department of Defense to the VA a seamless transition. We have been using that word for a long time, but we still have great cracks in that system. It is not seamless, but this bill would mandate the Department of Defense to provide disabled servicemembers who are being separated or returned from the Armed Forces with a written transition plan, a road map pointing the way to programs and benefits offered to them as veterans.

It would institute a formal process for transmitting reports and other information to the Veterans Administration from the active duty situation.

It would require both the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration to establish a joint separation and evaluation physical.

□ 1430

Physicals now are done by two different agencies and with two different standards and with two different bureaucracies. It is sometimes a hellish situation for returning active duty troops. We have to have a fully interoperable medical information system so that two agencies can speak to one another, so that the veteran coming home will have on his record in the VA all the things that occurred to him when he was on active duty in the military.

If we are going to make the handoff in the continuum of care successful, if we are going to make sure there is a seamless transition, if we want to make sure that we don't fumble information that puts at risk the returning servicemembers, we have to take these steps. These steps have are not newly invented. They were first expressed in earlier reports, the President's Task Force, for example, to Improve Health care for our Nation's Veterans, talked about this transition. I hope we are providing both departments with the resources and the tools they need to get that transition right.

Mr. Chairman, our concern is for the health of our fighting men and women when they come home that they get that health care taken care of, both in the Defense Department hospitals and in the VA system. Let's work seamlessly. I urge support for H.R. 1538.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

I rise in favor of this bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. For over 15 years, whether it was on the House Armed Services Committee or chairman of the personnel responsible for the military health delivery system or now at the VA, issues on seamless transition have been around. It appears that we can only measure success incrementally. For that, it is also unfortunate, because we deal with bureaucracies with both of these very large Departments and their subagencies.

Mr. SKELTON had some challenges in front of him because his leadership rushed him to get this bill to the floor. He also then convinced Chairman FILNER to waive the jurisdiction of the VA Committee so that this bill could get here.

I want to thank Chairman FILNER for complementing the amendment that I had offered in the Armed Services Committee, and I also want to thank Chairman SKELTON. I want to thank Duncan Hunter. I want to thank Dr. VIC SNYDER and JOHN MCHUGH for working with me on the amendment that was offered at the Armed Services Committee that profoundly enhances the seamless transition.

In its original form, the bill required a year-long pilot position on transition. Pilot programs can be useful in exploring new ground. But when it comes to seamless transition, and especially during a war, this is not new ground, and we need to proceed.

Back in 1982, is when Congress directed VA and DOD to work collaboratively together on health care. That was 25 years ago. I believe this collaboration is still being stymied by bureaucrats protecting their respective rice bowls. My amendment replaced the pilot project with system changes. It required a written transition plan for wounded servicemembers.

The bill would require an interoperable electronic exchange of critical medical information between the Departments and the use of the electronic DD Form 214, which DOD would provide to the VA. That allows VA real-time access to veterans' medical history.

There are countless examples of veterans seeking care at a VA facility, only to discover that their paper and military health records are not available. The lack of prior DOD health services is especially critical for badly wounded warriors returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The ability to transmit data between DOD and VA will speed the recovery of these warriors by avoiding duplication of unnecessary treatment or, more importantly, failing to provide lifesaving procedures.

Electronic exchange of critical medical information might also prevent bureaucratic intransigence on the part of VA. For example, I recently heard from a former Indiana National Guard member who was wounded in the neck and shoulder by an improvised explosive device. When he eventually filed a disability claim, the VA said the documentation in his military medical record was not sufficient to prove the injury was service connected.

Hopefully this rapid exchange of information will put an end to such bureaucratic injustices. Further, H.R. 1538, as amended, would require the use of a uniformed separation and evaluation of physical by DOD and the VA, but the VA could use more disability ratings. This cornerstone seamless transition eliminates the frustrating requirement for a servicemember to have two physicals, one at the military and one at VA.

I associate my comments with Mr. FILNER. Too often, recently discharged veterans filing VA disability claims must undergo a VA physical because their discharge physical failed to address issues affecting the veteran's claim for benefits.

Corporal Murphy, for example, in a hypothetical, gets his discharge physical from Fort Hood, Texas, on June 3. A week later he files a disability claim to the VA for his bad knee. Meanwhile, 90 days later, his physical records at the National Records Center in St. Louis arrive. During that period of time, his medical records are not available to process his claim, and our corporal has already lost 3 months. This is foolishness.

The result is not only costly but also delays the processing of a veteran's claim and possibly entry into life-changing programs, like the VA's vocational rehab program. Finally, the amended wounded warriors bill would collocate VA benefit teams at military treatment facilities and other agreed upon sites to facilitate the transition of recovering servicemembers. Why should a wounded warrior undergo a lengthy period of convalescence and be required to seek out VA benefits counselors at VA offices that are usually far away from the MTF where the veteran is living.

Instead of making Airman Mendez, for example, go to the VA, it is time to mandate the VA to be present where the airman is undergoing treatment. This will give him timely access to VA counselors and benefits that process needed benefits.

These teams would provide preseparation counseling for recovering servicemembers, and records would be transmitted electronically from DOD to VA before the date of separation or retirement, thereby reducing delays, which now bedevil the system. Access to these teams would enable most veterans to leave the treatment facility with their VA benefit in hand.

My own personal experience over the past decade validates the importance of these reforms.

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

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent to use 10 minutes that were yielded back from the Armed Services time to be split evenly between the majority and minority.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Committee of the Whole cannot change the scheme of control for general debate.

Mr. FILNER. A point of order, Mr. Chairman, I had understood that they had yielded the time that they had left back to the Veterans' Affairs Committee for use if we needed it, and we do need it. I think Mr. BUYER needs some time, and I do also.

If I could yield to Mr. HUNTER for that.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, if we could ask unanimous consent that on Armed Services we could reclaim our time that we yielded back, we would like to yield it to the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California could ask unanimous consent to reclaim his time, but could not yield control to another manager.

Mr. HUNTER. I would ask unanimous consent to reclaim my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there an objection? Hearing none, so ordered.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. I appreciate that.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. BUYER. Was the time yielded to the Veterans' Affairs Committee 10 minutes or 20 minutes?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Ten minutes per side.

Mr. BUYER. So we have 20 minutes. So as of right now we are still operating under the Veterans Affairs Committee time, not Mr. HUNTER's time, would that be correct?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Mr. HUNTER has 3½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 2½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Indiana has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. BUYER. So to the Chair it doesn't matter, with regard to the utilization. All right. Thank you.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, we yield 3 minutes to the command sergeant major from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act of 2007.

First of all, I would like to thank the chairman from California. I would like to thank the ranking member from Indiana for his leadership and colleagues on both sides of the aisle for introducing this timely bill that responds to the needs of our soldiers. Their leadership on both sides of the aisle is a testament to the 110th Congress' commitment to caring for this Nation's active duty forces and veterans. The commitment to veterans can show no political ideology.

As a 24-year veteran of the Army National Guard of this Nation, and the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in this Congress, I know that taking care of active duty forces and our veterans is one of the most important issues facing this country and this Congress. I, as all Americans, was outraged and saddened when we read reports of substandard care and unacceptable conditions at Walter Reed. Our Armed Forces and their families sacrificed too much to receive poor active duty care and difficulties in transitioning to veterans care. H.R. 1538 will fix these problems.

It will be done in a bipartisan manner and this piece of legislation has the possibility of starting to heal some of the divisions amongst this Nation, as we all agree, on the care of our veterans as a priority. This bill will provide more staff to work with outpatient servicemembers. It will improve training for medical staff. It will

find ways to better transition from active duty to veterans care, and it will create an oversight board for wounded warriors that they will properly investigate the quality of care our veterans are receiving in a timely manner.

I urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, regardless of political ideology, to support this bill. We must give our brave servicemen and -women the care they deserve, while serving our Nation. We must continue to address the need for their ongoing care once they hang up their uniforms, that they have performed their service to this Nation with honor, pride and dignity.

Now this Congress must do its job, provide the tools, the funding and the oversight necessary to ensure quality care for every soldier that serves this Nation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, may I confirm the fact that when I yielded back a few moments ago, that I have 8 minutes remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Missouri had 8½ minutes remaining. However, one manager may not yield control of time to another manager.

Mr. SKELTON. I understand. I do ask that I be able to reclaim the time, the 8½ minutes.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection? Without objection it is so ordered. To clarify, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) now has 8½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 3½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is out of time, and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS).

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Chairman, we have before us today an excellent piece of legislation, the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act, that I believe will help untangle problems in military health care such as the ones that we recently saw at the Walter Reed Hospital. This legislation came before us in the Armed Services Committee recently, and I am convinced that the provisions will dramatically improve the treatment for our brave, wounded servicemembers and their families by the Department of Defense health care system.

One issue of particular importance that was addressed in this bill is the mental health services and screenings that we will provide to our troops. I want to thank Members for supporting my amendment, that directly impacts mental health treatment for our men and women in uniform.

Ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are creating a brand-new generation of veterans, many have seen extreme stresses of war. According to the VA, post-traumatic stress syndrome rates are starting to appear about 20 percent. You look back during the Vietnam War era, those rates were close to 30 percent. So, I believe we are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg.

PTSD is an issue that will face thousands of American combat veterans for years into the future. This legislation will help ensure that these soldiers don't face this problem alone.

I am proud to vote with my colleagues from the Armed Services Committee to report this bill favorably to the House. I will be very pleased to vote for this outstanding piece of legislation when it appears here on the House floor. I want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER, for bringing this piece of legislation forward, and, of course, the staff of the Armed Services Committee for their dedication to this issue.

In closing, not every American signs up to put on the uniform. Not every American puts their life on the line for our principles and our values. But for those Americans that do, we owe it to be there with them when they need help.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for yielding time to me. I express my appreciation to the Chair for recognizing me.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today in support of this legislation, but I think this legislation could be significantly improved. I come today to advocate on behalf of veterans who live in rural America, as well as servicemen and -women on leave from active duty.

I failed to have the opportunity to attempt to amend this bill in the Veterans' Affairs Committee because of the waiver of its jurisdiction. I appeared yesterday before the Rules Committee seeking the opportunity to offer an amendment today on the House floor. That authorization for offering that amendment was not allowed, was denied.

□ 1445

And I am concerned that as we look at veterans and our military retirees, as we look at those actively engaged in the military today and we try to address the needs that they face, there is a large area of veterans, there is a significant veteran and military active military population that are disadvantaged. That is those who live in rural America.

I represent a district, a congressional district the size of the State of Illinois, and yet, although we have more hospitals, private community hospitals than any congressional district in the country, there is no VA Hospital. There is no military hospital. And so you can be distanced from that access to care by hours, by 3, 4, 5 and 6 hours.

Legislation that I have introduced would try diligently to address that issue, to allow access to the private sector health care providers. If you live further away from a VA Hospital or an outpatient clinic, that you can take your VA card, you can take your active military benefits and see your hometown physician.

Examples from my own constituents. A veteran in the community of Hoxie was told he couldn't see the local optometrist, despite the fact that the optometrist is down the street. But, no, he has to go to Wichita, 4 hours away, in order to have his glasses adjusted.

Another veteran, who is incapable of travel, was told that, no, the local physician can't refill his prescription. He has got to travel to the VA Hospital in order to do that.

This legislation would correct that by allowing, in those circumstances where distances are so great, that the VA can enter into contracts with the private sector to meet the needs of those veterans and that a physician, a private physician, could fill a prescription.

So, Mr. Chairman, I regret that, although this bill brings to the forefront and addresses many issues that our servicemen and women face, it fails in, at least in my belief, to address the needs that we see from rural veterans.

I was pleased that Mr. BARROW, the gentleman from Georgia, who I have joined with in past efforts to try to increase the reimbursement rate for mileage for rural veterans as they travel to a VA Hospital, his amendment was made in order. And I am pleased and will support that, would love to have the opportunity again to speak in favor of it.

But these are the kind of issues that we cannot let this Congress ignore. We are not a one-size-solution fits all. And those of us who have concerns for those who choose to live in rural America, we believe we can make this legislation better. So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time to speak in favor.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. SKELTON and Mr. HUNTER, your committee, working with the Veterans Committee, has produced an outstanding piece of legislation; and I hope that that cooperation, I know that cooperation will continue, because we have other things to do.

The gentleman from Kansas expressed what is on the minds of many of our colleagues, and that is to make sure that our rural veterans are served, also. We will do that; and I know my ranking member, Mr. BUYER, joins me in that commitment.

As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, we have a test as a Nation. Are we going to make sure that every returning young man and woman from Iraq and Afghanistan has the best facilities, the best health care, the best treatment, the best love, the best commitment that we, as a Nation, can offer? And are we going to make sure that their predecessors, from World War II to the present, are also given that same care and commitment?

There are 200,000 homeless vets on the street tonight, mainly from the Vietnam era. We cannot allow that to continue.

We have a 600,000 claim backlog for disability payments. We cannot allow that to continue.

We have facilities that need to be repaired and rebuilt. We have needs for Agent Orange veterans and atomic veterans. We, as a Nation, must take up this challenge and must meet it.

We had significant new resources provided in the budget matters that have come before us in the last 60 days. This Wounded Warrior Assistance Act is the next step as we try to make sure that those who faced danger and life-threatening situations in Iraq do not have to face a bureaucracy which threatens to kill them off. This is a step to change that. We are going to have a seamless transition, and I thank the Chair for his commitment.

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

In the 1990s, Mr. SKELTON, you can remember well that we drew down the size of the military. We cut all the divisions and the wings and the squadrons; and then we had to figure out how we could maintain all those military hospitals and the medical treatment facilities, all the forts and bases. And we found out, with limited dollars, we really couldn't do all of that to the level which we wanted, so we created three centers of excellence, at Brooke and at Bethesda and at Walter Reed.

And I do not want this debate today, for anyone who is working at Walter Reed, to feel as though this Congress is not proud of the level of respect and the enduring appreciation that we have of the doctors and the nurses and the technicians that provide the health care at Walter Reed, Bethesda, Brooke or any other medical facility, from the battlefield throughout the entire process.

We are very disappointed that we had single soldiers that were wounded, convalescing, being held in an unhealthy building. But for that to then be interpreted as though bad care was being delivered at Walter Reed is not a factual basis.

It is a curious thing, though, that one of our centers of excellence ended up on the BRAC; and that is an issue, Mr. SKELTON, we are going to have to address.

I do want to also extend though a compliment to Mr. HUNTER and Mr. SKELTON, because you saw this one coming in 2004, because in the 2005 Defense bill you then created the Disability Claims Commission. It has been extended now and will not report until September of this year. So I want to thank you for seeing this one coming; and I wish that we could have gotten to those results much, much sooner.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I just want to mention that in 2005, and working with Mr. BUYER and working with Mr. SKELTON and other Members of the Armed Services Committee and Veterans' Affairs Committee, we put together this Disability Claims Commission with an eye toward trying to make the evaluations that are arrived at in DOD and the VA system consistent. In this bill that we are passing today, we are directing DOD and VA to go back and, as this commission meets and continues to work, to focus on their work product and what they are doing; and, hopefully, we can have some value added as a result of their focusing on the commission that currently is in place.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUNTER. I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BUYER. What this means, Mr. Chairman, is we still have work to do. And I didn't want to be overcritical about the pressure the leadership gave you to get this bill to the floor. I think you and I both would have liked to have done something more comprehensive. But with this Disability Claims Commission sitting out there, and they have given 2 years now of labor, we are going to have to come back at this one in earnest. And I am most hopeful that you will continue your work with the Veterans' Affairs Committee as we work in this endeavor of a seamless transition.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, if I have got a couple of minutes left, if any member of the Veterans' Affairs or the Armed Services Committee would like to use the rest of the time, I would be happy to yield to them.

Appearing that there isn't anybody, I yield back at this point, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I wish to mention Mr. BUYER and I have had this discussion about there is more work to do. We will do it. We will do our very best I know in the Armed Services Committee as well as in the Veterans' Affairs Committee; and I appreciate your mentioning the fact that this is a step, although in my opinion, it is a major step. We still have a great deal of work to do regarding the wounded warriors.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned the positive work done by DUNCAN HUNTER, by VIC SNYDER, by JOHN MCHUGH, by BOB FILNER, by STEVE BUYER, but I would be remiss if I didn't brag on and thank the wonderful staff that we have on our Armed Services Committee and also in the Veterans' Affairs Committee. They have worked long and very efficiently, and the product before us is a work of art by the members of our staff, and I certainly thank them for their tremendous professionalism.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

Throughout our history, we have asked generations of Americans to protect the freedoms we enjoy. As the newest generation of brave Americans steps forward to answer the call at great personal sacrifice, we must honor them with a renewed commitment to providing the medical care they deserve.

The brave men and women of our armed forces proudly serve this great nation by putting their lives on the line in missions that take them far away from their homes and families. We must never forget the debt owed to our soldiers when they return home from the battlefield.

This bill addresses some of the patient care problems at Walter Reed Medical Center recently brought to light in news accounts and Congressional hearings. It requires every wounded service-member to be assigned a case manager to review and supervise the soldier's medical care.

The problems experienced at Building 18 should not overshadow the otherwise exceptional care the doctors and nurses at hospitals and clinics throughout the country provide our men and women in uniform. This will requires us to provide those doctors and nurses with reinforcements to ensure none of our wounded soldiers are left behind again.

Our obligations to our wounded soldiers do not stop when they become wounded veterans. By streamlining the transition process from soldier to veteran, our local VA clinics and hospitals can ensure our veterans continue to receive exceptional medical care without bureaucratic interruption.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, takes necessary strides toward ensuring that all of our wounded soldiers receive the best possible medical care. I am proud to support this bill and will continue to stand up for our service members in the future.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1538, Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting in favor of it.

I support H.R. 1538 because I believe our men and women in uniform who have served our country deserve the best possible care when they return home. The conditions that were recently uncovered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were disturbing and unacceptable. In addition, thousands of soldiers are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and we need to further improve the conditions of the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration health care systems in order to meet this need. As the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, and as a veteran myself, I have always made the needs of our soldiers and veteran and their families high on the priority list.

H.R. 1538 is a bipartisan bill that improves the lives of our veterans in several ways. This legislation will improve the access to quality medical care for service members who are outpatients at military health care facilities, restore efficiency to the disability evaluation system, and streamline the transition of wounded service members from the Armed Forces to the Veterans Administration. By establishing a system or patient advocates and independent medical advocates, and improving the system of case managers for wounded service members, H.R. 1538 makes sure that veterans are getting the care that they need. In addition, this bill improves training and reduces caseloads for these managers so that service members and their families can get more individual attention. Finally, H.R. 1538 establishes a national toll-free hotline so that service members and families have a mechanism for

reporting problems and deficiencies in their treatment.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 1538, Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, and improving the quality of care for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance 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 am committed to supporting all of our troops—before, during and after service.

There are 32,000 wounded soldiers from the Iraq conflict alone and they need medical attention and assistance to get back on their feet.

However, our veteran healthcare system that is in shambles. Internal reports, the media, and Congressional hearings are revealing the same kind of problems across the board—chronic under-funding, neglect, improper conduct, and lack of accountability.

There will be hundreds of thousands of veterans who will need care over the next decade as they return from Iraq, Afghanistan and other fronts in the Global War on Terror.

And our military and veterans healthcare systems are not prepared. Unless we act now, the situation will fall apart.

The recent tragedies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center underscore the urgency of the issue and the hardships faced by our military families across the country.

Mr. Chairman, I recently visited our returning veterans at Walter Reed Medical Center and as I spoke to these men and women and listened to their stories, I was almost brought to tears.

They told me of doctors who weren't giving them the attention they needed. Others shared how they had to prove to the medical staff that they were really injured.

One wounded soldier and his father in particular really struck a chord in me. This young man is from my home state of California and he told me how his father completely shut down his business, packed his things, and flew 3,000 miles across the country to make sure his son got the proper support and attention.

As if this brave soldier's sacrifice wasn't enough. Now his family has to put their lives on hold to ensure that he recuperates fully from his battle wounds.

After my visit, I took a long time to think and reflect on what I had seen. And really at the end of the day, all could think was that it just wasn't fair.

This young man is one of the lucky ones. His family could afford to make that sacrifice.

But what about the countless military families who are barely making ends meet and simply can't afford to quit their jobs?

Mr. Chairman, the bottom line is the American people shouldn't have to do these things.

We're fighting all over the world to spread democracy and peace at the expense of these young men and women and their families.

And yet what kind of example are we setting for the rest of world when we don't honor those who bear the scars of battle?

Veterans and military healthcare is one of the most neglected programs in this country.

It is immoral, it is embarrassing, and it is just plain irresponsible.

We have a duty as a government 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. 1538 takes a step in the right direction by comprehensively examining the cracks in military healthcare and fixing them.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act reduces the caseloads of our medical case managers so service members and their families get help when they need it.

It also creates a system of patient advocates for outpatient wounded service members so that they get the right treatment.

The bill also establishes a toll-free hot line so that service members and their families have someplace to turn to when they see neglect or improper conduct.

We're also going to look at the training all of our military healthcare employees get from top to bottom. We're going to make sure the people who are treating and working with our troops and veterans have the right tools and information to give them the best service possible.

The bill also creates an Army Wounded Warrior Battalion pilot program to track active-duty soldiers in ''outpatient status'' who still require medical care.

H.R. 1538 will also look at overhauling the disability evaluation process. Average disability claims take a year and appeals are taking about two years to process. We have an enormous backlog of claims within the VA system and we need to fix the problem immediately.

Finally, we're going to help our troops better transition from military healthcare systems to veterans' healthcare systems. The transition will include an official handoff between the two systems with the electronic transfer of all medical and personnel records before the member leaves active duty so that there are no gaps in coverage or service.

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 need this bill to ensure that we honor the sacrifices of all our troops and their families by at the very least providing quality, timely healthcare.

That's why I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1538.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, it's unfortunate that we even have to consider this bill. Proper care of our military wounded should be the top priority of our military medical establishment. As we know now, it was not a sufficient priority for the Secretary of the Army and several senior Army officers. Those individuals may be gone, but the problems they allowed to take root and fester must be eliminated. This bill is a good first step in that direction.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act seeks to correct the training, personnel, and oversight deficiencies that the Walter Reed Medical Center scandal revealed earlier this year. I want to be clear: the overwhelming majority of the men and women who work at Walter Reed are first-rate medical professionals who care deeply about the troops in their care. However, we now know that for several years, Walter Reed—and almost certainly other DoD and VA medical facilities across the country—had been strained beyond its capacity.

Ill-advised decisions—including the outsourcing of administrative and maintenance personnel—clearly contributed to the appalling living conditions experienced by some soldiers at Walter Reed. I applaud the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON, for including a 1-year moratorium on such outsourcing pending a review of the entire practice. I have long argued that it is a myth that the private sector can invariably do a better job than the Federal government with these kinds of services. We've already seen in Iraq how corporate contracting giants like Haliburton can make hundreds of millions of dollars while providing substandard services to troops in the field. I'm grateful that my colleagues on multiple committees are looking at these issues, and I'm sure the reforms in this bill will only be the beginning of our effort to re-evaluate the use of contractors within the Federal government.

This bill also mandates a review of the status of all DoD medical facilities, which is another key step in providing the oversight needed to ensure that any other hospitals or clinics with deficient care are identified and remedial measures taken immediately. I am confident that my friend from California, Mr. FILNER, the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, is already taking the same steps. Indeed, another positive aspect of this bill is that it seeks to streamline and rationalize the transition process for veterans when they move from the DoD medical system to the VA for treatment and followup care.

This bill requires that DoD ensure the veteran's medical and related records are transferred in a timely fashion, and that veterans get pre-separation counseling so that they understand the benefits they are entitled to and how to best interact with the VA medical system. Establishing a clear-cut mechanism for ensuring that veterans transition seamlessly from one system to another will require both a congressionally mandated structure, but perhaps even more important, continuous congressional engagement. That is why I am especially pleased that this bill mandates that members of Congress be informed any time one of their wounded military constituents enters the military medical system.

Current law requires DoD to notify members of the death of military constituents. These notifications, while bearing tragic news, allow us to provide the maximum possible assistance to families who have lost a servicemember. By now ensuring that we are informed when military constituents are wounded, we will be able to work proactively with the families to ensure the needs of the wounded are met in a more timely manner, and to provide us with a roadmap for oversight actions early on.

Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Missouri, Mr. SKELTON, for the work that he and his committee colleagues have done to bring this measure before us today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill will provide long overdue assistance to our wounded veterans.

I know every Member of this body has read some of the horrific stories that have come out of veterans' facilities such as Walter Reed, which is just a few miles from where we stand. Stories such as mold in the rooms, holes in the ceiling, and insect and rodent infestation became commonplace at what should be our preeminent Army healthcare facility.

We owe our war veterans the very best care that our country can provide, but these problems at Walter Reed are not isolated incidents. They are indicative of an Administration that has failed soldiers and veterans at every level. The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act will help remedy the problems that have become known over the past few years.

This bill will take a number of steps to improve the quality of life for injured veterans. For starters, it will reduce the workload of case managers handling the medical care of vets. Currently, these case managers are overwhelmed with thousands of soldiers who have come back wounded from Iraq.

In addition to reducing their caseload, this bill will also require that case managers are properly trained to handle the supervision of the soldiers in their care. These injured soldiers need an advocate to help them navigate the paperwork and potential obstacles they face.

H.R. 1538 will also direct the Department of Defense to create a toll free hotline for soldiers to report problems with their medical care, or with the facilities in general. Had there been a hotline already, we might have learned about the Walter Reed problems long ago.

As has been proven with all the problems that we have seen in military medical facilities recently, there has been a general lack of oversight involving the military hospitals. This bill will fix that problem by creating an oversight board. This board would be composed of members of the House, Senate, as well as appointees of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. This oversight is critical to prevent these terrible conditions from reoccurring.

Mr. Chairman, throughout our Nation's history, our freedom has been preserved by members of the Armed Forces. Countless soldiers throughout our history have given their lives or their health to preserve our way of life. Ensuring that they get the very best healthcare is the very least we can provide them with. How can we possibly ask a soldier to sacrifice a limb to preserve our safety, and then put them in a dirty, moldy room when they return? This is unconscionable behavior, and passing R.R. 1538 is a good way to address some of these problems.

I strongly support the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, and I urge my colleagues to offer their support as well.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the "Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007." The news of the horrible living conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center raised our national consciousness regarding the need to do more—much more—for wounded and injured service members and to upgrade the administrative systems that support them. While the committee made improvements in the past, there is more that can and should be done. When our heroic young men and women willingly sacrifice life or limb on the battlefield, the nation has a moral obligation to ensure that they are treated with respect and dignity.

According to Webster's, dignity is "the quality or condition of being esteemed, honored or worthy." Madam Speaker, we can never do enough to honor our wounded veterans. Studies have shown that 30 percent of troops deployed to Iraq suffer from depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). More than 1500 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have sustained devastating brain injuries from improvised explosive devices (IEDs). However when wounded troops return home the treatment they receive is more befitting a second class citizen than a hero. This is a shame and a great stain on our nation.

How these problems could be overlooked or neglected by this Administration is unfathomable. The very leaders that these brave young men and women rely upon let them down. The message that incidents like Walter Reed Medical Center sends to our troops is that we do not care enough. But that is not the message we wish to send. The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, H.R. 1538, will go a long away toward correcting this misapprehension.

On February 26, 2007, I had the opportunity to visit some of our wounded heroes at the Michael E. DeBakery VA Hospital in Houston, Texas. I promised those brave young men and women that "those of us in Washington would do everything we could to ensure that the health and well being of our veterans was a top priority."

Likewise, I was overwhelmed with sadness and anger after my visit to Walter Reed Hospital in May of last year. Walter Reed points to more general problems in the DOD and VA health care systems. The exposure of Walter Reed has led to the reviews of other DOD and VA health care facilities—reviews that have found that Walter Reed is not an isolated case. The Washington Post reported recently that a recent review by the Department of Veterans Affairs of 1,400 hospitals and other veterans' care facilities "turned up more than 1,000 reports of substandard conditions—from leaky roofs and peeling paint to bug and bat infestations—as well as a smaller number of potential threats to patient safety, such as suicide risks in psychiatric wards."

H.R. 1538 addresses the failures of an administration that was eager to go to war, yet took for granted its most valuable resource our troops. This bipartisan bill responds to the problems brought to light at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other military health care facilities by including provisions to: (1) improve the access to quality medical care for wounded service members who are outpatients at military health care facilities; (2) begin the process of restoring the integrity and efficiency of the disability evaluation system and taking other steps to cut bureaucratic red tape; and (3) improve the transition of wounded service members from the Armed Forces to the VA system.

Specifically, H.R. 1538 provides improvements to medical and dental care for members of the armed forces assigned to hospitals in an outpatient status. It establishes a toll-free hot line for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities and expedited response to reports of deficiencies.

The legislation requires congressional notification of hospitalization of combat wounded service members and creates an independent medical advocate for service members appearing before medical evaluation boards. The bill also provides for training and reduced caseloads for physical evaluation board liaison officers. It also requires the establishment of a standardized training program and curriculum for department of defense disability evaluation system.

Our wounded warriors will also benefit from improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates on particular conditions of recovering service members provided for in the bill, as they will from establishment of a medical support fund for support of members of the armed forces returning to military service or civilian life.

I am especially pleased that the bill requires the establishment of an oversight board for wounded warriors and the submission of an annual report to Congress evaluating military medical facilities and the DOD and VA disability evaluation systems. Finally, the bill imposes a moratorium on the outsourcing of mission critical health care jobs at Walter Reed Medical Center and other medical facilities.

Mr. Chairman, every morning when I arrive at my office, I am reminded of how fortunate I am. Outside of my office there is a posterboard with the names and faces of those heroes from Houston, Texas who have lost their lives wearing the uniform of our country. I think to myself how lucky I am to live in a nation where so many brave young men and women volunteer to the ultimate sacrifice so that their countrymen can enjoy the blessings of liberty. Now is the time to remind our heroes they have not been forgotten. More importantly, America has not forgotten them. As I have said in the past: "Just as our soldiers do not leave their comrades on the battle fields, America can not leave the injured to languish on their own with no comfort and support from a grateful nation. The problems in Iraq and Afghanistan are taking us away from focusing on the care for our wounded Veterans and their family and that must stop."

Substandard living conditions, inattentive care, and bureaucratic red tape are completely unacceptable. We must correct everything that is wrong with the current system of health care for wounded veterans and make it right. Most important, a situation like Walter Reed must never be allowed to happen again. One reason we are the greatest nation in the world is because of the brave young men and women fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan. They deserve honor, they deserve dignity, and they deserve our absolute best. Let them know you care. Let us honor our wounded warriors. Let us pass H.R. 1538.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which would be the first step in addressing poor patient care and problems experienced in navigating the military's medical bureaucracy.

In February 2007, the media uncovered the grotesque living conditions, inattentive care, and bureaucratic hassles experienced by some of the wounded soldiers staying at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. However, the situation at Walter Reed is not an isolated case, but a systemic problem that plagues the veteran health care system. A recent review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of 1,400 hospitals and other veterans' care facilities found "more than 1,000 reports of substandard conditions—from leaky roofs and peeling paint to bug and bat infestations." In Connecticut, approximately 2,500 veterans are waiting for benefits. The military health care system is understaffed and drowning in a backlog of cases and unable to provide our veterans with the benefits and resources they sacrificed a great deal to earn.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act would restore the process of integrity and efficiency

in our nation's military health care system. This bill would create a new system of case managers, advocates, and counselors for wounded service members returning from combat overseas to help them get the care they need and to help navigate the military's health care bureaucracy. The legislation would also require the establishment of a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in facilities supporting medical patients and family members. Under H.R. 1538, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the VA would conduct a joint study on the disability evaluation systems operated by both departments in order to improve the consistency between these two systems.

I applaud the leadership of Chairman SKELTON and the honorable members of the House Armed Services Committee who crafted the legislation before us today. Congress has an obligation to be a watchdog for our veterans and ensure they receive appropriate care. These men and women have sacrificed their lives for our freedoms and they deserve the best health care and resources our country can provide.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my strong support for the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. While I am pleased that we are taking swift action on this important bill, I am woefully disappointed by the circumstances that brought us here.

It seems that the efforts to meet the medical treatment needs of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were as poorly planned and executed by this administration as the military operations.

There is no doubt that our troops are getting outstanding military care from the time that they are wounded until they leave inpatient care.

But it is the aftermath where we are failing our Nation's heroes. Things such as:

Obtaining treatment for conditions like PTSD that develop after a soldier has left the combat zone.

Coordination of medical care for soldiers who have left the military hospital but still require rehabilitation and outpatient treatment.

A smooth transition from the military to the Veterans Administration health care system.

The bill under consideration today makes critical and desperately needed improvements in our current military and veterans health care systems.

It responds to the need to better coordinate care so that our wounded warriors never fall through the cracks, by improving the training of case managers and limiting their workload to a manageable number of soldiers; by creating a new patient advocate program so that each injured service member has a government employee fighting for his or her needs; and by establishing a toll-free number where families can report deficiencies and receive quick action to resolve problems.

The bill would also address the transition of troops from military medical treatment to civilian life and the Veterans Administration health care system by beginning to reform the disability evaluation system; by appointing independent medical professionals to support wounded service members during the medical evaluation board process; and by formalizing the process of transitioning military patients and all of their medical records to the Veterans Administration.

The bill would also improve training for the medical professionals and counselors who work with service members and their families and would create new Wounded Warrior Battalions at all Army medical centers modeled on the Marine Corps's highly successful program.

The bill also includes a provision that I sponsored during consideration of the measure by the House Armed Services Committee. My amendment, as included in bill, addresses the challenges facing the Army in providing needed facilities by directing the Secretary of the Army to report back to Congress on infrastructure requirements for supporting wounded warriors at Army medical facilities and installations.

My amendment arose from what I observed at Fort Bliss, in my district of El Paso, Texas, and my visits to other military medical facilities throughout the world.

At Fort Bliss, our garrison commander, our medical facility commander, and our military hold unit commander have worked tirelessly to meet the most immediate needs of the over 250 soldiers on medical hold there, but it is clear that we need a more concentrated effort by the Army to identify and fund needed upgrades to facilities for wounded warriors.

From adequate numbers of family housing units and barracks rooms that meet accessability standards to sidewalks, our Army posts simply don't have the facilities they need to meet the needs of soldiers recovering from disabling injuries.

But the area where I have seen the greatest need is accessability to military hospitals. At Fort Bliss and Army posts around the Nation, just getting in the door is a struggle for wounded soldiers as they face Army Medical Centers where the support facilities simply aren't adequate.

At Fort Bliss soldiers seeking treatment at the hospital often find the parking lot completely full, and when they do find a parking space, it's likely in a remote spot which may or may not be served by a volunteer-staffed shuttle. And to make matters worse, more often than not, those shuttles are broken.

There is no doubt that our Nation wants to do all that we can to help those who are injured in their military service, and there are thousands of dedicated professionals working hard to give them the medical care that they deserve. But it is clear that we have to do more. We need to provide all the resources that are required, and we must remove legislative and administrative barriers that are keeping our wounded warriors from getting the best possible care. Our military forces make invaluable sacrifices in defense of our Nation, and we owe them nothing less.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my support for the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act. As a member of the Armed Services Committee and a veteran myself, this is an issue that I find of the utmost importance.

Following the public exposure of the problems at Walter Reed Hospital, it has become clear that changes are needed in order to provide our soldiers the level of healthcare they deserve.

With a growing number of servicemembers in need of medical attention, it is imperative that there is an adequate amount of staff at our military hospitals. By enforcing a minimum ratio of caretakers to servicemembers, this legislation will ensure that every soldier gets the personal attention that they need. In addition, service members will be assigned medical care case managers that would help them and their families deal with the administrative process involved with their care. This type of personalized care and assistance will help our wounded warriors with their recovery, and make an easier transition back into the field or civilian life.

Having spent years on the House Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have seen first hand the need for improved lines of communication between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under the current system, there is no designated process by which military personnel become veterans; or for their medical and service records to move from one department to the other. This measure will streamline the transfer process by transmitting members' dismissal forms electronically to the correct agencies.

Another great concern of mine comes from the inconsistencies between the two departments' disability ratings systems. When given a different rating of disability as a member of the military than as a civilian, disparities are bound to arise in what benefits can be expected. Creating a single, standardized rating system will help ensure that both our military personnel and our veterans receive the best care that our government can provide.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their hard work on this legislation; and I strongly urge an ''aye'' vote for this important bill.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538—the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

At the beginning of this month, when I was in Iraq, I spoke with soldiers who had just learned that their tours had been extended.

They said to me, ''Please, can you help us get us out of here.'' These troop extensions are really having an impact on the morale of our military men and women.

To add to that, soldiers see what has been going on at Walter Reed and they wonder whether they will be able to get the care they need.

The President has sent our troops into harm's way, extended their tours to support his surge, and has allowed these unforgivable lapses in the care of our wounded warriors under his watch.

When our men and women sign up for military service, recruiters assure them that the military will take care of them. The failure at Walter Reed calls the commitment given by our military recruiters into question.

The bill before us today will go a long way in making sure that the troops get the care they need and deserve.

I would like to thank my chairman, Mr. SKELTON, and all my colleagues for their work in developing this important legislation.

I supported this legislation when it came before the Armed Services Committee on which I sit, and I am proud to support it today.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will help correct the unconscionable deficiencies exposed by the Washington Post at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. H.R. 1538 will improve the delivery of medical services to our wounded warriors who have done all that we have

asked of them. We now must honor our commitment to them to care for them when they are injured.

H.R. 1538 provides the basic services we would have expected for our wounded service personnel such as readily available case managers and advocates to assist incapacitated patients receive appropriate care, improved training of health care professionals and better monitoring of out-patients to ease the transition to the VA medical care system. The Walter Reed experience showed that we cannot rely on the current system to provide these basic services and care.

I am particularly pleased with the attention we will finally pay to the mental injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, that can be as crippling and incapacitating to our soldiers and veterans as physical injuries.

When I spoke on House Concurrent Resolution 63 opposing the President's surge, I mentioned CPT Lisa Blackman, a clinical psychologist, who cared for soldiers who suffered devastating emotional and mental harm inflicted while serving in Iraq and chronicled their troubling and heart-breaking torment in the book, Operation Homecoming.

These brave troops, who suffered severe physical as well as mental injuries, shamefully did not receive proper treatment after faithfully serving their country. H.R. 1538 properly recognizes the sacrifices our troops have made and provides the long overdue care and medical services our troops should properly expect and deserve from their government.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

The revamped case management system, the toll-free complaint hotline, and record transfer process from the Defense Department to the Veterans Administration will provide timely and serious response to the medical needs of our veterans.

Through repeated tours of duty, our troops have been made more vulnerable to injury and serious health complications. The U.S. Veteran healthcare system desperately needs the improvements that this bill provides in order to accommodate the soldiers who will be returning from these multiple tours.

In the 35th Congressional District, I have assigned staff specifically to the task of fielding the many calls of veterans who need assistance. Out of all veteran calls that we receive in our District office, the number one reason is to help them get a live response and to navigate through the bureaucracy to obtain the medical benefits that they earned serving our country. Therefore, in Los Angeles, we have living proof that our system is broken and in need of the fixes that this legislation offers.

Congress has appropriated more than enough funds to give our veterans decent medical care when they come home.

I commend Mr. SKELTON for his leadership on these issues and support H.R. 1538. I ask my colleagues to pass this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered read.

The text of the amendment in the nature of a substitute is as follows:

H.R. 1538

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE

Sec. 101. Improvements to medical and dental care for members of the Armed Forces assigned to hospitals in an outpatient status.
Sec. 102. Establishment of toll-free hot line for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities and expedited response to reports of deficiencies.
Sec. 103. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded service members.
Sec. 104. Independent medical advocate for members before medical evaluation boards.
Sec. 105. Training and workload for physical evaluation board liaison officers.
Sec. 106. Standardized training program and curriculum for Department of Defense disability evaluation system.
Sec. 107. Improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates on particular conditions of recovering service members.
Sec. 108. Pilot program to establish an Army Wounded Warrior Battalion at an appropriate active duty base.
Sec. 109. Criteria for removal of member from temporary disability retired list.
Sec. 110. Improved transition of members of the Armed Forces to Department of Veterans Affairs upon retirement or separation.
Sec. 111. Establishment of Medical Support Fund for support of members of the Armed Forces returning to military service or civilian life.
Sec. 112. Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors.

TITLE II—STUDIES AND REPORTS

Sec. 201. Annual report on military medical facilities.
Sec. 202. Access of recovering service members to adequate outpatient residential facilities.
Sec. 203. Evaluation and report on Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs disability evaluation systems.
Sec. 204. Study and report on support services for families of recovering service members.
Sec. 205. Report on traumatic brain injury classifications.
Sec. 206. Evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer Program.

TITLE III—GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 301. Moratorium on conversion to contractor performance of Department of Defense functions at military medical facilities.
Sec. 302. Prohibition on transfer of resources from medical care.
Sec. 303. Increase in physicians at hospitals of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES.—The term ''congressional defense committees'' has the meaning given that term in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

(2) DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM.—The term ''disability evaluation system'' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(3) FAMILY MEMBER.—The term ''family member'', with respect to a recovering service member, has the meaning given that term in section 411h(b) of title 37, United States Code.

(4) RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBER.—The term ''recovering service member'' means a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or a Reserve, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, or is otherwise in medical hold or holdover status, for an injury, illness, or disease incurred or aggravated while on active duty in the Armed Forces.

TITLE I—WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE

SEC. 101. IMPROVEMENTS TO MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES ASSIGNED TO HOSPITALS IN AN OUTPATIENT STATUS.

(a) MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE OF MEMBERS ASSIGNED TO HOSPITALS IN AN OUTPATIENT STATUS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1074k the following new section:

''§ 1074l. Management of medical and dental care: members assigned to receive care in an outpatient status

''(a) MEDICAL CARE CASE MANAGERS.—(1) A member in an outpatient status at a military medical treatment facility shall be assigned a medical care case manager.

''(2)(A) The duties of the medical care case manager shall include the following with respect to the member (or the member's immediate family if the member is incapable of making judgments about personal medical care):

''(i) To assist in understanding the member's medical status.

''(ii) To assist in receiving prescribed medical care.

''(iii) To conduct a review, at least once a week, of the member's medical status.

''(B) The weekly medical status review described in subparagraph (A)(iii) shall be conducted in person with the member. If such a review is not practicable, the medical care case manager shall provide a written statement to the case manager's supervisor indicating why an in-person medical status review was not possible.

''(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), each medical care case manager shall be assigned to manage not more than 17 members in an outpatient status.

''(B) The Secretary concerned may waive for up to 120 days the requirement of subparagraph (A) if required due to unforeseen circumstances.

''(4)(A) The medical care case manager office at each facility shall be headed by a commissioned officer of appropriate rank and appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code.

''(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A), an appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code includes membership in the Army Medical Corps, Army Medical Service Corps, Army Nurse Corps, Navy Medical Corps, Navy Medical Service Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, or Air Force Medical Service.

''(5) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standard training program and curriculum for

medical care case managers. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a medical care case manager.

''(b) SERVICE MEMBER ADVOCATE.—(1) A member in an outpatient status shall be assigned a service member advocate.

''(2) The duties of the service member advocate shall include—

''(A) communicating with the member and with the member's family or other individuals designated by the member;

''(B) assisting with oversight of the member's welfare and quality of life; and

''(C) assisting the member in resolving problems involving financial, administrative, personnel, transitional, and other matters.

''(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), each service member advocate shall be assigned to not more than 30 members in an outpatient status.

''(B) The Secretary concerned may waive for up to 120 days the requirement of subparagraph (A) if required due to unforeseen circumstances.

''(4) The service member advocate office at each facility shall be headed by a commissioned officer of appropriate rank and appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code in order to handle service-specific personnel and financial issues.

''(5) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standard training program and curriculum for service member advocates. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a service member advocate.

''(6) A service member advocate shall continue to perform the duties described in paragraph (2) with respect to a member until the member is returned to duty or separated or retired from the armed forces.

''(c) SEMIANNUAL SURVEYS BY SECRETARIES CONCERNED.—The Secretary concerned shall conduct a semiannual survey of members in an outpatient status at installations under the Secretary's supervision. The survey shall include, at a minimum, the members' assessment of the quality of medical care at the facility, the timeliness of medical care at the facility, the adequacy of living facilities and other quality of life programs, the adequacy of case management support, and the fairness and timeliness of the physical disability evaluation system. The survey shall be conducted in coordination with installation medical commanders and authorities, and shall be coordinated with such commanders and authorities before submission to the Secretary.

''(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'member in an outpatient status' means a member of the armed forces assigned to a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient or to a unit established for the purpose of providing command and control of members receiving medical care as outpatients.

''(2) The term 'disability evaluation system' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1074l. Management of medical and dental care: members assigned to receive care in an outpatient status.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 1074l of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 102. ESTABLISHMENT OF TOLL-FREE HOT LINE FOR REPORTING DEFICIENCIES IN MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITIES AND EXPEDITED RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF DEFICIENCIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Chapter 80 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1567. Identification and investigation of deficiencies in adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities

''(a) TOLL-FREE HOT LINE.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish and maintain a toll-free telephone number (commonly referred to as a 'hot line') at which personnel are accessible at all times to collect, maintain, and update information regarding possible deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities. The Secretary shall widely disseminate information regarding the existence and availability of the toll-free telephone number to members of the armed forces and their dependents.

''(b) INVESTIGATION AND RESPONSE PLAN.—Not later than 96 hours after a report of deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, or state of repair of a medical-related support facility is received by way of the toll-free telephone number or other source, the Secretary of Defense shall ensure that—

''(1) the deficiencies referred to in the report are investigated; and

''(2) if substantiated, a plan of action for remediation of the deficiencies is developed and implemented.

''(c) RELOCATION.—If the Secretary of Defense determines, on the basis of the investigation conducted in response to a report of deficiencies at a medical-related support facility, that conditions at the facility violate health and safety standards, the Secretary shall relocate the occupants of the facility while the violations are corrected.

''(d) MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITY DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'medical-related support facility' means any facility of the Department of Defense that provides support to any of the following:

''(1) Members of the armed forces admitted for treatment to a military medical treatment facility.

''(2) Members of the armed forces assigned to a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient.

''(3) Family members accompanying any member described in paragraph (1) or (2) as a nonmedical attendant.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1567. Identification and investigation of deficiencies in adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The toll-free telephone number required to be established by section 1567 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be fully operational not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 103. NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS OF HOSPITALIZATION OF COMBAT WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.—Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is further amended by inserting after section 1074l the following new section:

''§ 1074m. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded members

''(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary concerned shall provide notification of the hospitalization of any member of the armed forces evacuated from a theater of combat to the appropriate Members of Congress.

''(b) APPROPRIATE MEMBERS.—In this section, the term 'appropriate Members of Congress', with respect to the member of the armed forces about whom notification is being made, means the Senators and the Members of the House of Representatives representing the States or districts, respectively, that include the member's home of record and, if different, the residence of the next of kin, or a different location as provided by the member.

''(c) CONSENT OF MEMBER REQUIRED.—The notification under subsection (a) may be provided only with the consent of the member of the armed forces about whom notification is to be made. In the case of a member who is unable to provide consent, information and consent may be provided by next of kin.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1074m. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded members.''.

SEC. 104. INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS BEFORE MEDICAL EVALUATION BOARDS.

(a) ASSIGNMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE.—Section 1222 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS BEFORE MEDICAL EVALUATION BOARDS.—(1) The Secretary of each military department shall ensure, in the case of any member of the armed forces being considered by a medical evaluation board under that Secretary's supervision, that the member has access to a physician or other appropriate health care professional who is independent of the medical evaluation board.

''(2) The physician or other health care professional assigned to a member shall—

''(A) serve as an advocate for the best interests of the member; and

''(B) provide the member with advice and counsel regarding the medical condition of the member and the findings and recommendations of the medical evaluation board.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 1222. Physical evaluation boards and medical evaluation boards''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 61 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1222 and inserting the following new item:

''1222. Physical evaluation boards and medical evaluation boards.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (d) of section 1222 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to medical evaluation boards convened after the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 105. TRAINING AND WORKLOAD FOR PHYSICAL EVALUATION BOARD LIAISON OFFICERS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS.—Section 1222(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''establishing—'' and all that follows through ''a requirement'' and inserting ''establishing a requirement''; and

(B) by striking ''that Secretary; and'' and all that follows through the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting ''that Secretary. A physical evaluation board liaison officer may not be assigned more than 20 members at any one time, except that the Secretary concerned may authorize the assignment of additional members, for not more than 120 days, if required due to unforeseen circumstances.'';

(2) in paragraph (2), by inserting after ''(2)'' the following new sentences: ''The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standardized training program and curriculum for physical evaluation board liaison officers. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a physical evaluation board liaison officer.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'physical evaluation board liaison officer' includes any person designated as, or assigned the duties of, an assistant to a physical evaluation board liaison officer.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The limitation on the maximum number of members of the Armed Forces who may be assigned to a physical evaluation board liaison officer shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. The training program and curriculum for physical evaluation board liaison officers shall be implemented not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. STANDARDIZED TRAINING PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM.

(a) TRAINING PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Section 1216 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standardized training program and curriculum for persons described in paragraph (2) who are involved in the disability evaluation system. The training under the program shall be provided as soon as practicable in coordination with other training associated with the responsibilities of the person.

''(2) Persons covered by paragraph (1) include—

''(A) Commanders.

''(B) Enlisted members who perform supervisory functions.

''(C) Health care professionals.

''(D) Others persons with administrative, professional, or technical responsibilities in the disability evaluation system.

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'disability evaluation system' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The standardized training program and curriculum required by subsection (e) of section 1216 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be established not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 107. IMPROVED TRAINING FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, MEDICAL CARE CASE MANAGERS, AND SERVICE MEMBER ADVOCATES ON PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report setting forth recommendations for the modification of the training provided to health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates who provide care for or assistance to recovering service members. The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members, and make prompt notification to the appropriate health care professionals.

(b) ANNUAL REVIEW OF TRAINING.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter throughout the global war on terror, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the following:

(1) The progress made in providing the training recommended under subsection (a).

(2) The quality of training provided to health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates, and the number of such professionals, managers, and advocates trained.

(c) TRACKING SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall develop a system to track the number of notifications made by medical care case managers and service member advocates to health care professionals regarding early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide in recovering service members assigned to the managers and advocates.

SEC. 108. PILOT PROGRAM TO ESTABLISH AN ARMY WOUNDED WARRIOR BATTALION AT AN APPROPRIATE ACTIVE DUTY BASE.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Army shall establish a pilot program, at an appropriate active duty base with a major medical facility, based on the Wounded Warrior Regiment program of the Marine Corps. The pilot program shall be known as the Army Wounded Warrior Battalion.

(2) PURPOSE.—Under the pilot program, the Battalion shall track and assist members of the Armed Forces in an outpatient status who are still in need of medical treatment through—

(A) the course of their treatment;

(B) medical and physical evaluation boards;

(C) transition back to their parent units; and

(D) medical retirement and subsequent transition into the Department of Veterans Affairs medical system.

(3) ORGANIZATION.—The commanding officer of the Battalion shall be selected by the Army Chief of Staff and shall be a post-command, at O–5 or O–5 select, with combat experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The chain-of-command shall be filled by previously wounded junior officers and noncommissioned officers when available and appropriate.

(4) FACILITIES.—The base selected for the pilot program shall provide adequate physical infrastructure to house the Army Wounded Warrior Battalion. Any funds necessary for construction or renovation of existing facilities shall be allocated from the Department of Defense Medical Support Fund established under this Act.

(5) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of the Army shall consult with appropriate Marine Corps counterparts to ensure coordination of best practices and lessons learned.

(6) PERIOD OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be in effect for a period of one year.

(b) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the end of the one-year period for the pilot project, the Secretary of the Army shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) an evaluation of the results of the pilot project;

(2) an assessment of the Army's ability to establish Wounded Warrior Battalions at other major Army bases.

(3) recommendations regarding—

(A) the adaptability of the Wounded Warrior Battalion concept for the Army's larger wounded population; and

(B) closer coordination and sharing of resources with counterpart programs of the Marine Corps.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The pilot program required by this section shall be implemented not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 109. CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL OF MEMBER FROM TEMPORARY DISABILITY RETIRED LIST.

(a) CRITERIA.—Section 1210(e) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''of a permanent nature and stable and is'' after ''physical disability is''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to any case received for consideration by a physical evaluation board after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 110. IMPROVED TRANSITION OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS UPON RETIREMENT OR SEPARATION.

(a) TRANSITION OF MEMBERS SEPARATED OR RETIRED.—

(1) TRANSITION PROCESS.—Chapter 58 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1142 the following new section:

''§ 1142a. Process for transition of members to health care and physical disability systems of Department of Veterans Affairs

''(a) TRANSITION PLAN.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that each member of the armed forces who is being separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title receives a written transition plan that—

''(A) specifies the recommended schedule and milestones for the transition of the member from military service; and

''(B) provides for a coordinated transition of the member from the Department of Defense disability system to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(2) A member being separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title shall receive the transition plan before the separation or retirement date of the member.

''(3) The transition plan for a member under this subsection shall include information and guidance designed to assist the member in understanding and meeting the schedule and milestones for the member's transition.

''(b) FORMAL TRANSITION PROCESS.—(1) The Secretary of Defense, in cooperation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall establish a formal process for the transmittal to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of the records and other information described in paragraph (2) as part of the separation or retirement of a member of the armed forces under chapter 61 of this title.

''(2) The records and other information to be transmitted under paragraph (1) with respect to a member shall include, at a minimum, the following:

''(A) The member's address and contact information.

''(B) The member's DD–214 discharge form, which shall be transmitted electronically.

''(C) A copy of the member's service record, including medical records and any results of a Physical Evaluation Board.

''(D) Whether the member is entitled to transitional health care, a conversion health policy, or other health benefits through the Department of Defense under section 1145 of this title.

''(E) Any requests by the member for assistance in enrolling in, or completed applications for enrollment in, the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care benefits for which the member may be eligible under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(F) Any requests by the member for assistance in applying for, or completed applications for, compensation and vocational rehabilitation benefits to which the member may be entitled under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, if the member is being medically separated or is being retired under chapter 61 of this title.

''(3) The transmittal of information under paragraph (1) may be subject to the consent of the member, as required by statute.

''(4) With the consent of the member, the member's address and contact information shall also be submitted to the department or agency for veterans affairs of the State in which the member intends to reside after the separation or retirement of the member.

''(c) MEETING.—(1) The formal process required by subsection (b) for the transmittal of

records and other information with respect to a member shall include a meeting between representatives of the Secretary concerned and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which shall take place at a location designated by the Secretaries. The member shall be informed of the meeting at least 30 days in advance of the meeting, except that the member may waive the notice requirement in order to accelerate transmission of the member's records and other information to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(2) A member shall be given an opportunity to submit a written statement for consideration by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(d) TIME FOR TRANSMITTAL OF RECORDS.—The Secretary concerned shall provide for the transmittal to the Department of Veterans Affairs of records and other information with respect to a member at the earliest practicable date. In no case should the transmittal occur later than the date of the separation or retirement of the member.

''(e) ARMED FORCES.—In this section, the term 'armed forces' means the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1142 the following new item:

''1142a. Process for transition of members to health care and physical disability systems of Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(b) UNIFORM SEPARATION AND EVALUATION PHYSICAL.—Section 1145 of such title is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection:

''(d) UNIFORM SEPARATION AND EVALUATION PHYSICAL.—The joint separation and evaluation physical, as described in DD–2808 and DD–2697, shall be used by the Secretary of Defense in connection with the medical separation or retirement of all members of the armed forces, including members separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall adopt the same separation and evaluation physical for use by the Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(c) INTEROPERABILITY OF MEDICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND BI-DIRECTIONAL ACCESS.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and implement a single medical information system for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of ensuring the complete interoperability and bi-directional, real-time exchange of critical medical information.

(d) CO-LOCATION OF VA BENEFIT TEAMS.—

(1) CO-LOCATION.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly determine the optimal locations for the deployment of Department of Veterans Affairs benefits team to support recovering service members assigned to military medical treatment facilities, medical-related support facilities, and community-based health care organizations.

(2) MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''medical-related support facility'' has the meaning given that term in subsection (b) of section 490 of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 201(a) of this Act.

(e) REPEAL OF SUPERSEDED CHAPTER 61 MEDICAL RECORD TRANSMITTAL REQUIREMENT.—

(1) REPEAL.—Section 1142 of such title is amended by striking subsection (c).

(2) SECTION HEADING.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 1142. Preseparation counseling''.

(3) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 58 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1142 and inserting the following new item:

''1142. Preseparation counseling.''.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATES.—Section 1142a of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsection (d) of section 1145 of such title, as added by subsection (b), shall apply with respect to members of the Armed Forces who are separated or retired from the Armed Forces on or after the first day of the eighth month beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act. The requirements of subsections (c) and (d), and the amendments made by subsection (e), shall take effect on the first day of such eighth month.

SEC. 111. ESTABLISHMENT OF MEDICAL SUPPORT FUND FOR SUPPORT OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES RETURNING TO MILITARY SERVICE OR CIVILIAN LIFE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—There is established on the books of the Treasury a fund to be known as the Department of Defense Medical Support Fund (hereinafter in this section referred to as the ''Fund''), which shall be administered by the Secretary of the Treasury.

(b) PURPOSES.—The Fund shall be used—

(1) to support programs and activities relating to the medical treatment, care, rehabilitation, recovery, and support of wounded and injured members of the Armed Forces and their return to military service or transition to civilian society; and

(2) to support programs and facilities intended to support the families of wounded and injured members of the Armed Forces.

(c) ASSETS OF FUND.—There shall be deposited into the Fund any amount appropriated to the Fund, which shall constitute the assets of the Fund.

(d) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—

(1) AUTHORITY TO TRANSFER.—The Secretary of Defense may transfer amounts in the Fund to appropriations accounts for military personnel; operation and maintenance; procurement; research, development, test, and evaluation; military construction; and the Defense Health Program. Amounts so transferred shall be merged with and available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the appropriation account to which transferred.

(2) ADDITION TO OTHER AUTHORITY.—The transfer authority provided in paragraph (1) is in addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense. Upon a determination that all or part of the amounts transferred from the Fund are not necessary for the purposes for which transferred, such amounts may be transferred back to the Fund.

(3) NOTIFICATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall, not fewer than five days before making a transfer from the Fund, notify the congressional defense committees in writing of the details of the transfer.

(e) AUTHORIZATION.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to the Medical Support Fund, from an emergency supplemental appropriation for fiscal year 2007 or 2008, $50,000,000, to remain available through September 30, 2008.

SEC. 112. OVERSIGHT BOARD FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established a board to be known as the Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors (in this section referred to as the ''Oversight Board'').

(b) COMPOSITION.—The Oversight Board shall be composed of 12 members, of whom—

(1) two shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

(2) two shall be appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

(3) two shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(4) two shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives;

(5) two shall be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(6) two shall be appointed by the Secretary of Defense.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS.—All members of the Oversight Board shall have sufficient knowledge of, or experience with, the military healthcare system, the disability evaluation system, or the experience of a recovering service member or family member of a recovering service member.

(d) APPOINTMENT.—

(1) TERM.—Each member of the Oversight Board shall be appointed for a term of three years. A member may be reappointed for one or more additional terms.

(2) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Oversight Board shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(e) DUTIES.—

(1) ADVICE AND CONSULTATION.—The Oversight Board shall provide advice and consultation to the Secretary of Defense and the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives regarding—

(A) the process for streamlining the disability evaluation systems of the military departments;

(B) the process for correcting and improving the ratios of case managers and service member advocates to recovering service members;

(C) the need to revise Department of Defense policies to improve the experience of recovering service members while under Department of Defense care;

(D) the need to revise Department of Defense policies to improve counseling, outreach, and general services provided to family members of recovering service members;

(E) the need to revise Department of Defense policies regarding the provision of quality lodging to recovering service members; and

(F) such other matters relating to the evaluation and care of recovering service members, including evaluation under disability evaluation systems, as the Board considers appropriate.

(2) VISITS TO MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITIES.—In carrying out its duties, each member of the Oversight Board shall visit not less than three military medical treatment facilities each year, and the Board shall conduct each year one meeting of all the members of the Board at a military medical treatment facility.

(f) STAFF.—The Secretary shall make available the services of at least two officials or employees of the Department of Defense to provide support and assistance to members of the Oversight Board.

(g) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members of the Oversight Board shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of service for the Oversight Board.

(h) ANNUAL REPORTS.—The Oversight Board shall submit to the Secretary of Defense and the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives each year a report on its activities during the preceding year, including any findings and recommendations of the Oversight Board as a result of such activities.

TITLE II—STUDIES AND REPORTS

SEC. 201. ANNUAL REPORT ON MILITARY MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) REPORT REQUIREMENT.—Chapter 23 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 490. Annual report on military medical facilities

''(a) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than the date on which the President submits the budget for a fiscal year to Congress pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the adequacy, suitability, and quality of medical facilities and medical-related support facilities at each military installation within the Department of Defense.

''(b) RESPONSE TO HOT-LINE INFORMATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall include in each report information regarding—

''(1) any deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, or state of repair of medical-related support facilities raised as a result of information received during the period covered by the report through the toll-free hot line maintained pursuant to section 1567 of this title; and

''(2) the investigations conducted and plans of action prepared under such section to respond to such deficiencies.

''(c) MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITY.—In this section, the term 'medical-related support facility' is any facility of the Department of Defense that provides support to any of the following:

''(1) Members of the armed forces admitted for treatment to military medical treatment facilities.

''(2) Members of the armed forces assigned to military medical treatment facilities as an outpatient.

''(3) Family members accompanying any member described in paragraph (1) or (2) as a non-medical attendant.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''490. Annual report on military medical facilities.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The first report under section 490 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be submitted not later than the date of submission of the budget for fiscal year 2009.

SEC. 202. ACCESS OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS TO ADEQUATE OUTPATIENT RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES.

(a) REQUIRED INSPECTIONS OF FACILITIES.—All quarters of the United States and housing facilities under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces that are occupied by recovering service members shall be inspected on a semiannual basis for the first two years after the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter by the inspectors general of the regional medical commands.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORTS.—The inspector general for each regional medical command shall—

(1) submit a report on each inspection of a facility conducted under subsection (a) to the post commander at such facility, the commanding officer of the hospital affiliated with such facility, the surgeon general of the military department that operates such hospital, the Secretary of the military department concerned, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors established pursuant to section 112, and the appropriate congressional committees; and

(2) post each such report on the Internet website of such regional medical command.

SEC. 203. EVALUATION AND REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEMS.

(a) EVALUATION.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a joint evaluation of the disability evaluation systems used by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of—

(1) improving the consistency of the two disability evaluation systems; and

(2) evaluating the feasibility of, and potential options for, consolidating the two systems.

(b) RELATION TO VETERANS' DISABILITY BENEFITS COMMISSION.—In conducting the evaluation of the disability evaluation systems used by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consider the findings and recommendations of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission established pursuant to title XV of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108–136; 38 U.S.C. 1101 note).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the submission of the final report of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) the results of the evaluation; and

(2) the recommendations of the Secretaries for improving the consistency of the two disability evaluation systems and such other recommendations as the Secretaries consider appropriate.

SEC. 204. STUDY AND REPORT ON SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study of the provision of support services for families of recovering service members.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The study under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A determination of the types of support services that are currently provided by the Department of Defense to family members described in subsection (c), and the cost of providing such services.

(2) A determination of additional types of support services that would be feasible for the Department to provide to such family members, and the costs of providing such services, including the following types of services:

(A) The provision of medical care at military medical treatment facilities.

(B) The provision of job placement services offered by the Department of Defense to any family member caring for a recovering service member for more than 45 days during a one-year period.

(C) The provision of meals without charge at military medical treatment facilities.

(3) A survey of military medical treatment facilities to estimate the number of family members to whom the support services would be provided.

(4) A determination of any discrimination in employment that such family members experience, including denial of retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment by an employer on the basis of the person's absence from employment as described in subsection (c), and a determination, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, of the options available for such family members.

(c) COVERED FAMILY MEMBERS.—A family member described in this subsection is a family member of a recovering service member who is—

(1) on invitational orders while caring for the recovering service member;

(2) a non-medical attendee caring for the recovering service member; or

(3) receiving per diem payments from the Department of Defense while caring for the recovering service member.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the results of the study, with such findings and recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 205. REPORT ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY CLASSIFICATIONS.

(a) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives an interim report describing the changes undertaken within the Department of Defense to ensure that traumatic brain injury victims receive a proper medical designation concomitant with their injury as opposed to the current medical designation which assigns a generic ''organic psychiatric disorder'' classification.

(b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a final report concerning traumatic brain injury classifications and an explanation and justification of the Department's use of the international classification of disease (ICD) 9 designation, recommendations for transitioning to ICD 10 or 11, and the benefits the civilian community experiences from using ICD 10.

SEC. 206. EVALUATION OF THE POLYTRAUMA LIAISON OFFICER/NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER PROGRAM.

(a) EVALUATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct an evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program, which is the program operated by each of the military departments and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of—

(1) assisting in the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from the Department of Defense health care system to the Department of Veterans Affairs system; and

(2) expediting the flow of information and communication between military treatment facilities and the Veterans Affairs Polytrauma Centers.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program shall include evaluating the following areas:

(1) The program's effectiveness in the following areas:

(A) Handling of military patient transfers.

(B) Ability to access military records in a timely manner.

(C) Collaboration with Polytrauma Center treatment teams.

(D) Collaboration with Veteran Service Organizations.

(E) Functioning as the Polytrauma Center's subject-matter expert on military issues.

(F) Supporting and assisting family members.

(G) Providing education, information, and referrals to members of the Armed Forces and their family members.

(H) Functioning as uniformed advocates for members of the Armed Forces and their family members.

(I) Inclusion in Polytrauma Center meetings.

(J) Completion of required administrative reporting.

(K) Ability to provide necessary administrative support to all members of the Armed Forces.

(2) Manpower requirements to effectively carry out all required functions of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program given current and expected case loads.

(3) Expansion of the program to incorporate Navy and Marine Corps officers and senior enlisted personnel.

(c) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) the results of the evaluation; and

(2) recommendations for any improvements in the program.

TITLE III—GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 301. MORATORIUM ON CONVERSION TO CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FUNCTIONS AT MILITARY MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The conduct of public-private competitions for the performance of Department of Defense functions, based on Office of Management and Budget Circular A–76, can lead to dramatic reductions in the workforce, undermining an agency's ability to perform its mission.

(2) The Army Garrison commander at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center has stated that the extended A–76 competition process contributed to the departure of highly skilled administrative and maintenance personnel, which led to the problems at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

(b) MORATORIUM.—During the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, no study or competition may be begun or announced pursuant to section 2461 of title 10, United States Code, or otherwise pursuant to

Office of Management and Budget Circular A–76 relating to the possible conversion to performance by a contractor of any Department of Defense function carried out at a military medical facility .

(c) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives a report on the public-private competitions being conducted for Department of Defense functions carried out at military medical facilities as of the date of the enactment of this Act by each military department and defense agency. Such report shall include—

(1) for each such competition—

(A) the cost of conducting the public-private competition;

(B) the number of military personnel and civilian employees of the Department of Defense affected;

(C) the estimated savings identified and the savings actually achieved;

(D) an evaluation whether the anticipated and budgeted savings can be achieved through a public-private competition; and

(E) the effect of converting the performance of the function to performance by a contractor on the quality of the performance of the function;

(2) a description of any public-private competition the Secretary would conduct if the moratorium under subsection (b) were not in effect; and

(3) an assessment of whether any method of business reform or reengineering other than a public-private competition could, if implemented in the future, achieve any anticipated or budgeted savings.

SEC. 302. PROHIBITION ON TRANSFER OF RESOURCES FROM MEDICAL CARE.

Neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Secretaries of the military departments may transfer funds or personnel from medical care functions to administrative functions within the Department of Defense in order to comply with the new administrative requirements imposed by this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

SEC. 303. INCREASE IN PHYSICIANS AT HOSPITALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase the number of resident physicians at hospitals of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. No amendment to the committee amendment is in order except those printed in House Report 110–78. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent of the amendment, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. BARROW

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Mr. BARROW:

Add at the end of the bill the following new section:

SEC. 304. VETERANS BENEFICIARY TRAVEL PROGRAM.

(a) ELIMINATION OF DEDUCTIBLE.—Subsection (c) of section 111 of title 38, United States Code, is repealed.

(b) DETERMINATION OF MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT RATE.—

(1) DETERMINATION.—Paragraph (1) of subsection (g) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(1) In determining the amount of allowances or reimbursement to be paid under this section, the Secretary shall use the mileage reimbursement rates for the use of privately owned vehicles by Government employees on official business, as prescribed by the Administrator of General Services under section 5707(b) of title 5, United States Code.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Subsection (g) of such section is further amended by striking paragraphs (3) and (4).

(c) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(i) Funds for payments made under this section shall be appropriated separately from other amounts appropriated for the Department.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this Act shall apply with respect to travel expenses incurred after the expiration of the 90-day period that begins on the date of the enactment of this Act.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARROW) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, this amendment will make good on a 50-year old promise that has been neglected in this country for 30 years now. For over 50 years, this government has promised veterans that they would be reimbursed for the full out-of-pocket costs they incur in traveling to and from medical care that they receive. For the first 20 years, this government kept that promise. Every time the civil service mileage rate went up, the veterans' reimbursement rate went up.

But for the last 30 years, that promise has not been kept. The mileage rate for veterans traveling to get their medical treatment hasn't gone up, hasn't changed one bit since 1977. The rate for vets is the same $0.11 per mile today that it was in 1977. In 1977, civil servants got $0.11 and vets got $0.11. But, today, civil servants get 48.5 cents for every mile they drive their car. But vets still get the same $0.11 they got back in 1977.

That is not all. Since then, Congress has tacked on a $6 deductible for vets that doesn't apply to civil servants. When you add it all up, you have got to travel over 50 miles to get the free medical care you have been promised before you will get one dime of reimbursement from the Federal Government. And if you have to travel as much as 500 miles, you get a lousy 48 bucks back in return.

The reason for this problem is simple. When Congress made this promise way back in the 1950s, it passed a law that authorized the VA to keep up with changes in the cost of travel, to keep up with inflation, but it didn't require the VA to do anything about it. And since 1977 nothing has been done about it.

My amendment will fix that by doing two things. First, it will eliminate the $6 deductible, round-trip deductible that applies to vets but not to civil servants; and, second, it will mandate that the mileage reimbursement rate for veterans traveling to and from medical care will go up every time the rate goes up for civil servants. There will be no more having to remember vets when they raise the reimbursement rate for civil servants, and there will be no more forgetting vets every time they are entitled to an increase in the reimbursement.

□ 1500

This legislation has the support of the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Legion, AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

This amendment is about making good on a promise we made to our veterans, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support.

On a personal level, I want to thank the chairmen of the committees of jurisdiction in this matter. I also want to thank the staffs of the committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affair and the staff of the Rules Committee.

And I want to thank Mr. MORAN for his kind remarks earlier today. He supported this measure in the last Congress, and he continues to support it today. And I appreciate his support very much.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARROW. I will be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I think this is an excellent amendment from our side. I want to thank the gentleman for offering it, and we have absolutely no objections to this amendment. We support it very strongly. Good work.

Mr. BARROW. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I will yield to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, the amendment before us is an excellent one. Those of us who live in the rural part of this country, as well pointed out by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), will certainly appreciate this. If you look at the statistics, a disproportionate number of people in uniform come from a small town in rural America, and your change in the reimbursement rate will be a great deal of help to those young men and women as well as those who retire in their traveling to and from their hometown to receive the medical care from the designated facilities. And I compliment you and certainly approve of this amendment.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise to control the 5 minutes reserved for the opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida will control the time in opposition.

There was no objection.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I support the amendment before us.

This measure would increase the reimbursement rate available through the veterans beneficiary travel program to the level currently enjoyed by Federal employees, including Members of Congress who travel. It would also eliminate the travel deductible, which imposes an additional burden on veterans.

I have been pushing this issue for quite some time now and am happy to see it reach the floor of the House of Representatives. In my district, which spans eight counties, many veterans have to travel long distances to access health care. Considering today's gas prices, one can understand the enormous expenses incurred by those in need of care. Worse yet, with many veterans living on fixed incomes, the current reimbursement rate can seriously harm their standard of living. I know I have been contacted by many veterans also telling me about the burden that the deductibility imposes on us. It astounds me that in providing this benefit our government holds veterans to a different standard than Federal employees.

I commend the gentleman for introducing this amendment, and as he knows, our two staffs have been working together to put in an individual bill.

I believe that America needs to listen up. It is time for us to fix this inequity and support passage of this important amendment.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARROW).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. SKELTON

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 2 offered by Mr. SKELTON:

At the end of section 1074l(a)(4)(B) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, strike ''or Air Force Medical Service.'' and insert ''Air Force Medical Service, or other corps comprised of health care professionals at the discretion of the Secretary of Defense.''.

In section 107(b), add at the end the following:

(3) The progress made in developing the tracking system under subsection (c) and the results of the system.

In section 107(c), strike ''The'' and insert ''Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the''

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is a simple one that makes technical changes in section 101 to clarify the qualification of military officers who may supervise medical care case managers and also in section 107 to require that the tracking system for reports to medical authorities regarding wounded warriors' symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or suicidal tendencies be developed not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SKELTON. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my friend on the great work he has done being the chief architect on this bill. And I have absolutely no objections to the gentleman's amendment. I think it is good and I support it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. KLINE OF MINNESOTA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. KLINE of Minnesota:

Insert the following after subsection (d) of section 111 (and redesignate subsection (e) as subsection (f)):

(e) WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that $10,000,000 for fiscal year 2007 is transferred from the Medical Support Fund to support programs, activities, and facilities associated with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment program, to be used as follows:

(1) $6,550,000 for Case Management and Patient Support.

(2) $1,200,000 for Wounded Warrior Interim Regimental Headquarters Building conversion.

(3) $1,300,000 for Case Management System Development.

(4) $95,000 for Support Equipment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, this amendment addresses the situation that we are facing on the ground overseas and at home. The United States Marine Corps is suffering a little over 30 percent of the combat casualties. My amendment makes sure that they and their program, in support of this very important bill, gets 20 percent of the money allocated in the fund established in this bill.

Mr. Chairman, on October 7, 2004, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Tim Maxwell's life changed forever. While on his third tour in Iraq, an enemy mortar attack left him with a battered body and severe brain trauma. But Colonel Maxwell is a marine, and despite the frustration of relearning how to walk and read, he has refused to give in to his wounds. In an open letter posted on his Web site, Colonel Maxwell talks about what it is like to be a wounded warrior:

''We tend not to complain about our injuries too much. Most of us know others who are worse off—a guy with a bad leg knows a guy who lost a leg, or both legs. I, with a brain that is 'cracked,' know youngsters with brain injuries who are unable to walk or talk. We all know some who died. So it is not a good thing to complain. We are tough guys. We are all going to whip it.''

Having experienced loneliness, frustration, and depression during his recovery, Tim Maxwell set out to ensure that fellow wounded marines would have a place to recover with others like them. He said: ''When you're in the hospital, your morale is okay. You are with other wounded warriors. You can chat about it. Sometimes we just look at each other in the hallway and nod. That's all. Acknowledgment. But once you are out of the hospital, it's tough. It sounds great on the day you leave. But there's irritation, frustration.''

In May, 2005, Colonel Maxwell came across a 20-year-old wounded marine sitting alone inside a Camp Lejeune barracks. The young man couldn't use his arm and was lonely and lost, having seen his buddy killed in combat and with his family living far away in Florida. Colonel Maxwell decided that ''no marine was going to be left alone like that.''

So along with Gunnery Sergeant Ken Barnes, he convinced the Marine Corps leadership that wounded marines needed their own barracks to help them heal among other wounded warriors. The Marine Corps leadership agreed, and in September 2005, Camp Lejeune opened the first barracks for wounded marines. The following month the barracks was dedicated to the man whose vision led to today's Wounded Warrior Battalion: Lieutenant Colonel Tim Maxwell.

Maxwell Hall at Camp Lejeune now houses 80 marines and provides them with the support structure necessary to heal. A similar barracks has also been established at Camp Pendleton, California, to care for west coast marines. The program has been so successful

that the concept was formalized by establishing the Wounded Warrior Battalions at Lejeune and Pendleton.

Simply put, Colonel Maxwell's vision of Wounded Warrior Battalions seeks to ensure that marines don't fall through the cracks that were so evident at Walter Reed. This amendment will help ensure this unique program succeeds and acts as a model for other services by assisting the Marine Corps transition this successful program from independent battalions on each coast into a single regiment with a headquarters located at Quantico.

The regiment's 54 staff members will help oversee the battalions at Pendleton and Lejeune, track active duty and discharged wounded marines through their recovery, and connect them with resources at the VA, other government agencies, and through private organizations. The battalions will continue to handle the day-to-day tasks of ensuring that marines are scheduled for medical appointments, that they are transported to those appointments, and that they receive counseling support to help heal their mental scars.

Earlier this week, I spoke with the newly appointed Wounded Warrior Regimental commander, Colonel Gregory Boyle. After the conversation I was even more convinced that the Wounded Warrior Regiment is the model for how to treat our wounded servicemembers. Colonel Boyle is motivated and ready to go forward. He came from infantry regimental command. Passage of this amendment will ensure he is able to do so.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring this amendment to the floor, and I very much appreciate the support of Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I wanted to thank the gentleman for yielding. And, you know, the Marine motto is ''Always Faithful,'' and once again, the gentleman, who is a great former marine, is being always faithful, not just to the men and women of his service, the Marine Corps, but those of all services who have been wounded in the war against terror. I want to thank the gentleman. I support this amendment very strongly.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. SKELTON. We discussed this issue and this proposed amendment in the committee. At that time, we said we would work with you, and I compliment you on it. I support it. I think it is an excellent amendment and I wish to move forward and vote for it.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. KENNEDY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 4 offered by Mr. KENNEDY:

At the end of section 2, add the following:

(5) MEDICAL CARE.—The term ''medical care'' includes mental health care.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer this amendment with my colleague Mr. SESTAK.

This amendment, Mr. Chairman, would amend the definition of medical care under the legislation to include mental health care. Under this definition, we measure the quality of health care in our military hospitals in order to determine that we ensure that our military personnel receive the best possible quality health care in the military that they ought to be entitled to. In doing so we ought to make sure that mental health care is part of that quality review process. And as we know full well, in the wake of this war, too many of our veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan have been suffering tremendously from wounds that may not be visible from the outside but are wounds nonetheless that are equally harmful. They are psychological wounds, Mr. Chairman. They are mental health wounds, and they are wounds, nonetheless, that need to be treated.

□ 1515

That is why we need to have the best quality mental health care that our military can offer, and that is why we want to make sure that when it comes to measuring quality health care in this legislation that mental health care is also measured as a quality indicator to ensure that our military personnel receive the best quality health care that they can receive.

On behalf of Mr. SESTAK and myself, I move this amendment.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Rhode Island, Mr. KENNEDY, for this amendment and for the fact that it is a clarifying amendment that makes all of us, as well as those within the medical community, understand that mental health is included in the term ''medical care.'' I thank you for that, and I fully support it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my friend, a former member of the committee, for his work. We support this amendment strongly.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MS. CORRINE BROWN OF FLORIDA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 5 offered by Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida:

In section 1567 of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 102 of the bill—

(1) redesignate subsections (b), (c), and (d) as subsections (c), (d), and (e), respectively; and

(2) insert after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

''(b) CONFIDENTIALITY.—(1) Individuals who seek to provide information through use of the toll-free telephone number under subsection (a) shall be notified, immediately before they provide such information, of their option to elect, at their discretion, to have their identity remain confidential.

''(2) In the case of information provided through use of the toll-free telephone number by an individual who elects to maintain the confidentiality of his or her identity, any individual who, by necessity, has had access to such information for purposes of conducting the investigation or executing the response plan required by subsection (c) may not disclose the identity of the individual who provided the information.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to bring an amendment to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill establishes a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in medical facilities and a new system of case managers, advocates and counselors for wounded servicemen returning from combat overseas to help them get the

care they need and help navigate the military health care system.

The bill provides no professional protections for servicemen if they or their family members call this hotline to get better treatment. This could cause those injured men and women to refrain from reporting abuses and problems, and the situation we currently have at Walter Reed could continue.

There is also the worry that anything reported will affect the serviceman's career. My amendment would simply offer confidentiality for those soldiers to get the care they are provided under this bill.

This amendment requires any hotline set up by the Secretary of Defense to ask if the caller wants confidentiality at the beginning of the phone call.

Last month, I was in the grocery store in Jacksonville, Florida. A veteran working part time told me about a friend at Walter Reed, with pictures showing the problems occurring there. I couldn't believe what he was describing to me was a military facility, and I told him, You can't believe everything you see on the Internet. The next day, the very next day, this story was in The Washington Post. The fact that an active duty soldier was treated this way is inconceivable.

Most of the information I get is from families, about the war and lack of equipment. Not from the Department of Defense, not from the soldiers, but from the family members. I do not want a call for help by a wounded serviceman or woman or their family to be used against them. I do not want those heroes to be scared to ask for help, to be scared their future career could be compromised by one phone call.

Support the Brown amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlelady, and we support the amendment on this side. I thank her for her contribution.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I compliment the gentlelady on this excellent amendment, and certainly support it.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. SESTAK. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. SESTAK:

At the end of title I, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. PLANS AND RESEARCH FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) PLANS FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.—

(1) PLAN FOR PREVENTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan to incorporate evidence-based preventive and early-intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions) into—

(i) basic and pre-deployment training for enlisted members of the Armed Forces, non-commissioned officers, and officers;

(ii) combat theater operations; and

(iii) post-deployment service.

(B) UPDATES.—The Secretary of Defense shall update the plan under subparagraph (A) periodically to incorporate, as the Secretary considers appropriate, the results of relevant research, including research conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(2) RESEARCH.—Subject to subsection (b), the Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences, to conduct such research as is necessary to develop the plan described in paragraph (1).

(b) EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH AND TRAINING.—

(1) WORKING GROUP.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, to determine the feasibility of establishing a working group tasked with researching and developing evidence-based measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychological pathologies (including substance use conditions). The working group shall include personnel with experience in a combat theater, and behavioral health personnel who have experience providing treatment to individuals with experience in a combat theater.

(2) PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a plan for a peer-reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research and develop evidence-based preventive and early intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions).

(c) REPORT.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress annually a report on the plans and studies required under this section.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SESTAK. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, as someone who wore the cloth of this Nation for 31 years, few things are as important to me as our obligation to support those who fought for our country. Our men and women in uniform serve selflessly on our behalf, and it is our foremost duty in Congress to do everything in our power to ensure that they have the care and the treatment they deserve, as they are, and they will remain, our most important recruiters in our volunteer Armed Forces of the future. So it matters how we treat them, as they will be the ones to encourage or discourage their sons and daughters, their loved ones and friends, to become or not to become part of what they once belonged to.

With that in mind, recent reports about the conditions at Walter Reed were quite sobering to who we believe we are. I am as, if I am not more, responsible as anyone. I should have known better and looked more because of my 31 years of service.

But the Armed Services Committee has now looked closely at this issue and taken a significant step forward in reporting H.R. 1538 to the House. This is a bill that will address concerns regarding the adequacy of the treatment received by our servicemembers returning home from Iraq.

While we are all familiar with the images of soldiers who have returned home maimed as a result of an IED, it is another range of medical challenges that are increasingly being seen as a signature disability of the war in Iraq, mental health disorders and the invisible psychological trauma of post-traumatic stress disorder.

According to a Pentagon study released last year, 35 percent of Iraqi war veterans received mental health care during the first year at home. Twelve percent were diagnosed with a mental health ailment.

Left untreated, the more recognizable symptoms of PTSD, including nightmares or flashbacks, can ultimately lead to other problems, including drug and alcohol abuse.

At a time when science has shown that mental health and physical health are inseparable, we cannot overlook the integral role that mental health care plays in the proper medical care of our servicemembers and veterans.

This past Sunday, I attended an event hosted by the Military Order of the Purple Heart for the VA Medical Center in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and spoke to several of those who work with and treat veterans with PTSD. They emphasized to me their concerns about the level of resources, attention, and the scope of care available to those who need mental health services.

This is an issue we cannot simply ignore because the challenges of mental illness are interwoven with the other challenges that we are confronted with in every corner of our society. And that is why I was honored that Representative KENNEDY held with me a forum in my district on mental health and substance abuse last month, where,

among other things, Congressman KENNEDY spoke of the importance of properly addressing the needs of veterans and servicemembers.

As a Nation, we will never be fully healthy, never fully productive, until we eliminate all barriers to good mental health care for all our citizens, and especially those who have put themselves in harm's way to serve our country.

This amendment requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies, what we might call psychological Kevlar.

Prevention, how nice. No, how necessary. It is what we do in the military. Successful generals win. Then they go to war.

This is what we must do to ensure that our soldiers are properly prepared, not just physically with the right Kevlar but, also, thanks to the knowledge developed through the peer-reviewed research called for in this amendment, with the proper psychological Kevlar. We must treat both physical and mental care of our troops the same.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SESTAK. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I have examined this amendment. I think it is an excellent one, and I compliment you. It is certainly acceptable on our side.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Rhode Island is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I only asked for the opportunity to speak in opposition just to claim the time in opposition. This is my amendment, so I won't be speaking in opposition to it.

Of course, I do want to speak in favor of this, because clearly this is the leading cause of disability, I believe, and will be the leading cause of disability for this war. As we have seen our soldiers come back, more and more of them are reporting mental health as the leading cause of disability; and, of course, this has been underreported in so many instances.

Why? It has been underreported because of the stigma, Mr. Chairman. Continued in this country is the fact that our society continues to stigmatize the treatment of mental illness. So even our soldiers who have every right to feel that they have been stressed by the experience of having suffered through the trauma of war, even those that have been through this experience and have every right to seek mental health treatment, even they feel stigmatized by having to need mental health treatment, and that is the reason why so many of them don't actually go and seek mental health treatment.

But in spite of the stigma, we still find that 35 percent of those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have sought treatment for mental health services. This is an enormous number, and I think it points very much to the fact that this is a very enormous challenge for our country.

Mr. Chairman, we need to deal with this problem before we even have these soldiers returning from Iraq, and that is why we are looking to have the psychological Kevlar act adopted in this legislation.

I want to identify Kristen Henderson, who is a spouse of a member of our military who came to my office and said, why is it that we are waiting until our soldiers get back from Iraq until we deal with their post-traumatic stress disorder? Why don't we start helping them become resilient, and how come we don't start preparing them for the trauma of war before they even get into the trauma of war? We do so much to put them into boot camps to train them physically for war. Why don't we do more to put them together and train them mentally for war?

This is what this amendment says. It puts the Department of Defense in the position where they have to put together a program where our military men and women are put into a curriculum where they are better prepared to deal with the conflicts and the stresses of war before they actually see the trauma of combat.

Mr. Chairman, I think that this is something that we need to do, because we need to make sure that when our soldiers come back that they don't have that sense of stigma attached to seeking mental health services. And if they understand that in order for them to be good soldiers that they need to be of sound mind and sound body and that is part of their being part of a esprit de corps, then they will be more forthcoming in seeking help when they need it. That will mean they will be better soldiers in the long run.

Mr. Chairman, just a few years ago, I had the opportunity to go down to Fort Bragg and see our Green Berets. Mr. Chairman, they have psychiatrists available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

You might ask, why do the best and brightest in the military have that? The reason they do is because the military has figured out that if they have anything else on their mind bothering them, they can't do their job the way they are best trained to do their job. I think, Mr. Chairman, if it is good enough for the Green Berets, then why isn't it good enough for the rest of our Armed Forces?

That is what this psychological Kevlar bill puts in place. It says we need to protect the mind as well as the body of our soldiers before battle, and we need to make sure that they are prepared for every eventuality when it comes to wartime.

I ask my colleagues to vote for this and destigmatize mental health and help the Department of Defense lift the veil of the stigma of mental illness and vote for the psychological Kevlar bill. For that reason, I will ask for a recorded vote on this amendment.

□ 1530

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. HOOLEY) having assumed the chair, Mr. ROSS, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (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, had come to no resolution thereon.

PERMISSION TO OFFER AMENDMENTS OUT OF ORDER DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during further consideration of H.R. 1538 in the Committee of the Whole pursuant to House Resolution 274, any of the amendments printed in House Report 110–78 may be considered at any time.

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

There was no objection.

WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 274 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1538.

□ 1532

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (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 Mr. ROSS (Acting Chairman) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110–78 by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) had been disposed of.

Pursuant to the order of the House of today, amendments may be considered in any sequence.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MS. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON OF TEXAS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 6 offered by Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas:

In section 107(a), in the first sentence, strike ''modification of the training'' and insert ''improvement of the training''.

In section 107(a), strike the second sentence and insert the following: ''The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are adequately trained and able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 6, AS MODIFIED, OFFERED BY MS. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON OF TEXAS

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that my amendment be modified with the text that I have at the desk that proposes text changes in section 107 of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will report the modification.

The Clerk read as follows:

Modification to amendment No. 6 offered by Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas:

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

In section 107(a), in the first sentence, strike ''modification of the training'' and insert ''improvement of the training''.

In section 107(a), strike the second sentence and insert the following: ''The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are adequately trained and able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members and make prompt notification to the appropriate health care professionals.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment is modified.

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, this amendment proposes text changes to section 107 of the bill, the section that deals with improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers and servicemember advocates on particular conditions of recovering servicemembers.

As of March 1 of this year, over 24,000 servicemembers have been wounded in action since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, according to the Department of Defense. The Government Accountability Office has found that servicemembers injured in combat face an array of medical and financial challenges as they begin their recovery process in the health care systems of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran Affairs. A GAO report was recently released on March 5 and entitled ''DoD and Va Health Care, Challenges Encountered By Injured Service Members During Their Recovery Process.''

According to the report, Mr. Chairman, the Department of Defense screens servicemembers for post-traumatic stress disorder, but it does not ensure that further mental health evaluations occur.

DoD health care providers review questionnaires, interview servicemembers, and use clinical judgment in determining the need for further mental health evaluation. Sadly, DoD found that only 22 percent of the service members who may have been at risk for developing post-traumatic stress syndrome were actually referred by the Defense Department health care providers for further evaluation. In addition, the Defense Department never identified the factors as health care actually used to determine which servicemembers needed the referrals.

Although our wounded warriors may obtain mental health evaluations for treatment for post-traumatic stress through the VA, and the VA may face a challenge in meeting the demand for these services, VA officials estimated that follow-ups for veterans to get treatment for this stress syndrome may be delayed up to 90 days.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I spent my professional career as a psychiatric nurse with the Veterans Administration. I can tell you that we could save time and money if we had the proper people in place to diagnose early, or at least get a referral. We miss a lot of early symptoms that later causes long-term unemployment, long-term financial stress and long-term hospitalization simply because we have not put the well-trained people in place, professional social workers, professional nurses that would diagnose and know that something needs to be done to prevent further deterioration, and that is my reason for bringing this.

My 15 years of hands-on inpatient program care were specialized in mental health. And I have my credentials to show that. And my amendment strengthens this section because I feel that more emphasis needs to be made on adequate training by health care professionals to recognize these signs, including suicidal tendencies, so that the early intervention can come, and it will shorten the recovery period.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

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

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I ask to claim the time allotted for debate of the amendment offered by Ms. JOHNSON, although I do not oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I certainly support this and so many other amendments on this bill which are so very, very important not only to our veterans, but it serves as a model, as do so many veterans programs, of something we could be doing for other Americans.

Let me speak first to the point of what these do when we manage and coordinate patient care. We had an issue recently in the Energy and Commerce Committee which I serve on doing this, another aspect, and it was a very lively discussion. But recognize that someone who is wounded, as well as someone who has other medical illnesses, a single diagnosis is usually not something that stands loan. For example, a person with diabetes may have several other endocrine problems, problems with their kidneys, with their diet, their circulation, their limbs, their mobility, and of course there are emotions, too, all of which can be very, very complex to deal with.

When the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center did a study on coordinating the care of people with diabetes, for example, they found when they assign people to work on these cases, they reduce rehospitalization by 75 percent. Washington Hospital in Washington, Pennsylvania reduced rehospitalization of folks with heart disease by 50 percent. These are extremely important aspects. And we have to look upon these as things that not only save money, but they save lives and they save a lot of care.

Let me also point to an amendment offered by my dear friend, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, when he talked about mental illness. When we are talking about the wounds of war or the wounds of life, not all of these wounds are visible. They are not necessarily scars one can see, they are not something you can put a bandage on, but they are very real. The psychological wounds of war are such that they can break up a family, keep someone from holding a job, perhaps lead someone to try to self-medicate their problems away with drugs or alcohol, all too common problems among our veterans.

And then when they are not dealt with, we find people who become more dependent upon others, that with difficulties with their families, with their

children, perhaps become hopeless, have trouble holding a job. And all of those continued effects of wounds of war go on.

It is extremely important that we recognize in Mr. KENNEDY's amendment, as well as Ms. JOHNSON's amendment and other aspects of this whole bill that what is vitally important is we treat the whole person.

The time is long past due in this country where we look at medical symptoms and medical disease as something that shows up on an x-ray or a blood test or some other sophisticated test. Indeed, the wounds of war are not always visible, nor are they things that appear soon after the battle. Post traumatic stress disorder, other anxiety disorders can remain latent for years and suddenly reappear. I remember meeting a veteran at a VA hospital who ended up with some problems after 20 or 30 years after the Vietnam War. He had recently had a liver transplant.

Under the medications and other aspects, he suddenly began having nightmares that he never had before. He had all this psychological trauma that was never showing up before.

What is so important is that we work to train people to understand these issues, which the gentlelady's amendment talks about, that we work to deal with the mental illness issues, which Mr. KENNEDY's amendment talks about, and we work as a unit, as a whole, as a Congress, as a Nation to recognize that many times the illnesses and wounds of war are things that may not be there now, may not be visible, but are aspects we have to treat in the long run.

I call on all of my colleagues to enthusiastically support these amendments.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. I yield 1 minute to Mr. ANDREWS from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank my friend. With the authority of the chairman of the full committee, I would like to indicate the committee enthusiastically supports this well-thought-out amendment and thanks the gentlelady for offering it.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I have no further requests for speakers. I want to thank both sides for their support, and I urge adoption.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), as modified.

The amendment, as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MS. HOOLEY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 8 offered by Ms. HOOLEY:

At the end of title I, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. OPTION FOR MEMBERS OF RESERVE COMPONENTS TO USE MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITIES CLOSEST TO HOME FOR CERTAIN INJURIES.

The Secretary of Defense shall provide that, in the case of members of the reserve components returning from a combat theater, if a member requires treatment on an outpatient basis for injuries or wounds sustained in theater, the member may be provided treatment at the military medical treatment facility closest to the member's home rather than closest to the base from which the member was deployed.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, with four in 10 members of the military in Iraq and Afghanistan serving in the Reserve component, it is clear that our National Guard is no longer a strategic reserve, but an operational reserve. And as such, we must change the way we treat the Guard if we want to maintain recruitment and retention because it is the right and fair thing to do.

After 5 years of mobilization, both involuntary and voluntary, our National Guardsmen are still navigating the system that was intended for use by the active duty rather than our current nearly even blend of Reserve and active components.

My amendment to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warriors Act, is simple. It allows members of the National Guard and Reserve who are returning from theater with minor injuries or other outpatient care needs the option to seek treatment at the military medical treatment facility closest to the member's home rather than closest to the base from which the member was deployed.

□ 1545

When an active duty soldier with certain injuries comes back to the United States, he gets treated at the medical facility closest at his home base where his family lives. But for Oregon Guardsmen and Reservists and soldiers from about a dozen other States that have no bases, our troops must remain for weeks at the base they deployed from for follow-up care. These can be hundreds or even thousands of miles away from home and family.

In 2004, I spoke with Monica Davey of the New York Times about the problem as she covered the issues in a series of front-page news stories. She quoted one spouse as saying, ''Having him in Iraq was hard enough. When he got hurt, I said, 'Well, at least he can come home now and get better here with us.' But it is a strange thing. He came home, but he is not home at all.''

This problem is old news and no longer on the front page, but it still goes on. Here are a couple examples of what happens when these Guard troops request treatment upon demobilization:

An Oregon Guardsman who returned months ago is still on the east coast base with medical issues. He and his wife have several young children; and, as can happen with lengthy deployments, the separation has strained their relationship to the breaking point. He has seen his family only once in the last 3 months. That soldier should have the option of seeking treatment at Fort Lewis in Washington State, much closer to his home.

Another story involves an enlisted man with a wife and young children who has seen his young family stateside only three times in the last 3 months, once because the Army sent him home for convalescent leave, and the other two times over the holidays because his wife drove their children out to the east coast military treatment facility where he was awaiting care because they couldn't afford to fly.

These stories are heartbreaking; and, despite years of work on trying to get the problem fixed, little progress has been made. Since the start of the Iraq war in 2003, tens of thousands of Reservists and Guardsmen have been placed on medical hold.

As the New York Times reporter Ms. Davey aptly put it 3 years ago, ''Unlike the most gravely injured soldiers receiving around-the-clock treatment at the finest military hospitals, these are ordinary soldiers with more ordinary wounds. The loneliest and the impatient can elect to go home even if they still need medical attention, but that could be a very expensive trade-off. Military rules dictate that they lose their active duty salaries, even though they may still be too injured or ill to return to their civilian jobs.''

Today, four out of 10 soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are Guard or Reserve, and it is long past time for the DOD to adjust their policies and make improvements to the demobilization process for Guard members in States like mine that have no military treatment facilities. I ask for your support of this amendment so we can finally give soldiers from the Reserve component the flexibility to be treated for certain injuries at military medical treatment facilities nearest their homes and families just like the active component.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. Very briefly on behalf of the committee, we thank the gentlelady for offering this well-thought-out amendment and, on behalf of the chairman, indicate our strong support for the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say we support the gentlewoman's amendment and have no opposition to it here on our side.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

DEMAND FOR RECORDED VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I may be permitted to request a recorded vote on amendment No. 7 at this point, notwithstanding the passage of time since its adoption by voice vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Rhode Island?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote is requested. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment numbered 7 offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. ALTMIRE). It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 9 offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

At the end of title II, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 207. STUDY AND REPORT ON WAITING PERIODS FOR APPOINTMENTS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study on the average length of time between the desired date for which a veteran seeks to schedule an appointment for health care at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility and the date on which such appointment is completed.

(b) FOCUS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall focus on appointments scheduled and completed at Department medical facilities located in both rural and urban areas.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress containing the findings of the study under subsection (a) and recommendations for decreasing the waiting time between the desired date of an appointment and the completion of the appointment to a maximum of 15 days.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank the chairman of the committee, and I want to thank all those who contributed to this underlying legislation. I thank them for their good work on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

I myself am not a veteran. I did not serve my Nation in uniform. My grandfather did. He served during World War II. My father did. He served during Korea. My brother did. He served during the Cold War. So I have the highest respect for the men and women who serve our Nation in uniform.

Mr. Chairman, as we approach the annual debate on our budget, one thing that I think that we hold in common, although there are many differences in our parties, is that we all believe that our veterans and especially our veterans health care ought to be one of the most important priorities that we have as a Nation. And as we continue to fight this war on terror, we know we are creating more veterans with more health care needs.

During the last congressional recess, I spent a lot of time visiting with the veterans of the Fifth Congressional District in Texas that I have the honor and pleasure of representing. I heard many good comments, frankly, about VA health care and some complaints. And I suppose, Mr. Chairman, that one of the most important complaints I heard was the complaint on the waiting time in order to actually get the appointment that the veteran has requested.

Now, I know that great strides have been made in reducing these waiting times. I know that the veterans health care system is serving entire new populations that they didn't serve years ago. And this is a good thing. But I still would hope that, number one, we could understand exactly the challenges that our veterans are facing and see if there are not some commonsense solutions, as earlier the gentlelady from Texas, my colleague, said, that essentially we can save time and save money and still help our veterans.

This amendment is a very simple amendment. I hope it is a very noncontroversial amendment. It simply directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to study the average length of time between the desired date for which a veteran seeks a scheduled medical appointment and the date in which the appointment is actually completed.

Now, I know that the vast majority of appointments are completed within this 30-day window, but I don't believe this body knows if that means the bulk of them happened on day 29 or the bulk of them may happen on day six. This is important information we ought to have.

I represent a district that is urban, suburban, and rural; and this study would not just concentrate on our urban areas but our rural areas as well, where a number of our veterans go to retire.

Additionally, this amendment would ask for the Secretary's recommendations on what we might do to shorten the length of time to 15 days and provide recommendations to our body to do that. Not only veterans in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas, but if you look at the independent budget supported by numerous of our veterans service organizations, they speak to the need to see what we can do to reduce, in many cases, excess waiting times, something they flagged as a strong concern.

So I know the VA has made great strides, but there is still work that we can do to serve these people who serve us and protect freedom, the greatest commodity that we have in our land. And by supporting this amendment, Congress can make just one more small step in the direction of supporting our veterans.

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

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I may claim the time in opposition, although I do not, in fact, oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the chairman of the committee, we thank the gentleman from Texas for offering this well-thought-out amendment. We support his efforts to try to reduce waiting time for our deserving veterans, and the majority will support the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman for his support. I know when to take ''yes'' for an answer.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 10 OFFERED BY MR. BILIRAKIS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 10 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 10 offered by Mr. BILIRAKIS:

After section 101, insert the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 102. ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE-WIDE OMBUDSMAN OFFICE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish a Department of Defense-wide Ombudsman Office (in this section referred to as the ''Ombudsman Office'') within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

(b) FUNCTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The functions of the Ombudsman Office are to provide policy guidance to, and oversight of, the ombudsman offices in the military departments.

(2) POLICY GUIDANCE.—The Ombudsman Office shall develop policy guidance with respect to the following:

(A) Providing assistance to and answering questions from recovering service members and their families regarding—

(i) administrative processes, financial matters, and non-military related services available to the members and their families throughout the member's evaluation, treatment, and recovery;

(ii) transfer to the care of the Veterans Administration; and

(iii) support services available upon the member's return home.

(B) Accountability standards, including—

(i) creating and maintaining case files for individual specific questions received, and initiating inquiries and tracking responses for all such questions;

(ii) setting standards for timeliness of responses; and

(iii) setting standards for accountability to recovering service members and their families, including requirements for daily updates to the members and their families about steps being taken to alleviate problems and concerns until problems are addressed

(c) STATUS REPORTS.—The ombudsman office in each military department shall submit status reports of actions taken to address individual concerns to the Ombudsman Office, at such times as the Ombudsman Office considers appropriate.

(d) RESPONSES FROM OTHER OFFICES.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that all other offices within the Department of Defense and the military departments respond in a timely manner to resolve questions and requests from the Ombudsman Office on behalf of recovering service members and their families, including offices responsible for medical matters (including medical holdover processes), financial and accounting matters, legal matters, human resources matters, reserve component matters, installation and management matters, and physical disability matters.

(e) STAFF OF THE OFFICE.—The staff of the Ombudsman Office shall include representatives from each military department, including persons with experience in medical holdover processes and other medical matters.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Like all of my colleagues, I was greatly disturbed by the conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center which were depicted in The Washington Post. Last week, I introduced H.R. 1580, the Wounded Warriors Joint Health Care Ombudsman Act. My legislation is intended to create a single point of reference for recovering servicemembers and their families to ensure they are receiving prompt responses and information to their questions.

The amendment that I am offering today is a modified version of my legislation, and it creates a Department of Defense-wide ombudsman office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The functions of the office are to provide policy guidance and oversight to each military department. Specifically, the office would develop policy guidance with respect to providing assistance to and answering questions from recovering servicemembers and their families on a variety of important issues.

The policy guidance developed by the ombudsman office should allow recovering servicemembers to get information on administrative processes, financial assistance, the transition to care from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the support services available upon the member's return home. Very important.

The office would also establish accountability standards for the military departments. These standards would cover issues such as creating and maintaining case files for specific questions received, as well as tracking the response for all such questions. The office would also set timeliness standards for responses.

Under my amendment, the office can also require each military department to submit status reports of actions taken to address individual concerns raised by the recovering servicemembers and their families.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, everyone agrees that our military servicemembers should receive the highest quality of care and services possible. As they recover from their injuries, our wounded warriors should not have to battle bureaucracy to get the care and benefits they have earned. It is important that the ombudsman office be an advocate for servicemembers during every phase of treatment and the evaluation process as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this important amendment. I would also like to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member DUNCAN HUNTER for their assistance.

□ 1600

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. On behalf of the chairman, we thank the gentleman for his carefully crafted amendment. We think it is important that there be a department-wide ombudsman as well as in the services. The majority will support the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to join in thanking the gentleman for an excellent amendment, and thank him for his very thoughtful addition to this important bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 11 OFFERED BY MR. BUCHANAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 11 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 11 offered by Mr. BUCHANAN:

At the end of title II, add the following new section:

SEC. 207. STUDY AND REPORT ON STANDARD SOLDIER PATIENT TRACKING SYSTEM.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study on the feasibility of developing a joint soldier tracking system for recovering service members.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The study under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Review of the feasibility of allowing each recovering service member, each family member of such a member, each commander of a military installation retaining medical holdover patients, each patient navigator, and ombudsman office personnel, at all times, to be able to locate and understand exactly where a recovering service member is in the medical holdover process.

(2) A determination of whether the tracking system can be designed to ensure that—

(A) the commander of each military medical facility where recovering service members are located is able to track appointments of such members to ensure they are meeting timeliness and other standards that serve the member; and

(B) each recovering service member is able to know when his appointments and other medical evaluation board or physical evaluation board deadlines will be and that they have been scheduled in a timely and accurate manner.

(3) Any other information needed to conduct oversight of care of the member through out the medical holdover process.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the results of the study, with such findings and recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment is a simple one. It requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility of a soldier patient tracking system to improve the medical holdover process.

In the aftermath of the Walter Reed scandal, we heard criticism about the medical hold and holdover process, which requires injured soldiers to stay in certain facilities until evaluated and treated.

We heard the story of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant John Shannon who testified before the House National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee and he said, ''I had been given a couple of weeks' appointments and some other paperwork upon leaving ward 58, and I went to all of my appointments during that time. After these appointments, I sat in my room for another couple of weeks wondering when someone would contact me.''

The Buchanan amendment would require the Department of Defense to

identify and report to Congress ways of making the medical holdover system more responsive and effective for military personnel like Staff Sergeant Shannon.

I believe every servicemember should have complete, on-demand information with respect to his or her status as a medical holdover. No soldier should sit in their room for weeks wondering about their treatment and when their next appointment might be. The Department of Defense must closely examine ways to give servicemembers real-time information regarding the key milestones in their physical and medical evaluation process.

By requiring a report to Congress, my amendment would make certain that we are knowledgeable in considering all available options when it comes to improving the medical holdover process for troops and their families. I urge my colleagues to support the Buchanan amendment.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I accept and I thank the gentleman from Florida for the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to support the gentleman's amendment, and thank him for his valuable contribution to this process.

Mr. BUCHANAN. I thank the chairman and the ranking member and the House Committee on Armed Services and their staff.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MR. WELCH OF VERMONT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 12 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 12 offered by Mr. WELCH of Vermont:

Insert at the end of section 10741(a) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new paragraph:

''(6) The Secretary concerned shall ensure that medical care case managers have the resources necessary to ensure that they expeditiously carry out the responsibilities and duties of their position.''

Insert at the end of section 10741(b) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new paragraph:

''(7) The Secretary concerned shall ensure that service member advocates have the resources necessary to ensure that they expeditiously carry out the responsibilities and duties of their position.''

Insert after subsection (b) of section 10741 of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new subsection (and redesignate subsections (c) and (d) of such section as subsections (d) and (e), respectively):

''(c) OUTREACH.—The Secretary of Defense shall make available to each member in an outpatient status at a military medical treatment facility, and to the family members of all such members, information on the availability of services provided by the medical care case managers and service member advocates, including information on how to contact such managers and advocates and how to use their services.''

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank the Committee on Armed Services for this bipartisan legislation that all of us here in Congress are eager to support. Mr. SKELTON has spent virtually his entire career in Congress making certain that the military is prepared and has the equipment it needs and it has the services they require when they come home; and his colleague who has worked very carefully with him, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER). I thank you for bringing this legislation to Congress.

The underlying bill does two things, as you know. It creates, one, a medical case manager. Number two, it creates a servicemember advocate. The point of those two positions is to guarantee that what happened at Walter Reed won't happen again.

My amendment is intended to strengthen and intensify the ability of those two positions to be effective on the part of the men and women who need medical services, and it does it in two ways. One, it makes it clear to the Secretary that these two positions must be empowered to do whatever is required to work through the bureaucracy and see to it that folks get the care they need.

Secondly, it requires the Secretary to advertise the availability of these services to our veterans, but also to their families. As we saw at Walter Reed, it was the families who often were the best spokesperson for the veterans and our soldiers who were in need of service. So the amendment builds on what the committee has done by empowering and advertising.

Mr. Chairman, I want to close by thanking the members of the Committee on Armed Services and their staff for working so closely with me to help write this amendment in a way that was consistent with the underlying objectives of the bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Let me support this amendment of my friend and colleague, Mr. WELCH. The gentleman from Vermont has done a service in bringing this thoughtful amendment forward.

In doing so, it specifies the training and reporting requirements for medical care case managers and servicemember advocates. More importantly, it ensures they have the resources they need to get the job done. I will repeat that. That they have the resources to get the job done. I appreciate his contribution and thank him for his efforts in this regard to make this good bill even better.

Mr. HUNTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Yes, I yield.

Mr. HUNTER. I also want to thank the gentleman for his very thoughtful amendment.

Since this is the last amendment, I thought I would take this opportunity to thank my great friend, IKE SKELTON, for bringing our team to the floor and moving this very important legislation very effectively. I thank both gentlemen.

Mr. SKELTON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I yield to Chairman SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. I must say, it is a thrill to be able to work with my friend, DUNCAN HUNTER, in bringing a piece of legislation like this forward in a bipartisan manner, and thank him for his cooperation as well as all on both sides of the aisle.

Again, I will mention our wonderful staff that works so well in a bipartisan manner. So Mr. HUNTER, thank you very much for your solid efforts in this regard.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, apparently I have the last word, and I think I will say what any of us would say if they were here, and that is thank you to the chairman and thank you to the ranking member. You have embodied in this legislation a principle we all know, and that is that the cost of the war has to include the cost of caring for the warrior. So I know I speak on behalf of all of us in thanking you for your excellent work.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, the unfinished business is the request for a recorded vote on amendment No. 7 offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 434, noes 0, not voting 4, as follows:

[Roll No. 206]

AYES—434

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Faleomavaega
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fortuño
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Norton
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—4

Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
Millender-McDonald

□ 1635

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. There being no further amendments, the question is on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended,was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) having assumed the chair, Mr. ALTMIRE, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (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, pursuant to House Resolution 274, he reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute reported from the Committee of the Whole?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I demand a re-vote on the Sestak-Kennedy amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is a separate vote demanded on any other amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute?

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment on which a separate vote has been demanded.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. SESTAK:

At the end of title I, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. PLANS AND RESEARCH FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) PLANS FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.—

(1) PLAN FOR PREVENTION—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan to incorporate evidence-based preventive and early-intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions) into—

(i) basic and pre-deployment training for enlisted members of the Armed Forces, non-commissioned officers, and officers;

(ii) combat theater operations; and

(iii) post-deployment service.

(B) UPDATES.—The Secretary of Defense shall update the plan under subparagraph (A) periodically to incorporate, as the Secretary considers appropriate, the results of relevant research, including research conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(2) RESEARCH.—Subject to subsection (b), the Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences, to conduct such research as is necessary to develop the plan described in paragraph (1).

(b) EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH AND TRAINING.—

(1) WORKING GROUP.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, to determine the feasibility of establishing a working group tasked with researching and developing evidence-based measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychological pathologies (including substance use conditions). The working group shall include personnel with experience in a combat theater, and behavioral health personnel who have experience providing treatment to individuals with experience in a combat theater.

(2) PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a plan for a peer-reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research and develop evidence-based preventive and early intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related

psychopathologies (including substance use conditions).

(c) REPORT.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress annually a report on the plans and studies required under this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment.

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 426, nays 0, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 207]

YEAS—426

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Bartlett (MD)
Davis, Jo Ann
Hayes
Issa
Kanjorski
Lampson
Millender-McDonald

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1654

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on adoption of the committee amendment, as amended.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on 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.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 426, nays 0, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 208]

YEAS—426

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant

Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Davis, Jo Ann
Fattah
Kanjorski
Lampson
Meek (FL)
Millender-McDonald
Rangel

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1711

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be authorized to make technical corrections in the engrossment of H.R. 1538, including corrections in spelling, punctuation, section numbering, and cross-referencing and the insertion of appropriate headings.

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

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 21. 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.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.J. RES. 40

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that my name be withdrawn as a cosponsor of H.J. Res. 40. After further reflection, I have concerns that this legislation, which would propose an amendment to the Constitution relative to equal rights for men and women, could potentially compromise my longtime stance on pro-life issues. I hope that clarifying language can be added to this bill to offer assurances to pro-life supporters that this measure would not be used to undermine Federal laws on this important matter.

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

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 695 AND ADDED AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1222

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Mrs. EMERSON be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 695 and added as a cosponsor of H.R. 1222. I regret the error.

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

There was no objection.

OLDER AMERICANS REAUTHORIZATION TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 1002) to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to reinstate certain provisions relating to the nutrition services incentive program, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the Senate bill, as follows:

S. 1002

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 ''Older Americans Reauthorization Technical Corrections Act''.

SEC. 2. NUTRITION SERVICES INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

Section 311 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3030a), as amended by section 309 of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006, is further amended—

(1) by striking subsection (b)(3);

(2) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

''(d)(1) Each State agency and each title VI grantee shall be entitled to use all or any part of amounts allotted under subsection (b) to obtain, subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), from the Secretary of Agriculture commodities available through any food program of the Department of Agriculture at the rates at which such commodities are valued for purposes of such program.

''(2) The Secretary of Agriculture shall determine and report to the Secretary, by such date as the Secretary may require, the amount (if any) of its allotment under subsection (b) which each State agency and title VI grantee has elected to receive in the form of commodities. Such amount shall include an amount bearing the same ratio to the costs to the Secretary of Agriculture of providing such commodities under this subsection as the value of commodities received by such State agency or title VI grantee under this subsection bears to the total value of commodities so received.

''(3) From the allotment under subsection (b) for each State agency and title VI grantee, the Secretary shall transfer funds to the Secretary of Agriculture for the costs of commodities received by such State agency or grantee, and expenses related to the procurement of the commodities on behalf of such State agency or grantee, under this subsection, and shall then pay the balance (if any) to such State agency or grantee. The amount of funds transferred for the expenses related to the procurement of the commodities shall be mutually agreed on by the Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture. The transfer of funds for the costs of the commodities and the related expenses shall occur in a timely manner after the Secretary of Agriculture submits the corresponding report described in paragraph (2), and shall be subject to the availability of appropriations. Amounts received by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to this section to make commodity purchases for a fiscal year for a State agency or title VI grantee shall remain available, only for the next fiscal year, to make commodity purchases for that State agency or grantee pursuant to this section.

''(4) Each State agency and title VI grantee shall promptly and equitably disburse amounts received under this subsection to recipients of grants and contracts. Such disbursements shall only be used by such recipients of grants or contracts to purchase domestically produced foods for their nutrition projects.

''(5) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require any State agency or title VI grantee to elect to receive cash payments under this subsection.''; and

(3) by striking subsection (f) and inserting the following:

''(f) In each fiscal year, the Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture shall jointly disseminate to State agencies, title VI grantees, area agencies on aging, and providers of nutrition services assisted under

this title, information concerning the foods available to such State agencies, title VI grantees, area agencies on aging, and providers under subsection (c).''.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by section 2 shall take effect beginning with fiscal year 2008.

(b) APPLICATION PROCESS.—Effective on the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall take such actions as will enable State agencies and title VI grantees described in section 311 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3030a) to apply during fiscal year 2007 for allotments under such section for fiscal year 2008.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, this bill makes technical corrections to the Older Americans Reauthorization Act of 2006. The bill would restore language regarding the administration of the Nutrition Services Incentive Program that existed prior to the Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2006.

Prior to the reauthorization, this nutrition program provided cash or USDA commodities to states to supplement meals for the elderly. Six states chose to receive USDA commodities through the program—Massachusetts, Kansas, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Delaware. However, while attempting to relieve administrative burdens for USDA during the last reauthorization, Congress inadvertently denied states the ability to directly purchase essential USDA commodities.

This was not the intent of Congress. The states that receive USDA commodities run tremendous programs that help provide nutritious meals to seniors. Many states reported that they were able to double the value of their appropriated funds by purchasing USDA commodities and Massachusetts reported that because of this program they were able to avoid waiting lists for meals for 17 years.

I've heard from my fellow Iowans on the importance of this program as well. Iowa has participated in this program and recognizes its benefits. We never received much money for commodities—only about $155,000—but the money goes a long way. Our Area Agencies on Aging often have a hard time meeting their budgets, but USDA commodities allowed them to serve more meals at a higher quality. Iowa fully intends to take advantage of USDA commodities again once we pass this bill.

This bill hasn't strayed from Congress' original intent either. The bill reduces the administrative burden on USDA, and streamlines the transfer of funds between the Department of Health and Human Services, to which funds are appropriated, and the Department of Agriculture, which purchases commodities for the states.

We must pass this bill today so that states wishing to take some or all of their NSIP allotment in commodities may place their order with the Department of Agriculture for FY 2008 by April 7th.

It's time to fix the mistakes that were made and allow these state to continue to serve seniors the most effective way possible.

The Senate bill was read a third time and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 275 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 99.

□ 1714

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) 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, with Mr. ALTMIRE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the concurrent resolution is considered read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 4 hours, with 3 hours confined to the congressional budget, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on the Budget, and 1 hour on the subject of economic goals and policies, equally divided and controlled by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) each will control 90 minutes on the congressional budget.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina.

□ 1715

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 9 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, H. Con. Res. 99 is not the full and final solution, but it is a good solution. It moves us in the right direction towards a balanced budget. It moves us to balance in 5 years, as a matter of fact, by 2012. It posts a smaller deficit than the President's budget over 5 years. It adheres to PAYGO, and it contains no new mandatory spending that is not fully offset.

It also includes program integrity initiatives to root out waste, fraud and abuse in the Department of Health and Human Services and in the reporting of taxes in the Internal Revenue Service.

Mr. Chairman, I have listened to this resolution described both in our markup in committee and today during the debate on the rule. I think you have to bear in mind what our critics have said, in terms of where the criticism is coming from, because the party that is opposing this resolution and criticizing this resolution is the same party that took a surplus of $5.6 trillion between 2002 and 2011 and turned it into a deficit of $2.8 trillion during this same period of time.

As a consequence, we have heard a lot of talk out here today, but the truth of the matter is, with respect to taxes, their bill imposes on future generations, our children and grandchildren, an unerasable tax called a debt tax, because they will be servicing the debt of the United States for years to come.

Let me show you just a few charts to illustrate what I mean.

First of all, the chart showing the debt of the United States that has increased since 2001 when Mr. Bush took office. This is a simple chart, but it contains an enormous amount of truth.

When Mr. Bush took office in 2001, he came to office with an advantage that few American presidents have ever enjoyed, a budget in balance, in surplus by $236 billion the year before. Within 4 years, he had driven that surplus of $236 billion into a deficit of $418 billion; and, as a consequence, the debt when he took office, which was $5.7 trillion, today is $8.8 trillion, having increased $3.1 trillion over the last 6 years.

We have never seen a debt accumulation like this, certainly during any normal period of time. Except for the Depression or Second World War, we have never seen, except for those periods, any kind of accumulation of debt that approaches this. And if we continue on this path, if we continue on this path, then we will see the debt, by the time Mr. Bush leaves his presidency, at $9.6 trillion, as opposed to $5.7 trillion when he came to office.

Net interest on the national debt is today $170 billion. That is the debt tax I am talking about. This is the debt service that our children and their children will have to pay for years to come. It is a debt tax that is indelible, almost permanent, unless we can do something to turn this budget around and start reducing our debt, instead of accumulating mountainous debt year in and year out.

The budget that we bring to the floor today fully funds the President's defense request, and we husband what little is left over for some centerpiece initiatives which we strongly support as Democrats.

First of all, we created in 1997 a Children's Health Insurance Program. The authorization for it runs out this year. We would propose in our budget resolution to reauthorize the CHIP program, Children's Health Insurance, and add $50 billion to the program so we cover most of the children who are eligible for coverage in the United States.

The second point: With respect to education, we think the education of our children, of today's workforce, is critically important as never before in American history; and we think it would be shameful to cut back for education. But for 3 straight years President Bush has sent us a budget that would cut the Department of Education, this year by $1.5 billion.

If you take Function 500, which includes elementary and secondary education and student loans and workforce investment and Trade Adjustment Assistance Training, the Bush administration requests $3.6 billion next year

less than this year; and in 2012 the request is $8.6 billion below current services. That is for training our workforce. That is what this administration is willing to invest in the education of our children.

We feel differently, and strongly differently, and we provide $8 billion to $9 billion more than the President and, over 5 years, $46 billion more than the President provides for education and job training and related activities.

We also call for a long-term fix in the Alternative Minimum Tax. The President has told us twice that they can take the Alternative Minimum Tax and, within the context of the Tax Code in a revenue-neutral manner, change the Alternative Minimum Tax so that it will not extend to middle-income families for whom it was never intended. They have told us that, but they are yet to do that.

We are saying in this budget resolution to the Ways and Means Committee, given its jurisdiction over taxes, and to the administration, we need to fix the AMT.

You will hear, as you have heard earlier today, a lot of talk about this being the biggest tax increase in American history, which is absolutely absurd. The Democratic budget resolution which I am presenting right now, introducing, which we will discuss tonight, does not raise taxes, period. The budget resolution that we bring to the floor tonight in no way affects the tax cuts that were passed in 2001 and in 2003. It leaves those tax cuts in place for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

What we do assume is the same revenues that CBO projects in its current baseline. If you look at the CBO baseline and the OMB baselines, you will find they virtually converge. There is about a 1.2 percent difference between the two of them, as this chart right here will easily show you.

All this palaver about taxes and the biggest tax increase in history, this is the difference between our revenue projections, the green bar, and theirs, which is blue, 1.2 percent over a 5-year period of time.

Looking at this budget in its whole context, three outside groups which are vigilant overseers and advocates for good, sound fiscal policy, the Concord Coalition has said, ''Thus, to be clear,'' this is how they sum up their letter, ''this budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' As plain as you can put it, from a group that is truly disinterested and independent politically.

Then we have got the Brookings Institution, the Hamilton Project. ''This budget would not raise taxes.'' ''This budget would not raise taxes.''

Finally, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, they took a look at our budget and they said, ''This claim is just flat incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.''

What the House plan does do is allow the tax cuts that were passed in 2001 and 2003 to follow their course. They will expire on December 31, 2010. Not because of this budget resolution. It doesn't have a thing to do with the expiration or extension of those tax cuts. But, in 2010, those tax cuts expire of their own volition, because they were so drawn, designed, intended by those on this side of the aisle, the Republicans. They were designed to expire on December 31, 2010.

What we are simply assuming in this budget resolution is that that decision will be taken when we reach it. When we have to cross that bridge, we will cross that bridge. We will know then what our deficit is in 2010. We hope we will have a surplus by that point in time; and if we have a surplus, we will know whether or not we can offset it against the extension of some of these tax cuts.

I will say this and will say it repeatedly: Read this budget resolution. Give us a fair shake. And you will find in two different places prominently inserted, this resolution says we endorse, we support, and we will seek the renewal of the middle-income tax cuts that have been passed since 2001 and 2003, the marital tax penalty, the child tax credit, the 10 percent bracket, State tax reform. All of these things we embrace and we pledge ourselves to the extension to see when they expire, as they will, they will be duly renewed.

We will have this debate continually throughout the night. It will be brought up again and again and again. But I want to say one final thing: This budget resolution does not raise taxes, and it does not cause the expiration of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. They expire of their own volition.

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

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 12½ minutes.

Mr. Chairman, first off, I would like to start off this debate by paying a compliment to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT). The gentleman from South Carolina is just that. He is a gentleman. He is a good man, he is a man who has a tough job, and he is a man who I enjoy working with.

The key to this year's budget debate is not whether Congress should balance the Federal budget. Republicans and Democrats this year are agreeing that we need to balance the Federal budget. The key is about how we are going to get there.

Today, as this House debates both the Democrats' and the Republicans' budget proposals for fiscal year 2008, it will become clear that this is much more than a simple discussion about numbers and how they add up over the next few years. Instead, this is going to be a bigger debate about our different governing philosophies, about what kind of society we envision, about what kind of country we want to leave to future generations.

The budget that the Democrats have proposed is true to their philosophy. I give them credit for that. They believe that more government is better government and that the best way to solve the myriad problems we face in this country is to spend more and more and to tax our people more and more to pay for that spending.

The Democrats' budget reflects this philosophy by calling for the largest tax increase in American history. I will make this irrefutably clear throughout the course of this debate: They call for immense new spending and postponement of critical entitlement reforms for another 5 years.

If Congress passes this budget tomorrow, this will enshrine the raising of taxes to the tune of $400 billion on the American family, worker and business. And we are not just talking about raising taxes on the rich, as they would like to have us believe. We are talking about raising taxes on every single American income tax payer. This means raising marginal income tax rates on all taxpayers; eliminating the 10 percent bracket that has benefited numerous low-income individuals; raising the tax on capital gains and dividends and discouraging investment in our economy and saving for our seniors; slashing the child tax credit in half; reinstating the marriage tax penalty; reimposing the death tax; and eliminating the State and sales tax deduction for States like Texas and Florida.

Let me just show you where the lie is. It is not in the numbers. The lie is in the so-called reserve funds. They can give you all the words they want. They can say they put all these fancy words in this budget that says we don't want to raise taxes, we want this new spending. But what a budget resolution is is a bunch of numbers, and numbers don't lie, Mr. Chairman.

This budget requires, banks on, plans for, assumes, insists upon the largest tax increase in American history. Otherwise, they don't balance the budget.

So my friends on the other side of the aisle can have it one way or the other, but not both. They can say they are balancing the budget. But, according to their budget, they therefore have to raise taxes. Or they can say they are not raising taxes, at which hand they then are not balancing the budget. They can't have it both ways.

□ 1730

The line, the red line, which is the revenue baseline, does not lie.

Now, their revenue numbers show it. And they can bring in all the left-leaning think tanks that have been in favor of tax increases in the past and in the present to say that this isn't a tax increase, but come December 10, January 31, that is the last day people have a $1,000 tax credit. It is the last day married couples won't be taxed for being married. It is the last day the death tax isn't at zero. It is the last day income tax rates don't go up across the board. That is what happens.

They have also made more than $100 billion worth of additional spending

promises in this budget, if they are offset. That's what all these reserve funds are about; more money for this program, more for that program, more money for this program, maybe some tax relief for the middle class. We have a reserve fund for it. My friends, a reserve fund is worth less than the paper it's printed on because all it says is we have these priorities, these ideas, these things we would like to do, we have no money for it; middle-class tax relief, more money for SCHIP, farm programs.

But if we did come up with the money to pay for these programs, we would like to do it; but we don't have the money, so we're not doing it. That is basically what a reserve fund is.

What we really have here, Mr. Chairman, is a huge tax increase, a tax increase that will have the effect of significantly increasing the burden on individual taxpayers and small businesses and will completely ignore the positive growth impacts that these tax cuts encouraged since 2003.

Let's review some of the effects that low tax burdens have had on economic growth, on jobs. Before we provided tax relief in 2003, we were losing an average of 100,000 jobs a month. Since then, we have added 7.6 million new jobs; about 170,000 new jobs have been created per month since the tax relief.

The economy. Before tax relief occurred in 2003, the economy grew at an average rate of 1.1 percent. Now it has been 3.5 percent since then, faster than it has grown in the last three decades, on average.

Unemployment. When we passed tax relief, the unemployment rate was at 6.1 percent, now it's all the way down to 4.5 percent.

Business investment. When we passed tax relief, business investment had been down for nine straight quarters. Since then, business investment has been up for 15 straight quarters. That is where the 7.6 million new jobs got created. Unfortunately, the Democrat budget would ignore all of this, with immense tax increases that threatened to put us right back where we were in the recession of 2001.

And now on revenues. What they will tell you is that the revenues are the reason why we are in deficit. What they will tell you is that the tax cuts drove us deeply into deficits. That is completely untrue. On the contrary. If you take a look at this chart, the tax relief actually had the effect of increasing job creation and revenues coming into the Federal Government.

We had 3 straight years of revenue decline during the recession. The tax cuts kicked in. What happened? Revenues went up exponentially, to the point where we have had double digit revenue gains for the last 3 years, and as a consequence, the deficit has been going down. These surging revenues have been a key factor in reducing this deficit.

Mr. Chairman, the wrong way to balance the budget is to raise taxes. The right way to balance the budget is to control spending. We do not have a revenue problem in Washington. Money is coming in very quickly from taxpayers. What we have here is a spending problem. And the Democrats are making it worse because they are calling for all this new spending.

For all of their talk about reducing the deficit, all they have done since they came into the majority is to spend more and more money, and we are only into the end of March. First they passed the omnibus bill that added $6 billion in new spending. Next came the supplemental for the warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan; they added $21 billion in unrelated and unrequested spending. And now their budget resolution adds another $24 billion in new spending next year alone.

For all the additional spending and gimmicks, the worst thing about this budget is not just the tax increases and the new spending, it's about what it does not include. This budget does nothing, absolutely nothing, to address our entitlement problem. This is what needs to be fixed, Mr. Chairman.

We had all these eyewitnesses, all these experts come from the left and the right that the majority called, from the GAO to CBO to other groups, all talking about the fact that our Nation is facing a fiscal crisis, that entitlements are growing out of control, that our primary responsibility in crafting our budget should be to address entitlement spending. Let me read some quotes from the Democrats' own witnesses.

The Comptroller General of the GAO has called the rising costs of government entitlements a fiscal cancer that threatens catastrophic consequences for our country and could bankrupt America. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve came to testify. He said, ''Without early and meaningful action to address the rapid growth of entitlements, the U.S. economy could be weakened, with future generations bearing much of the cost.'' Even the Democrats' own witnesses from the Concord Coalition testified to the same.

They've heard all of these witnesses, they've heard all these warnings, and they have chosen in this budget to do nothing. There is not a single reform, a single dollar of savings from entitlements. Obviously, they seem to be unconcerned with the $4.6 trillion in liability that Social Security has, which grows every year by $600 billion; or the $32 trillion in liability that my children are facing that gets larger and larger every single year.

With this budget, they have simply accepted that we are going to continue to pile up massive amounts of debt to our children, and we are going to force them to pay double what we pay in taxes today to sustain these programs.

This brings me to my final chart, a chart by the General Accounting Office. We know that if we fail to reform entitlements, the Federal Government will double in size by the year 2040. When my kids reach my age, this budget would leave them with the choice of either paying double our current tax rate, or accepting the fact that we just don't have enough money to spend on health care, defense, national security or education.

I believe this is an enormous missed opportunity by the Democrats. Yes, the Democrats balance the budget in 2012, and they should be commended for reaching that goal. But at what price are they balancing the budget? They hit balance only because they are imposing the largest tax increase in American history. We still will have all of the same problems though.

They are not reforming anything in government. They are not reforming any program. They are just calling for the American taxpayer to send more money in Congress so we can continue to spend too much money. And because of the path of big government and the tax-and-spend policies that the Democrats have chosen, this is going to be a very short-lived success. As soon as we get back to this balanced budget on paper in 2012, the year where their budget gets balanced on the backs of taxpayers, it won't be long before entitlement spending drives the Federal Government right back into deficits as far as the eye can see.

This is not a Republican and Democrat issue. The fact is every independent expert in America that watches fiscal issues knows that government is growing out of control. We have really important programs that need our attention, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the three most important programs, in my particular opinion, in the Federal Government. Important programs, and programs people depend on, organize their lives around. We have to reform these programs in order to save these programs, yet they are doing nothing to do that. And because their budget does nothing to save these programs, they are hastening the day at which they go bankrupt. That is an abdication of responsibility.

No matter how you put it, Mr. Chairman, this is a tax increase. No matter how you put it, Mr. Chairman, a reserve fund, no matter what flowery language you can attach to it, no matter what left-leaning think tank you can have to say whatever you want, a tax is a tax.

In our budget, we make sure that these tax increases don't hit American families. We make sure the marriage penalty stays away. We make sure the child tax credit stays up. We make sure tax rates are down. We make sure the death tax goes away. What do they do? They insist upon, they require, they depend up all these tax increases. If they don't, their budget doesn't balance. They can't have it both ways.

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

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, before yielding to the gentleman from Texas, I yield myself 1 minute to reply.

Mr. Chairman, the gentleman will acknowledge that they have requested in their budget resolution $278 billion in reconciled tax cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, student loans and a number of different areas. He is faulting us for not joining in this endeavor. That is partly because, number one, we don't agree with his specific cuts. But number two, having so-called saved $278 billion, there is then enacted by reconciliation directive to the Ways and Means Committee $447 billion in tax cuts.

So the net effect is not to use entitlement cuts for reform, but to actually add to the deficit $168.5 billion.

Mr. Chairman, I now yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, a distinguished member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. DOGGETT. I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this resolution.

You know, listening to these Republican complaints about this budget resolution, it kind of takes you into some sort of strange magic kingdom. They live by the first law of Disney, that wishing will make it so. They thought they could wish away the results of their tax policy changes, but we all suffer in national debt as a result of them. And no matter how long they wish and how hard they wish, they will not find the phantom taxes that they claim are increased in this budget resolution. We write our tax policy right in the black and white.

This year, additional revenues, zero. Next year, zero. The following year, zero. The following year, zero. The following year, zero. 2012, zero, but that year we still achieve a $154 billion surplus, the first time we will have a surplus in our budget since President Clinton left office.

You know, like Mickey Mouse and Tinker Bell, the Republicans are living in a land of fairy tales. But instead of imaginary friends, they've got imaginary demons, tax demons that come out. We cannot follow them on a path that is paved with fools gold deeper and deeper into national debt.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy and I appreciate his calling the attention, if not to our Republican friends, but to the American public, that they can look at page four in the resolution that is before us and find what has been said is simply not true.

Additionally, they can keep thumbing to page 46, which deals with what our policy is, in fact. Because we do want to minimize the impact on middle America. We make it clear that we are very interested in terms of being able to support extensions, the extension of the child tax credit, the extension of the marriage penalty relief and the extension of the 10 percent individual income tax. What we are not interested in doing is buying into the grab bag of special interest tax benefits, most of which flow to the Americans who are most well off.

I want, if I could, to just make one point in terms of talk of the largest tax increase in American history. Well, it's coming. There is a tax tsunami that is bearing down not just on the rich, not just on the upper middle class, but on middle America, and it is called the ''alternative minimum tax.''

For 6 years, Republicans in charge have had an opportunity to rebalance tax priorities in this country. My colleagues and I have called upon them to deal with permanent adjustment to the alternative minimum tax. They have refused. So now we have inherited a serious problem that is going to mean that middle America is facing the alternative minimum tax. Twenty-six million American families, 89 percent of people who earn between $75,000 and $100,000 will pay the AMT by 2010. Stopping this increase is our priority, that is what we are going to focus on, that is what we have committed to, that is what we are going to do, something that the Republican majority have failed to do in 2001, 2003, 2004.

Mr. DOGGETT. Indeed, those are the true missed opportunities, 6 years of missed opportunities under this administration.

As the gentleman points out so well, our objective here is to respond to the legitimate tax concerns of middle-class families, but to do it in a fiscally responsible way. No more will we borrow from our children and our grandchildren to finance tax cuts for the wealthy few now.

Mr. Chairman, I know, the gentleman from California, serving on the Ways and Means Committee, is very familiar with what we have gone through in this last 6 years of Republican borrow and spend policies.

I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BECERRA. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I agree with my colleagues.

As we discuss here what we are going to do in this Democratic budget resolution, I think the first thing we have to remember is we are going to pass a Democratic budget resolution. Guess what? Last year, the Republican majority did not pass a budget resolution so we had no guidepost, no blueprint to tell us how the Congress would spend its money. And does it surprise anyone to know that we went further into debt?

Unfortunately, as we continue to hear our colleagues, our friends on the Republican side say they want to see further tax cuts, what they don't mention is all those tax cuts that they passed in the last several years, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts that the President proposed, they paid this way.

□ 1745

This is what they did. They took out this credit card. Because every single one of those years we have been in deficit. And after using up the Social Security trust fund dollars, because they had to use the entire amount that was preserved for Social Security to help pay for the tax cuts, they still were in debt. So, guess what? They had to pull out the credit card, and we have been deficit spending for the last 7 years to pay for these tax cuts that have principally gone not to the middle class but to the folks who are on the highest level of our income scale.

This chart shows what happens, and it goes to the point of the gentleman from Oregon. What happens here is if you continue to extend the Republican tax cuts, you are going to help those that make over $1 million. The AMT, which the gentleman from Oregon pointed out, is going to hit folks that are making less than $200,000 or so most, the folks that were not helped by the Bush tax cuts. That is where we want to concentrate our tax cuts, right here, to help middle America.

Mr. DOGGETT. So this balanced budget resolution is a pledge for relief for legitimate middle-class working folks who are out there that have concerns without borrowing to finance more breaks for those over $1 million.

Mr. BECERRA. Precisely. We are going to provide middle-class Americans with these targeted tax cuts, targeted tax relief; and, as you mentioned before, Mr. DOGGETT, we are also going to be able to balance the budget in 5 years and have a surplus by 2012.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DOGGETT. I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I just think it is important that the American public can listen to politicians debate on the floor of the House, but they also have an opportunity to deal with independent groups.

Mr. DOGGETT. Let me say, I believe this is one of the most impressive, it can't be discounted as a Democratic group, because the gentleman is aware that the Concord Coalition is a bipartisan, nonpartisan group that has a Republican and Democratic co-Chairs. And they have said, again, in black and white, ''Thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' It just demonstrates this imaginary demon that they have over here, which is about all they can unite around.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. And I appreciate the gentleman's pointing the Concord Coalition that makes it clear that it does not call for or require a tax increase and the type of mindset we are getting from our friends on the other side that they would dismiss former Senator Warren Rudman, Republican from New Hampshire, establishing a left-wing think tank.

Mr. BECERRA. If the gentleman would yield for a moment.

Mr. DOGGETT. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BECERRA. The real distinction comes here. Our tax cuts will be targeted towards the middle class, not towards the wealthiest. And, at the same time, we have priorities. We are going

to balance this budget. We have committed to our PAYGO policies that we will pay for whatever we propose. But, at the same time, we are going to try to make sure that interest payments on the national debt don't consume everything, because today this is what happens when you do deficit spending.

Mr. DOGGETT. It is really a debt tax.

Mr. BECERRA. This is a debt tax, what happens when you do deficit spending. Deficits do matter. Under the last 7 years of Republican leadership with these tax cuts that have gone principally to very wealthy people, this is what happens. You have interest payments of over one quarter trillion dollars, yet veterans and education programs are suffering. This is what happens when you do deficit spending. You end up spending over a quarter of a trillion dollars to pay interest on the debt. That does nothing to help anyone.

Meanwhile, we have said we are going to focus money on veterans and education. We are not going to do it on interest payments. If you are fiscally responsible, you can do that.

Mr. DOGGETT. That debt tax is a tax that gets imposed on all Americans, and that is a tax that we are eliminating by moving back to a budget surplus.

Mr. BECERRA. It is $29,000 per person. A child born today is born with a birth tax of $29,000 he or she will owe.

Mr. DOGGETT. Of course, as the gentleman knows, that also jeopardizes our ability to preserve Social Security when you let that much debt and that much debt tax build up; and that is something else that we address in this resolution. We don't think when you talk about entitlements that just cutting grandma's Social Security check or reducing Medicare is the way to do it. We do need to come together on a bipartisan basis on entitlements. We could well have done that had President Bush not been so intent on privatizing Social Security.

But this resolution is well-rounded. That is why groups like the Concord Coalition have spoken out about it. And it is time now for the Republicans, like every child, to give up their imaginary demons and recognize they have done tremendous damage to our country in recent years. But if we work together on a bipartisan basis, it is possible for us to meet legitimate tax concerns, not increase taxes, and still meet the needs of our veterans and protect Social Security.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of rebuttal, I yield myself 1 minute.

I think we may set a record today on the floor on charts.

But, first, let me say, if you really don't want to raise taxes, if you are telling us that you have these words in your budget that says you don't want to raise taxes, you want middle-class tax relief, then why didn't you put it in your budget?

The fact is, Mr. Chairman, we gave the Democrats ample opportunity to put it in their budget to make sure that these taxes wouldn't increase. We had amendments in the Budget Committee to prevent the increase on the marginal tax rates, to prevent the elimination of the $1,000 per child tax credit, to prevent the elimination of marriage penalty, cap gains, dividends, State and local tax, bring back the death tax. We had all these votes to say, let's make it clear in the numbers: Don't raise taxes.

What happened? Party line vote after party line vote after party line votes, Democrats voted on every one of these amendments which put in the numbers the prevention of these tax increases.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California, a member of the House Budget Committee, Mr. LUNGREN.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I must disappoint you. I have no charts. I was in this body a number of years before and then left and came back; and, frankly, I have never seen such a war of charts as we have on the Budget Committee. They are instructive. But facts really matter.

Dandy Don Meredith, the famous philosopher on Monday Night Football, once said, ''If ifs and buts were candy and nuts, then every day would be Christmas day.'' And that really describes the Democrats' commitment towards not raising taxes. They say it as a matter of policy, but in terms of actually doing it, they not only wouldn't put it in but they resisted every amendment we brought forward.

And they like to talk about, well, let's go back to the last few years; let's see what happened back here and what has happened with the Republicans.

I came to this House in 1979, one of the last times the Democrats had control of the White House, control of the House, control of the Senate, and they were talking about budgets then and they were coming forward with their proposals. And what did we have then? We had something called stagflation. We had inflation raging at 13.5 percent, the prime lending rate was 15.3 percent, the unemployment rate was 7.1 percent. Of course, the top marginal rate was 70 percent. They were resisting tax cuts.

We came in and said it might make sense, when President Reagan came in, to reduce marginal rates, to reduce the impact of taxes on the American people, not only because it was fair to them but because the real genius of our economy is the production of jobs in the private sector.

And I would like to ask them, what do they think would happen if we go back to their same old days, one of the last times we had, for an extended period of time, the Democrats controlling the Senate, the Democrats controlling the House, and what they want to do in 2 years is control the White House as well.

If we move in that direction, we may very well get back to the times of Jimmy Carter when you did all those things, and the worst impact was not on tax rates, was not on inflation, it was on jobs. Jobs. Economists were telling us at that time, following your prescription, that we couldn't have a sustainable rate of unemployment below 6.5 percent. We now have it at 4.5 percent, 4.6 percent. That is the greatest social welfare program we have ever had in this country, jobs to American citizens.

And I understand how you have greater faith in the Federal Government, have greater faith in government at all levels to create jobs than do we, but the facts speak for themselves.

Looking at your particular proposal with the tax increases it has, it would not only affect the wealthy, it would affect in my home State of California 12,839,000 people at an average increase of $3,331.

Now, you may not want to admit to it, but your increases in spending, your refusal to do anything about the increases in mandatory discretionary spending that are taking place during the lifetime of this budget that you present, and your claim that somehow you don't raise taxes but you magically come up with a balanced budget, it just doesn't add up. It is like that movie, The Illusionist. It may sound good, it may look good, but, you know, you go behind the curtain, and there is nothing there.

Now, if you can explain to us how economics would allow you to raise spending, refuse any cuts, refuse to even bring down the rate of spending, and you don't increase taxes but you have a balanced budget, God bless you. Bring your charts out. We would love to see it.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield myself 1 minute.

While the gentleman was on his extended sabbatical back in California, he missed the heyday of our experience here under the Clinton administration and seems not to know that during those years the average job creation was 237,000 jobs per month. By comparison or by contrast, for the Bush administration comparable figures are 68,000 jobs per month.

Now, you can fudge that number by starting to count in August of 2004, claiming that it doesn't apply until then. But if you go back to January of 2001, the average per monthly increase for the Bush administration is 68,000 versus the Clinton administration which was 237,000.

Furthermore, the Clinton administration every year had a better bottom line in the budget. Every year, the deficit got smaller and smaller, to the point where, in 1997, we had a surplus for the first time in 1998 in 30 years; and in 2000 we had a surplus of $236 billion.

I now yield 1 minute to Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Chairman, I agree with my good friend from California, Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN, that facts do matter. And these are the interesting facts, Mr. SPRATT:

While Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN was on his sabbatical in California, the two political sides shifted. The old progressive party decided that it believes in fiscal discipline. That is why we have the PAYGO rules. And the previously conservative party is advocating an AMT tax continuation that would bring 26 million families into its purview. Let me put this in perspective.

There is one budget on the floor that, for the period 2008 to 2012, would raise taxes as much as $2,300 per person on 26 million families. It is not the CBC budget, it is not the Spratt budget, it happens to be the budget of the President of the United States.

So we have switched. The progressives have become the people who want to restrain spending, and our friends on the conservative side no longer care about raising taxes on the middle class.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN, a number of things have indeed changed.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, the gentlemen on the other side are right, we have charts. Because you can see what is going on with a chart.

We have been lectured by those who have created these red lines. The Democratic plan is the blue line, and this is what has happened in the last 6 years: the red line.

We are being lectured by people who have put us in the ditch. In fact, the Republican policies turned a $5.5 trillion surplus into approximately a $3 trillion deficit, deterioration of the budget of about $8.5 trillion.

Now, the $500 billion we have spent on the war is about 0.5; $8.5 trillion deterioration, 0.5 on the war.

Now, they say we have stimulated the economy. This is the change in the Dow Jones Industrial Average: Reagan's first term; Reagan's second term; Bush I's term; Clinton; Clinton, 4 years. In 6 years, the Dow has not increased as much as it had in each of the previous 4 years back through the Reagan administration. So there has been no economic growth.

They brag about job growth. Add them up: Tied for last place since Herbert Hoover.

Now, they keep talking about this 2003 tax cut. You ought to talk about the 2001 tax cut, add up all the jobs through the tax policy: worst since Herbert Hoover.

We can do better than that. We don't want to be lectured by those who put us in the ditch. We need to make sure that we have good economic growth, good tax policy, balance the budget, and go forward.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time I yield myself 20 seconds to say, the gentleman from Virginia who just spoke, Mr. Chairman, according to the numbers in this budget, that State will have an average household tax increase of $3,119; and this will hit another 2,958,000 taxpayers in the State of Virginia.

□ 1800

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member of the committee for yielding.

This budget resolution we are talking about tonight is a target-rich environment for things that we can disagree about that are in there. I have been tasked to talk about the things that aren't in the budget that we wish we would have been able to get in the budget, such as process reform.

Every year that we have this opportunity to do a budget, we have an opportunity to reform our processes and do this budgeting process in a better way. We spent all day last week in the Budget Committee during the hearing to try to get some of that done; and, quite frankly, we failed miserably on our side to convince our colleagues of the value of some these reforms.

Reforms like strengthening PAYGO to make it really mean PAYGO in the way our folks back home would understand it, to have PAYGO apply to the very first year of this budget. We were unable to get that done.

I offered an amendment that said if you are going to start a new program, a new, great idea in this vast array of programs that we have in our Federal Government, you would have to kill an existing program of equal or greater spending.

Well, in the rarified air of that room that night, I got laughed out of the room. I don't do instant messages, but I think the term ''LOL'' comes to mind. They were laughing out loud. One Member rolled their eyes the way my 14-year-old daughter used to do about, I guess, how naive I was about this process.

But I can assure you, I can assure you that back in Texas the idea of setting priorities, of trying to decide between good things, what we can afford and what we can't afford, and putting in place a mechanism that helps us with that discipline, does not get laughed out of the room. It is only in Washington that would be a laughingstock.

We also attempted to do away with the Gephardt rule. I have heard for the first 2 years of my service here night after night after night people decrying the fact that we had hidden in our arcane way of doing business raising the debt ceiling without taking an up-or-down vote, without standing in here and doing it the way we ought to do.

We offered an amendment that would have eliminated the Gephardt rule. A vote for this resolution is a vote for whatever requisite debt ceiling limits are necessary; a separate vote would have been better on that.

We offered up other process reforms that had been offered in the 109th Congress by the Democrats. We brought these to the committee hearing on a word-for-word basis for what they proposed, brought and voted for just last year. Not one of those passed. Every single one of those went down on a party-line vote.

I am here tonight to express my disappointment with the fact that we were not able to gain some process reforms in this resolution. I am disappointed that it is not in the underlying resolution. I will oppose it for that reason and a lot of others. I am here to express my disappointment, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, a budget is a statement of priorities. What this budget states clearly is that our Federal Government's first priority must be to defend our Nation from terrorists and foreign enemies. We begin by fully funding the administration's 2008 request for national defense and our military, $5.3 billion, and that is just the first step.

Next, we invest more than the administration had proposed to defend our homeland against terrorism. For example, this budget funds the implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, such as increasing screening of cargo on passenger aircraft. We do more to scan shipping containers destined for the United States while those containers are still in foreign seaports. Why? Because we must stop nuclear terrorists long before their weapons reach U.S. shores.

This resolution says ''no'' to the administration's ill-advised proposals to cut funding for first responders. Why? Because our police, firefighters and EMS personnel must be well trained to respond to terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

On national defense, this budget states loudly and clearly that a strong national defense begins with supporting our troops and our veterans and their families. This bill includes the largest increase in funding for veterans' health care in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration, and our service men and women, Mr. Chairman, and our veterans have earned every dollar of this funding with their service and sacrifice.

This means better health care for those with traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, and better health care for over 5 million of America's veterans. It means shorter waiting lines for those who have earned their benefits through service-connected combat injuries. And in the aftermath of the Walter Reed Annex 18 tragedy, we say in this resolution that no soldier, no veteran should ever again have to endure the indignity of living in moldy, rat-infested housing. Never.

A vote against this budget is a vote against the largest increase ever in veterans' health care funding.

We also reject the administration's proposal to put in effect a $1,400 annual tax on our military retirees by raising their TRICARE health care premiums. It is interesting, the administration didn't ask members of the President's cabinet or Members of Congress to raise our health care premiums by $1,400 this year, and yet it would do so to men and women who served in the military for 20 to 30 years. That's wrong, and this budget resolution rights that wrong.

This budget provides for a strong national defense. It improves our homeland security against terrorism, and it supports our military forces and veterans with our deeds, not just our words. Our troops, our veterans, and our Nation's defense deserve a ''yes'' vote on this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Texas for giving me this opportunity to speak so I can applaud my friend, John Spratt, the gentleman from South Carolina, for bringing to this House floor a fiscally responsible budget, particularly as it relates to defense. It is an excellent budget.

The fiscal year 2008 budget resolution provides the same level of funding for national defense as was requested by the President. It provides for $507 billion for national defense and another $145 billion for overseas deployments, numbers consistent with the CBO's reestimates of the President's budget.

The budget resolution includes proposals that would reorient the national defense priorities, including more funding for CTR and nonproliferation programs, which I think are very important, and greater assistance for wounded veterans, including fixing the problems at Walter Reed. This is serious.

Earlier today we passed legislation that was the first step in fixing the challenges at Walter Reed Hospital, and this budget resolution gives us greater assistance in doing just that, and we will be able to do that in the Armed Services Committee.

The budget resolution also calls for a significant increase in funding for veterans' health, and I fully support this proposal which falls within the jurisdiction of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Budget resolutions are difficult at best. But if you look at it through the eyes of the Committee on Armed Services and if you look at it through the eyes of national security, this is an excellent approach. It gives us the opportunity to work our will within the committee, to make things even better, particularly for the young men and women in uniform. They are our national treasures, and this budget resolution gives us the opportunity to do something positive about that.

Again, I thank my friend from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. I thank the chairman for his remarks.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I yield to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) who has been a strong advocate and a national leader on veterans' affairs issues.

Ms. HOOLEY. I thank my friend from Texas for yielding, and I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for the fabulous job he did.

I rise today to speak on the budget, a budget I am very proud of. This budget keeps our promise to our veterans, gives us the tools to defend our country, grows our economy, provides American children health care, and much more. All of it is done in a fiscally responsible way, ensuring a balanced budget by 2012, and all the while not raising taxes.

This budget before us sets priorities and ensures that a promise made to our brave veterans will truly be a promise kept. Too often over the last 6 years we failed to meet our basic obligation to our veterans. American veterans who served with honor and distinction deserve better. This budget is a step towards making sure our veterans get what they have earned.

We also have to remember that today's soldiers are tomorrow's veterans. At a time when we are asking our men and women in uniform to sacrifice so much, it is inexcusable not to honor their service by providing the benefits and health care our veterans were promised.

This budget, Mr. Chairman, puts us back on track. I am proud to say that the $5.4 billion increase in funding for veterans is a record 18 percent increase.

We are sending a strong statement to our veterans and service men and women of today that we as a Nation will not forget their sacrifices. I have three letters that I would like to submit for the RECORD, and I would like to quote from them.

First of all, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Gary Kurpius, Commander-in-Chief, says: ''We have long argued that the price of health care and benefits for this Nation's veterans are the ongoing costs of war. The $3.5 billion increase above the President's request is a strong acknowledgment that you agree and that this Nation must do more to live up to its sacred obligation to those who have defended her. The costs of war are not just about buying bombs or tanks, but about providing for our sick and disabled when they return and helping those heroes care for families and independents. The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you.''

From the Disabled American Veterans, National Commander Bradley Barton says: ''The budget recommendations that came out of the House and Senate Budget Committee will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans. This is especially important as our Nation is at war.''

And finally, from Steve Robertson, director, National Legislative Commission of the American Legion says: ''The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee. As a Nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families.''

I support this budget. I support our veterans. This is a good budget. Again, I want to remind people, it does not raise taxes. But if you want to support our veterans, you should vote for this budget.

MARCH 21, 2007.

Hon. JOHN SPRATT,
Chairman, Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SPRATT: On behalf of the 2.4 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), and our Auxiliaries, I would like to offer our gratitude for the leadership you have demonstrated on veterans' issues through your dramatic increase above and beyond the President's request for fiscal year 2008 funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We have long argued at the price of health care and benefits for this Nation's veterans are the ongoing costs of war. The $3.5 billion increase above the President's request is a strong acknowledgement that you agree and that this Nation must do more to live up to its sacred obligations to those who have defended her. The costs of war are not just about buying bombs or tanks, but about providing for our sick and disabled when they return, and helping these heroes care for their families and dependents.

The dramatic increase in this budget recommendation will help to ensure that all veterans—those from Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom and those from all our previous conflicts—have access to the high-quality health care VA provides, and quicker resolution to their veterans' disability compensation decisions.

The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you, in support of your strong advocacy for this Nation's veterans. We thank you for your strong leadership on veterans' health care and benefits, and we look forward to working with you to ensure the success of this budget.

Sincerely,

GARY KURPIUS,
Commander-in-Chief.

HOUSE, SENATE BUDGET PLANS KEEP FAITH WITH VETERANS

WASHINGTON.—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is urging lawmakers to support a recommended $6.6 billion increase in funding for veterans health care and other programs as called for in 2008 budget blueprints being debated in the House and Senate.

''The budget recommendations that came out of the House and Senate Budget Committees will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans,'' said DAV National Commander Bradley S. Barton. ''This is especially important as our nation is at war.''

Both budget resolutions reported out of committee call for $43.1 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs, the bulk of which is for veterans health care. That is $6.6 billion above the fiscal 2007 enacted level and $3.5 billion above the President's request. The congressional budget blueprints do not include user fees and higher prescription co-payments contained in the President's plan.

Commander Barton praised Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D–N.D.)

and House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D–N.C.) for their support of discretionary funding levels in line with recommendations in The Independent Budget authored by the DAV and other veterans service organizations. ''This much-needed funding increase will allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to better meet the needs of the men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as all veterans who have served in the past,'' he said.

While the draft budget resolutions call for significant increases in spending for veterans programs in fiscal year 2008, the DAV is concerned about future projected funding levels. ''Funding must keep pace with rising health care costs and an expected increase in veterans seeking services from the VA,'' Barton said. ''The DAV will continue working with Congress to ensure that future budgets meet the needs of our nation's sick and disabled veterans.''

The 1.3 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation's disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation's disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization's Web site www.dav.org.

MARCH 21, 2007.

Hon. JOHN M. SPRATT, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on Budget, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee for the Budget Resolution recommendation for $43.1 billion in discretionary funding for Veterans (Function 700). This represents an increase of $3.5 billion above the President's budget request for FY 2008 and $6.6 billion above current funding level for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As a nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families. Your recommendations closely parallel the views and estimates submitted by The American Legion earlier this year.

The American Legion urges the Congress to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with sufficient funding to meet the needs of taking care of America's service members—past, present, and future. We look forward to working with you and your congressional colleagues in ensuring the Department of Veterans Affairs remains a solid agency that meets this nation's obligation to those men and women sent into harm's way.

Sincerely,

STEVE ROBERTSON,
Director,
National Legislative Commission.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute.

The gentlewoman from Oregon who just spoke, the tax increase in this budget would hit the average Oregon household with an annual tax increase of $2,751 which would affect 1,336,000 taxpayers in that State alone.

I would like to take a moment to compliment my colleagues on the other side on the veterans' portion of the budget. They do add more resources for veterans, to veterans' health care. They do meet the President's numbers on defense. This is a part of their budget that I would like to compliment them on. We, too, in our substitute, will add additional resources to veterans and veterans' health care. This is an area where I think they have made some improvements over the President's budget in their budget.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BONNER).

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin, our ranking member.

Either our friends on the other side of the aisle have a bad case of amnesia, or their selective memory is such that they need to check themselves into the House physician's office.

The Democratic majority likes to claim that when President Bush came into office, we had a budget surplus, which we did. But because of those evil tax cuts, which let the record also show that many of our Democratic colleagues actually voted for, and some even still profess to support, that because of these dastardly tax cuts, all of the problems we are facing now are because of George Bush and the Republican Congress.

□ 1815

Mr. Chairman, our Democratic colleagues either have forgotten or they fail to acknowledge the fact that when President Bush came into office in January of 2001, he was walking into a recession left courtesy of the outgoing Clinton administration. A few months later, the dot-com bust and the corporate scandal made matters worse. And then remember September 11, 2001, and the ensuing costs associated with responding to the worst terrorist attack in American history and the additional costs associated with fighting the global war on terror.

I mention this, Mr. Chairman, because this budget is step one in the Democratic majority's plan to dismantle the tax policies that Republicans have put in place these past few years, policies that have actually worked, and replace it with the single largest tax increase in American history.

Do not take my word for it, Mr. Chairman. Consider the following: During the past 45 months the tax relief was enacted, 7.6 million new jobs have been created, an average of 168,000 per month; contrast that with the 27 months prior to the tax relief, where we lost 2.7 million jobs.

During the past 15 quarters since the tax relief was enacted, real GDP growth has averaged a robust 3.5 percent, faster than the averages of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In the nine quarters prior to the tax relief, actual GDP growth was just 1.1 percent.

Since the enactment of the tax relief, unemployment has fallen from 6.1 percent in June of 2003 to a near 5-year low of 4.5 percent. This is below the averages of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

My friends in Alabama know a good economy when they see one. Our unemployment rate under the leadership of Republican Governor Bob Riley is just 3.3 percent, the lowest since we became a State in 1819.

Mr. Chairman, no one on our side is saying that we can continue the great economy or that everyone who has a job has the job they hope to retire from.

One thing is for certain. The Democratic majority had 32 opportunities last week in committee to vote on amendments that would have made these tax cuts permanent, 32 opportunities where they had an opportunity to vote for it, put it in writing, make it acceptable to the American people; and all 32 times they voted it down on a party-line vote.

Mr. Chairman, I do not have a chart. I have a picture of America's children. These tax increases are going to result in Alabama alone of an increase of $2,500 for the average working, tax-paying family. That means no braces, no college education fund, no family vacation. That is what this budget is about, our children.

And I thank the gentleman.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I will take a little time on our side to try and catch up. I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding the time.

I find this such an interesting debate every year, Mr. Chairman. You know, as we come down here and debate the budget every year, we do talk about the budget, and it should be a reflection of the priorities of the people of this Nation. And what we see in the budget document that is before us is the priorities of the bureaucracy reflected. Because what we see is a budget document that is going to make spending permanent and tax reductions temporary.

Now, one of the things that we all know is that is not what the American people voted for. That is not what they wanted. They did not want to grow spending. They did not want to increase what the Federal Government spent. They did not want to increase the Federal Government's reach into their lives. What they wanted to do was to see that size reduced. But we do have a budget before us that is going to raise taxes $392.5 billion over 5 years.

Now, the last time the Democrats were in control in 1993, 1994, they passed what was then the largest tax increase in history, about $240 billion over 5 years; and this year it did not take them but about 3 months to come back and decide they were going to get it while they could.

You know, it is baseball season. They were going for a home run. They have earned the moniker of the hold-on-to-your-wallet Congress because America, yes, indeed, can be sure they are coming to a pocket near them as quick as they can get there for a wallet; and they are going to take $2,600 out of every wallet of every one of my constituents in Tennessee, $2,600.

And to add insult to injury, our sales tax deductibility, which was restored

in 2003 because we do not have an income tax in Tennessee, thank goodness, we just have a sales tax, that is being taken away in this bill, $1,100 per family, $2,600 total. It is a tax increase.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 20 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE) with the request that he be allowed to yield part of the time that is allotted to him to other Members.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, if I may just interject, may I just inquire as to how much time is on each side remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) has 63 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 56½ minutes remaining before yielding to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the Chair.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. On the question of yielding control of time, the Chair would advise that the Committee of the Whole may not, even by unanimous consent, alter the scheme for control of time for general debate that was established by the House in House Resolution 275. The gentleman from South Carolina controls the time.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, today with this budget resolution the majority party, the Democratic Party, takes an important step towards restoring fiscal discipline as a priority of our government, something the Blue Dogs in Congress have advocated for years.

When the administration took office in 2001, it inherited a projected surplus of $5.6 trillion. Within 2 years, the surplus was gone; and, since 2001, $3 trillion in new debt, to my friends here, $3 trillion in new debt was added to our country's bottom line.

Because of the previous majority's lack of fiscal discipline, our gross national debt now stands at over $8.8 trillion. They talk about tax cuts, and they are just not providing accurate information at all. It is not true information.

They say that our budget proposes tax increases, which simply is not true. They wrote the tax cuts back in 2001 that were implemented in 2001, and they were to last for 10 years, and they still will be going until 2010. The Democrats are not doing a thing in their budget to raise taxes, not one single thing, to the contrary of what our friends across the aisle are saying.

In fact, our friends across the aisle have added $3 trillion of debt to our country, to our children and grandchildren. That is the way you paid for the tax cuts, was by adding $3 trillion of debt.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Mr. MOORE, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

This is a very healthy debate taking place. I so appreciate the budget that has been brought out of the Budget Committee, and I appreciate the ranking member for offering a budget. Because, in offering a budget, now the contrast is clear.

Pay-as-you-go is the fundamental foundation of fiscally disciplined budgeting, because it means you have made a decision the deficit goes no deeper. We have heard about the soaring deficits, the astonishing turnaround from a surplus to nearly $3 trillion of deficit spending during the years of Republican control, now yielding us a national debt approaching $9 trillion.

I was pleased to see a picture of children raised by a Member of the other side, because I think that is exactly what it is about. We cannot continue to raise this debt on the children, and that is why pay-as-you-go budgeting was passed in the first 100 hours of this new Congress included in this budget.

Now, the alternative budget, they take a little different view. They say pay-as-you-go does not apply if you are going to cut taxes; you do not have to pay for cutting taxes. In fact, they cut taxes $470 billion without any pay-fors, just cut taxes.

Can you imagine a family sitting down saying, man, we have got to tighten our budget, we have got to cut this, we have got to cut that, we have got to this, we have got to cut that. This is so depressing that I am going to quit working full time. I am going to work half time.

It would not make any sense. You have got to count the revenue side; you have got to cut the spending side. That is our plan.

But that is not the end of the Ryan budget and what it means in terms of overall budget picture, because they do have cuts. This is an important final point to make. It reminds me a little bit of the budget policies we debated in the 1990s, where they wanted to cut the heck out of Medicare in order to fund tax cuts disproportionately flowing to the wealthiest people of this country.

In this budget you have a directive to the Ways and Means and the Energy and Commerce Committees to cut $250 billion. We know where those cuts are coming from. I am on the Ways and Means Committee. That is the Medicare committee. They are coming right back after Medicare again, taking dollars from the seniors' health care in this country in order to fund these tax cuts for the wealthiest people, to the extent they are funded at all.

Here is a chart illustrating the distribution on their tax cuts. This is for those over $1 million. This has been the most regressive series of tax cuts ever enacted in this country. We know the benefit has gone all to the rich, predominantly to the rich, disproportionately to the rich.

To think that they fund it out of cutting Medicare, while driving the debt deeper, shows the budget choice. Fiscal discipline, balanced budget by 2012; cutting Medicare, deeper deficits. Go for the Spratt budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

The Republicans are plain wrong; and, worse than that, they are not telling the truth when they stand over there and say that our budget raises taxes. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This Democratic budget does not raise taxes one single penny. In fact, section 203 of the Democratic budget explicitly provides for tax cuts.

One, middle-income tax cuts, including the marriage penalty. That is in this budget. That is a tax cut. Including child tax credits. That is in this budget. That is a tax cut. And the 10 percent tax bracket. And on top of that, you talk about the President's tax cuts, the President's tax cuts in 2001—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman must direct his remarks to the Chair and not directly to other Members. The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Well, Mr. Chairman, my point was simply to try to respond to the accusations that were made to our side. I will respect that.

But my point, if I may continue, is that it really gets on your nerves a bit when the other side makes these accusations which are totally bald-faced wrong. When it says, for example, the previous speaker said, for example, that we did not support the President's tax cuts. Not only did we, as they said, on the Democratic side, some of us did, but we have very seriously kept, the tax cuts of the President from 2001 and 2003 are secured in this budget. That is a fact. And they are consistent with our House pay-as-you-go rule.

The alternative minimum tax, which otherwise would hit tens of millions of families, these families are protected in this.

And the area where it presses us so and in previous budgets, the President's previous budgets have cut veterans. We increase the funding for veterans by over $2 billion in this budget.

It is a good budget.

□ 1830

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1⅔ minutes.

I would simply say the gentleman from North Dakota represents a State that pays a lot of capital gains tax and farm income, death taxes. Under this bill, the average household of North Dakota will see a tax increase annually of $2,613, which had 244,000 taxpayers. In the State of Georgia, the gentleman just spoke, that State will see an average household tax increase per year of

$2,743, which will hit 3,132,000 taxpayers.

If this budget doesn't raise taxes, then why is it that the Democrats shot down every single amendment that was offered to prevent all of these tax increases?

If you really believe it doesn't raise taxes, then why would you prevent us from adjusting the numbers to make sure it didn't raise taxes? You can read any word you want.

You can read any word you want of these so-called reserve funds. At the end of each of these reserve funds, it says, well, we got to come up with offsets to pay for these priorities. We don't want to raise these taxes. We want to extend the child tax credit, but they are not paid for. Actions are louder than words.

More importantly, numbers are louder than words.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman would please direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, the numbers are very, very clear. The numbers, equivocally, have the largest tax increase in the American history.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART).

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Chairman, this budget does include $392 million in increased taxes. Unfortunately, this Democrat tax increase plan affects all Americans. Those increases would hit middle income families, low-income earners families with small children, business, just to name a few.

Now, we have heard here tonight from our friends on the other side of the aisle that they don't want to raise taxes in this budget and that this budget doesn't raise taxes. Mr. Chairman, there is a problem, that the votes here in this body are recorded, they are actually recorded, just last week, not last year, not last century, just last week.

I know memory sometimes fails, but last week, when we marked up this budget, the Republicans offered several amendments making sure that the taxes did not go up. Not a single Democrat in that committee voted for those amendments.

So here they come, on this floor tonight, and say that they do not raise taxes, but last week they voted against an amendment extending the $1,000 per child tax credit. They say, tonight, on this floor, that this budget does not raise taxes, but voted against an amendment last week on this budget that would have extended the marriage penalty tax relief. They say tonight on this floor that they do not want to raise taxes and this budget does not raise taxes, but just a few days ago, they voted against extending the elimination of death tax and even voted against extending the State and local tax deduction.

That is on the record. You see, you can say a lot of things, but votes are recorded.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't take my word for it, don't take theirs. Go on the Internet. Look at the votes. They voted to extend, they voted against those amendments which would have kept the taxes low.

What does that mean for every American family? For example, a middle income family of four earning $60,000 will see an increase of 61 percent to their tax bill in 2011.

But wait, there is a lot more. But wait, like the TV commercial says, but, wait, there is more, 150 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, of $1,795 by 2011. In the State of Florida alone, there are over 7.6 million taxpayers. I hate to break the news, there aren't 7.6 million rich people in Florida. Over 7.6 million taxpayers in my home State of Florida will see their taxes increase by an average of $3,036.

Mr. Chairman, this is the largest tax increase in the history of this country.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield myself 1 minute just to read some clarifying language, which is in the Democrats' budget.

At the end of these reserve funds, so called, for middle income taxpayers, it says we want to provide this tax relief, but only to the extent that such bills or joint resolutions in the form placed before the House in the Committee on Rules would not increase the deficit or decrease the surplus for fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

Then, in section 401, where they talk about these tax extensions as a statement of their policy preferences, they assume that the cost of such a policy is offset. What does that mean? That means they are not covering the tax cuts. That means if you want to extend these tax cuts, they would have to pay for them on top of raising these taxes.

What this budget resolution also does, if you simply merely want to extend this tax relief, that is past 2010, you would have to come up with more tax increases to do so. This prohibits the ability of Congress to simply extend this tax relief, thereby bringing these tax increases to a curve.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT).

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

Mr. Chairman, our friends on the other side have complained that I guess we Republicans don't know what fiscal mismanagement is. What does it mean? I guess our Democrats, by their actions this year, especially looking at this budget, I think that fiscal mismanagement means that we are not spending enough. Apparently, if the Republicans had spent more money on everything, including everything in this budget, everything would be perfect, but we certainly know that is not the case. The Democrats seem to think that the IRS tax collectors just need to bring in more money.

But let me tell you exactly what has happened. Collections over the past year are up $2.5 trillion. That figure keeps going up every year. We are collecting more tax revenue, as a share of the economy, more than the average over the past 40 years.

So I guess they are telling me it is not enough. According to the Democrats, there is still too much uncollected tax revenue out there. So their budget, like the budget in the Senate that was produced last week, calls for the IRS to make up the difference trying to close this magical tax gap. I am sure somebody will tell me exactly what this magical tax gap is some time tonight.

In short, this Democrat budget has found that the Federal Government budget is almost perfect. I guess all we need to do is spend more money. Clearly, my colleagues and I have a different approach. Number 1, we think prosperity and economic growth mainly comes from economic investors and workers, not the Federal Government. We think creative ideas, the ones that lead to progress and higher standards of living come from thinking outside the box, not inside the box, because that is government.

I guess last of all, we believe, as President Reagan said in his first inaugural address, we are a Nation that has a government, not the other way around. We believe these things, because we believe the government should limit its taxing and spending, ease the burden on the economy, and let it grow.

Judging by this budget, the Democrats, they don't see that. They think government should call the shots and keep widening its control.

For that reason, this budget trusts the government more than the people that are paying the tax bills. We believe this budget is fundamentally a failure.

If you want to bring it home, in South Carolina terms, so I can let the folks in South Carolina know, this is about a $2,500 tax increase for my average South Carolinan home, $2,500. We believe in freedom. With freedom comes less government, and that is a good thing.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to a distinguished member of the Budget Committee, a member who has great financial expertise, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL).

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, you know, I am a little stunned by this debate tonight, by what's being said by the other side. I am hearing a lot of stuff about how this budget balances the budget, but also about how it doesn't raise taxes. The gentleman from Georgia said, and I believe I wrote it down correctly, that it ''does not raise taxes one single penny.''

Well, this budget either doesn't raise taxes, or it doesn't balance the budget. But it absolutely mathematically cannot do both. It will not and cannot mathematically do both.

This budget includes every penny of tax increases, in the dollars, in the revenue dollars, every penny, which will tax my constituents and the people of California $3,331 each per taxpayer per year. Now, your numbers, the numbers of their budget, includes every bit of cutting the child care tax credit, eliminating the marriage penalty deduction, raising rates at every income bracket, raising the capital gains tax, raising the dividends tax, raising the death tax, raising all of those taxes. Every penny of that is included.

That is how their budget balances. Without it, it doesn't balance. Without it, it has a deficit in the fifth year of somewhere close to $100 billion, which is just a little less than the deficit that we have now.

Now, we didn't write this budget. This is their budget. I will give them the benefit of the doubt, and, presume, that perhaps they would like to have a budget that doesn't raise taxes, or perhaps they would like to have a budget that balances.

But they have increased spending in this budget, which is the reason we have the deficit today. It is not because taxes are too low, it is because spending is too high.

So, I would say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, choose. You are either raising taxes, or you are not balancing the budget, but you mathematically cannot do both. It is your budget, it is your decision. You tell us which one you are going to do.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman will direct his remarks to the Chair, please.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, they should tell the American people which one they are going to do, because they either are increasing taxes or not balancing the budget. They mathematically cannot do both.

Mr. Chairman, the budget, the way it is written, is, absolutely is, and assumes every penny of the largest tax increase in American history, and that is something the people of this country cannot afford.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, before yielding to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) let me just say once again that this budget resolution leaves in place all of the tax cuts implemented in 2001 and 2003. Had we wished, we could have repealed those tax cuts. It leaves them in place in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. The year 2010, December 31, those tax cuts expire their provisions, because they were written and designed to expire by the other side, by the Republicans. That is what happened to them.

This present resolution does not trigger their re-elimination, it doesn't trigger their determination. It doesn't decide either way. By its open volition, by its own terms, these tax cuts will expire on that very day unless they are renewed.

For the purpose of renewal at that point in time, 2010, 2011 and 2012, we will have a surplus of $450 billion, and those surpluses, over time, according to our projection, according to this budget resolution, will build to $1 trillion. If we so choose then, depending on the situation, we can so choose, then, to apply these to all or some of the renewable tax cuts. But that decision can be reached and made then better than it can be now. In the meantime, the tax cuts stand for the next 4 years.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, just to save my good friend from Wisconsin the time, I represent a State where 7.5 million people will not see the repeal to their marriage penalty relief, a State where 7.5 million people will not see capital gains rates go back up under this budget, where 7.5 million people will not lose their child care tax credit, et cetera. Here is what these budgets say about taxes.

In 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, the present law remains in effect. There is no tax cut that was enacted that is modified, limited or repealed.

□ 1845

On December 31 of 2010, whomever is in control of this Congress will have a choice to make, and that choice will be which, if any or all, of the tax cuts should be extended beyond their expiration date.

Here is the difference between our budget and the President's Republican approach. We say that we should think first, analyze first, and then make the right choice. We say that when we get to December 31 of 2010, let's look at what surplus may exist. If Mr. SPRATT's budget is adopted, the budget will be in surplus of $154 billion by fiscal year 2012.

We say, let's look at the revenues that come in. Our budget, of course, is based upon the CBO's more pragmatic and conservative revenue estimates.

The President's budget, Mr. Chairman, is based upon more optimistic revenue assumptions. We hope that he is right. We hope that the optimistic revenue assumptions are correct, and there will be an even greater surplus at that point in time.

Our budget contains significant investments in closing the tax gap, in going after the tens of billions, if not hundreds of billions, of dollars that are owed under present law but not collected. And we say, let's see how we do in collecting some of those funds. Let's look at the Nation's priorities, and then let's make an intelligent choice about what to do.

The President and the Republican Party have fallen back into the same old rut of saying, when we get to December 31 of 2010, let's do what we have done throughout our period of primacy and majority. Let's borrow more money. That is how we got into the mess that we inherited when we took this majority in January.

We believe that this budget should not borrow money from the Social Security trust fund and from foreign governments like the People's Republic of China to meet our obligations. We believe we should pay as we go, whether it is adding a dollar for the Children's Health Insurance Program, or reducing a dollar in taxes paid by the people of the country.

We believe that the right choice and the first choice and the dominant choice is to stop running this country on borrowed money from the Social Security trust fund, from the Chinese and from others.

So when my friend from Wisconsin read from our resolution, I thank and commend him, because that is exactly what we stand for. When we get to December 31 of 2010 and the question about which tax cuts to renew should be taken up by this Congress, if we are the majority at that time, we will make a wise choice based upon what the surplus is, what the economy looks like and what our options are. But we will not borrow the money from the Social Security trust fund and from other creditors around the world.

We have tried that under them for the last 6 years. It is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe for a cataclysm in the next decade when Social Security and Medicare come due in a very, very large way. So our principle is not to increase this deficit and to build a surplus, and we stand by it.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. I would like to deeply thank, Mr. Chairman, the chairman of our Budget Committee, the very able and distinguished gentleman from South Carolina, JOHN SPRATT, who has led our committee to produce a budget that will balance in the next 5 years with no tax increase. It is going to take pay-as-you-go and it is going to take a real regimen to correct America's net negative savings rate.

Certainly, the Bush administration has done much damage in the last 6 years by making a mess of fiscal policy, just as it has made a mess of foreign policy; and now we have got these overhanging budget deficits and trade deficits. For, in fact, in 2001, the administration inherited a projected 10-year surplus of nearly $6 trillion; and within 2 years alone the surplus had been eliminated and we began piling up debt, adding $2.8 trillion over 6 years, much of it purchased by foreign investors, which I will talk about here in just a second.

I want to thank Chairman SPRATT for doing what is right for America. Many organizations, like the Concord Coalition, states, ''Thus, to be clear, the Democratic budget resolution does not call for nor require a tax increase.''

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said this month as well, ''The House Democratic plan does not include a tax increase.''

And the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution of this month also says, ''The Democratic budget would not raise taxes.''

I think that those on the other side of the aisle doth protest too much, because, in fact, you didn't produce this kind of budget. Now, you might be well intentioned. I used to think Republicans balanced budgets. I have since learned differently after serving here in this Congress.

I want to talk about what is so dangerous about the debt that the Republicans and the Bush administration have accrued. If you look at who is footing the bill, it is foreign countries, Japan, the oil-producing and exporting nations, China. In fact, China now holds over $1 trillion in U.S. dollar reserves, and they are looking to diversify away from the Dow. And if you look at what is happening to the price of gold, it is skyrocketing as the U.S. dollar's worth is dropping.

Our accounts are badly out of order. This budget maintains in the reserve account all of the tax breaks that were given to the American people, the extension of the child tax credit, the marriage penalty relief, extension of the research and air experimentation tax credit, extension of the deduction for State and local sales taxes, school construction bonds and so forth.

So even with the incredible drag of the Iraq war on our Federal budget and our Nation's economy, this Democratic budget that Chairman SPRATT and members of our committee have produced does achieve balance within 5 years. It is rigorous, it will make the Nation more healthy, and I just want to commend him for taking a most difficult challenge and doing what is right for the American people, for our children and grandchildren.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

I was just taken aback when I heard one of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I think from South Carolina, talk about the concern they have about being, that they weren't big spenders enough. Well, what we have seen under Republican control, where they had the executive and both branches, the spending has skyrocketed. In fact, we saw essays from Republican conservative pundits saying that probably they should have lost in the last election because they have lost control of the budget process. The greatest increase since the Great Society.

I think it is important to go back and look at their record. When they had complete control, spending was out of control, and the most conservative pundits said so. The facts reveal it. They may try and run away from their record at this point by attacking a balanced budget, pay-as-you-go, and focus on priorities that the American public supports, but their record does not support the assertion.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, we have just heard from the other side about what we are doing. And based upon what they are doing, it is very important for us to set the record straight, that they have had control of this place; and for the last 5 years, since 2001, under this Congress and this administration, they have borrowed more money just from foreign governments alone, from foreign nations, more money than all of the previous 42 Presidents and administrations.

And I know that is shocking to the American people. But it is important. That alone is a glaring example of the outright mismanagement and the lack of fiscal responsibility that they put us in debt to that tune.

Again, since 1789, the foundation of this country, all the way up to 2001, they borrowed more money in the last 5 years, $1.6 trillion. We only borrowed $1.3 trillion from 1789 from foreign countries to 2001. That is why we have to move with a responsible measure like this.

On top of that, Mr. Chairman, finally, I want to say that, in addition to borrowing that money, they inherited a surplus of $5.6 trillion that was squandered in addition to the debt that was acquired.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3½ minutes to the chairman of the RSC, a distinguished member of House Budget Committee, Mr. HENSARLING from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. I hope that the American people, Mr. Chairman, are paying very careful attention to this budget debate. The budget is really about priorities. We have heard about the priorities of the Democratic budget, and that is, let's increase the Federal budget at the expense of the family budget. I can hardly believe what I am hearing with respect to taxes. We know that, having been in power fewer than 90 days, the Democrats have now proposed the single largest tax increase in American history, almost $400 billion of new taxes on the American people.

Well, guess what? Last time they were in the majority, Mr. Chairman, they proposed the single biggest tax increase in American history. I suppose there is something to be said for consistency.

Now, I have heard from our distinguished chairman, and I have the utmost respect for him, and others that there is really not a tax increase. We just have expiring tax provisions.

Well, Mr. Chairman, when people all over America all of a sudden look at their tax bill and see how much they are going to have to pay, I think that is going to be a distinction that is lost on them. Either you are paying more in taxes or you are not.

And I might point out, Mr. Chairman, that all the members, all the Democratic members of the Budget Committee had the opportunity to make sure that the tax relief for American families was permanent, that we extended it. But, instead, they voted against it. They will have another opportunity tomorrow. So there is the old saying that your actions are so loud that I can hardly hear your words.

And so what are we left with? Again, the Democrats are proposing the single largest tax increase in American history.

Now, I have the honor and privilege of representing a lot of good people in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas. And in my home State, the single largest tax increase in American history that Democrats are trying to impose is going to mean an extra $2,700 burden on a family of four in my State.

And I asked people, I asked people from the Fifth District, what is this going to mean to you? And I heard from a lady, and I will use first names here, Diana from Mesquite, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. She said, Congressman, I wanted to let you know that I am a single mom that does not receive any type of child support, and an increase of this amount would break me. I would be at risk of losing my home with this type of increase. I am writing to ask your help to keep this from happening. This would be devastating to middle-income families in my situation.

Mr. Chairman, what the Democrats don't seem to realize again is when they spend more money on the Federal budget, they are taking money away from the family budget with their single largest tax increase in American history.

Let's hear from Brian from Dallas. Dear Congressman HENSARLING, the tax increase would most likely affect our ability to pay tuition and books for our daughter to go to college. She is a junior this year, and we are trying to save money for her education. The loss of these funds due to an increase in taxes will have a negative impact on our plans for her education.

They are taking money away from the family budget. They are putting Diana's home in jeopardy. They are putting the education of Brian's daughter in jeopardy.

Vote down this single largest tax increase in American history.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the House Budget Committee, Mr. SMITH from Nebraska.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Chairman, I rise with great concern about the proposed budget and how sustainable it is or it is not.

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I would express it concerns me a great deal when I see the fact that 115

million taxpayers would see their taxes increase on average by almost $1,800 in 2011. I think this discussion can be healthy, and I appreciate the fact that the majority does want to keep some of the tax relief, but it needs a budget that comports with that intent.

It concerns me a great deal when I look at the long term when we see absolutely no change in direction from prior spending. We hear that there has been borrowing that has taken place. It has. There is no denying that. But now it seem that the option is to take more tax dollars from the taxpayers, and that is what I think will be damaging to the economy as a whole and certainly the economy of households all across America. When I look at what I see as very damaging to seniors with the dividends tax relief plan that would be cut off, that concerns me a great deal, and when I look at the impact to my State of Nebraska in the increases in taxes, I just don't see where this new budget sets a new direction.

We were told in the Budget Committee several times that we need fundamental reforms in entitlements, and yet this budget presents absolutely no reforms in entitlements.

Mr. Chairman, those are my concerns and they are concerns about the future.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), the former superintendent of education in the State of North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of North Carolina's children and our working families and the people of America, I rise this evening in support of this budget resolution and congratulate my good friend the chairman of the committee, JOHN SPRATT, for his visionary leadership in crafting this important document.

With this budget resolution, the new Democratic majority will succeed where our Republican predecessors have failed. To budget is to govern, and this resolution will produce a balanced budget with balanced priorities, and that is important.

As the chairman has indicated, I am proud to be the only chief State schools officer serving in Congress, and I am particularly pleased about the measures providing for education and innovation in this budget. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership.

Specifically, rather than continuing the Republicans' record of passing a crushing debt burden on the future generations, the Spratt resolution contains tough budget discipline for a new direction for the Federal budget. The Spratt resolution rejects the President's proposed education cuts and instead provides greater investment in our Nation's schools, including the school construction bonds that Chairman RANGEL and I have been working on for nearly a decade. It provides $50 billion for children's health insurance, and it protects millions of middle-income families from the onslaught of the alternative minimum tax.

There are many reasons to support this resolution, but in my brief allotted time, I want to say that I support this resolution on behalf of my grandson, William, and my granddaughter, Virginia, and all the children of America and their families who deserve a budget that puts their needs first.

My friends, this is what the Republican leadership has done for the last 6 years. They used a credit card. No one in America could get away with paying nothing but the interest on a credit card. They have run up the debt for my grandchildren and every child in America, and that is wrong. The definition of a good budget is when you do what is right for the next generation. That is the definition of this budget, and it is a budget that is truly balanced. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your hard work.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, if a Nation is judged by how it treats its weak, its vulnerable, and its children, then American families can be proud of the fiscal year 2008 Democratic budget.

For the past 6 years, this administration and its allies in Congress have pit ordinary people and their struggles against the interests of the wealthiest in our society.

The Democratic budget represents a dramatic change of course, putting children and families first by investing in health care and education, accommodating tax relief to middle-class families, and providing assistance for hurricane-ravaged communities and supporting the poorest of the poor, those who have no tax liability. We budget for expansion of the State children's health insurance program.

We often hear folks say that education is the key, but, of course, money is what unlocks the door. The chairman's mark increases funding for education and social services, job training by almost $8 billion over the 2008 program level in the President's budget for vital services such as Head Start, IDEA, and programs under No Child Left Behind.

We reject the President's cuts to critical social services programs by helping struggling families make ends meet, and in doing so, we recognize that the number of Americans living in poverty has increased by 5.4 million since 2000. We provide the resources to help support energy assistance, food stamps, and child care for low-income families. The Democratic budget rejects the President's proposal to eliminate the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, serving nearly 5,000 seniors each month in my district.

This evening's budget debate is about our priorities as a Nation as well as our morality. In short, the Democratic budget represents a downpayment to fulfill the commitment we have made to our Nation's children and families.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise as a member of the Budget Committee. I am now in my second term. There is a great contrast between what went on in the last 2 years when I was in the Budget Committee and this budget that is being presented.

I want to compliment, first of all, on behalf of the people in my district, the 13th Congressional District in Pennsylvania, and as a proud American, to be able to do the right things fiscally, to be responsible, to compliment and congratulate Mr. SPRATT for putting forward a budget that is fiscally disciplined and fiscally responsible. And it is very different than the budgets we saw presented by the President or that I have seen passed in my last 2 years in Congress.

This budget is fiscally responsible, and it is a budget that is committed to new priorities for Americans, priorities that recognize the needs of the American families. This budget ends the Republicans unsustainable borrow-and-spend policies.

One of the most irresponsible things we could do we have watched them do for the last 6 years, and that is, spend money we simply do not do not have, with no real expectation about how we are going to repay the debt that we have incurred. In the last 6 years, we have reached a point where we have, because of their borrow-and-spend priorities, an almost $9 trillion national debt.

This budget will put our Nation on sounder financial footing. It won't correct everything because the fact is that you can't deal with an $8 trillion debt in 1 year, and we won't. But this budget does put us on sound fiscal footing, and that is something we should all be proud of and we should all support, both sides of the aisle, because what this budget does is it says that we are going to finally take responsibility to pay for what we spend and we are going to reach a balanced budget in 5 years.

We are going to have some surplus at the end of that 5 years. We are going to be able to start paying down our debt that we would otherwise be leaving to our children and our grandchildren. And at the same time, we are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure that we spend a few extra dollars, take money other places, pay as you go, as we have talked about, to actually be able to put some more spending into education and health care and veterans' health.

You have heard about some of that already this evening, Mr. Chairman, but we want to be absolutely clear that this budget requires any new Federal spending, including what we do this year, to be fully paid for, rather than left to future generations. It balances the Federal Government's checkbook within 5 years without raising taxes. It sets us on a course to pay down that debt and to pay for Social Security. It

is committed to tax relief for hard-working Americans, particularly the middle class, and we are committed to do so in a way that is fiscally responsible by saying we will do it and we will pay for it.

And we have asked our committees to take that seriously. I am on the Ways and Means Committee. We fully expect to deal with what would be an enormous tax increase on middle-class Americans, the alternative minimum tax, by not just patching it for 1 year, as the Republicans suggest and have been doing for 6 years, but by, in fact, fixing it permanently.

This budget also, Mr. Chairman, and I want to emphasize this, recognizes the priorities of American families as they seek to meet their obligations, just as we should as the Federal Government.

Fifteen years ago, a long time ago now, in 1992, I worked successfully as a Pennsylvania State Senator to start one of the Nation's first children's health insurance programs. We call it CHIP; the Federal Government calls it SCHIP. But as a result after 1992 to now, we have 150,000 children in Pennsylvania who have health insurance they wouldn't have had otherwise, private health insurance, and 4 percent of Pennsylvania children still don't have coverage. And nationwide, there are 7 million children across America who are uninsured. This is unacceptable.

So let me just say, Mr. Chairman, this budget responds by dedicating resources to insure those children. So let me just say this budget is a win for America's children, and it is a win for America's family. It is a budget that values our Nation's future economic outlook. It balances the budget. It lays the future groundwork for prosperity for the future of this country. It gets us to a point where we can pay down our debt. This budget is a proposal that presents a new direction for America. We should all be for it. It is fiscally sound and makes that investment.

I am proud to support this budget. We all should be.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT).

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Chairman, I have heard someone say, appropriately so, once they saw the Democrats' budget plan, ''Be afraid. Be very much afraid.'' And the reason they said that was because they were looking at one of the points that have already been raised here, and that is the Democrats' largest tax increase in U.S. history. As people have already noted, a $392 billion increase in taxes on American families. That certainly is reason alone to be afraid of this budget and what it will mean to the American taxpayer.

But mind you, the Democrats don't stop there. After they raise your taxes once, they are going to be coming after you a second time. And they do that in the form of trying to fill the so-called ''tax gap.''

What is the tax gap? The tax gap is their position of how they fill up any shortage in their funding by going after people who are not adequately paying their current tax amount.

I think the average American would say that we are already paying far too much in taxes. I think if you ask the average American, they would tell you that they are already paying their fair share. But the Democrats are saying that in addition to the $392 billion in additional taxes that American families are going to pay, they are going to go after you one more time.

Right now, 86 percent of Americans, according to the IRS, are paying their fair share and paying at the respective time. The Democrats are saying that they are going to go for another around $300 billion from Americans. Now, in committee, what they said they were going to do is go after those egregious loopholes in corporations and the like. I think Members on both sides of the aisle would agree that we should try to close those loopholes and go after corporations who are not paying their taxes.

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But do you know what? In the testimony before our committee, the IRS Commissioner told us that when he goes after corporations, that is only about 10 percent of all the outstanding taxes that are out there. That means one thin dime on the dollar is maybe available.

I pointed out to you already that they want to get another $300 billion from you and I from this so-called tax gap. What does the IRS say about that? They say the most realistic figure they could come up with is around $20 billion. And not just in one year. It would take about 5 years in order to achieve that $20 billion.

So what does it come down to? It comes down to that the Democrats are raising your taxes on one hand and going with the other hand one more time at you to try to fill that tax gap. What does that mean to the average family, you and I?

Well, yes, they will tell you they are going to go after the bad guy out there who is not paying his taxes, but, in order to do it, they are going to have to change the Tax Code, strengthen the IRS, put more agents out there.

As a matter of fact, again, the IRS Commissioner came and testified before the committee. He said, in order to achieve even a part of what the Democrats want to do, they are going to have to impose draconian changes to the Tax Code. That means you put in a 1099 to pay your niece when she babysits or pay your neighbor when he mows the law. Draconian effects, added to this tax increase is what the Democrats would cost the American family.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

Mr. MCHENRY. I thank my colleague from Wisconsin.

Mr. Chairman, this is a landmark day in the House of Representatives; and records are being broken. In fact, they are being shattered here on the House floor.

Democrats are poised to pass a $392.5 billion tax increase to this Federal budget and a spending increase to match it. And, you guessed it, it sets the record for our Nation's history, the record of the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, they should be proud, because they have outdone themselves from their budget in 1993, which was then the largest tax increase in American history. One hundred and fifteen million taxpayers will see their taxes increase by $1,795; 48 million married couples will see their taxes increase by $2,899; 17 million elderly individuals will see their taxes increases by $2,270. This isn't chump change for the American people. It is real money. It is real money the Democrats believe the American people owe them.

And why do Democrats feel entitled to this money? Because it is what they do. It is what they do. They tax and they spend. They spend and they tax. It is what the Democrat Party here in Washington does. And why is that? Well, I think it is because they haven't had a new idea in 70 years with the advent of the New Deal.

But as a side note, for the American people listening today, Mr. Chairman, I think it is very interesting, very striking, the level of hypocrisy in this budget. Because it also does something very interesting with this budget today. It accepts the President's funding levels for the troops in Iraq through 2009.

Well, this is pretty interesting, because just last week the liberal majority voted to cut off funds in 2008, right before the general election, didn't they? I think this is a high level of hypocrisy out of this budget. And what they said last week is ''we are standing against the war in Iraq. Get our troops out in 2008.'' What they are saying with this budget here today is, ''we will fund it a little longer.'' It is a level of hypocrisy here in Washington, D.C., Mr. Chairman, that the American people need to know about. They say, forget about last week.

This Democrat party is the party of consistent inconsistencies.

Another glaring error is, in their first majority budget in 13 years, they don't tackle the entitlement programs. They don't tackle reforming entitlement programs to make sure Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security can last for generations. We need entitlement reform.

Republicans, when we were in the majority, we had $280 billion worth of entitlement savings and reform to preserve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and all the entitlement programs. But the Democrats ignore the looming entitlement crisis.

I think what we have to go back to is this is the tax-and-spend party, and we must oppose them. I urge my colleagues to vote against this budget.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER), a member of the Budget Committee and the distinguished chairman of the Republican Policy Committee.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Chairman, in addressing my issues with this budget, I prepared some elaborate charts. I know that you are pretty worn out of charts by now, but I think these will try to encapsulate some of the problems that I believe my party and myself in particular have with this budget.

Some of the problems I think have to be dealt with right off the top. We have a budget that promises to balance by 2012. It does so with many promises for future spending, and it promises to hit American taxpayers with the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, we are told not to be concerned about that. As someone with young children who would like to be out of the poorhouse when I retire, I worry about that greatly. I worry about that greatly, the economic opportunities that they will have in the future.

So when I see that it is being defended, the largest tax increase in human history is being defended because there are promises contained within the budget that, no, we do not mean this, we will only raise certain of your taxes, that still provides me very cold comfort indeed.

When I hear there are promises for billions upon billions in future spending in things called reserve funds, which means there is no money in it, it constitutes an IOU account, which to its name you have signed the American taxpayer, I also take very cold comfort in that.

When I hear that we talk about trying to find tax gap money to pay for new spending, I am reminded of the fact that tax gap funding is the difference between taxes levied and taxes collected. In short, tax gap money has to go for deficit reduction or debt reduction, because you are going to collect money for which services have already been purchased. If you allow new spending based upon that money, you will continue to perpetuate a deficit.

Now, I have come to this also as a father with young children and as a member of Generation X. I know I don't look it, because I am bald, but I am far younger than my service here has rendered me to look.

In the final analysis, there is no true entitlement reform here. My generation is the one that thinks it is never going to see Social Security, that the babyboomers will break the social safety net. We are concerned about Medicare, we are concerned about Medicaid, and yet we are told that we will deal with that later.

We are told by the Democratic majority that, when they were in the minority, somehow we impaired their ability to think and devise plans to save the social safety net of the United States, and let us wait. I tell you, I am not getting any younger, and I prefer not to wait.

Now, one of my particular concerns I have to address. I have much respect for the Blue Dogs in the Democratic Party. My father was a Blue Dog Democrat. He wound up being a Reagan Democrat, which I think is pretty good.

The Blue Dog Democrats looked like this before in the past when they were in the minority, trying to show that they were fiscally conservative. Now, I don't know that I would let this dog watch my wallet, but I wouldn't think he would bite me. So I might take a chance on him or not.

But today's budget, for the Blue Dogs who support it, I want you to see what America is going to think of you. There you are. There you are, with a fine new hairdo. There are you are with silk and threads, purchased with the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, that dog might not bite you, but I certainly wouldn't trust it to guard my wallet either.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I thought I had seen it all, until I just saw the cartoon. What we have seen tonight is a sort of unrelenting attack for 3 hours on a straw man, a demonized version of this particular budget resolution. Because if you read it, you read it in vain in search of any particular language or place where these tax cuts are terminated or extended. That decision, as we have said, has been left open until a better time when we know better where we stand.

If we had wanted, if we had wished, we could have repealed all of the deductions, credits and exemptions passed in 2001 and 2003. We did not do that. They remain in effect this year, next year, 2009, 2010. Then they expire on December 31, 2010, because that is the way they wrote them to expire, in order to diminish the size of the tax cuts somewhat and shoehorn them into the budget situation, which would only provide for so much tax expenditure reduction.

I have also heard it said out here something about defense spending. Let me mention to you one little anomaly we haven't brought up tonight. But in order for the other side to say they are spending more than us on defense, I guess, I surmise, they have added $38 billion to budget authority, BA, for national defense. But, at the same time, they have taken $60 billion out of the outlay stream. That is the real money that is outlaid, that is spent by the Pentagon.

So they have taken $60 billion away from our troops in the field by their assumption about outlays, if it were efficacious; and, in fact, it is not efficacious. You can't control outlays. So they have an anomaly like that in the middle of the budget.

So I don't think it behooves them to criticize our budget resolution or to make it something that it isn't, because they have got things there in their own budget resolution that won't bear scrutiny and require explanation.

But the tax cut, let's get down to the bottom line, this budget resolution does not raise taxes. It allows all of the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 to remain in place until they expire December 31, 2010, and leaves for then the decision as to what to do about their renewal.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAHONEY).

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise tonight on behalf of Florida's 16th Congressional District in support of the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2008.

I decided to run for Congress 18 months ago because I wanted to protect my daughter Bailey's American Dream. I was appalled by how Republican leadership had turned a budget surplus into a $3 trillion deficit. I was appalled by out-of-control earmarks that put political payoffs over good government. Tonight, my daughter's legacy of this Republican mismanagement is her personal debt tax of $29,000.

I am proud to stand here tonight with Chairman SPRATT and my fellow Blue Dogs in support of a fiscally responsible budget that reflects the priorities and values of the American people. I am proud that the Democratic Party is taking yet another step in bringing fiscal responsibility back to our Nation.

Our first step happened within hours of our swearing in, when we began to clean up the Republicans' culture of corruption by passing earmark reform. Next, we passed the pay-as-you-go, PAYGO, rule that forces this Congress to live within its means, just as American families do. I am proud that this budget follows the PAYGO rule, as it demonstrates a Democratic commitment to walk the walk of fiscal responsibility and not just talk the talk.

Instead of a fiscal policy that gives tax breaks today and funding them by going into debt and mortgaging our children's future, this budget begins the process of bringing spending under control and lays the foundation to return to a budget surplus so that we can legitimately lower taxes.

While the President's budget imposes nearly $81 billion in new taxes over the next 5 years through user fees for veterans, seniors and other taxpayers, our budget reduces taxes on middle-income families.

While the President's budget increases taxes by more than $300 billion by cutting employer-provided health care, our budget lowers taxes by extending the child tax credit, the marriage penalty tax relief, the 10 percent individual income tax bracket, the research and development tax credit and the deduction for State and local sales tax, something that is critical to my constituents in Florida.

And while the President's budget increases the deficit by over $1.4 trillion

over the next 10 years, our budget would create a budget surplus within 5 years.

This budget resolution provides for a strong national defense, giving the President what he requested, while increasing homeland security funding for port security and our first responders. It takes care of those who have served our country by increasing funding for veterans service programs by a record $6.6 billion. It stands up for Florida's 1.8 million small business owners by rejecting the President's plan to slash the Small Business Administration's budget by 26 percent.

Mr. Chairman, this budget puts children and families first by investing in health care and education. It helps 733,000 of Florida's most vulnerable children who do not have health insurance.

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This budget helps 733,000 of Florida's most vulnerable children who do not have health insurance by increasing funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and invests in our children and our economy's future by honoring the President's broken promises by funding No Child Left Behind and special education and Head Start.

This budget resolution funds our priorities and reflects the priorities of our districts, the States and Nation; it lowers taxes, not raises taxes.

Mr. Chairman, I encourage my colleagues to support the House budget resolution.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I yield myself 30 seconds, Mr. Chairman, only to say that I can't understand how you can say that their budget lowers taxes, let alone doesn't raise taxes.

You can't have it both ways. Either you are raising taxes and balancing the budget or you are not raising taxes and not balancing the budget. It is mathematically impossible for the other side to say they are balancing the budget and not raising taxes.

With that, I yield 6 minutes to the distinguished ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. BUYER of Indiana.

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

Mr. BUYER. I compliment Mr. RYAN for his budget. I speak in support of the Republican alternative for fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

In particular, I would like to address the veterans discretionary health care and programs which would provide $42.4 billion, most of it for health care. This budget is $2.9 billion above the administration's overall request.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican alternative would provide our Nation's veterans with an increase of $8 billion more than the Democrats over the next 5 years, without any tax increases on the very same veterans. That is a budget of $8 billion more for our veterans versus a tax increase of $392.5 billion on America's veterans.

Now think about that. They want to stand up and say, oh, we are going to be against enrollment fees and copays, but what are they really doing? They are increasing taxes on veterans to do what? Increase funding for veterans programs. Think about it. Over 25 million veterans they want to increase taxes on.

The assumptions behind the numbers of Mr. RYAN's budget here, within the $28.5 billion for medical services for FY08, House Republicans would provide $1.3 billion more than the President's request, including $463 more in increasing demands on VA health care system, $200 million for mental health over and above the President. These numbers are over and above the administration. $100 million more on OIF, OEF, $100 million for chiropractic care, $100 million for dental care, $80.2 million on long-term care, $50 million more than the administration on polytrauma care, $65 million for prosthetic and sensory aids, $25 million for blind rehabilitation. Republicans would also provide nearly $100 million more than the administration's request for the medical and prosthetic research.

We also fund $1.4 billion above the administration's budget for construction and facilities. This includes $585 million to the O&M accounts for improving our current medical facilities, an additional $691.7 million to support a substantial investment in the construction, renovation, planning and design of major medical VA facility projects, and $120 million for the gravesite expansion in the National Cemetery Administration.

When you look at the chart, the zeros on the chart, the dots here are the National Cemetery expansions. Those would include Calverton, New York; Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania; Canton, Georgia; Abraham Lincoln, Illinois; Dayton Ohio; Houston, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona and Riverside, California.

When you look at the diamonds, what this would include would be advanced planning for construction projects in Tampa, Florida; in Bay Pines, Florida; Seattle, Washington; American Lake, Washington; Seattle, Washington; Roseburg, Oregon; Palo Alto, California; San Francisco, Loma Linda, Los Angeles; Dallas, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; Butler, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.

In North Carolina it would be in Salisbury, Ashville and Fayetteville; Wichita, Kansas; Omaha, Nebraska. And in South Carolina, it would be in Columbia and in Charleston. In Alabama, it would be Birmingham. Perry Point, Maryland; Bronx, New York; West Haven, Connecticut.

With regard to major construction projects and full funding, that is depicted by the stars on this map, you would have in Los Angeles, California would be seismic corrections of $103.8 million; Fayetteville, Arkansas, clinical addition $59 million; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a campus consolidation of $105.5 million; Lee County, Florida outpatient clinic of $89 million. St. Louis, Missouri, is medical center improvements of $25.8 million. Columbia, Missouri operating suite replacement of $32.5 million. And in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a spinal cord center of $30 million.

With regard to how we get to the $8 billion differential, it is this: The Democrats assume an assumption over the 5 years of an increase of 5.8 percent. The Republican proposal over 5 years is an increase of 7.2 percent. What I did is I looked at the medical inflation plus utilization rate, and when you work those numbers, we actually come up with a differential of $8 billion. The Republican alternative is an $8 billion increase in veterans funding over and above the Democrat proposal. And we do that without increasing taxes on America's veterans. I think that is pretty important.

When I think about the taxes on America's veterans and families, let's see, those are tax increases on middle-income veterans and their families, tax increases on low-income earners, tax increases on veterans with children, those who own small businesses. Think about it. It is going to be an increase in marginal rates potential, the child tax credit reduction could be wiped out. You've got the increase in the marriage penalty, increase in death taxes, increase in capital gains and other tax increases. That is going to be upon America's veterans, and I think that is pretty disturbing.

So a $392.5 billion Democrat tax increase, who does it hurt? It hurts America's veterans. It hurts our wounded warriors. It hurts our low-income veterans. It hurts veterans with children. It hurts our veterans who are business owners.

Now think about this for a second. I want to go back to it. I support the copays, I support enrollment fees for proper utilization. But what is happening here? You see, my Democrat colleagues will stand up and say to the veterans community, oh, I don't want to increase any copays, I don't want to do enrollment fees, but what are they doing instead? They are taxing America's veterans, who in turn will then take those dollars and roll them back into veterans programs. But they are going to champion that we are not going to increase copays, I am not going to increase enrollment fees, but what I am going to do to 25 million veterans is I am going to tax them, not only during your life, but I am going to tax you when you die.

Thank you, for the time Mr. RYAN and I thank you and your staff for your hard work on this budget. It is a budget of which we can be proud.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican Alternative for Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution for veterans discretionary healthcare and programs would provide $42.356 billion, most of it for health care. This budget is $2.939 billion above the administration's request.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican alternative would provide our Nation's veterans with an

increase of $8 billion more than the Democrats over the next 5 years without any tax hikes on those same veterans.

Within our $28.5 billion for medical services for FY08, House Republicans would provide $1.3 billion more than the President's request, including: $463 million more for increasing demands on the VA health care system; $200 million for mental health care; $100 million more for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom; $100 million for chiropractic care; $100 million for dental care; $80.2 million for long-term care; $50 million more than the administration for polytrauma care; $65 million for prosthetic and sensory aids; and $25 million for blind rehabilitation.

Republicans also would provide nearly $100 million more than the administration's request for medical and prosthetic research.

We fund $1.4 billion above the administration's budget for construction and facilities. Included in this is $585 million for improving our current medical facilities and an additional $691.7 million to support a substantial investment for the construction, renovation and planning and design of major medical facility projects. The Republican Alternative also includes $120 million for the National Shrine Commitment of the National Cemetery Administration and expands gravesites in the following locations: Annville, PA; Canton, GA; Elwood, IL; Riverside, CA; Calverton, NY; Houston, TX; Elwood, IL; Dayton, OH; and Phoenix, AZ.

This is why the Republican alternative also funds an additional $691.6 million above the administration's request to support a substantial investment for the construction, renovation and planning and design of major medical facility projects.

$105.5 million for the consolidation of campuses in Mr. DOYLE's district in Pittsburgh, PA. Constituents in Mr. ALTMIRE's, Mr. MURPHY's, and Mr. MURTHA's district will benefit as well.

$103.8 million for seismic corrections in Mr. WAXMAN's district in Los Angeles, CA. Constituents all over the Los Angeles area would also benefit including constituents in Ms. HARMAN's and Ms. WATSON's district.

$32 million for a Spinal Cord Center in Ms. MOORE's district in Milwaukee, WI. Constituents in Ms. BALDWIN's, Mr. SENSENBRENNER's, and Mr. RYAN's district will benefit.

$89 million for outpatient improvements in Mr. MACK's district in Lee County, FL. Constituents in Mr. MAHONEY's, Mr. DIAZ-BALART's, and Mr. BUCHANAN's district will benefit as well.

$59.9 million for a clinical addition in Mr. BOOZMAN's district in Fayetteville, AR. Constituents in Mr. SNYDER's, Mr. BLUNT's, and Mr. ROSS' district will also benefit.

$92 million for medical center improvements in Mr. CARNAHAN's district in St. Louis, MO. Constituents in Mr. LACY CLAY's and Mr. AKIN's district will benefit.

$25.8 million for operating suite replacement in Mr. HULSHOF's district in Columbia, MO. Constituents in Mr. GRAVES', Mr. SKELTON's, and Mr. AKIN's district will benefit.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican Members also fund advanced planning for medical facilities. The funding represents about 5 percent of the estimated cost of the project and is an important first step in the construction of these new facilities.

$36.8 million for a co-located joint use medical facility with the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. This project is in Mr. BROWN's district but constituents in Mr. CLYBURN's district will benefit as well.

$8 million for Poly-trauma center expansion and a bed tower in Tampa, FL. The project is in Ms. CASTOR's district, but it will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. PUTNAM, and Mr. YOUNG.

$1.9 million for seismic improvements in Seattle, WA. The project is in Mr. MCDERMOTT's district but will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS and Mr. SMITH.

$6.8 million for inpatient and outpatient clinic improvements in Bay Pines, FL. This is in Mr. YOUNG's district and the project will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. BILIRAKIS, Ms. CASTOR, and Mr. PUTNAM.

$26.5 million for land to build a new medical facility in Louisville, KY. This project is in Mr. YARMUTH's district but will also benefit constituents in the districts of Mr. DAVIS and Mr. LEWIS.

$14 million for seismic correction in ambulatory care in Palo Alto, CA. This project is in Ms. ESHOO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HONDA, Mr. LANTOS, and Mr. STARK will also benefit.

$2.4 million for seismic corrections in American Lake, WA. This project is in Mr. SMITH's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS, Mr. MCDERMOTT, and Mr. REICHERT will also benefit

$3.6 million for seismic corrections for the mental health building in Roseburg, OR. This project is in Mr. DEFAZIO's district but constituents in the districts of Ms. HOOLEY and Mr. WALDEN will also benefit.

$2.9 million for a spinal cord injury center in Dallas, TX. This project is in Ms. BERNICE JOHNSON's district but other constituents in the Dallas area will also benefit.

$4.1 million for a spinal cord injury center in Bronx, NY. This is in Mr. SERRANO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. RANGEL, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. ENGEL will also benefit.

$4.3 million for seismic corrections to five buildings in San Francisco, CA. This project is in Speaker PELOSI's district but constituents in the districts of Ms. WOOLSEY, Ms. LEE, and Mr. LANTOS will also benefit.

$7.5 million for seismic corrections to thirteen buildings in Los Angeles, CA. This project is in Mr. WAXMAN's district but all constituents in the greater Los Angles area will benefit especially those in the districts of Ms. HARMAN and Ms. WATSON.

$2.2 million for an outpatient clinic in Butler, PA. This project is in Mr. ENGLISH's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. PETERSON will also benefit.

$6.5 million for seismic corrections for buildings in Seattle, WA. The project is in Mr. MCDERMOTT's district but will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS and Mr. SMITH.

$3 million for an outpatient clinic in Palo Alto, CA. This project is in Ms. ESHOO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HONDA, Mr. LANTOS, and Mr. STARK will also benefit.

$8.5 million for outpatient clinic expansion in Washington, DC. This project would affect constituents in ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON's district but also benefits constituents in Mr. DAVIS's and MORAN of Virginia, as well as constituents in Mr. WYNN's and leader HOYER's district.

$2 million for a clinical addition in Salisbury, NC. This project is in MELVIN WATT's district, but constituents in Mrs. BONO's, Mr. BACA's, and Mr. MCKEON's districts will also benefit.

$3.75 million for medical and surgical bed, and ambulatory modernization in Wichita, KS. This project is in Mr. TIAHRT's district but will benefit all veterans in Kansas.

$2.6 million for diagnostics and specialty care facility renovation in Columbia, SC. This project is in Mr. WILSON's district but the constituents in the districts of Mr. SPRATT, Chairman of the Budget Committee, and Mr. CLYBURN will also benefit.

$5.9 million for clinical expansion in Dallas, TX. This project is in Ms. BERNICE JOHNSON's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. SESSIONS and Mr. MARCHANT will also benefit.

$1.6 million for an outpatient clinic in Huntsville, AL. This project is in Mr. DAVIS' districts constituents in the districts of Mr. ADERHOLT and Mr. BACHUS will also benefit.

$2.5 million for a nursing home care unit in Perry Point, MD. This is in Mr. GILCHREST's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. MILLER and Mr. SARBANES will also benefit.

$5.2 million for a clinical ward tower in West Haven, CT. This project is in Ms. DELAURO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HALL, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. MURPHY and Mr. COURTNEY will also benefit.

$7.8 million to fix heating and air conditioning and clinical deficiencies in Omaha, NE. This is Mr. TERRY'S district but I am sure all Nebraskan veterans will benefit.

$1.8 million for outpatient expansion in Ashville, NC. This project is in Mr. SHULER's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. DAVIS and Mr. DUNCAN, of Tennessee, will also benefit.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to my next chart, which shows the Republican alternative budget outlays for the next five years.

As you can see, the President's five-year average budget growth rate for VA discretionary spending is 1.60 percent, the Democrat's is only 5.8 percent and the Republican alternative five-year average growth rate is 7.2 percent.

This number accounts for the cost of medical inflation that is calculated by the consumer price index and annual increased use of VA by all veterans.

What this means Mr. Chairman is that over the next five years Republicans would increase spending by $8 billion more than our friends on the other side of the aisle and we will do this without a tax increase.

Mr. Chairman, at first blush the Democratic budget appears good for veterans, but it is really just smoke and mirrors.

The Democratic budget contains a $392.5 billion tax hike. This includes tax hikes on middle income veterans and their families, veterans who are low-income earners and veterans who own a small business. Democrats also blocked every amendment offered in the Budget Committee that would stop unfair taxes on veterans and their families.

Mr. Chairman, the last time Democrats were in the majority they passed the largest tax hike in history. Now, with only 3 months in office they have already broken their own record. This is the wrong message to send to our veterans and their families.

Mr. Chairman, we are a nation at war, and we will win this war. The best way to maintain morale of our servicemembers is not to micromanage the fight, pretending that's good for the troops; it is to make tough decisions here that will engender their confidence in our capacity to preserve the vitality of this nation while they fight for its freedom.

I believe that the Republican budget helps do exactly that, while honoring the promises we have made our veterans.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, may I inquire as to how much time is left on each side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman from Wisconsin has 31½ minutes and the gentleman from South Carolina has 23½ minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I will yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, if America is watching this debate, I'm sure they are getting confused by all this minutia, which is very, very important. So the things that they really need to be listening to tonight is, and I hope America is paying attention to this, this is the largest tax increase in the history of the United States by the people who said they weren't going to do it when they were running for office. They promised a streamlined government. They promised less spending and lower taxes.

Let me tell you what they are going to raise, and I hope everybody in America is listening because this isn't minutia, this is the facts. Marginal tax rates are going up by $192 billion. The reduction in child credit, if you've got a child, the reduction in child credit is $27 billion. That's an increase. The increase in the marriage penalty is $13 billion, you know, the marriage issue that has been around for a long time.

The death tax. If you are going to leave your business to your kids, if you want to reduce that so that you can leave your children your farm or something, they are going to increase that by $91 billion. They are going to increase the capital gains tax. If you are a small businessman trying to make it in this very competitive society in which we live, they are going to increase the cost of capital gains by $32.5 billion, and then other tax increases by $47 billion.

So, America, if you are listening tonight, and I hope you are, it is late in the day, except in California, I guess in California it is only about 5 o'clock or a little before, but if you are listening, remember, the people who promised you a streamlined government, the Democrats, the people who promised you lower taxes and better government, the Democrats, remember, they are giving you, across the board, the largest tax increase in the history of America, $392.5 billion over 5 years.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Members are reminded that they are to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to the television audience.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for putting together such a great alternative budget.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the budget resolution being considered today, and I do urge support for the minority substitute budget.

Totaling nearly $3 trillion, the 2008 budget, as introduced, is the largest in history, and it fails on many levels.

First, it fails to provide significant entitlement reform. Second, it fails to provide fiscal restraint on discretionary spending. And finally, it fails in reducing the physical burden on taxpayers.

The 2008 budget, as introduced, also fails to provide a blueprint for reining in our bloated farm programs. I want to talk about that for a minute.

This budget is consistent with CBO's March baseline and provides funding for reauthorization of current farm bill programs. But it also allows for up to $20 billion in so-called ''reserve spending'' over 5 years. Even with select commodity prices as high as they are, allowing for farm programs to continue at their current funding level is a tough pill to swallow.

Even though an estimated allocation is included in the budget, under the current farm programs, the actual amount of spending will depend on future commodity prices. Should crop prices fall, as they did after the 1996 farm bill, we will see dramatic increases in farm payments, spending that we have not accounted for or that we have otherwise offset for.

According to the CRS, the 1996 farm bill was expected to cost $37 billion over 7 years, but with farm prices falling dramatically, the Federal Government actually spent nearly $90 billion. This could happen again. With the volatility inherent in current farm program spending, taxpayers should not be saddled with an additional $20 billion over 5 years in so-called reserve spending.

While at this point this reserve spending requires offsets, there is no way to ensure that that requirement will actually stick in the outyears.

Mr. Chairman, I urge support for the minority substitute, which includes fiscal restraint and an unprecedented level of transparency. The substitute budget includes about $300 billion worth of savings in entitlement reforms and balances the budget in 5 years without increasing taxes.

With 77 million baby boomers set to retire, pushing the total cost of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from today's 8.4 percent of GDP to 18.9 percent of GDP in 2050, we literally cannot afford to do nothing. The substitute budget also does not provide the additional reserve spending for agriculture programs.

Finally, the substitute budget includes a requirement that earmarks be included in the text of appropriation bills. This is a measure that I have championed for a while, and I should point out in the last Congress I had good bipartisan support. Many Democrats supported this legislation. They are not today. I think it should be noted, if it was good last year, it's good this year as well.

I urge support for the substitute budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Before yielding to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), let me read from three letters we received in our committee. One is from the American Legion with respect to our support for veterans' health care.

''The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee,'' that's us, Democrats, ''for the budget resolution recommendation of $43.1 billion in funding for veterans' health care. That is our recommendation.'' That is the American Legion speaking.

The DAV says, ''The budget recommendation coming out of the House will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans. This is important if our Nation is at war.''

And the Veterans of Foreign War, the VFW says, ''The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you in support of your strong advocacy for this Nation's veterans.'' These letter go on and on and on. We had a press conference yesterday where they endorsed our budget resolution because of what we provide for veterans' health care, the biggest increase in veterans' health care funding in the history of the organization.

Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

We have been lectured. And sometimes you just have to be reminded about what's been happening to the deficit. We have been lectured by the people who created this chart. You don't create charts like this by accident. Those that created this chart are the ones that are lecturing us on what to do. Just look at the chart.

Now, one way to improve this mess is to improve the economy. Some economic policies help the economy, some don't. We know that creating jobs is extremely important.

□ 1945

If you look all the way back to Herbert Hoover, the job growth under this administration is tied for last since Herbert Hoover. We know that the job growth during this administration in fact isn't even as good after two major budget-busting tax cuts, isn't even as large as the Congressional Budget Office suggested it would be if we had done nothing. They had a projected job growth if we do nothing. They cut the taxes, and we actually didn't even do as well as that. So, the worst job performance since Herbert Hoover.

And what has it done to the stock market? Every 4 years, since the first Reagan administration, the first 4 years of Reagan, the second 4 years, the first 4 years of the first Bush administration, Clinton, the aggregate 4 years change in the Dow, worst since before 1980. That is what is the result of the economic policy.

Now, we know that we can grow the economy if we reduce the deficit, reduce the vulnerability to foreign countries. Three-fourths of our net debt has been financed by foreign investments, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia being three of the largest. You can't negotiate trade deals if you are borrowing money from somebody. You can't negotiate oil prices if you are borrowing money.

We can also grow the economy with investments in education, job training, and science. The Democratic budget does it. You can help with health care, with help in productivity. You can invest in agricultural, rural communities, and transportation. Our budget does that. And we can grow the economy with fiscal responsibility, and the Democratic budget will help dig us out of the ditch that was formed by the Republican policy starting in 2001.

There will be a number of budgets introduced. I will be introducing the Congressional Black Caucus budget that I frankly think does even a better job and makes tougher decisions. But this budget will dig us out of the ditch because it will make those important investments in the economy.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for recognizing me.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this fiscally responsible and morally sound budget resolution. I am especially proud that it prioritizes health care for our neediest children over tax breaks for our wealthiest few.

For the first time in my tenure in Congress, I feel we have a blueprint that invests in our future. I want to commend Chairman SPRATT and my colleagues on the Budget Committee for including the necessary funds to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program to every child who qualifies. These are children of hardworking families. Low-income children and their families should have access to the same quality health care as everyone else, but the reality is that they don't. Under the President's budget, even more of them would have been cut off from SCHIP and Medicaid.

As a former school nurse, I can tell you that children without health care translates into children who do not receive primary care, who do not receive dental care, who are sent to school sick, who suffer from preventable illnesses.

I applaud the $50 billion investment into SCHIP because it is sure to bring us great returns, returns in the form of healthy, productive children. After all, that is what we have been sent here to do. I urge my colleagues to support this budget and support this bill.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, given the history of the last few years, there is no reason to take what the Republican minority is saying seriously. And I say that because the history of the last 6 years has been to prove that people who don't believe in government don't run it well.

It is also true that past Republican budgets have never made permanent the President's tax cuts. So there is rank hypocrisy to suggest that there is a tax increase embedded in this one when there was a similar increase embedded in past Republican budgets.

But, beyond that, what we are really talking about is criticism from a party which ran up $3 trillion in the Federal debt over the last few years; and they have done that, frankly, by putting their tax cuts for the richest people in the country on a credit card. Only they don't intend to pay the credit card. They intend our children and grandchildren to pay back the credit card with $3 trillion of additional Federal debt.

Now, we could go on, on that subject, but the bottom line is budgets are about priorities; and the Democratic priorities in this budget are very, very different from what the administration and the Republicans have done before.

For example, clean water. In my home State of Maine, we value the environment. A good environment is absolutely essential to the health of our economy, because so many people come to me precisely because we have clean air and clean water and a beautiful place to visit. So it is important to the economy. People move to Maine because it is a fabulous place to live, and the quality of the environment is important there as well. Our future responsibility for the planet is all tied up in environmental issues.

But the President and the past Republican Congress has reduced the Clean Water State Revolving Fund over the last few years. Clean water is a basic value for all Americans, and they tried to reduce funds for the Clean Water Revolving Fund. Conservation and preservation of important resources, important to all people in this country, they tried to cut it. We are increasing that funding.

The bottom line is this: Our budget priorities are dramatically different. We have rejected the administration's proposed cuts to core environmental programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Fish and Wildlife Refuge System, and EPA's own budget. They have been trying to reduce funding for the Environmental Protection Agency. We have a different set of priorities. We increase that funding, and this makes a dramatic difference. This budget funds conservation and environmental protection infrastructure at $31.4 billion, $2.46 billion more than the President requested.

We have provided a deficit neutral reserve fund for the reauthorization of the farm bill, and a significant portion of that increased funding would go toward enhancing the Department of Agriculture's natural resource conservation programs.

I would go on to say that expanded agricultural conservation programs help farmers better comply with environmental regulations, and they certainly provide valuable natural resource benefits for the public.

The bottom line is this: clean water, clean air, protecting public health, improving the environment, fulfilling our responsibility to preserve the planet for our children and grandchildren, to preserve our parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and open space. That is what this Congress should be doing. That is what this Democratic budget does. It is a dramatic change from the past, and I just want to congratulate Chairman SPRATT for the good work he has done in making this budget environmentally sensitive.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, what we are hearing this evening almost gives hypocrisy a bad name. We have our friends on the other side of the aisle somehow chastising us for not doing enough on entitlement reform when they have had 6 years of being in control. We have a situation, in spite of their collapse of the budget process last year, they couldn't put it together, collapse of the appropriations process and, quoting from the Heritage Foundation, that they presided over one of the largest run-ups in spending in American history. They somehow are looking at our budget and thinking that it is wanting.

Well, through their warped prism, I can understand that. Their top priority is not dealing with the tsunami of the alternative minimum tax, which they have ignored for the last 6 years, but to put $1 trillion in the hands of the top 1 percent over the next 10 years with their tax priorities.

As my friend Mr. ALLEN pointed out, this is about priorities. And, for the first time in 6 years, we are going to reverse their negative priorities dealing with the environment, one of the few areas that they could control spending. Now, bear in mind, these are the folks that gave us the rainforest in Iowa which they are now concerned about, the Bridge to Nowhere.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman must direct his comments to the Chair.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the advice of the Chair.

They cut spending for the environment, the 300 section, 16 percent; and under the leadership of Mr. SPRATT and the Democrats, we are reversing it. We can't deal with all their problems in just one year, but we are making a good start with over $2.5 billion to deal with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, dealing with cleaning up of superfund sites and toxic waste.

But look at the details of what they offer in their alternative later. Mr. RYAN has suggested almost $19 billion of reductions in ag, transportation, and

natural resources. These are conservation, these are clean water, these are environmental protection. The contrast could not be more stark.

We are investing in America's environmental future. They, if their alternative were adopted, would continue the deterioration, the disinvestment, the attack on America's priorities. I would respectfully suggest that this alone ought to be a compelling argument to reject their alternative offered later and to adopt the Democratic proposal that is before us this evening.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from the Budget Committee, Mr. HENSARLING from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that the last speaker is reading the same budget that I am. I mean, it is incredible to be lectured here on the whole question of entitlement spending, and the Democrat budget alternative is stone cold silent on the issue, the number one fiscal issue that is challenging our Nation.

And don't take my word for it, Mr. Chairman. Look at the testimony of the Congressional Budget Office. Look at the testimony of the General Accountability Office. Look at the testimony of our Federal Reserve Chairman, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of OMB. Anybody who has any responsibility for fiscal policy in America will tell you that we are on the verge, we are on the verge, and to paraphrase the Comptroller General, we are on the verge of being the first generation in America's history to leave the next generation with a lower standard of living.

So when we get lectured about entitlement spending, why is the Democrat alternative silent on it? Why have all the Democrats refused to join us in doing anything to save Social Security, save Medicare, save Medicaid for the next generation?

Let's look here. They speak about what has happened in the Federal debt, and they should be concerned about it. But when it increases $3 trillion, look at what has happened to the unfunded liability in Social Security and Medicare when they refuse to do anything, anything to reform entitlement spending. If you do not reform Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, they will not be there for the next generation. They will not be there. If you do not reform them, you lose them.

So how their budget, Mr. Chairman, can be described as fiscally responsible when they are absolutely silent on the number one fiscal issue that faces our Nation is beyond me.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

□ 2000

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member for yielding me this time.

I appreciate Mr. HENSARLING's comments as well. My comments this evening are going to be directed toward the entitlement program known as Medicare. It does seem that the budget, before this evening, the budget we are debating, does lack a lot. It has a significant deficiency.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) has already pointed out the lack of any real entitlement reform; but there is a missed opportunity in this budget which is disturbing. Yesterday in the Rules Committee, I offered an amendment which was not made in order. This amendment was relatively simple. It would have provided for reconciliation instructions, require the House Judiciary Committee to take up and report to the full House a bill that would reform our medical justice system, and limit the number of lawsuits of questionable merit in order to achieve an overall savings of $2 billion over 5 years.

By capping noneconomic damages at $250,000 per provider, $500,000 per case for noneconomic damages, the CBO estimates that this amendment would save nearly $2 billion over 5 years, $4.5 billion over 10.

Because the practice of defensive medicine is so pervasive, this amendment would establish a liability safety net for many States. It would also insulate providers from lawsuits of questionable merit while ensuring just compensation for those who have been truly injured.

Defensive medicines increases the cost of medical care. It reduces access for patients, and increases the cost of programs like Medicare and Medicaid for the United States taxpayer. This is doubly important as costs increase in Medicare and Medicaid year after year, and we seek savings to make certain that these programs are solvent and viable for those who depend on them now and well into the future.

Medicare and Medicaid represent a growing expenditure of over $600 billion a year for the Federal Government. As the medical liability crisis grows, a large fraction of these dollars will be spent on inefficient health care services provided more to protect the provider from a lawsuit than to improve the patient's health.

Effective medical liability reform would constrain the growth of vital programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, and ensure their long-term viability.

I am happy that the Republican substitute addresses this issue in a responsible manner. Once again, it is an example of a missed opportunity by the budget before us tonight. I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the budget and ''yes'' on the Republican substitute.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BISHOP).

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this resolution. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle argue that this budget represents the largest tax increase in history; nothing could be further from the truth. This budget does not increase taxes by a single dime.

Rather, this budget simply extends current law as the President and the then-Republican majority designed with the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, which expire on December 31, 2010. At that time we will have a decision to make: Whether to renew those tax cuts, and how to pay for them. The era of blank checks for tax cuts is over. Today, we restore fiscal responsibility to the budget process. With respect to entitlement reform, I think many of us would like to hear some acknowledgment from our friends on the other side of the aisle that the $3 trillion in debt that was accumulated on their watch makes dealing with the growing demands on Medicare and Social Security all the more difficult to contend with.

We balance the budget within 5 years and set the table for tax-writing committees to do their job, which first and foremost, should result in repeal of the AMT for middle-income Americans once and for all.

As this budget puts us on the glidepath to fiscal responsibility, it dramatically raises spending levels education, veterans, and health care. These priorities will never be overlooked on our watch.

We reject the President's proposal to cut funding for education by $1.5 billion and eliminate 44 programs. We give college students and their families a chance to succeed by rejecting the President's plan to zero out SEOG, Perkins loans and need-based grants.

Mr. Chairman, I commend the distinguished chairman and his staff for their excellent work, restoring middle-class priorities is accomplished. Fiscal responsibility is achieved. Finally, the fiscal blueprint of America's future reflects our hopes, dreams and the promise of economic prosperity and security in the years ahead.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I stand here tonight as probably the only Member of this House of Representatives that is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Blue Dogs, as well as the New Dems. That is a broad cross-section of diversity within our party that is not shared by this party, and I make that observation only because the American people are watching this tonight. The truth must come out and be said properly.

That is why all three of these groups, moderate, conservative to the liberal are behind this budget. Let me state very quickly, because there is one fact I want understood tonight, and that is that this budget is not a tax increase, does not raise taxes one penny.

Let me quote, for example, and this is not Democrats who are just saying this, this is what economists from the Concord Coalition, moderate conservative economists say. ''Thus to be

clear, the Democratic budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' That is not just us saying it.

From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this is what they say: ''The House plan does not include a tax increase.''

The Alexander Hamilton Project of the Brookings Institute says this: ''This Democratic budget does not raise taxes.''

Now, that is so important for us to get across tonight. They have run the polls. They did their surveys. Stick it to the Democrats, just say they are raising taxes. That will stick with them.

But not tonight, Mr. Chairman, not tonight. These are other people who are speaking and saying that the Democrats' budget does not raise taxes.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute to simply say, you can get every left-leaning think tank to say whatever you want, but the Congressional Budget Office is saying: This raises taxes. Plain and simple.

We can reinvent new words and come up with new language. We can put reserve funds that are meaningless into the budget.

Mr. SPRATT. If you are quoting the Congressional Budget Office, can you cite the quote?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. The CBO says that their baseline, which the gentleman is using for his budget, if the tax cuts expire, the baseline goes up, that is what they are using.

Let me put it another way. According to the Congressional Budget Office, their budget does not balance if they don't raise taxes. Their budget does balance, which they are claiming it does, by letting these tax cuts expire and raising taxes across the board.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH).

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, whatever the rhetoric, the Democratic budget resolution fails to keep faith with the American people.

Instead of embracing fiscal responsibility, it underwrites a saturnalia of spending propped up by, and listen to my words, the largest tax increase in American history.

Instead of maintaining pro-growth tax policies that grow the economy and reduce the deficit, this budget clobbers the American economy by requiring nearly $400 billion of new revenue.

Instead of protecting middle-class families, it lays the groundwork for tax increases on a whole new level of taxpayers.

Instead of setting new priorities, it throws priority setting to the wind and undercuts the benefits of tax policies that have clearly helped the middle class.

The details are stunning. For starters, the Democratic budget threatens to reduce the child tax credit by half, increase the lowest tax bracket from 10 to 15 percent, reconstitute the marriage penalty and eliminate incentives for higher education savings like the student loan interest deduction.

In my home State of Pennsylvania, the average taxpayer can expect to see an estimated $3,000-plus increase in their annual tax bill. That is an increase in the tax bill for a working family of more than $15,000 over a 5-year period. That is a different standard of living.

So much for their empty rhetoric about children and families. Not only does this budget contain the largest tax increase in American history, it also chooses to employ smoke and mirrors instead of underwriting real financial relief from the AMT for Americans.

For years, the AMT has been a growing monster because while originally intended to close loopholes for the very wealthiest taxpayers, it was never indexed for inflation. It is now hitting more and more middle-class taxpayers. As a result, this year, without relief, 23 million taxpayers will be forced into AMT status and hit with a significant tax increase, ten times the number than if it had been indexed to inflation. The Democrats' budget does nothing, sets aside no resources to address this problem.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle fail to include an AMT repeal in their budget. They don't even include the bare minimum step of a patch to keep it at bay as Republicans have in previous years. Instead, this budget resolution holds millions of middle-class taxpayers hostage to a record tax increase. Don't let the rhetoric on the other side of the aisle fool you. The reserve fund that is folded into this resolution is utterly meaningless. This is a piggybank that doesn't even rattle when you shake it.

America's working families deserve better. I urge every Member who cares about working families, cares about protecting their earnings to vote ''no'' on this budget today.

Mr. SPRATT. How much time is left on each side, and who has the right to close?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 7½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) has 18 minutes remaining.

The gentleman from South Carolina has the right to close.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield to myself 1½ minutes.

I want to go to the point that I mentioned a minute ago about who says what about what this budget does. Let me talk about the Congressional Budget Office. By law, that is what we use.

Here is what the Congressional Budget Office says: The year 2010, all of these tax cuts expire. I think we all agree with that. All of these tax cuts expire in 2010. But we are talking about marriage penalty, per child tax credit, death tax, capital gains dividends, income tax rates across the board, they all go up.

That is the red line. That red line shoots up because all of those taxes are increased. That is the line the Democrats are using to run their budget. That is the line the Democrats are using to finance their new spending. That's the line the Democrats are using to show that they get to a balanced budget.

The green line, the dotted line, that is the CBO line that says here is what revenues will be if you extend the tax cuts. That's the line we are using in our budget. We are balancing the budget by controlling spending.

So reserve fund, shmerve fund, that means nothing. What matters are the numbers. And the numbers, not by the Center For Budget and Policy Priorities, not by the Brookings Institution. The Congressional Budget Office. The Congressional Budget Office shows us very clearly, black and white in the numbers, in the numbers in your budget resolution.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair reminds Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, what I am saying, the red line shows all the tax increases kicking in and hitting American taxpayers. That is the line that the Democrats are using to run their budget, to balance their budget, to pay for their new spending.

You can use any word you want, you can't escape the fact that they are imposing, banking on, planning on, assuming, legislating the largest tax increase in American history.

They want to smoke screen it with reserve funds and cute language. The fact is the fact, and the fact is underlined by the Congressional Budget Office.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

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Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman, the ranking member, for yielding once again; and I wish to follow up on his insights about this single largest tax increase in American history that the Democrats are trying to impose. Again, Mr. Chairman, it is reminiscent of what they did 12 years ago, the last time they were in the majority. Again, as I said, they at least get an A for consistency.

But, Mr. Chairman, this is very, very serious business; and we need to take a good hard look at the numbers. But beyond the numbers, Mr. Chairman, we need to look at the people.

Earlier this evening, I read some correspondence from some constituents from the Fifth District of Texas that I have the honor of representing in Congress. These are people who will be hurt by the single largest tax increase

in American history that the Democrats are attempting to impose upon America today.

I heard from Carrie of Dallas, and she said: ''Jeb, you asked us to let you know what we'd be sacrificing if I had to spend another $2,200 in taxes. Well my family's basic needs may not be met, food, shelter, school clothes for the kids. Not to mention not being able to pay my creditors. Please continue to do your best to help the working class and families.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to let Carrie in Dallas know that I want her to be able to keep her earnings, and I am going to fight this single largest tax increase in American history that the Democrats are trying to impose.

Mr. Chairman, I heard from Lorri in Palestine, TX: ''Dear Congressman, I have a son going to college and my mother is on a fixed income and needs my help more times than less. The tax relief I received gave me the opportunity to help my family with their needs. If my taxes are increased again, my family would suffer tremendously.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to let Lorri in Palestine know that I am going to do everything I can to make sure she can keep more of her earnings and fight this single largest tax increase in America's history.

Mr. Chairman, I had a particularly poignant letter from Linda from Rowlett, TX, that I have the honor to represent in Congress. She said: ''This tax increase would make the difference whether my daughter and her husband would be able to purchase a car or not. For my husband and I, it helps us continue with his radiation treatments for his prostate cancer. It allows us to continue providing in-home assistance for my elderly parents, one of whom has Parkinson's and one who has dementia. Please allow us to retain this money for our needs. Please do not let our government take additional tax dollars from us. Please allow us to decide how this money will be spent. Please do not allow the government to decide for us.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, again, I have a message for Linda of Rowlett. I am going to do everything I can to ensure that she gets to keep her earnings for her family, for her health care needs, for her housing needs, her transportation needs.

Vote against this largest tax increase in American history.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. POMEROY). Who seeks time?

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I am reserving my time to close.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

As a representative from the State of Wisconsin, each of us represents about 670,000 people in our congressional districts, and in my home State of Wisconsin, the average tax increase on the average household in the State of Wisconsin will be $2,964, and this will hit 2,164,000 taxpayers. Numbers do not lie. The CBO certifies it. If we pass this budget and it comes into being, that is what will happen. Mr. Chairman, I think that is wrong.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY).

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I look at our families in Texas, everything seems more expensive these days, whether it is getting your kids through school or paying medical bills or insurance or paying light bills; and it is tough enough for family budgets to stretch as it is. I just cannot imagine why we in Washington would hand our families another tax bill for $2,700 for Texas families and expect them to like it, especially since we can balance this budget without that tax increase.

When I talk to our Texas seniors, the first thing they tell me is, please stop spending our Social Security money, quit spending the trust fund; that is our money. Yet, the Democrat budget spends that Social Security trust fund. The Republican budget for the first time in 40 years stops spending it, preserves it for Social Security.

When I look at small businesses, who are the backbone of our country and really struggle to make payroll, I used to be a Chamber of Commerce manager. I know how hard it is to meet that payroll. And 26 million small business owners, we are going to hand them another tax bill of about $4,000 on top of what they struggle today? That is just asking too much, especially when we can balance the budget without those tax increases, without taking senior's Social Security, and do it the right way.

That is why I respectfully disagree, strongly disagree with this bill and why we need to pass the Republican alternative. It makes much more sense for our families.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the remaining time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a very important debate. It is an important debate about our priorities as a country. It is an important debate about how we run the fiscal ship of state, but it is more important than that. It is an important debate about our future.

I related a story the other day in committee that I want to share again with my colleagues.

When I first ran for Congress in 1998, I was a 28-year-old young guy, single, no children. I remember at a Kiwanis Pancake Day, we have a lot of pancake days in Wisconsin. It is how we raise money for charities. I remember going up to a woman in line, not much older than me, and she had three little children. I asked her for her vote. I asked her to support me in my race for Congress.

She said something to me. She said, I do not think I am going to vote for you. I said, well, why not? She said, because I do not think you can relate to me. I said, well, why can I not relate to you? She said, because you do not have children and you do not know what it is like to have children; you do not know what it is like to think about their futures. I said, well, I was in a family. I know what it is like to be in a family. And you know, I did not understand what she was saying to me at the time.

You know what? Now that I have a 5-year-old daughter, a 3-year-old son and a 2-year-old son, I understand exactly what that woman was telling me. I understand exactly what it feels like to really, really, really care about the next generation. It is like your heart is walking around in someone else's body. I can only imagine what grandparents feel like.

So this debate is about numbers. It is about priorities, how much for the Pentagon and how much for veterans and how much for this program and that program. But it is also about what is that horizon we are looking for, what is that vision on the horizon and what are we doing for our kids and our grandkids? What legacy are we putting in place for our country?

The great, beautiful thing about America, the American Dream is that one generation leaves a better standard of living for the next generation. That was drilled into me by my parents, that they were working and thriving so that we would have a better life than they had. That is what our job in Congress is to do.

We have big challenges and our country has faced big ones before, the Great Depression, World War I, World War II, the Cold War. We have got three challenges right now hitting us simultaneously, the global war on terror, globalization, and this entitlement explosion, the retirement of the baby boomer generation which we are not prepared for. This budget is about all of those things, but let me talk about two of them.

Globalization: We have got new kinds of competitive pressures against us unlike that which we have ever seen before. No longer do the oceans separate us from competitive pressures. We have broadband and digital technology. We have competition from countries like China and India unlike any we have ever seen before, and it is something we have to respond to so that our kids and our grandkids can have that higher standard of living.

At the same time, we have got entitlement programs that are exploding before us. We have an enormous debt on our horizon that we have to address.

Now, you heard this talk about taxes, tax increases. This budget does unequivocally raise taxes. I will not belabor that point.

Let me show you three lines. The lower line here, the blue line, shows you what revenues would look like if we kept those tax cuts permanent. That is what our budget will propose to do. Do not raise taxes, keep the marriage penalty down, keep the kid credit where it is, keep income tax rates where they are, get rid of the death tax, do not raise taxes. That is the blue line.

The red line right here shows you what happens if we let the tax cuts expire as this budget proposes to do if you increase taxes. It shows you a $400 billion tax increase.

What really matters here is not the red and the blue line at the end of the day for our children and grandchildren, matters a lot, but at the end of the day what matters is the green line, the spending line. This is the line that is occurring right now under our watch. This is the spending trajectory of the Federal Government because of Republicans and Democrats, both of us. We are all in this thing together. This is the line that happens.

So if you do not address the spending, you are not addressing the real problem. That is why I really have a big problem with this budget. Not only does it have the largest tax increase in history, not only does it raise taxes about $400 billion, it does nothing to control spending. It does not reform our entitlement programs. If you want these entitlement programs to succeed, to exist, to continue, you have to reform them.

Let me show you one more chart. This is the Government Accountability Office. This shows you the trajectory we are on when you take a look at Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, interest on the debt, when you take a look at all the discretionary spending. It shows you this: By the year 2040, that is when my kids will be exactly my age, by the year 2040, our Federal Government will be doubled in size.

Let me put it another way. If we want to have no new programs whatsoever, keep today's government in place, no fewer programs, no more programs, just today's Federal Government, the cost of that Federal Government when my kids are my age will be double what it costs today.

Let us put it another way. We have historically run our government, the Federal Government, by taxing about 18 percent of GDP to fund the Federal Government. Since about 1960, the Federal Government has had to tax the American people at about 18 percent of the economy and its output to fund the Federal Government. When my kids are my age, to fund today's Federal Government at that time it will require us to tax 40 percent of GDP. We will literally have to tax our kids at twice the rate we are taxing ourselves today if we do nothing to reform spending and reform these entitlements.

You cannot survive globalization if you are going to double the tax rates on every man, woman and child in America at that time. We cannot win when we are competing against the likes of China and India if we are going to crank taxes up like that.

So the real problem with this budget is not what it contains, the largest tax increase in American history. The even larger problem with this budget is that it contains no reforms. It contains no spending control. It includes immense new spending.

You have 12 of these reserve funds which are worth less than this piece of paper. They do not pay for anything, but the one thing they do say is we want to spend $115 billion in more money. We do not have the money for it, but if we can have the money for it, we would do it. The other reserve funds say we do not want these taxes to go up, but we are planning on having them go up. We would stop them going up if we had money to do it, but we really are not stopping these tax increases.

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say you are going to balance the budget and not control spending without raising taxes. In order for your budget to balance, in order for the Democrat budget to balance, Mr. Chairman, they have to raise taxes, especially since they are not only not controlling spending, they are increasing spending. That is the way mathematics works.

But more important than all of this, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that we have to get our kids and our country ready to compete in the global economy. We are not prepared for that. We have got to do more to help them compete, and we do not do it by doubling their taxes.

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We tax our country, our businesses and our capital more than any other country in the industrialized world except for Japan, and they just finished two decades of recession. We can't tax our way out of this problem. We will tax ourselves out of being the leading economic superpower. We will tax ourselves out of a good standard of living.

If we don't tackle this problem, we will have severed that American Dream, that American legacy, that legacy that says each generation should leave on to the next a better country, a better standard of living. That is what is really wrong with this budget. We can't keep spending or taxing our way out of these problems. If this budget achieves balance on paper, which I will clearly, freely admit that it does, it will only do so for a short period of time.

Because if you don't fix these entitlement programs, it will drive us that much deeper into debt, that much more in the deficit, just around the corner. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are the big three entitlements. They are very important programs. Health care for low income, health care for people in old age, retirement security. We all agree with that. We think that is the right thing.

But you have got to reform these programs if you are going to save these programs. You have got to reform these programs if people are truly going to be able to count on these benefits. Because if you don't reform these programs, you are driving the debt even higher. You are driving taxes up on our kids and grandkids even more. Not only will we not have programs to depend on for our livelihood when we reach the age of 65, not only will we not be prepared for the baby boomers, we will hit our kids with the biggest tax burden this country has ever seen.

We will lose our greatness, and we will not pass on this legacy of a better country and a higher standard of living to our children. I urge a ''no'' vote on this budget.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, we have been treated to a show tonight featuring a one-trick pony. Every Republican who has come to the well of this Chamber has come with the same mantra, the same slogan, alleging wrongfully that our budget resolution would raise taxes. We have repeatedly explained why, only to have them keep coming to the floor basically on the belief if they say it often enough, maybe somebody will believe it.

Here is one thing you can believe. There is no conjecture in this. These are matter of fact. As Casey used to say, you can look it up. You can look it up. There is the debt of the United States, $5.7 trillion before President Bush came to office. Here is the debt of the United States today, $8.8 trillion. That arithmetic is very simple and very straightforward. It's a $3.1 trillion increase of debt of United States on their watch. This isn't conjecture, this is a matter of record.

I will just show you this chart one more time, because it shows that the revenue flows that we are projecting, based upon CBO's base-line certification of projection of revenues is essentially the same as the President is assuming in his budget from OMB, there is a 1.2 percent difference. This is the so-called biggest tax increase in American history. The President is right where we are, 1.2 percent difference between us.

Now, why all of these shenanigans? Partly it is because this is a red herring. They don't want to talk about really what is in their budget resolution. It's their resolution they will have to pass tomorrow. They bear the burden of truth and persuasion. You would think they would be talking about it.

But deep down in that resolution, you have to dig hard. You will find the same thing in the Agriculture Committee. This year they are to renew and reauthorize the farm bill. We want you to reconcile $9.85 billion in cost reduction in the agriculture bill. It will be awfully hard to get that farm bill out if that reconciliation is implemented.

They say to Labor, which has student loans, Pell Grants under its jurisdiction, you can cut $4.9 billion. Where from, student loans? No where else to go.

They say to Energy and Commerce, with Medicare and Medicaid in its jurisdiction cut $97.539 billion over the next 9 years. Judiciary and our law enforcement programs, cut $3.5 billion

dollars; Natural Resources, already strained, huge backlog for our national parks, cut $4.7 billion; Transportation and Infrastructure, about to run short of funds for our highways, cut $4.2 billion; Ways and Means, with all kinds of safety net programs, this is an instruction to Ways and Means, to cut $153 billion.

Now, this is done under the name and guise of balancing the budget. But what's the bottom line? They also tell Ways and Means to cut taxes by $447 billion.

When you net the $447 billion tax cut against the $278 billion in reconciled spending cuts, the result is $168 billion more to be added to the deficit. That is why they are talking about this other subject. That is why they wouldn't talk about their own resolution. Our resolution will stand on all fours. Our resolution is a good resolution. It's not the best, but it is doggone good.

It brings us to balance by 2012. It fully funds defense. By the way we don't have any shenanigans with the outlays. We don't short up guys in the field $67 billion in outlays. When we get through paying and providing for defense, which is a big item there, is not a lot left over. We husband our resources. We say to our veterans, by golly, you deserve what you are talking about. We give the biggest increase in history, $5.4 billion over current services for veterans health care.

Education, we think it's critically important. We genuinely believe in it on this side. We provide $9 billion more than the President for education next year, over the next 5 years, we provide $46 billion more for education than does theirs.

Children's health insurance, it's going to expire this year. What they propose will not even allow us to insure the children now on the program. We want to not only renew it, but expand it. We also want to pay for it. So we say to those who advocate SCHIP, its expansion, if you pay for it, you can go up to $50 billion in expanding the program. That is in our budget resolution.

Why do they want to put this red herring out there? To keep us from talking about these things that the American people really care about, the health of their children. They should.

We don't have any Medicaid cuts, and we don't have any Medicare cuts. I will tell you, because I have been at this business of the budget for a long time, in 1990 and 1991 Democrats voted for budget measures that truly reduced the deficit and had some restraints on Medicare and Medicaid in them; 1997, the same thing; 1993, with Mr. Clinton, the same thing. When we knew that it was going to improve the bottom line and not be used simply to offset another of their tax cuts, we were willing to pay for Medicare and Medicaid reduction. They have not been able to or willing to.

Finally, as to taxes, we have no tax increase anywhere in this resolution, none whatsoever. For that matter, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, particularly those middle-income tax cuts, which we list and enumerate, not once but twice in our resolution, we fully protect them and leave them in place, full force and effect, this year, next year, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

They only expire then, not because of anything in this budget resolution, but because when the Republicans first wrote those tax cuts and passed them, they put that sunset date in there in order to diminish the size and shoehorn these tax cuts under what was allowed under that budget resolution.

We have got a good budget resolution. It will stand on all fours. It brings the budget to balance in 2012, encourages less in deficits and depth than the President does. Furthermore, we have got a track record to talk about.

When President Clinton came to office in 1993, there was a deficit of $290 billion. Every year thereafter, every year thereafter, the bottom line of the budget got better, to the point where in 2000, there was a surplus of $236 billion. That is what happened on his watch.

President Bush came to office with an advantage few preceding Presidents have enjoyed, a surplus of $5.6 trillion projected by his own economists. He has run that into a deficit of $8.2 trillion. We haven't seen a reversal like that since the Great Depression. That was not the President's fault in the 1930s.

This is the record they have to rely on. The record we have to rely on is the record of the Clinton administration, which balanced the budget in the year 1998 for the first time in 30 years, and built up a surplus of $236 billion, which we turned over to Mr. Bush.

We will discuss this further tomorrow. But what we offer is a responsible budget resolution that reaches responsible results but is balanced well in its priorities.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) each will control 30 minutes on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, as Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, I am pleased to speak in the time reserved by the Budget Act for a discussion of economic goals and policies that is traditionally led by members of this committee.

Mr. Chairman, we have a responsibility to chart a more sensible course for economic policy than has been pursued over the past 6 years, and this budget starts us down that path.

The President says his policies are working to make the economy strong, and that all Americans are benefiting. But evidence of a slowing economy is building, and an anxiety over the state of the economy remains high. The meltdown in the subprime mortgage market is also adding to worries about the overall health of the economy.

American families are optimistic by nature, but they are understandably worried about the future, because the economy is weakening, even before many have shared in the gains from the economic growth we have seen so far.

Despite 5 years of economic expansion, most American families have struggled just to hold their economic ground on President Bush's watch. Job growth has been modest. Wages are barely keeping pace with inflation. Real incomes have fallen, household debt is rising, employer-provided health insurance coverage is declining, and private pensions are in jeopardy.

These are the economic barometers that matter most to America's families. Having a job is the key indicator of economic well-being for the vast majority of Americans. The President likes to talk about these 7.5 million jobs created since August of 2003, but he neglects to mention the fact that more than a third of those jobs were necessary just to replace the ones that were destroyed between 2001 and 2003.

Most Americans depend on their earnings to support themselves and their families. But unfortunately, workers' pay has lagged far beyond productivity, and wage growth has been weaker and more unequal than in the late 1990s. Strong productivity growth has translated into higher profits for businesses. Corporate profits are at an all-time high as a share of GDP, but not more take-home pay for the average worker.

Focusing on usual weekly earnings of full-time workers, we see only modest gains concentrated in the upper half of the distribution from 2000 to 2006. As we see in this chart, the red bars show the unequal gains during the Bush administration, and the blue bars show the Clinton years when earnings grew for everyone across our country.

The divergence between the haves and the have-nots in the Bush administration economy stands in marked contrast to the last 4 or 5 years of the Clinton administration when real wage gains were strong up and down the wage ladder as productivity growth first accelerated.

These earnings figures do not reflect bonuses of highly paid executives or capital gains and other nonwage income earned at the very top of the income distribution. This picture likely understates the disparities. The people experiencing the largest income gains are executives and highly compensated individuals, while ordinary American workers are only just beginning to see some gains in their paychecks after inflation.

Workers' pay and benefits, the red line, have grown only half as much as productivity; the blue line over the last 6 years. Typically, real compensation of workers, their wages and benefits, tend to track productivity growth as

they did in the late 1990s. But that has not happened since the 2001 recession. Productivity growth has been strong, but real inflation-adjusted compensation growth has been weak.

The compensation growth we have seen came much more from benefits than from wages, but not because employers suddenly became more generous. Benefit costs have been increasing because health insurance costs are rising and employers have had to make contributions to restore the solvency of their pension plans.

□ 2045

Higher benefit costs have squeezed take-home pay, but workers have not been getting more generous benefits in return. Slow job growth and stagnant wages during much of the Bush administration have depressed families' incomes. Median household income in 2005 was nearly $1,300 lower than in 2000, a loss of 2.7 percent during the President's first 5 years in office. Clearly, many American families have a lot of lost ground to make up.

Those who are already well-to-do are doing very well in this Bush economy, but the typical American family is struggling to make ends meet in the face of high costs for energy, health care and a college education for their children.

College tuition is up 44 percent, health insurance premiums are up 87 percent, and the price of gasoline was only a $1.45 per gallon when the President took office.

Somehow, the President's tax cuts were supposed to make up for all of this. But the lion's share of the tax cuts went to the people at the very top, especially the top 1 percent of earners.

The legacy of the President's tax cuts has been to run up massive deficits and debt that leave us unprepared to deal with the budget challenges posed by the retirement of the baby boom generation, and that weakens the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren.

This administration has presided over a stunning reversal of fortune. The $5.6 trillion, 10-year budget surplus that they inherited turned into a deficit over those same 10 years of at least $2.3 trillion.

The administration has incurred the three largest budget deficits on record, including a $413 billion deficit in 2004. The deficit may be retreating, as it usually does in a business cycle recovery, but each year's deficit still stands in marked contrast to the projected surpluses when the President took office.

The gross Federal debt is now almost $9 trillion, or more than $29,000 per person. That is how much every man, woman and child in America owes to this debt. This is the fiscal mess that we have to clean up. Thanks to the President's policies, we are now a Nation of debtors, relying on the rest of the world to finance our budget deficits and excessive spending.

Our current account deficit, which is the broadest measure of our trade deficit with the rest of the world, rose to a record-smashing $856 billion in 2006, from $791 billion in 2005.

This administration keeps giving us records, but they are the wrong kind of records. Record deficits, record debts, and record amounts of money owed by each American citizen. The amount of Federal debt owed by foreigners has more than doubled under President Bush, rising to $2.2 trillion, with Japan and China alone holding $1 trillion of our debt.

Recent stock market volatility underscores just how vulnerable the U.S. economy has become to the decisions being made in other countries. When China sneezes, a half a world away, the U.S. economy catches a cold.

Our future prosperity depends on increasing our normal saving and making wise investments. It depends on being ready for the retirement of the baby boom generation and the pressure we know that that will put on our budget.

The challenge for this Congress is to return to the fiscal discipline that has been squandered by the President and Congress over the past 6 years, and that is what this Democratic budget proposal does.

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the ranking member of the Joint Economic Committee, Mr. SAXTON, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

A couple of corrections here. Let me make the point that the American economy is still one of the strongest in the Nation, in the world, the largest economy in the world. We have had 42 straight months of job growth. We have created 7.6 million new jobs under President Bush. We have low unemployment. And this was all done as President Bush inherited a recession as he took office.

I should make note that President Clinton inherited an expanding economy. President Bush inherited one that was slipping into recession. And you don't need to take my word for it. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Laureate and President's Clinton's own chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, observed the economy was slipping into recession even before President Bush took office.

So let's talk about the facts. Let's talk about this budget. I actually think it is a healthy thing that we are arguing over how to balance the Federal budget. That is something that ought to be a goal of both parties.

And, frankly, as a Republican, I am convinced one of the reasons we got fired from management of Congress is that we forgot to pursue a balanced budget. We forgot to limit spending. We forgot to try to look out for the American taxpayer.

I oppose this Democratic budget because it increases the Federal deficit by billions of dollars next year. It continues to raid the Social Security trust fund, and it does include the largest tax increase in American history. And that is not only fiscally irresponsible, it means a staggering $2,700 tax increase for our average Texas family of four.

Now, this budget will spend nearly $3 trillion next year, and we will impose almost $400 billion of tax increases to finance new Federal spending. If you look at what it does, it allows President Bush's tax relief to expire, bringing back the marriage penalty, bringing back the death tax, cutting the child tax credit in half, and raising the income capital gains and dividend tax rates.

And their budget, closer to home, next year it also kills the State and local sales tax deduction, which I and others on both sides of the aisle worked so hard to restore. That State sales tax deduction saves Texas families $1 billion annually, and they will see a new tax increase shortly after this holiday season.

And what is, I think, most absurd, I was listening to the chairman of the Budget Committee's discussion on shenanigans and I thought, I have not seen a bigger shenanigan in any budget in history than what is called the reserve account in the Democrat budget. What they say is, we will do tax relief for middle-class families, but we will pay for it with the reserve account. You ask, what is in the reserve account? And not a single dime, not a single dollar. It is as if someone said, here is a check for what I promise you, but the bank account is empty. I don't know if there will be money in it ever. I don't know how to put money in it. But, trust me, here is a check. Those reserve accounts are the biggest shenanigan.

And after years of criticizing President Bush for not eliminating or at least reforming the alternative minimum tax, the Democrat budget doesn't allow for even 1 year of it, which means an additional 20 million Americans will be hit by this growing tax next year.

I am backing an alternative budget, the Republican budget, that balances the budget in 5 years without a tax increase and ends the raid on the Social Security trust fund.

It seems to me tonight we have probably as clear a choice as we have had in many years between the Democrat philosophy of balancing the budget and the Republican.

The Democrat philosophy in this budget is, we will balance it, which is good for them. We balance it by increasing spending and increasing taxes on hardworking families.

The Republicans approach is, we will balance it a different way, by limiting the spending and by keeping the tax relief that families need. And there has never been a clearer choice.

And I think, too, I look at the promises that were made last campaign by

our new majority. We are going to reduce the deficit. Yet, under this budget, the deficit will actually increase $36 billion in 1 year, $36 billion. That compass is headed the wrong direction.

They said, we will stop spending the Social Security trust fund, but they spend all of it this year and in every year. And they say, we promise middle-class tax relief, but, instead, they provide tax increases on families and small businesses and single moms with children.

In a moment I am going to go through some of those tax increases which, frankly, as expensive as life is these days for most families, I know our families in Texas can't quite handle that big a hit.

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

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I just want to remind my dear friend on the other side of the aisle that the Bush administration has given this country several records, only they are the wrong kind of records: $9 trillion in debt, the largest debt this country has ever carried; $859 billion trade deficit, the current account deficit, the largest trade deficit in the history of this country. And out of that $9 trillion, each of us in this room and each person across America owes $29,000. That is their portion of the debt that we owe.

Once again, we have heard about job creation. As I have said earlier, a third of the jobs created since 2003 were necessary just to make up for earlier job losses. Under President Clinton, the economy created 237,000 jobs per month, and this administration has created well less than 100,000 jobs per month.

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute to make the point that under President Clinton's watch we did have a strong economy. It turned out that much of it was false, based on the supposed paper accounts of Enron and WorldCom and others. Too many families woke up after the Clinton administration and realized that retirement fund they had counted on their whole life wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

And I will make the point, too, that after the attacks of 9/11, after this recession, after this administration handled the fallout of this recession, that we bounced back with tax relief that created 7.6 million new jobs in America. We are going in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), former head of the Republican Study Committee and one of our leaders on fiscal discipline.

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding; and I express strong support for his leadership and remarks concerning the Joint Economic Committee.

I also would echo the sentiments of the chairman who expressed on this floor, moments ago, the importance for pursuing a ''more sensible course for economic policy.'' And, as she did, I will reflect on the fact that that begins with the Federal budget.

We are in the midst, Mr. Chairman, of considering the Federal budget; and I rise this evening to reflect on that, however briefly. But I must tell you, I have a strong sense of deja vu as I come to this floor. It seems like it is the 1970s all over again.

I mean, seriously, if you think about it, there are hostages in Iran; Congress is making plans to withdraw from another unpopular war; the Equal Rights Amendment is about to be considered in the Congress, once again; and the tax-and-spend policies of a liberal Democrat majority are about to beset Washington, D.C.

□ 2100

The contrast between the Democrat plan for tax and spend and the Republican plan to balance the budget by 2012 could not be more startling, and I would like to speak about that this evening.

On taxes, under the Democrat budget that will be considered tomorrow, we find the largest tax increase in American history. Despite hollow promises, the tax hikes are in the numbers, and in a budget resolution the numbers don't lie.

The Republican budget, no tax increases, period.

On the spending side, the Democrat budget includes a $22 billion increase in nondefense spending above the President's request on top of $22 billion of unrequested spending in the supplemental and $6 billion in the omnibus. More taxes and more spending.

Under the Republican budget, we see a courageous effort to freeze nondefense, nonsecurity spending, while providing additional funds for veterans, the war on terror, CDBG, the National Institutes of Health and Science and Technology.

And perhaps most grievous and most startling a contrast, Mr. Chairman, is under the Democrat budget that will be considered tomorrow, we see a majority party in Congress that is prepared to ignore the trillions of dollars in unfunded obligations in entitlements altogether. The Democrat budget ignores the Nation's looming entitlement crises and allows unfunded liabilities in Medicare and Social Security to actually grow by an additional $25 trillion.

Again, the Republican alternative includes $279 billion in savings and commonsense reforms to entitlement programs to preserve our social safety net for future generations. And on budget process reform, believing, as I always have, that we must change the way we spend the people's money, the Democrat budget relies on gimmickry and hollow promises of reserve funds and PAYGO strategies that will only chase higher spending and higher taxes.

Under the Republican plan, we see legislative line item veto and PAYGO for all congressional spending.

So the contrasts have been startling, and it does seem like deja vu. But who will pay the price? Well, under the Democrat plan, working families in Indiana will pay an additional $2,700 per year. The Democrat budget resolution will increase marginal tax rates for all Americans, eliminate the new 10 percent tax bracket, increase taxes paid on capital gains and dividends, reimpose the death tax, cut the child tax credit. And that is just a start.

The GOP budget alternative will preserve tax cuts, will protect Social Security, and will balance the Federal budget by the year 2012. It is truly an historic recommitment by this Republican minority to the principles of fiscal discipline and reform.

It is, in fact, the 1970s all over again. But I would say very humbly, Mr. Chairman, let's not, as a Nation, relearn those lessons. Let's rather say ''no'' to bell bottoms, to disco, and to the tax and spend policies of the 1970s; and say ''yes'' to the fiscal discipline and reform reflected in the Republican budget resolution.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. First of all, Mr. Chairman, I find it rather ironic that my good friends on the other side of the aisle are lecturing us on fiscal responsibility. After all, let us remember that the $5.6 trillion 10-year budget surplus that Mr. Bush and the Republican majority at that time inherited turned into a deficit over those same 10 years of at least $2.3 trillion. Numbers do not lie, Mr. Chairman. They turned a $5.6 trillion surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit. And they are preaching fiscal responsibility.

The administration has incurred the three largest budget deficits on record, including a $413 billion deficit in 2004. And let's remember that the Bush administration not only lost 3 million manufacturing jobs since they took office, but we now have almost a $9 trillion debt, and that breaks down to all of us in America owing, our own individual share, $29,000. Now, that is what they have given the American people.

On top of that they gave us another record, another horrible record. The highest trade deficit in the history of our country, $857 billion. So they give us the record debt, the record trade deficit, and the record budget deficit in the history of this country, and they are talking fiscal responsibility. And then on top of it they turn the surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit.

Believe me, I am so glad that for the future of America we have a Democratic budget before us today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to my colleague from the great State of Washington, Congressman MCDERMOTT.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what I heard out here.

I was sitting in my office listening, and it is interesting to imagine yourself being like the people at home listening on television to the Republicans talk about fiscal responsibility. Now, you have just heard the figures, but I want to bring back some images to your mind because a budget is a statement of your principles and what you care about in society.

I remember when Katrina hit and we were sitting watching television looking at the absolute chaos and failure of the Republicans to deal with a national crisis. Those pictures looked like the Third World. In fact, we were quicker to go out to Indonesia to deal with the effects of tsunami than we were to deal with the problems of people in our own country, in New Orleans.

In large measure, I believe, the election of 2006 was a rejection by the American people of the Republican we-don't-want-government-to-work philosophy. Anybody who appoints a guy who runs cattle shows or horse shows to run the emergency management organization in this country does not care about the security of the American people. Meanwhile, giving tax breaks. Unbelievable. Spending us into a deficit.

I mean, when I came to Congress, all I heard for the first 6 years were Republicans coming out and saying, We have to pass a balanced budget amendment. By God, we have got to balance the budget.

So we did in 1994. We did it, and lo and behold, here comes all this money in and soon we have a balanced budget with a potential surplus. The Republicans win, and I don't know whether they had amnesia or they didn't really mean it in the first place when they talked about a balanced budget. You can choose which of those you want.

Either they were deceiving the people or they just lost their minds when they got in control and spent us into this hole. Now for them to come out and say we are going to balance the budget in 2012, why don't you say you are going to balance the budget in 2049? That is as good a date as any. You don't mean it. You never meant it because when you came in, you made decision after decision after decision that dug the hole deeper. The old aphorism everybody knows in this country: If you are in a hole, the first thing you should do is stop digging. But the Republicans, session after session, came out here and dug the hole deeper. I don't know what they were looking for. Maybe they were looking for china or gold. I don't know where they were going. But, clearly, the budgeting that has come out of the Republicans was phony from the outset and the people said we don't want any more of that.

The people want a government that works. There is a reason why we have government. We have government to do those things for people that they cannot do for themselves. All of us over here believe in individual responsibility. We think people should be responsible. They should save money. They should get an education. They should raise their children. None of us over here disagree with that individual responsibility.

But there are some things that people cannot do for themselves. They cannot prevent the effects of a hurricane. They look to the government to deal with that. But the Republicans said, No problem. Leave the jobs open. And you could find the same kind of things all through this budget, whether you are looking at the national parks or you are looking at what they have done to the environment.

The President bragged about what a great education Governor he was, and he came in here and told us we are going to have this No Child Left Behind bill. Then he proceeded to underfund it by $17 billion. Now, if you are serious about schools, you put the money in schools. You don't give tax breaks to people making a half million dollars a year. They have got enough to get by. Most all of them can pretty much get by on half a million. But there are schools in this country which are failing for the lack of money to do the things that are necessary for the school system.

And the choice the President made was let's give the tax break. Never mind that silly bill I had about No Child Left Behind. He didn't mean it. You didn't mean it. And that is why we had the election of 2006. And the budget you see out here is the priorities of the Democrats trying to bring some sense back to a government that we want to actually function when the people look to it and need it.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The gentleman does make many relevant points, just not relevant accuracies.

The truth of the matter is he claimed that the Democrats balanced the budget in 1994, but there was a $200 billion deficit in 1994. In fact, it was the Republican Congress that balanced the Federal budget for the first time after 40 years of Democrat leadership in Washington, D.C.

The gentlewoman from New York claims that manufacturing jobs were lost under President Bush, but manufacturing losses began in 1998, 1999, and 2000 under President Clinton's administration.

And while I agree with the gentlewoman that the $9 trillion debt is unconscionable, I will point out that in every budget that we passed in the 10 years that I have been here, Democrats voted against it because it was not spending enough. And the gentleman in front of me just said we haven't spent enough on Katrina, we haven't spent enough on education, we haven't spent enough on health care; yet they say we shouldn't be spending this much. And that $9 trillion debt, when I go onto their Web sites, when I look at the press releases on all the pork barrel projects, I brought home this highway fund, this university research, I brought home this special program, now, either they didn't support that spending or they are just claiming credit for that spending.

You can't have it both ways. You can't be fiscally responsible. You are spending too much. No, you are spending too little, and I am taking credit for what you did.

The fact of the matter is when we look at the Democratic budget, what we see is a massive tax rate, massive new spending, all in an effort, I think, to reclaim the title of the biggest government possible.

□ 2115

I try to explain this to my taxpayers back home and my families, what does this budget mean to you?

You look at an elderly couple in Texas with $40,000 income. That is where the husband and the wife is still working. Under the Democrat bill, this elderly couple in Texas, their tax bill would rise by $1,000 a year. That is a lot of money for a senior citizen and his wife.

A family of four with $60,000 in earnings, that is maybe a firefighter and a secretary, this bill would increase their taxes by $1,800. A family of four, which probably is struggling already to make ends meet.

For a single parent with two children and $30,000 in income, that is a single mom working in the local school district, under Republicans, at the end of the year she would get back almost $2,500. Under the Democrat tax increase bill, she would get $1,600 less.

I know in Washington $1,600 doesn't seem like a lot, but when you are a single mom working at the local school district with two kids, that is a lot of clothes, that is a lot of car insurance, that is a lot of medical bills for young people. This budget hands these families a tax hit that, frankly, they can't afford.

Taxes will rise, on the average, for 26 million small business owners by almost $4,000. That is a lot of payroll. That may be the only profit they make all year.

Then, by eliminating the lowest tax bracket, you are going to take 5 million taxpayers in America who didn't have to pay taxes, we are going to hand them a tax bill and say we want to do this so we can spend more in Washington. So that we can try to balance the budget on the backs of hard-working families in America, we are going to spend more.

What my Democrat friends have never figured out is, Washington has all the money it needs. It just doesn't have all the money it wants. It is time we know the difference.

I am supporting the Republican alternative, which balances the budget without this massive tax increase. In fact, there is no tax increase at all. For the first time in many, many years, it does not spend the Social Security trust fund, which is just critical.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. POMEROY). The gentlelady from New York is recognized to close.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the American people voted for change, and this Democratic leadership has given them change, not only in the direction in Iraq but the direction in our budget.

I repeat, it is unbelievable. I am mystified that the Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle are talking fiscal discipline. Let us remember, they are the ones that gave us the largest debt in history, $9 trillion, the largest trade deficit, over $859 billion, and they turned the $5.6 trillion 10-year budget surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit. That is what they gave this country.

Within the first 100 hours of this Congress, the new Democratic leadership instituted pay-as-you-go budgeting requiring that new spending be offset. In other words, we are not spending money we don't have. We are not going to grow that deficit. Adhering to this policy helped turn deficits into surpluses in the 1990s during the Clinton administration but was abandoned by the Bush administration and the Republican-controlled Congress. That is what led us to these huge debts and deficits.

Today, Democrats in Congress present a realistic budget plan that adheres to PAYGO principles for controlling the deficit and bringing revenues into line with the amount we need to spend to defend the country and take care of the needs of our citizens.

Our budget provides health care for millions of additional uninsured children. We make investments in veterans health care and benefits. We restore critical funding for first responders and State and local law enforcement.

In order to spur innovation that will keep America number one in the world, we provide increased funding for the National Science Foundation, increase investments in math and science and education, and make college more affordable for our young people, investing in the future of our country.

We also expand renewable energy and energy efficiency to reduce global warming and dependence on foreign oil.

Democrats target tax relief to those who need it most. Our plan protects 19 million middle-American families from a tax increase by setting up a reserve fund for a long-term fix for the alternative minimum tax, which is snagging millions more families each year in its widening net. We pay for these tax cuts in part by eliminating tax loopholes and closing the tax gap to make sure that middle-class families don't have to pay the tab for tax cheats.

Mr. Chairman, this budget resolution is an important step toward putting our fiscal house back in order and creating greater economic opportunities and prosperity for all American families.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 99, the Congressional Budget Resolution for fiscal year 2008.

I am extremely pleased that the budget proposed by Chairman SPRATT recognizes the critical importance of meeting our nation's infrastructure investment needs, even while achieving a balanced budget by the year 2012.

Increased investment in our transportation infrastructure has far-reaching effects on our nation's economy, our competitiveness in the world marketplace, and the quality of life in our communities.

Yet, too often, capital investments are shortchanged due to a more immediate need to finance day-to-day operations.

This budget does not make that mistake. Rather, it assumes full funding for programs financed by the Highway and Aviation Trust Funds. These programs are funded by highway and aviation system users and do not contribute to the deficit.

Specifically, the proposed budget fully funds highway, transit, and highway safety programs at the levels guaranteed by the surface transportation reauthorization act, commonly known as SAFETEA–LU. It rejects the Administration's proposal to cut highway and transit funding below the guaranteed levels by $631 million and $309 million, respectively.

The Administration's proposal to cut transit funding was particularly ill-advised. The Administration proposed that Capital Investment Grants receive $1.4 billion, compared to $1.7 billion authorized by SAFETEA–LU. Of the $1.4 billion requested for Capital Investment Grants, the Administration proposed to fund 11 existing Full Funding Grant Agreements, seven projects that are currently in final design, and three other projects currently in preliminary engineering. However, the Administration's request ignores the significant pipeline of new start projects seeking funding, including 11 projects that are currently in preliminary engineering, as well as another eight projects that are very close to approval to enter preliminary engineering.

Furthermore, within the $300 million reduction in Capital Investment Grants proposed by the Administration, $100 million was to have come from the small starts program. The small starts program is authorized in SAFETEA–LU to receive $200 million in fiscal year 2008. The Administration proposed to provide just $100 million, to fund four small start projects. There are, however, at least 11 other small start projects around the country which may be ready for project development approval in fiscal year 2007.

Given that traffic congestion has become a major national problem costing motorists more than $63 billion in wasted time and fuel each year, the Administration's proposal to cut funding for transit investments is just plain wrong, and I am pleased it is not included in the Concurrent Resolution before us today.

Beyond highways and transit, the Concurrent Resolution lays the groundwork for reauthorization of Federal Aviation Administration programs by allocating the full amounts recommended by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). As requested in the Committee's Views and Estimates, the proposed budget provides an allocation for AIP of $3.8 billion in FY 2008, $3.9 billion in FY 2009, $4.0 billion in FY 2010, and $4.1 billion in FY 2011. In contrast to the Administration's proposal to cut AIP funding to $2.75 billion in FY 2008, the increased funding levels provided by this Resolution will allow the AIP program to keep pace with inflationary cost increases, and begin to address the investment gap in airport safety and capacity needs.

I commend Chairman SPRATT for bringing this Resolution to the Floor, and look forward to working with him on continued improvements to our nation's infrastructure.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 99.

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, yesterday I was thrilled to join four distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee—Ms. DAVIS, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. CONAWAY, and our esteemed chairman, Mr. SKELTON—on a tour of Fort Riley.

I am proud to represent Fort Riley in Congress, and my pride only grew as I saw the professionalism and patriotism of Fort Riley's troops. Fort Riley is charged with training Military Training Teams—small groups of American soldiers who recruit, organize, and train Iraqi forces to take charge of their nation's security.

Fort Riley goes to tremendous lengths to prepare soldiers for their tours in Iraq. The fort runs complex simulations of battle conditions—they engage actors to portray Arab citizens; they encourage soldiers to behave throughout their training as though they are already in Iraq.

For transition teams at Fort Riley, the war begins months before they leave American soil. Their war will continue through twelve months of hazardous, exhausting deployment in Iraq. And even when they return home, their war will continue still. Many will bear the scars of the Iraq war—both physical and mental—for a lifetime.

Just as Fort Riley has recognized that we cannot drop soldiers into a war zone without adequate preparation, this Congress must realize that we cannot abandon soldiers upon their return to America. We owe veterans nothing less than a lifetime of support. Abraham Lincoln understood this concept when he charged America "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." It is time that this Congress meet our obligation.

I was proud in January to support a continuing resolution that increased VA funding by $3.4 billion. Last week this House passed a supplemental bill that provided a further $1.7 billion. These increases were meaningful and long-overdue—but our support must not waver now.

The Budget Committee has provided superb leadership toward that end. The Committee proposed a fiscally responsible, comprehensive 2008 budget that includes a $6.6 billion increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Their approach has earned praise from AMVETS, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion.

I urge my colleagues to follow the Budget Committee's lead.

No one can doubt that every Member of this esteemed body supports America's veterans. The only question is whether we will demonstrate our support using the most powerful tool at our disposal: the federal budget.

I urge you to turn words of support for veterans into action, to transform sentiment into financing. Please vote for full funding of the VA.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. McDERMOTT) having assumed the chair, Mr. POMEROY, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) 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, had come to no resolution thereon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. 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. Con. Res. 99 and S. 1002.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO MEXICO-UNITED STATES INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h, and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group:

Mr. PASTOR, Arizona, Chairman

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ, California, Vice Chairman

Mr. FILNER, California

Mr. REYES, Texas

Ms. SOLIS, California

Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Texas

Ms. GIFFORDS, Arizona

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 gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. KILPATRICK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

HEALTH CARE: THE BIGGEST DOMESTIC CRISIS FACING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the biggest domestic crisis facing America today is health care. Every 30 seconds, an American files for bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious health problem. So says a recent study from Harvard University. And that is just one of the chilling new statistics that should compel Congress to act.

Every Band-Aid has been tried and has not solved the problem. Instead, the crisis of health care has been allowed to fester like an open wound. We cannot continue to tinker around the edges.

Today, the health care system is increasingly dysfunctional. America is fast becoming a nation of haves and have-nots, those wealthy enough to afford comprehensive health care coverage and the vast majority of American people struggling to maintain coverage.

It is time to provide universal health care for every American, and the only delivery system that works is a single-payer health care system, which is what I propose in H.R. 1200. We don't need to change the way health care is delivered. We do need to change the way we pay for it.

Today's health care system is pockmarked with inequities, overutilization and uncertainty. We don't get the benefit or the cost-savings of a risk pool that includes every American. Instead, we have wildly different programs, costs and outcomes across this country.

The casualties are mounting and spreading. America's health care crisis is fast becoming America's economic crisis, especially for small business, the backbone of the U.S. economy.

Data compiled by credible organizations reveals the depth of the crisis. We are spending over four times as much on health as we are on national defense, yet 47 million Americans are defenseless because they don't have any health care coverage at all. We are spending over $2 trillion a year on health, an average of $6,280 per person, and it is too much.

A Harvard study found that 68 percent of the people filing for bankruptcy had health insurance, and they also had an average of $12,000 in health-related debt. Unpaid medical expenses play a role in half the bankruptcies in this country.

America is better than that. People don't deserve to fall into financial ruin in the richest nation on Earth because of an illness or an injury.

We tried everything else except the only effective solution, a single-payer system that guarantees every American has a minimum set of health care coverage benefits, decisions made locally in their own town, closest to the patient, in a universal system that covers every American.

We do this for essential programs and services across America, from national defense to local police and fire. It is a tried and true system that protects everyone by involving everyone working together for the common good.

We have to take the pragmatic approach contained in H.R. 1200 for the good of the American people and the U.S. economy. Big business confronted an 8 percent increase in health expenses last year. Small businesses saw expenses rise by more than 10 percent. The average premium for an employer to provide health insurance to cover a family of four was $11,500 a year, and employees typically paid $3,000 of that bill.

□ 2130

These costs are only going to go higher in the current dysfunctional system.

Uncontrolled business expenses like these are unsustainable. At least one respected business consulting group projects that health expenses will overtake profits in many American businesses next year, 2008. This is not something 40 years down the road, it's next year. More Band-Aids won't stop the bleeding. America's health care system is failing the American people and business.

Affordable health care coverage should be a right, not a privilege, in America; but that's not the way it really is. Those who profit most by the inefficient, bloated and broken system in place today will spend millions of dollars on ads trying to scare you into believing that paying them more and more is in your best interest.

Remember Harry and Louise, that baloney in '93? You're going to see it again. Every American deserves affordable health care coverage. H.R. 1200 will do just that. We have waited too long, and we can't wait any longer.

It is time to act and pass H.R. 1200, universal health care coverage for all Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

RETURN SOVEREIGNTY BACK TO THE STATES, THE SCHOOL BOARD, AND THE PARENTS

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, with the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind before us this

year, we all have an obligation to consider reforms that both further education policy, and also maintain consistency with our constitutional duties.

The Federal Government began its interference, if you will, in education through land grants, and over time has transformed into a bureaucracy that we see today. I would like to highlight some of the serious flaws in this tangled web we have weaved and pose a question to my colleagues and our constituents as well. Are we better off today with the Federal Government's involvement in education as it has been over the years?

Since 1965, American taxpayers have invested more than $778 billion on Federal programs for elementary and secondary education. The GAO, the Government Accountability Office, reported in 1994 that 13,400 Federally funded full-time employees in State education agencies work to implement Federal education programs. That is three times the number then working at the Department of Education.

The same report found that state education agencies are forced to reserve a far greater share of Federal and State funds for State-level use by a ratio of 4–1, due to the administrative and regulatory burden of Federal programs. And because it cost so much to allocate a Federal dollar than a State dollar, 41 percent of financial support and staffing of State education agencies was a product of Federal dollars and regulations. In other words, the Federal Government was the cause of 41 percent of the administrative burden at the State level, despite providing just 7 percent of overall education funding.

Again, according to the GAO, the testing requirements alone for No Child Left Behind will cost the States about $1.9 billion between 2002 and 2008. And that is if the State uses only multiple choice questions that can be scored in machines, as opposed to essays and what have you.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, No Child Left Behind increased State and local governments' annual paperwork burden by 6,680,334 hours at an estimated cost of $141 million. So while No Child Left Behind advertises that it helps to attract and maintain highly qualified teachers, some States, in fact, have now responded to it by actually lowering their testing requirements for new teachers.

Since the law enactment, Pennsylvania has dropped its testing after finding that too many middle school teachers had failed the test. In Maryland, New Hampshire and Virginia, they have made their basic skills test for teachers easier to pass now than before we had No Child Left Behind.

In Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada and West Virginia, they, too, have lowered their requirements for teachers trained out of state. So what is happening is as State officials become more familiar with the No Child Left Behind statute and with U.S. Department of Education's interpretation of it, more States have rushed to lower their own standards. So by September 2004, 47 States had filed requests with the U.S. Department of Education to approve changes to their No Child Left Behind plans that would, in many cases, make it easier for them to show adequate yearly progress than before.

Now, to address all this, in the near future, I will come back to the floor as I will be introducing legislation that will immediately cut both the financial and the regulatory strings between the Federal Government and the States that choose to opt out and relieve the Federal education system.

How it will work is this: Under my proposal, States that elect to opt out of the Federal education funding system would be eligible to keep their own money, keep it in their own States through a mechanism, a Federal tax credit. It would be a refundable Federal tax credit, and it would be available to all the residents in that State that chose to opt out. Therefore, what we have here is not only would that State free itself up from the education regulations and all the costs I have just laid out here, but by taking this deduction, those residents in those States won't have to be taking money out of their pocket, sending it to Washington, Washington handling it for a while, and some of it coming back to their States. In effect, what will happen is you will not have to send your money to Washington at all.

But the bottom line is this: We should not waste this unique opportunity that we have now, now that No Child Left Behind is coming up for reauthorization. We should use this as an opportunity to return sovereignty back to the States, and most importantly, back to the parents themselves.

So Mr. Speaker, I will close on this to say I look forward to the time when all education decisions are returned back to the States, to the legislatures, to the local school board, and most importantly, to the parents themselves.

SUPPORT THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS BUDGET

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is offering a budget to help us get out of the financial mess that we're in. We have seen this chart before, it shows the deficit over the years, how in 1993 we started to eliminate the deficit, ran the budget up to a surplus, creating a 10-year budget of over $5.5 trillion. The policies that have now gotten us into a mess have changed that $5.5 trillion surplus into an almost $3 trillion deficit, a swing of $8.5 trillion.

The first thing the Black Congressional Caucus budget does is to repeal the policies that got us into this mess by rolling back the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for that portion of a person's household income over $200,000. By rolling back the brackets for the first two brackets and eliminating the tax cuts for capital gains and dividends, primarily for that portion of the household income over $200,000. People will say it is a big tax cut. So what. Those policies got us in the ditch. We are repealing those policies to get out of the ditch.

Now what does that do to the budget? The Congressional Black Caucus deficit is better every year than the President's budget. The President's budget is in red, the Democratic alternative is in blue. The Congressional Black Caucus beats both of them every year, except the last year, we only had a $141 billion surplus in the last year, the Democratic budget has $153 billion, but of course, the President's budget is still in the ditch. We have significantly reduced the deficit $339 billion better bottom line cumulatively than the President.

We also save interest. By reducing the deficit, we save interest. Every year, we have saved more and more interest. $27 billion less interest paid over 5 years than the President's budget. In fact, $18 billion more than the Democratic alternative.

We have also addressed our priorities with the money left over. After we have reduced the deficit and reduced the amount of interest, we have also made important investments. SCHIP, $66 billion more in health care than the Democratic budget, over $100 billion more than the President. We can fund health care for each and every child in America.

No Child Left Behind. We are funding over $158 billion more in education and training than the President. We have honored our veterans by spending $42 billion more than the President's budget. We have attacked fraud, waste and abuse in the Democratic budget. We have made communities more secure with investments in juvenile justice, gang prevention, prison re-entry. We have provided community support through community development block grants in nutrition and housing. We have contributed to diplomacy by fighting global AIDS, child survival. We have spent significantly more in these priorities, Mr. Speaker, than both the Democratic alternative and certainly the President's budget.

The Congressional Black Caucus repeals the policy that put us into a mess. We address important priorities that are so important, and we have a much more fiscally responsible budget.

We would ask the House to adopt the Congressional Black Caucus budget that gets us out of the mess and puts on the right track.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS ALTERNATIVE FISCAL YEAR 08 BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise as the Health Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus to express my strong support for the Congressional Black Caucus' alternative fiscal year '08 budget and to urge its passage.

I want to begin by applauding our leadership, our chairwoman, CAROLYN KILPATRICK, and the person who headed up our Budget Task Force for his hard work, skill, leadership and commitment to justice it represents, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT.

This is a smart and responsible budget that is as fiscally sound as it is congruent to the needs, hopes and aspirations not only of African Americans, but of all Americans.

This budget uses the Democratic budget, a good budget itself, as a starting point and takes a step further by putting $112 billion more in education, training, employment and social services; $9 billion more in veterans benefits and services; $8 billion more in homeland security. And over a 5-year period, it spends more than $101 billion on health care. It does all of this and more while balancing the budget in 2012 and creating $141 billion surplus, beginning to reduce the burden that the Republican spending spree would have placed on future generations.

Four years ago, the current administration began taking us down the slippery slope of huge deficits and unprecedented debt by giving tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans instead of using that money to strengthen our country by investing in the American people. This budget rescinds some of those tax cuts and incentives, including the tax cuts to the top two tiers of income, tax cuts that this country could not afford then and cannot afford today.

By rescinding those tax cuts, which is where our budget departs from the Democratic base budget, we begin now to correct the wrong that was perpetrated particularly on the poor and middle class, and we put the interests of the majority of this Nation's hard-working families at the forefront of our spending priorities, and Mr. Speaker, it is about time.

While this is true across every line item, it is especially true as it relates to spending on health and health care. As I have previously observed and stated on the RECORD, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget proposes to eliminate, cut or flat fund every single program that is critical to reducing health disparities or to strengthening the health and wellness of African Americans and other people of color across this Nation.

The Democratic budget, for which I applaud Chairman JOHN SPRATT, does much to restore these programs, at least in part. But the health deficit of African Americans and other people of color, of the poor and rural Americans requires a major investment to reverse the severely adverse impact of long-term neglect, neglect which is not only causing excess deaths, but driving up the cost of health care and undermining the quality of care for all Americans.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the CBC alternative budget uses the additional funding stream from the funds we put back into the budget to maintain, create or expand programs that are proven to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities that have left more people of color in poorer health, without access to adequate health care, and more likely to die prematurely from preventable causes often during their most productive years for far too long.

Programs like Healthy Start, nurse education and other health profession programs, the Ryan-White Care Act, Health Careers Opportunity programs, Gulf Coast Health Infrastructure, Maternal and Child Health get the funding they need. And NIH and community health centers get an additional increase as well.

Most importantly, we create a health equity fund to fund prevention programs that pay for themselves and create value, and which make that investment to fill in the gaps in health care in poor and rural communities and communities of color, and to improve the health status of all Americans.

□ 2145

The CBC budget through its investment in education, economic opportunity, housing, and all of the social determinants of health provide that kind of holistic approach to our communities and our Nation's well-being that had been missing and for which we are all, but especially people of color, paying the price.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King once said that the moral arc of the universe bends at the elbow of justice. The CBC resets the moral compass of our Nation, and the CBC sits at the elbow of justice. And by supporting the CBC budget we not only will be championing justice and equity in health care but in all social, public and economic policies and programs that currently fail far too many of our Nation's citizens and which have thus created two Americas separated by a wide and deep chasm of inequality.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King also said that the time is always right to do what is right. Well, that time is now, and doing what is right is passing the CBC alternative budget. I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for this well-constructed, sound budget that sets a new direction for this country not just for today but for tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE 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 Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CBC BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. I would like to begin by congratulating Congresswoman CAROLYN KILPATRICK, the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, Chair of the CBC Budget Task Force, for their leadership in developing the CBC budget.

I strongly support the CBC budget because it provides sufficient funding for critical domestic priorities such as health care, education, and community development. For example, the CBC budget spends $112 billion more than the Budget Committee's budget and $158 billion more than the President's budget on education, training, employment, and social services. Yet the CBC budget still eliminates the deficit by 2012.

As the Chair of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, I am deeply concerned about the need for affordable housing in America. The CBC budget recognizes that affordable housing is all but out of reach for many Americans. Just imagine, the 2006 average minimum wage required to rent affordable housing is $16.31 an hour, more than three times the Federal minimum wage of $5.15 an hour, putting most housing out of reach for many American families.

Approximately 6 million persons in this country are very needy, paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing. This is a real threat to families trying to educate their children and make ends meet. Affordable rental housing is critical to communities across this Nation. Public housing is still part of the solution, community development programs are part of the solution, and the renewal of the section 8 voucher and many other housing programs is part of the solution.

The President's fiscal year 2008 budget request would cut overall net funding for public housing by $477 million, from $6.4 billion to $5.9 billion, a cut of 7 percent. While the budget increases the operating fund by $136 million, public housing authorities are estimated to receive only 80 percent of their total operating expenses. The budget decreases the capital fund used to repair

and modernize public housing units by $415 million, to only $2.0 billion.

Continuing a downward spiral in funding, this is part of the effort to dismantle public housing as we know it. We cannot sit idly by and let this happen. The community development programs would be seriously eroded and undermined if left to this administration. The Brownfields and the section 108 loan guarantee program would also be eliminated. The Community Development Block Grant Program would be cut by 20 percent, losing $735 million. And the list goes on and on.

In addition, Section 202 and 811 housing programs for the elderly and disabled would be cut drastically in the administration budget proposal. Rural housing programs would also suffer serious cutbacks faring no better.

The administration's budget proposes to terminate the major Rural Section 515 rental housing program, which would leave thousands of families living in rural communities, many poor, working families with children, and the disabled and elderly without affordable housing.

There is another issue that I feel strongly about that is addressed in this budget. As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I am highly concerned about the origin and proliferation of gangs in communities throughout the United States. Along with full committee chairman JOHN CONYERS and Crime Subcommittee chairman BOBBY SCOTT, I plan to retool existing authorized Federal programs to comprehensively address this problem. This requires full funding of the following programs: the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant, the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, the Youth Violence Reduction Demonstration Projects that are administered by the Department of Justice, and the Compassion Capital Fund, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

In the city of Los Angeles, there are approximately 4,000 gangs and 39,000 gang members. For 2006, there were about 470 homicides, and 250 were gang related. Of the shootings in the city last year, 70 percent were gang related. According to a September 1, 2006, report by Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, it costs about $287 million to treat and hospitalize victims of nonfatal gang assaults countywide in one year.

This is not only in Los Angeles. There are gang problems all over America, and not simply in our cities but in our rural communities, in our suburban communities.

It is about time that we focus some efforts on dealing with the gangs from two perspectives:

Number one, we have got to have prevention. We have got to be able to provide social services. We have got to be able to meet the needs of people in communities that have no hope.

Number two, yes, we must be tough. But the answer is not simply lock them up and throw the key away. The answer is, how do we prevent young people, young children, from connecting and getting involved with gangs in the first place? We need serious funding and smart assembly of existing programs to effectively halt the recruitment of new gang members.

We need serious funding and smart assembly of existing programs to effectively halt the recruitment of new gang members; to reduce the incidence of homicide and violence between gangs; to implement programs that deliver support services and job training; and to enable communities to solve problems that lead to race-related gang tensions.

CONCLUSION

I urge all of my colleagues to support the CBC Budget so that we can begin to tackle important issues like gang violence and the need for affordable housing in our communities.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BUDGETING FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today the House began debate on the budget for the next year. This is the time when each party shows its true priorities. The Democrats have promised to ensure our homeland security while providing for the needs of America's working families: health care, education, safe communities.

This is another chance to tell the people to tell the administration that we are not going to fund this misguided occupation of Iraq. We are quickly approaching one-half trillion dollars for the occupation of Iraq, including billions that have been lost, misallocated, or squandered, while drastically cutting important domestic programs in the United States of America.

Let me say that one more time: one-half trillion dollars. What comes after a trillion? A zillion? This might not mean much to some of the folks in Washington, but to the people scraping to get by this means everything.

We are in the fifth year of this occupation, and if we follow the leadership of the administration we will be there for years to come. In fact, they even say that the exit strategy for Iraq will be decided by future presidents. Presidents. Not one, but many. This is really unacceptable.

The Progressive Caucus budget, the Peace and Security budget, takes a stand against the ridiculous budget request and puts the money where it will do the most good. By ending our military presence in Iraq, we can save at least $202 billion over the next 2 years. Doing that, we can focus on the real needs of Americans.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus budget will fully fund No Child Left Behind and IDEA and improve the Teacher Corps and job training. It will provide affordable, accessible, quality health care for Americans, starting with fully funding the SCHIP program to ensure that every American child is covered for basic health insurance. It will rebuild America's communities by increasing funding for Community Development Block Grants, Hurricane Katrina relief, and reconstruction and community policing. It also guarantees veterans health care and ensures that the Federal funding that is needed will be available to provide health care, including mental health care, for every single American veteran, including but not limited to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

This Peace and Security budget gives a fair shake for working families by increasing funding to protect fundamental worker rights, enforcing credit and lending practices, and promoting liveable wages and safe work places. It also will renew the social contract and 21st century safety net by substantially increasing funding for decent, affordable housing, for anti-hunger programs, and more quality child care for low-income and impoverished Americans, including Hurricane Katrina victims.

Does this mean that we will abandon our obligation throughout the world? Absolutely not. We will support the Smart Security Plan by increasing nonmilitary spending to enhance homeland security and to fight the root causes of terrorism, a real 21st century diplomacy plan that meets basic human needs such as fighting HIV and AIDS and providing for universal basic education.

If we had spent the last 4 years focusing on the real needs of America's working families and not fighting this endless, misguided occupation of Iraq, America would be safer, more prosperous and a leader in peace and security worldwide.

It is time to bring common sense and reason back to our foreign policy. I call on my colleagues to join me in supporting the Progressive Caucus budget, the Peace and Security budget, and to join me in the call to bring our troops home now.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland 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 gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LANGEVIN 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 Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come to the floor. Mr. RYAN and I have spent a long time, Mr. Speaker, when it was just Mr. RYAN and I on the floor. This goes back to the 108th Congress and a little of the 109th Congress, and I am so glad we are having the opportunity to come to the floor to talk about not only the budget but what we were able to do last week, last Friday, moving in a new direction as it relates to the emergency supplemental.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the 30-Something Working Group comes to the floor to not only share facts but to also do away with the fiction that many of the Members on the other side of the aisle come to the floor many times sharing information that I guess someone gave them some information and said, go on the floor and say this, or what have you.

□ 2200

I can't help but watch some of this debate on the floor and question where some of the information comes from.

The good thing about the 30-something Working Group, we actually have third-party validators for information that we share here on the floor. We want to make sure that every Member is able to make a sound decision and that the American people are able to get great information from what we share here on the floor.

As you know, every time we come to the floor, we talk about a number of issues. But tonight, again we are going to talk about the budget. We are also going to talk about the ongoing issue of Iraq and the courageous step we took just last week, and the Senate has taken a step in that direction also in accountability measures within the emergency supplemental.

Mr. RYAN, I don't know if you had an opportunity to see the President's press conference today, but it was quite interesting. It was like he was trying to sell something to the American people. He was speaking to the Cattlemen's Association, and he took that opportunity not to talk about beef, but to talk about what the Congress is doing in the area of making sure that we bring about accountability.

He was saying he is going to veto what we actually passed. What he is trying to do, and there is a word on the street that is used, flipping the script. He is trying to flip the script and trying to fake the American people out in saying that the Democratic Congress is standing in the schoolhouse door of the funding getting to our troops.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ and I think we have prima facie evidence here to show that the emergency supplemental, everything in the emergency supplemental is a true emergency, making sure that we fund our troops beyond what the President has called for, making sure that we stand up on behalf of our veterans, an unprecedented commitment to Veterans Affairs and to the VA in the history of this country.

Because we already had a system that needed work and needed funding, this Congress stepped forth and put forth, the 110th Congress, the Democratic controlled Congress stepped forward and made sure we did what we needed to do for the veterans, and we are just getting started.

At the same time, Mr. RYAN, we have to look at the issue of Hurricane Katrina. The President said there is other funding in there. We are doing things in the emergency supplemental for the people on the gulf coast that have been waiting on the President. They don't want lip service, they want action. If the President wants to veto that, that's on him. But I guarantee you that the American people will see through what our President is saying as it relates to and as he continues to explain how he is going to veto an emergency supplemental.

He is saying if the money runs out, and it is on the back of the U.S. Congress. Well, I can tell you this: The American people are on the side of the U.S. Congress. They have asked us to lead, and we are leading. They didn't ask us to balk at the first threat that the President makes. Or I am going to veto. Well, okay, that is something that you are going to have to live with. That is something you will have to explain. But we are going to continue to do what we need to do here in providing the kind of leadership necessary.

America said in November they want to move in a direction. They said they want accountability. They no longer want a rubber stamp. They want a do-something Congress and not a do-nothing Congress. We will talk about that tonight.

Mr. RYAN, I am so glad you are here as we continue to share this information with the Members so they can make an accurate decision tomorrow when we vote on the budget, on our priorities, making sure that we give every child in the United States health care, and making sure that we move in the direction that the U.S. mayors have asked us to move in, making sure that we move in the direction that governors have asked us to move in, and giving the necessary dollars to homeland security to protect the homeland.

We are going to make sure that the Members know exactly what they are voting on so when we go on a 2-week break, Mr. Speaker, Members can't go home and say, I didn't really understand what was in the budget.

I yield to Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate what you are saying, and there are a couple of points I would like to add.

When the President says he is going to veto the supplemental bill, he is going to veto a $1.7 billion understand increase for veterans. We have seen Walter Reed and heard the stories from across the country. We know we have more veterans coming back. He is going to veto a $1.7 billion increase from his recommendation. And then he is going to veto a $1.7 billion increase for defense health care for our troops, not yet veterans but still needing access to care. And $500 million is for

post-traumatic stress disorder. And $500 million is for brain injuries.

Those of us who have been to Walter Reed have seen these veterans who are more affected than any of us. They are the ones that are hurt. They are the ones with the brain injuries, and we get in and we try to put in $500 million in addition to what the President wants for brain injuries, and the President threatens to veto it.

That is $500 million for post-traumatic stress disorder, and the President threatens to veto it. We put in this supplemental bill, Mr. Speaker, rules that the Department of Defense and the Pentagon say we need. That if you don't have the proper equipment, you shouldn't go off to war. If you don't have the proper rest, you shouldn't go off to war. If we can't put the proper armor on your Humvees when you are on patrol in Baghdad, you should not go. The President said he is going to veto that.

So the President is saying he is okay with sending our American troops to Baghdad to drive in a Humvee that is not up armored, to send the soldiers out in the field without the proper body armor, and to sending kids back when they have only been home for a few months, sending them right back. That is what the President is saying he is going to veto, Mr. Speaker.

I am not okay with that. And the Democratic Congress is not okay with that. And the Senate is not okay with that. And the American people are not okay with sending our troops to Baghdad to ride in Humvees that don't have the proper armor on them. Period. That is the debate. That is what the President says he is going to veto.

Let's be very, very clear about what the Democratic Congress has passed and put in front of the President and what he is threatening to veto. Now, we have even given him a few months to get done what he wants to get done. Many of us want our troops home now, I'm one of them, but I recognize there are a lot of us here, and we need to have some level of compromise.

All we are saying is if there is not progress by July, we start bringing our troops home. The war has already been longer than World War II. If you haven't done it by now, it can't be done. Bring them home.

But if there is progress, we will give them until October. If they don't meet the benchmarks that the President set out, Mr. MEEK, in January, and these are the President's benchmarks. These aren't the Speaker's benchmarks or Senator REID's benchmarks; they are not Kendrick Meek's benchmark. They are not mine. These are the benchmarks the President of the United States set out in his speech of January 10.

All we are saying, is you have been able to say one thing and not live up to it. You have certain goals, and then not get there, and we just all go on our merry way. What we are saying, is you've got to be accountable for the benchmarks you have set out. If they don't meet those benchmarks, we are coming home. We are bringing our troops home.

So I think it is very important that the American people understand what is going on. You mentioned Katrina. Everybody wants to talk about there is pork in this bill and this and that; the majority of this goes to the troops, and the next biggest chunk goes to Katrina relief. We are trying to free up money to rebuild the gulf coast.

And the hold-up the whole time has been that the President and the Republicans want a 10 percent match from a local community in order to draw down 90 percent of the Federal money. And we wonder why the coast isn't getting rebuilt, it is because the towns have been completely destroyed. They don't have the 10 percent match, Mr. Speaker. They are wiped out. They don't have police, they don't have fire, they don't have roads, sewer, anything.

And the former leadership in our last Congress was so ideological they said no, you have to have your 10 percent match, and then billions of dollars did not get down to the gulf coast. That is what the President is also going to veto. I feel strongly about this.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, they don't say 10 percent match for the special interests. When it comes down to big oil and some other big guys and gals here in this town, Mr. Speaker, they don't say you have to match us halfway. They say just, we will give you what you need. As a matter of fact, we will give you technical assistance to be able to take the U.S. taxpayer dollar and do what you want. And guess what, we will not even look. We will cover our eyes. We won't even have hearings.

Get my hearing chart, Mr. RYAN. I want to get down to the nitty-gritty here.

Mr. Speaker, we come to the floor 10 minutes past 10, 12 minutes past 10, and there are some things that we could be doing, but this is serious business.

We come with the facts. These numbers are from the Clerk of the House of Representatives. It is not from the DNC, and it is not from my cousin back in Miami that said hey, this looks good, maybe you want to take that to the floor and talk about it. This comes from the Clerk's Office. I actually like the Clerk's Office. These are the facts. The 107th Congress, 108th Congress, this is the 109th Congress that many media outlets have called the do-nothing Congress.

At this point in March of 2005, compared to March of 2007, the new Democratic Congress, the new direction Democratic Congress, the Congress only had 90 roll call votes. We have already had 189 roll call votes and counting for this month.

When you look at suspension bills that are coming over from the Senate what have you, kind of agreed upon, 26 votes that took place by this time; 72 we have done here in this new direction Congress, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at bills passed under a rule, 11 votes by this time in the last Republican-controlled Congress; 24 in this Congress.

We are here to do business. Days in session, 26 days in the Republican-controlled Congress; 48 days under this new direction Congress, Democratic-controlled Congress.

We bring these facts to the floor to make sure that not only Members, but the American people understand we are here to carry out the business of the American people. Mr. RYAN has some numbers when it comes down to accountability on Iraq because some Members would lead you to believe, a small number, would lead other Members to believe that there was some backroom decision that was made about accountability in Iraq, and all of the things that we are learning about Iraq, all of the accountability measures that we come up with as it relates to Iraq and policing the U.S. taxpayer dollars and all of the protection measures that we have in for the troops and men and women in uniform, they just think it happens in some backroom here in the capitol.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Here is the difference we are starting to see. When Members turn on the television, Mr. Speaker, and they see what is happening with the Attorney General's Office, when they hear about $10–12 billion in Iraq that nobody knows where it is, and now all of this information that is coming out, hearing about the gulf coast, hearing about Halliburton. If a truck blows a tire, Halliburton puts in for another truck instead of putting a new tire on the truck.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. If the gentleman would suspend, is this the company where the CEO is moving to Dubai?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes, just moved to Dubai. You would think that with all of the taxpayer money they get, they would at least stay in the country.

But all of this is not just coming out by coincidence.

□ 2215

There have been 104 hearings related to the Iraq War. Oversight and accountability. One of the key responsibilities of the United States Congress is to provide oversight to the executive branch agencies, and we did not hear about any of this stuff for 6 years when the Republican House and the Republican Senate sat on their hands while all of this was going on. This is not stuff that is on the news. This is not stuff that just happened. This is stuff that happened when the Republican Congress was in charge.

Now, I understand that we are all loyal to our political parties, but at some point, when it begins to hurt the American people, you need to provide the oversight of their tax money and the kind of inadequacy that has been going on in Iraq.

Now all of the sudden they want to change course. Now all of the sudden

the commander in the Middle East is running around saying that we do not have time. You know why they do not have time? Because we are putting the heat on them to get things done. 104 hearings on oversight. That is our responsibility.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. One last point before we recognize Ms. JACKSON-LEE because I know we want to get to our next discussion, get into the budget.

Mr. Speaker, to hear the President say even the word ''veto'' is something we have never heard since he has been President of the United States. He has never vetoed anything. Spending out of control, foreign debt, record numbers, passing tax cuts for the superwealthy and for the special interests, President never said a mumbling word. Cricket sounds of special interest subsidies and tax breaks, rolling through this floor, Members held hostage here on the floor, voting for special interest legislation for hours upon hours, the board is left open, not a mumbling word out of the President, not a mumbling word.

And now legislation happens to pass that he no longer has his rubber stamp Congress, he no longer has a Speaker who says, hey, this is the way I want it or no longer has President, this is the way we want to do it over in the Senate, so shall it be written, so shall it be done, his original thoughts are not followed through here in the Congress. Since that no longer exists, now all of the sudden, the President wants to get animated when it comes down to I am going to veto what they send and they are blocking money.

We are not blocking money for the troops. Matter of fact, we are giving them more than what he asked for. We are dealing with the issue of the VA. We are dealing with the issue of the crisis that we have here in the United States of America. It is an emergency. The children do not have health care. This is not an emergency for Iraqi children. It is an emergency for kids in Alabama. It is an emergency for the kids in Georgia, and it is an emergency for the kids in the Midwest and in Florida.

This chart here, and I am going to leave it alone and I am going to recognize Ms. JACKSON-LEE, I have over 12 percent of uninsured. This is my State here in Florida. Over 12 percent of the children in the State of Florida, more than 12 percent are uninsured. That is my State. Texas, hello, President of the United States, he has a house there. It is where the West White House is. Over 12 percent of the children in that State do not have health insurance. This is an emergency to the American families. This is an emergency here in this country. It cannot be Iraq, Iraq, Iraq, and that other issue, Iraq.

We have to care about our own country, and if we cannot put that in an emergency supplemental without the President threatening a veto, if he vetoes that bill he is denying U.S. children, need it be Republican, Democrat, Independent, concerned citizen thinking about voting in the next election, yes, your children, too; yes your State, too; yes, your community, too, will be without health insurance because the last Congress decided not to do it. They decided not to do it, and I think it is important when you look at this, as we move into the budget, if we were to follow what the President wants to do as it relates to vetoing this emergency supplemental, $2 billion for what we call the State insurance plan for children. In the budget resolution that we have, $50 billion to make sure that we cover the costs of that as we look in the projection as the years go out.

So I am glad that Mr. RYAN is bringing these issues up, and as we now segue into the budget, the next thing you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess when we pass this budget tomorrow, we will probably end up being a bipartisan vote just like the emergency supplemental was a bipartisan vote in the House and Senate, that the President will probably have a press conference tomorrow and say I am going to veto the budget, too. So, if he now believes in vetoes, after 6 years of being President of these United States, out-of-control spending, record borrowing from foreign Nations, and now there are accountability measures in the budget and in the emergency supplemental, I do not even want to tell the President to have at it because, as an American, I am going to do everything I have to do to stop him from doing it.

I yield to Ms. JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me first of all thank the distinguished gentleman from Ohio and distinguished gentleman from Florida for allowing me to join you this evening. We do this on occasion, and I thank you for setting the record straight.

I just want to say this brief comment on this question of the Iraq War and the veto. Usually there is a phrase that says if you break it, fix it. Well, this government was broken. Nobody in the last several Congresses wanted to fix it, and it is now our task to fix it. That is why you had a board that showed accountability and oversight, and that is why it is imperative that we took the vote last Friday and the Senate took the vote yesterday to go forward and make a difference with a framework in Iraq that the American people asked us to do.

I frankly thought that when we won the election that this President would do what many Presidents do in a divided government, sit down with the Speaker and the majority leader and work to save lives in Iraq. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and so I applaud you for bringing to the light the idea of accountability.

I just want to quickly move forward with a couple of points about the budget vote and the budget that we have to engage in, and when I look at this particular board that talks about the economy and jobs, I think of places like Texas, Ohio, Florida, the Midwest, New York. I think of the time of the past presidency under President Clinton, a Democratic President, when there were 236,000 jobs created per month. Now, we are at 68,000 jobs per month.

Clearly, the Bush economy job growth is among the slowest of any administration in over 70 years, and this literally shows Presidents Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford. Ford had, of course, inflation. It shows Carter. It shows Reagan. It shows Bush I, Clinton and now this President.

The balancing of the budget that we intend to do with a vote taken tomorrow clearly speaks to energizing the economy.

Now, let me just talk to those who say that we are raising taxes in this budget. That is false. That is not true. This budget does not contain a single penny of tax increases, period, and the Republicans have been misdescribing this budget because they have had the largest tax cut in the history of the United States. But who benefits the most when the tax cuts are fully enacted? As usual, it is those making over $1 million.

That is why Democrats are focusing on middle class taxes. That is why we are cutting middle class income tax. That is why we are focusing on fixing the alternative minimum tax, to shield middle income taxpayers. That is why we have relief for the child tax credit, the marriage penalty relief, and we do something about the estate tax, because any tax cut by this administration, $17,500 would go to those making over $1 million. I would simply say to the gentlemen, who are we representing, the special interests, the rich, or are we trying to represent the working middle class?

Now, there are many budgets that will be on the floor tomorrow, and I just want to comment on one. The Congressional Black Caucus budget improves the deficit by $107 billion even over our Democratic budget and $339 billion over the President's budget. There will be a number of budgets, but I am very proud of this budget which really improves the deficit, and when we improve the deficit, being that when we lower the deficit, we work on the high interest rates. Many of us have been hearing unfortunately about large numbers of foreclosures. Part of that is because of reverse mortgages and poor people being plagued upon, if you will, by predatory lending, which are some challenges that fell into this administration, where there was no oversight and accountability of our financial industry. I am delighted that we have a new chairman of the Financial Services Committee to begin to look at the massive foreclosures, and I would encourage those who are tragically in the jaws of foreclosure, get on the phone and call your Members of Congress to speak out against predatory lending and asking for some relief because you are deserving of it.

My attentiveness on what Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK were speaking about drew me to bring to the attention of our listeners and to my colleagues on the floor this whole question of why not only do we need this budget but why it is I think ludicrous for the President to have a veto threat on the emergency supplemental.

Who is going to respond to the emergency conditions at Walter Reed? Who is going to respond to the emergency conditions of large numbers of Iraqi veterans who are returning, along with the veterans from Afghanistan, with brain injury, post-traumatic stress, the need of prosthetics, the need of outpatient clinics and the need of family resources and health resources?

Well, I hate to tell you that I think over the last 8 years, last 6-years, this administration has, in fact, been poor to poor veterans. January 2003, this lays out how the Bush and the Republican budget funding for veterans has been poor and the veterans have been doing poorly. The Bush administration cuts off veterans' health care for 164,000 veterans.

Why do you not walk in your veterans hospitals like many of us have done? I did a couple of Sundays ago, visited with veterans who are paraplegic, paralyzed from the neck down, paralyzed from the legs down, and you ask the question, how can you can cut off veterans' health care for 164,000 vets? Our budget fixes these problems.

In March 2003, Republican budget that cut $14 billion from veterans' health care passed by Congress with 199 Democrats voting against it. We voted against the cut of $14 billion from veterans' health care.

March 2004, Republican budget that shortchanged veterans' health care by $1.5 billion passed by Congress with 201 Democrats voting against it. Our record is very clear.

And in March 2005, President Bush's budget shortchanged veterans' health care by more than $2 billion for 2005 and cut veterans' health care by $14 billion over 5 years but passed with 201 Democrats voting against it.

But what I would also say is that it was Democrats who had to come back on this floor and pressure this Congress to put more money back in the budget and back into the resources for our veterans.

Let me just say this as I wind down on this budget. Tomorrow there will be a number of substitute budgets. If I could write my own Sheila Jackson-Lee budget, I would have all of it for domestic spending, for housing and health care. Though we have done a great job on the SCHIP program, and I thank Mr. MEEK for holding up the embarrassment that we have across America, with States that have as high as 12 percent of our children uninsured, when we could, in fact, have universal health care for all of our children if we were more responsible and we had a more responsible government, I am grateful for the fact, even with a budget that I would have written differently, with more money for health care, as I said more money for housing, and probably more money for the gulf region because we think of Katrina, but the whole gulf region was undermined by this terrible hurricane and it has remained so, so it needs a boost in its economy, but I am grateful that this budget includes a $50 billion reserve fund to expand the State children's health insurance to cover more of the 9 million children without health insurance in this country.

So we tried to fix what was broken. We did not break it, but the fact is it is broken, and therefore, I am very proud to stand with Democrats in this budget to be able to come to a Ohio or to be able to tell you that we are going to stop the bleeding on jobs leaving this country, and stop the bleeding of jobs not being provided for Americans.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am excited and I called my mom on the way over here, and I was just saying, this is really great because we are actually getting things done to help people. That is what is exciting about this is that next year at this time, all of us are going to be able to go back home and campaign about how many thousands of kids in your congressional district now have access to health care because of what we are going to do through the SCHIP program.

□ 2230

All of are going to be back home. We are going to be able to talk about the increase in the Pell Grants, and how many more kids have access to higher education. We are going to be able to go into the VFW and the American Legion and talk about the highest increase in the history of the Veterans Administration, who supports the troops. I am excited about the opportunities that we are going to have over the next year to go out, and as our Speaker said, this is a movement of hope for the American people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it is very good, interesting, because I have a lot of veterans in my district. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to a group of veterans yesterday that came to this capital. We had an opportunity to talk. You know, veterans, why are you giving the President a hard time about funding, the President loves us. The President loves veterans. We all do. Who doesn't? Who is running around here saying I don't like veterans? No one.

But it is not what you say, it is what you do.

Mr. RYAN, I think you pointed it out. I just want to share this information and the sources from the House budget committee, and also from the Office of Management and Budget, and the Congressional Budget Office, and this is from the president's budget office and the Congressional Budget Office, and it is from the House Budget Committee. So you have three, third party validators to these numbers.

As we look at the President's budget as he proposed for the United States of America, when you look at the veterans, the Democrat budget is $32 billion above what the President's budget over the next 5 years. You can see the numbers going across. But let's just get all the way over to 2010. The President's budget is $39.7 billion. We have $48.3 billion.

All right, what do these numbers mean? It means shorter waits at VA hospitals. It means better care for our veterans. It means that we will have a system set up for when these men and women come home, and those that are in the system now. Doctors will be able to receive the kind of training they need. Medical professionals will be able to receive the training. VA medical facilities will better. There will be oversight because we have made an investment there. It won't just be the same old thing over and over again. These are the facts.

Politically, you know, if someone just says, I am with the President, that is fine. But have the facts, have the facts.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me first of all thank Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN for yielding to me and allowing me just to join what I think has been an enormously instructive discussion.

The point that I want to leave on is, and I love what your display is saying, the budget would not raise taxes, but what I do want to just acknowledge, all that you have said, is because we are choosing people over special interests, because I leave you with this large brown bar that shows you that if the taxes that the President wants to keep in his budget, and the Republican budget, were to go forward, all the work that we are trying to do, whether it is the emergency supplemental and SCHIP and Pell Grants and more jobs being created, go down the tube, with the $17,500 tax relief to those making over $1 million. This is what put us in this enormous deficit.

Of course, the Iraq war with no oversight and control, $12 billion lost in Iraq somewhere, contracts not accounted for, but I am glad that we have got one in emergency supplemental that will get us out of Iraq and will help people in this country. We have got a budget that will not focus on special interests, but we will focus on veterans and children and health care.

Mr. MEEK, you know, you were saying about that, hours-long vote, that was Medicare. As you well know, we are still paying for that Medicare prescription drug benefit now.

Let me thank both of you. I am proud to be part of the fix-it Congress after we have been walking through the muck, if you will, of a broken Congress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so much, Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Thank you so much for coming down and sharing information that you shared with us. I think it is also important to note in the budget resolution that we have, it

will not change the tax structure that the taxes, the President's tax cuts will sunset 2010. It doesn't change that.

So as we start to move along. But I just want to make this point. I think it is very important. I am just going to ask the question, since we have three Members on the floor, and I know, Ms. JACKSON-LEE, you are about to leave. Here at the Capitol, when we are walking across the street to come over here to vote, and even when we have groups come up to visit with us, and even in my district office, in the 5 years, 5, going on 5 years that I have been in Congress, Mr. RYAN and I have been here 5, you have been here longer than us, that not one millionaire or billionaire came to me and said, please protect my tax cut. Not one billionaire wearing Polo shoes walked up outside of the Chamber and said, Congressman, I am a billionaire, you know, with a pinky with diamonds and everything on it. Please protect my tax cut. Done give my tax cut to kids without health insurance, not one. Not one.

I am just trying to figure out, but I can tell you, people from the State of Florida, that is in government, say please help insure our children. There have been veterans running in here saying, I can't wait 6 months to see the ophthalmologist any more. Can you help us?

Back in the District, Congressman, have you been to the VA hospital recently, or the clinic? Do you have to pin your nose when you walk in because of the conditions there?

I have seen that. I haven't seen a billionaire or millionaire run up and say, please, fall on your knees, Congressman, whatever you do, do not take my tax cut away that I didn't even ask for.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You know what I have heard? Do you know what I have heard from folks around the Capitol, people who don't make a lot of between, $100,000, between $50,000 and $100,000. Do you know what I heard them say? I don't mind paying taxes. But if I am going to pay taxes don't give it to the oil companies and corporate welfare. If I am going to pay taxes out of the $50,000 I make a year, living in D.C., very expensive town, don't spend $2 billion of it a week in Iraq. I don't mind paying, but if I am going to pay, give it to the poor kids who need health care. Make college more affordable. Make investments in our economy. You know, I think most people recognize they have got to pay their own fair share. But what they get frustrated about is where it goes.

Now, are you telling me Halliburton is going to get billions and billions and billions of dollars out of a guy or a woman who makes $50,000 a year, who is paying those taxes? And then that same company moves off, out of the country? No respect for anything. But I want to make a point here as we begin the wind down.

Mr. Speaker, many people have made comments on this floor over the past several hours that our budget somehow raises taxes on the American people.

Now, we are big on third-party validators here. I am going to give you three, this is the Hamilton project at the Brookings Institution. ''The budget would not raise taxes.''

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Just stop right there, Mr. RYAN. Brookings Institute.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Would not.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Would not. Now this is the Center on Budget and Policy, statement, March 28 ''This claim about raising taxes is incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.'' That is a third-party validator.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Third party validator.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have one more. This is the Concord Coalition. This is the gold standard of the budget hawks. This is bipartisan, this is deficit hawks, Republicans, Democrats. In an issue brief of March 28, quote, ''Thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' That was three, separate, third-party validators.

I am just going to make this statement, and I am going to kick it to one of my friends. The same people that are saying we are raising taxes are the same people that said we would be greeted as liberators. They are the same people that said, you know, we use the oil money for reconstruction, the same people that said it would only cost us $50 billion to run the war in Iraq, the same people that said we are in our last throes, the same people that said mission was accomplished, those are the same people that are saying that the Democratic budget is going to raise taxes, which three third-party validators have not say. All I am going to say is this. Let's ask the American people to reserve judgment.

Next January and February, when you file your taxes, you compare them to the taxes you filed this year, and you will see that the Democrats have not raised your taxes. Reserve judgment, keep your sheets, keep your forms from this year, and you will see next year that we have not done it, and that will be one more that you could add to the list of inaccuracies that have been levied towards the American people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Don't get too far from the rhythm here. Don't go anywhere.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am not going anywhere.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. On this potent point, first of all, Mr. MEEK, let me say the people that have come to my office say can you provide for funding for child care so I can be at work. I have not heard, Warren Buffett has not been in my office, but Warren Buffett himself has said he would rather see an investment in the domestic economy as opposed to the enormous tax cuts for the rich.

The reason why I think this is important, let me have you see something else in 12 months besides the filing of your taxes, an economic engine that may see an increase in jobs just because the Democrats had enough courage to stand up to the President's budget and do our own budget that doesn't have tax increases, but invests in the economy.

Maybe we will also see more students going to college. Maybe we will also see more children getting SCHIP money based upon the appropriators and the budget coming together. Maybe we will see, you know what, my country cares for me. They actually care about what I need, because they have brought down the deficit. That is what this President would sign this budget and work with this Congress, maybe we will see what it means to care about Americans as opposed to putting forward special interests.

I thank the gentlemen. I would just like to read that as I go, thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase. That is the Democratic budget resolution.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think it is important that we continue to say this. Mr. RYAN, you said something that I thought was very interesting, very interesting.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thank you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are welcome. Again, third-party validators, and I have here Congressional Budget Office numbers here, there is nothing it is nothing like the truth, and it is nothing like the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I can tell you when we look at, these are the same individuals in the White House, and some of the same Members on this floor that were left over from the days of just spend, spend, spend, borrow, borrow, borrow, don't worry about it, we are not going to be here to fix it, but here is the truth, $5.6 trillion surplus was here when the President got here, President Bush.

We have had an $8.4 trillion swing, deficit, from a $5.6 trillion surplus, which means, projection, we had money, and these numbers were based on 2002 to 2011 projections, to now, a $2.8 trillion deficit. Republican policies and this, you know, that got us there, $8.4 trillion.

Let me just share this with you. The amount of foreign debt held more than doubles under the Bush administration. He didn't do it by himself, that is why we have a Democratic Congress, because the American people caught on to what he was doing and what the rubber stamp Congress was doing last Congress. We are talking about accountability. We are talking about being responsible with U.S. tax dollars, foreign-held debt. Look at it skyrocket, going straight up.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Those are trillions of dollars.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Trillions of dollars. Trillions of dollars. We have kids now, growing up, can't even get to the trillion part. Who are we getting the money from? That is interesting, a list of countries. Mr. RYAN has been to a few of these countries.

Japan has $644.3 billion of our debt. They bought that debt because of Republican policies and because of the rubber-stamp Congress. We have to have a paradigm shift here. We want to change.

China, $249.8 billion, I think it is important to also understand that. The UK, $239.1 billion. You can see it goes across, and all of these countries have a part of American apple pie now.

□ 2245

This is the same group, the same folks that are saying that we are going to continue to raise taxes and we don't manage. We are the party and we are the majority, back when we had the majority 12 years ago, that balanced the budget and took us into surpluses. So who has the track record as relates to doing the right thing on behalf of the country?

Budget resolution reaches balance by 2010. The numbers come from the Congressional Budget Office. And this is the House resolution, our bill. The Bush budget is projected to be $31 billion under, still in deficit. We are going to be at a surplus. These are the projections by 2010, $1.53 billion. These are the facts, Mr. RYAN. And I know they hurt for some Members, but they are educational to others, and they give them what they need to be able to come here and make sound decisions.

Mr. RYAN, the bottom line is this. We are not by ourselves. Let's talk about why we are not by ourselves. And I just want to read a couple of the folks that are with us on this issue. And I think it is important, and there are so many, I had a list here, Mr. RYAN, that kind of a little cheat sheet here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I have got it right here, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Tell you what. You start naming off a few, and then I will name off. Because we need to make sure the Members know that this not just something that came out the back room.

Oh, I have my list here now. There is so much information, Mr. RYAN, that we have to share.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would like to ask to submit this for the RECORD, Mr. Speaker.

So this will be listed and memorialized in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the organizations who have endorsed the 2008 budget.

The following organizations have endorsed the 2008 Budget Resolution:

American Academy of Pediatrics, March 27
American Association of People with Disabilities, March 26
American Association of School Administrators, March 27
American Association of University Women, March 27
American Farmland Trust, March 28
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, March 27
American Hospital Association, March 28
The American Legion, March 21
American Public Transportation Association, March 23
The ARC of the United States, March 26
Association of Child Support Attorneys of Los Angeles County, March 27
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, March 27
Association of Public Television Stations, March 27
Audubon, March 27
Catholic Charities USA, March 27
Child Support Directors Association of California, March 27
Coalition on Human Needs, March 27
Committee for Education Funding, March 27
Computer & Communications Industry Association, March 28
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, March 26
Catholic Health Association, March 27
Council on Competitiveness, March 28
Defenders of Wildlife, March 22
Disabled American Veterans, March 21
Electronic Industries Alliance, March 28
Emergency Campaign for American's Priorities, March 27
Environmental Coalition (including American Rivers, Audubon, NRDC, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society and many others), March 26
Families USA, March 26
Food Research and Action Center, March 27
Independent Budget, March 21
Information Technology Association of America, March 27
Information Technology Industry Council, March 27
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., March 27
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, March 28
League of Conservation Voters, March 27
Military Officers Association of America, March 26
National Child Support Enforcement Association, March 27
National Low Income Housing Coalition, March 26
National Women's Law Center, March 27, 2007
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, March 27
National Association of Counties, March 27
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, March 27
National Association of Police Organizations, Inc., March 28
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, March 27
National Council of La Raza, March 27
National Council of Social Security Management Associations, March 27
National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals, American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, March 27
National Education Association, March 26
National Head Start Association, March 27
National School Boards Association, March 27
Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors' Association, March 27
OMB Watch, March 26
Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International North America, March 27
Student Aid Alliance, March 27
Symantec, March 28
Technet, March 28
Transportation Construction Coalition, March 23
Trout Unlimited, March 26
The Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and Land Trust Alliance, March 27
United Cerebral Palsy, March 26
United Spinal Association, March 27
US Action, March 27
U.S. Public Interest Research Group, March 27
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, March 21
Wider Opportunities for Women, March 23

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The Members who are in their offices, those that may be on the floor, I don't want them to have to wait to read the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD tomorrow, the next day or what have you. I just wanted to name a few of these folks. I think it is important.

Military Officers Association of America wrote a letter in support of this budget. The National Child Support Enforcement Association, the National Low Income Housing Association, the National Women of Law Centers Association, Fight Crime, Invest in Kids.

The National Association of Counties. Who are they? These are counties throughout the country and parishes that are saying enough is enough.

The National Association of Police Organizations, Inc. Who are they? They are our law enforcement community that is looking for the COPS program to come back.

The National School Board Association, the National Head Start Association, the Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors Association. I thought I would mention that, Mr. RYAN, since you were here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Appreciate that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The Trust for Public Land and Conservation Fund endorse. The Trust Alliance endorse what we are doing here. The U.S. Public Interest Research Group endorse what we are doing here. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorse what we are doing, because they are seeing the largest increase in commitment that so many Members of Congress have talked about over the years.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. These are the folks that work every day. These are the individuals that come in before we get here and leave after us. These are the works folks that know what it means to punch in and punch out.

The Audubon Society, Catholic Charities, the Committee for Education Funding, the Computer and Communications Industry Association, Catholic Health Association, Defenders of Wildlife, Disabled American Veterans.

These are the individuals, Mr. RYAN, and that is just, I can't go through all of the letters. We have the letters right here. I am not just reading from a sheet, just saying, well, I am just going to read. Anybody want to see this, they can stop by 1039 Longworth, and I will give them several copies of this. And, Mr. Speaker, they can run and take a look at them.

My Republican colleagues, some that I believe that will vote with us on this budget resolution, since it is so good and it is doing the right thing and it is not just about Iraq and Iraq and the other issue, Iraq. It is about domestic priorities. It is about making sure that our children have health care. It is about protecting the homeland. It is about all of the things and all of the reasons why we came to Congress. Not just to hear from the President and say, so shall it be written, so shall it be done.

So, Mr. RYAN, for you to get passionate about this, not that I am not passionate about it, but I think it is important that we share this accurate information with the people, with not only Members of Congress but the American people. So I am glad that you entered it into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Those that may be able to get on-line or even get a copy of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD will be able to see these great American organizations that will endorse.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, as this budget resolution, when we start moving through the process and the Senate product and we go into conference and we send it to the President of the United States, there will be a true momentum of the American spirit that will be rolling over to the White House on Pennsylvania. It will go right down the street here.

If the President wants to veto domestic priorities and things that are going to help Americans every day and be able to make sure that our military is strong and make sure that our veterans get better service that we promised them when they signed up as volunteers to protect this country, then we have to continue, Mr. RYAN and Members, to persuade the President to do otherwise. If he wants to veto it, we have to persuade him not to do it.

I am not going to say have at it. It would be okay if it wasn't the budget of the United States of America. It would be okay if it wasn't an emergency supplemental to make sure that our troops and men and women have what they need and accountability measures are in that emergency supplemental to hold the Iraqi government's feet to the fire, and what the administration has said, and making sure that our troops have what they need when they are sent into harm's way and make sure when they come back home that they are able to even go to their son or daughter's school without coming back in 6 weeks and 2 months being shipped back to Iraq for another 14-month tour. Because the administration, it takes them so long to admit that they have a problem. They just admitted 2 weeks ago, the Defense Department just called the conflict in Iraq a civil war after a year of the media and Members of Congress saying it was a civil war. They just got there, Mr. RYAN.

So the good thing about it is that, and in the last Congress we used to talk about if we had the opportunity to do. Now we have the opportunity, and we are doing, and I would just want the majority of this House to join us in the leadership opportunities that the American people have provided us. And I am not just talking to Democrats, Mr. Speaker, I am talking to my Republican colleagues.

Because, guess what? Maybe not this November but next November is going to be another opportunity for the American people to stand in judgment. And I guarantee you this: People are going to vote their personal priorities over their politics.

The President got out there today. They are going to get us. Terrorists are coming. We have to fight them there so we don't have to fight them over here. Well, guess what? When we passed and fully implemented the 9/11 recommendations, we are ready to protect America. That is what this budget reflects, and that is the way we protect the homeland, not continuing to stay in the middle of civil war.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Exactly. Budgets are priorities. They are blueprints for what you stand for and what you believe. And the Democrats and the Democratic budget is something that I think really is going to invigorate the country. It is not going as far as a lot of us want it to go, but the fact of the matter is we are left holding the bag of a Republican-led Congress and President that added almost $3 trillion in debt to this country, and we have got to deal with that. That is the stark reality of the budget situation.

But, again, I would like to say this. This President has threatened to veto the supplemental bill that adds an additional $1.7 billion for veterans, an additional $1.7 billion for defense health care, $500 million for post-traumatic stress, $500 million for brain injuries. That is what the President is going to veto when he says he is going to veto the supplemental.

The American people are way ahead of us on this war, and the national intelligence estimate said that the war in Iraq has created more terrorists and has made the terrorist situation worse, Mr. MEEK. This war has created more enemies for us, has created more terrorists that are gunning for the United States. So to say that by coming home that that somehow is going to make us less safe is inaccurate and inconsistent with the national intelligence estimate and the basic common sense of most Americans.

So as we move forward in a new direction in Iraq and the budget blueprint that we have that is going to move the country in a new direction domestically, without raising taxes, as the Concord Coalition said, the Democratic budget is not raising taxes. And the Center on Budget and Policy is saying the Democratic budget is not raising taxes. I will say, and another third-party validator, the Brookings Institute, says the Democrats are not raising taxes in their new budget.

I want to repeat this. I am asking, Mr. Speaker, for the Members of this House who know the facts, who will vote on this bill, they know we are not raising taxes, and that is why we are going to get broad support on it.

But for the American people to compare this year's tax returns that they get, reserve judgment on the Democratic tax policy, compare this year's to next year's, and you will see that your tax rates are the exact same, the exact same. And you will have one more piece of evidence to put in the column of we will be greeted as liberators, the same thing, the same column as we are in the last throes, the same column as mission accomplished. You will be able to put the Democratic budget and the Democratic tax policy in that same list.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Very quickly, while you get the chart to give the Web site, Mr. RYAN, I just wanted to say in this letter that Senator REID, the leader in the Senate, and also the Speaker here in the House wrote to the President saying that we will no longer move in the old direction but, rather, a bipartisan majority of the House and Senate believes strongly that the U.S. mission should transition to a counter-terrorism force protection and training equipment of the Iraqi forces. Phasing redeployment of U.S. troops should commence.

So this is the stage that we want to move in now. It won't be a total withdrawal but definitely will be making sure that there are accountability measures there, that their troops get trained and that we get our men and women back home more sooner than later.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We just want them to meet the benchmarks that the President set on January 10 of this year. We are going to hold the administration's feet to the fire.

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. For any e-mails you may want to send, www.speaker.dot.gov/30something. All of the charts that Members may want to look at are all available on these Web sites. www.speaker.gov/30something.

THE DEMOCRAT BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARNEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I always come over here with the intentions of using my prepared remarks, and then I hear things being said by the other side and they usually grab my attention.

I want to talk tonight a little bit about the Democrat budget, but something that one of my colleagues said just a few minutes ago needs to be repeated.

He said, budgets are what you stand for and believe. Well, what the Democrats stand for and believe is greater government spending, taking more of your money and giving to the government.

And he also said, this budget doesn't go as far as some wanted. Well, that is the truth, I am sure. I am sure there were many Democrats who wanted to raise taxes a whole lot more and spend a whole lot more of the American people's money than they are going to do, but they are going to do plenty of damage, even not going as far as some of them want to go.

So the truth is, they told it to you tonight. The budget is what you stand

for and believe; and what they stand for and believe is, again, taking more of your money and spending it.

A lot of times I speak to school groups. I spoke to one on Monday.

□ 2300

And they often ask me, What is the difference between Democrats and Republicans? And I tell them that the short answer to that is Democrats believe that government is the answer to everything. Just have more government. Take more money from the American people and put it into government. Republicans think that Americans have survived very well on individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and individual responsibility, and we don't need the government to run our lives completely. So there is a big difference.

Also, the Democrats think the government knows how to spend your money more than you know how to spend your money. Republicans think that you are quite intelligent enough to know how to spend your money and we don't need to take it away from you and give it to some bureaucrat to spend it for you. So that is the big difference. And I think, again, the Democrat budget illustrates that.

It also illustrates how out of touch they are with the citizens of this country. As one of my colleagues said the other night, and I wish it had been my line, they promised change, but what they didn't tell you was it was going to be the change left in your pocket from taking your money away from you for increased taxes.

Now, under the assumptions in the Democrats' proposed budget that is going to be voted on tomorrow, we are going to see a massive tax hike. In fact, you are going to see the largest tax increase in our Nation's history. The Democrat budget increases taxes by $392.5 billion over 5 years, shattering their last record tax increase of $240 billion in 1993, when they were last in control of the Congress. In fact, they would increase taxes by $231 billion in 2012 alone.

Today, almost 100 million Americans from virtually every walk of life have a financial plan for their future that involves saving and investing, and millions more benefit from the countless jobs and opportunities that a capital marketplace creates. In addition, more than half of America's seniors receive dividend income every year and more than 30 percent receive capital gains income.

Under the Democrat budget, these seniors will see a tax increase of an average of $1,100 on dividends and capital gains. Overall, 28 million American families will pay an additional $1,000 a year in new investment taxes as a result of the budget. Many of these people earn annual incomes of $50,000 and less.

This is more than just a reckless policy that endangers the strength of our economy. I see it as a cause for serious concern for the livelihood of the people of North Carolina's Fifth District, whose tax bills would skyrocket under the proposed budget. In North Carolina alone, more than 3.1 million taxpayers would see their tax bill go up. It wouldn't be a little bump either. The average tax increase for those 3.1 million North Carolinians would be $2,671.

This approach is completely backwards. We should be looking first to put money back into taxpayers' pockets, not taking it out.

The current budget proposal is a squandered opportunity to reform spiraling Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid costs and to give Americans the permanent tax relief they deserve. Instead it allows widespread tax increases that hit middle-income families, low-income earners, families with children, small businesses, and many others.

Some people would see more than a 100 percent increase in their taxes. For example, an elderly couple with $40,000 in income would see a tax increase of 156% in 2011—from $583 to $1,489.

And a family of four with $60,000 in income would have a tax bill that would rise from $3,030 to $4,893 in 2011—an increase of more than $1,850, or 61%.

And these increases are no accident. During the budget markup, Democrats rejected every one of a series of amendments that would have prevented tax increases.

But ultimately, this budget proposal isn't a real surprise. It's business as usual for the Democrats and proves that their promises to be fiscally responsible are just empty rhetoric. If this budget is approved it will signal a return to the Democrats' beloved Tax-and-Spend model for government.

For example, if you take one look at the more than $20 billion in pork that was added to last week's troop emergency funding bill, it becomes crystal clear where the Democrats stand on spending. And worse, they proved they don't mind using our troops as bargaining chips.

Democrats have willfully abandoned their pledge of fiscal responsibility. They pledged to follow pay-as-you-go budget rules and spending restraint to curb the deficit. And then we get this budget, which would give us the largest tax increase in history and ignore the larger consequences for our economy.

These massive tax increases would threaten to reverse the economic gains that have developed since adoption of the 2001 and 2003 tax laws.

Job Growth—A total of 7.6 million new jobs have been created—an average of 168,500 per month.

Unemployment Declines—The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.1 percent to 4.5 percent.

Economic Growth—In the past 15 quarters, real gross domestic product [GDP] has grown an average of 3.5 percent per year. In the nine prior quarters, average GDP growth was an anemic 1.1 percent.

Investment Growth—Business investment has increased for 15 straight quarters, reversing a previous nine-quarter decline.

Stock Market Gains—Despite recent market corrections, the Dow Jones Industrial Average remains 41 percent above its 2003 level.

Ignores Fiscal Benefits—These tax increases also threaten to reverse the substantial deficit reduction that has occurred in the past several years.

Total federal tax revenue has increased from 16.5 percent of GDP in 2003 to 18.5 percent this year—exceeding the average percentage of the past four decades.

Tax revenue grew by 14.6 percent in 2005, 11.5 percent in 2006, and 9.3 percent in the first five months of fiscal year 2007.

Deficit Reduction. This revenue growth was the principal factor in reducing the budget deficit from $412.7 billion in 2004 to an estimated $214 billion this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Raising the 10% Tax Rate Bracket to 15 percent—More than 5 million individuals and families who previously owed no taxes would become subject to the individual income tax in 2011 if Democrats are successful in raising the 10% tax rate bracket to 15%, and reducing or eliminating other low-income tax benefits.

Eliminates Marriage Penalty Relief—23 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $466 in 2011.

Cuts the Child Tax Credit in Half—31 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $859 in 2011.

Every Working American Would be Affected by Democrats' Tax Hike—115 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $1,795 in 2011; 83 million women would see their taxes rise, on average, by $2,068; 48 million married couples would incur average tax increases of $2,899; 12 million single women with children would see their taxes increase, on average, by $1,082; 17 million elderly individuals would incur average tax increases of $2,270; and taxes would rise, on average, by $3,960 for 26 million small business owners.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

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 Mr. MCDERMOTT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. KILPATRICK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ELLISON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BRADY of Texas) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Ms. Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

S. 494. An act to endorse further enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to facilitate the timely admission of new members to NATO, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 29, 2007, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

986. A letter from the Chief Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Withdrawal of Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Listed Communities in Yuma and Coconino Counties, AZ [FEMA Docket No. D-7642] received January 16, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

987. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's annual report on the Economic Dispatch of Electric Generation Capacity, pursuant to Sections 1234 and 1832 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

988. A letter from the Deputy Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — National Archives and Records Administration Implementation of OMB Guidance on Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension [DOCKET NUMBER: NARA-06-0010] (RIN: 3095-AB56) received March 2, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

989. A letter from the Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting the Endowment's report for Fiscal Years 2001-2006, in accordance with Title II of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

990. A letter from the Secretary to the Board, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting in accordance with Section 647(b) of Division F of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY 2004, Pub. L. 108-199, the Board's report on competitive sourcing efforts for FY 2006; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

991. A letter from the Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule — Inflation Adjustment of Civil Money Penalty Amounts [Docket No. FR-5104-F-01] (RIN: 2501-AD30) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

992. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's report entitled, ''Buckle Up America: The National Initiative for Increasing Safety Belt Use, Ninth Report To Congress and Seventh Report to the President'' June 2004, as required by House Report 105-188 and Executive Order 13043, highlighting activities from January 1, 2005, through December 31, 2005; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

993. A letter from the Vice President, Government Affairs and Communications, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, transmitting the National Railroad Passenger Corportation (Amtrak)'s Financial Performance of Routes, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 24315(a); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

994. A letter from the Dir. Regulations Mgt., Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Home Schooling and Educational Institution (RIN: 2900-AM37) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

995. A letter from the Dir. Regulations Mgt., Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Priority for Partial Grants to States for Construction or Acquisition of State Home Facilities (RIN 2900-AM42) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

996. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Corporate Reorganizations; Additional guidance on distributions under sections 368(a)(1)(D) and 354(b)(1)(B) [TD 9313] (RIN: 1545-BG29) received March 1, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

997. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Moore v. Commissioner, T.C. Memo. 2006-171 [T.C. Docket No. 11634-05L) received March 1, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

998. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Depreciation of MACRS Property That is Acquired in a Like-Kind Exchange or As a Result of an Involuntary Conversion [TD 9314] (RIN: 1545-BF37) received February 28, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

999. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the report entitled ''Second Report to Congress on the Evaluation of the Medicare Coordinated Care Demonstration'' in response to the requirements Section 4016(c) of Public Law 105-33, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

1000. A letter from the Chair, Good Neighbor Environmental Board, transmitting the tenth annual report of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board; jointly to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Energy and Commerce.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mrs. BONO (for herself, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. ISSA, and Mr. CALVERT):

H.R. 1725. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the Rancho California Water District Southern Riverside County Recycled/Non-Potable Distribution Facilities and Demineralization/Desalination Recycled Water Treatment and Reclamation Facility Project; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself, Mr. KUCINICH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, and Mr. MORAN of Virginia):

H.R. 1726. A bill to promote more humane treatment of farm animals; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, 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 Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mrs. BONO, Mr. LANGEVIN, and Mr. BILIRAKIS):

H.R. 1727. A bill to enhance and further research into paralysis and to improve rehabilitation and the quality of life for persons living with paralysis and other physical disabilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HONDA (for himself, Mr. FARR, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CLEAVER):

H.R. 1728. A bill to authorize the National Science Foundation to establish a Global Warming Education Program; to the Committee on Science and Technology.

By Mr. HAYES (for himself, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. COBLE, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. SHULER, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, and Mr. WATT):

H.R. 1729. A bill to amend the Trade Act of 1974 with respect to the trade adjustment assistance program, and for other purpose; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. WALDEN of Oregon (for himself, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. PAUL, Mr. EDWARDS, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. SIMPSON, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HERGER, Mr. MATHESON, Mr. TERRY, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. FORBES, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. KIND, Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. PICKERING, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. RENZI, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MANZULLO, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. BERRY, Mr. HARE, Mr. ROSS, Mr. LATHAM, Mr. BOREN, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. UDALL of New Mexico):

H.R. 1730. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure proportional representation of rural interests on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission; 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. BAIRD (for himself and Mr. SOUDER):

H.R. 1731. A bill to eliminate the annual operating deficit and maintenance backlog in the national parks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, 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. BARTLETT of Maryland (for himself, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. PITTS, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, and Mr. RENZI):

H.R. 1732. A bill to provide alternative retired pay rates under title 10, United States Code, and alternative disability compensation rates under title 38, United States Code, for members of the Armed Forces with a combat-related disability, with such rates based on the average monthly salary for high school graduates in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 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. BILBRAY:

H.R. 1733. A bill to prohibit the inclusion of earmarks in conference reports that were not in the House- or Senate-passed bills; to the Committee on Rules.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER (for himself, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. WU, and Mr. DEFAZIO):

H.R. 1734. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 630 Northeast Killingsworth Avenue in Portland, Oregon, as the ''Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Post Office''; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. BUCHANAN:

H.R. 1735. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide mandatory imprisonment for certain kidnapings by illegal aliens; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CANNON:

H.R. 1736. A bill to amend the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 to provide for conjunctive use of surface and groundwater in Juab County, Utah; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mrs. CAPPS:

H.R. 1737. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the design, planning, and construction of permanent facilities for the GREAT project to reclaim, reuse, and treat impaired waters in the area of Oxnard, California; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Ms. GRANGER (for herself and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 1738. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a national screening program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide States the option to provide medical assistance for men and women screened and found to have colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. HARMAN:

H.R. 1739. A bill to require the approval of a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court judge or designated United States Magistrate Judge for the issuance of a national security letter, to require the Attorney General to submit semiannual reports on national security letters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Intelligence (Permanent Select), and Financial Services, 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. HINCHEY (for himself, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. PALLONE, and Mr. LOBIONDO):

H.R. 1740. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to permit the simplified summer food programs to be carried out in all States and by all service institutions; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. KLEIN of Florida (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. CRENSHAW, and Mr. SALAZAR):

H.R. 1741. A bill to impose a 2-year moratorium on implementation of a proposed rule relating to the Federal-State financial partnerships under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. LANGEVIN (for himself, Mr. CANTOR, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. GRIJALVA):

H.R. 1742. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as 5-year property for purposes of depreciation; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. LYNCH (for himself, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. OLVER, and Mr. MCNULTY):

H.R. 1743. A bill to establish the National Center on Liver Disease Research, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. OBERSTAR:

H.R. 1744. A bill to provide for a hospital in Cass County, Minnesota; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. ORTIZ (for himself, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. REYES, Ms. LEE, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Ms. BORDALLO, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 1745. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to waive inadmissibility based on a misrepresentation in the case of an immediate relative of an active duty or reserve member of the Armed Forces and to extend the V nonimmigrant visa program for spouses and children of such a member; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. PENCE, and Mr. CHABOT):

H.R. 1746. A bill to require disclosure of Holocaust-era policies by insurers and establish a federal cause of action for claims arising out of a covered policy; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and Oversight and Government Reform, 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 Ms. SOLIS (for herself, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. INSLEE, Mr. WEINER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. WYNN, Ms. DEGETTE, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY):

H.R. 1747. A bill to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to require a national primary drinking water regulation for perchlorate; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. WAMP (for himself, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. KIND, and Mr. RAMSTAD):

H.R. 1748. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand workplace health incentives by equalizing the tax consequences of employee athletic facility use; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. WELCH of Vermont:

H.R. 1749. A bill to establish an Ombudsman in the Department of Defense to assist members of the Armed Forces seeking medical care at military medical treatment facilities; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. WYNN:

H.R. 1750. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend from 90 days to one year the period after release of a member of the Armed Forces from active duty during which the member is protected from mortgage foreclosure under that Act; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself and Mr. UDALL of Colorado):

H.R. 1751. A bill to establish a coordinated avalanche protection program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, and Oversight and Government Reform, 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. GENE GREEN of Texas (for himself and Mr. MANZULLO):

H. Res. 281. A resolution expressing the support of the House of Representatives for the goals and ideals of National Internet Safety Month; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SIRES:

H. Res. 282. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should discontinue the practice of contracting out mail delivery services; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII, memorials were presented and referred as follows:

14. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Florida, relative to House Memorial 11A urging the Congress of the United States to support a National Catastrophe Insurance Program; to the Committee on Financial Services.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 17: Mr. MITCHELL and Mr. HILL.
H.R. 39: Mr. CASTLE.
H.R. 63: Mr. BACHUS.
H.R. 66: Mr. ETHERIDGE.
H.R. 89: Mr. BOREN.
H.R. 171: Ms. SUTTON and Mr. STARK.
H.R. 178: Mr. STARK.
H.R. 241: Mr. HOEKSTRA.
H.R. 303: Mr. LATHAM.
H.R. 321: Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 339: Mr. BOREN.
H.R. 359: Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. SCHIFF.
H.R. 394: Mr. MCCOTTER and Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H.R. 464: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.
H.R. 468: Ms. NORTON.

H.R. 471: Mr. SALI and Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 473: Mr. STEARNS and Mr. CASTLE.
H.R. 503: Ms. WATSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. HUNTER, and Mr. WYNN.
H.R. 549: Mr. GONZALEZ.
H.R. 592: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY and Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 634: Mr. BONNER, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. GILCHREST, Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina, Mr. PETRI, Mr. RADANOVICH, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. KAGEN, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mr. GOODE, Mr. MACK, Mr. TIBERI, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. PENCE, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. WYNN, Ms. FOXX, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky, and Ms. GIFFORDS.
H.R. 694: Mr. RUSH.
H.R. 695: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 697: Mr. LINDER and Mr. TIAHRT.
H.R. 698: Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. KAGEN, and Ms. HOOLEY.
H.R. 704: Mr. GONZALEZ.
H.R. 708: Mr. MCHUGH.
H.R. 726: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida.
H.R. 728: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Ms. CARSON.
H.R. 734: Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. ALTMIRE, and Mr. RAHALL.
H.R. 741: Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 769: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H.R. 774: Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H.R. 784: Mr. BOREN, Mr. OLVER, and Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.
H.R. 853: Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. WALBERG, and Mr. MCCOTTER.
H.R. 872: Mr. HARE.
H.R. 882: Mr. UDALL of Colorado and Mr. FARR.
H.R. 887: Mr. BERMAN.
H.R. 938: Mr. CARTER and Mr. BAKER.
H.R. 943: Ms. SCHWARTZ, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. PASTOR, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Ms. SOLIS, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr. ROSS, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. BERRY, Mr. KIND, and Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 957: Mr. KILDEE, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BONNER, Mr. TERRY, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. MICA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MACK, Mr. BOREN, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WELLER, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. LINDER.
H.R. 971: Mr. GILLMOR, Mr. PICKERING, and Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 989: Mr. CANNON and Mr. SHIMKUS.
H.R. 997: Mr. UPTON, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, and Mr. WAMP.
H.R. 1026: Mr. BOOZMAN and Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi.
H.R. 1038: Mr. HOEKSTRA.
H.R. 1055: Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.
H.R. 1076: Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1082: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. COURTNEY, and Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 1084: Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 1091: Mr. STEARNS, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. MICA, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mrs. BONO, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.
H.R. 1110: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN.
H.R. 1112: Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 1147: Mr. TANNER.
H.R. 1157: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. FERGUSON, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. NORTON, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. DENT, Mrs. CUBIN, and Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 1225: Ms. MATSUI.
H.R. 1237: Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. HOLDEN, and Ms. HOOLEY.
H.R. 1246: Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 1248: Mr. SAXTON, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. ROTHMAN, and Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 1280: Mr. HARE.
H.R. 1283: Mr. HALL of New York, Mr. GOODE, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.
H.R. 1291: Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, and Mr. MCHUGH.
H.R. 1303: Mr. WALSH of New York.
H.R. 1332: Mr. BISHOP of Utah and Mr. FILNER.
H.R. 1338: Mr. SESTAK and Mr. LEWIS of Georgia.
H.R. 1346: Mr. MEEKS of New York.
H.R. 1357: Ms. HARMAN, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. BONNER, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. MICA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MACK, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. BOREN, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WELLER, Mr. TERRY, Mr. LINDER, Mr. FORTENBERRY, and Ms. BERKLEY.
H.R. 1363: Ms. HERSETH.
H.R. 1366: Mrs. BACHMANN and Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 1384: Mr. COSTA, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. FILNER, Mr. GALLEGLY, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, and Mr. BILBRAY.
H.R. 1391: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1394: Mr. GERLACH, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Ms. NORTON, and Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota.
H.R. 1400: Mr. CALVERT, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. COSTA, Mr. BILBRAY, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. CHABOT, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. SESTAK, Mr. WEINER, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. RENZI, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. SHADEGG, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SIRES, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. WAMP, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. EHLERS, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. SKELTON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Ms. BERKLEY, and Mr. GALLEGLY.
H.R. 1407: Mr. WILSON of South Carolina and Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 1413: Mr. WEXLER and Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.
H.R. 1424: Mr. GILLMOR.
H.R. 1428: Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.
H.R. 1438: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. STARK.
H.R. 1453: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 1469: Mr. SNYDER and Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H.R. 1476: Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, and Mr. REICHERT.
H.R. 1506: Mr. COHEN, Mr. FARR, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. DELAHUNT, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. HOLT, and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.
H.R. 1514: Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. FILNER, Mr. TERRY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, and Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.
H.R. 1535: Mr. WEXLER and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1542: Ms. HIRONO and Ms. BALDWIN.
H.R. 1548: Ms. SHEA-PORTER.
H.R. 1560: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1576: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 1589: Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 1590: Mr. COURTNEY and Mr. HARE.
H.R. 1596: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H.R. 1609: Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. HOLT, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 1645: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Mr. WEINER.
H.R. 1647: Mr. ROSS, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. PETRI, Mrs. BONO, Mr. BISHOP of New York, and Mr. SHAYS.
H.R. 1650: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1653: Mr. JEFFERSON.
H.R. 1662: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mrs. CUBIN, and Mr. HERGER.
H.R. 1673: Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SAXTON, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HOBSON, and Mrs. CAPPS.
H.R. 1675: Mr. JONES of North Carolina.
H.R. 1676: Ms. HERSETH, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. BACA, and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1680: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.
H.R. 1681: Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.
H.R. 1688: Ms. LEE and Mr. ELLISON.
H.R. 1691: Mr. ACKERMAN and Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California.
H.R. 1717: Mr. LINDER.
H.R. 1718: Ms. SHEA-PORTER and Mr. DELAHUNT.
H. Con. Res. 68: Mr. RENZI, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Ms. WOOLSEY, and Mr. TANCREDO.
H. Con. Res. 100: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.
H. Con. Res. 102: Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. STARK, and Mrs. DRAKE.
H. Res. 101: Mr. SMITH of Washington.
H. RES. 121: MS. CLARKE, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. ALLEN.
H. Res. 123: Mr. JEFFERSON and Mr. HOLDEN.
H. Res. 125: Mr. LINDER.
H. Res. 128: Mr. MCCOTTER.
H. Res. 186: Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. KIND, Mr. KIRK, and Mr. EHLERS.
H. Res. 209: Mr. STARK.
H. Res. 221: Ms. NORTON.
H. Res. 231: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H. Res. 245: Mr. PALLONE.
H. Res. 248: Mr. UPTON.
H. Res. 259: Mr. REGULA, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. CUELLAR.
H. Res. 268: Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. PENCE, Mr. WAMP, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. WYNN, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. AKIN, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. FILNER, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. GOODE, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. GORDON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. ROSS, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. MATHESON, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. SHULER, Mr. FORBES, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. RADANOVICH, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. JORDAN, and Mr. BACHUS.
H. Res. 272: Ms. NORTON.
H. Res. 273: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

DELETIONS OF SPONSORS FROM PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were deleted from public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 695: Mrs. EMERSON.
H.J. Res. 40: Mr. HALL of Texas.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk's desk and referred as follows:

6. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the Village of Pomona, New York, relative to a resolution requesting that the Congress of the United States pass legislation requiring

the Nuclear Regulatory Commission conduct an Independent Safety Assessment of the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7. Also, a petition of the New Orleans City Council, Louisiana, relative to Resolution R–07–89 urging the Congress of the United States to fully fund all necessary improvements to the various flood control and drainage projects that have been designated for funding to date, as well as those forthcoming in the immediate future; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8. Also, a petition of the City Council of Honolulu, Hawaii, relative to Resolution 07–044 urging the Congress of the United States to support S. 57 and H.R. 760, the Filipino Veterans Equity Acts of 2007, conferring benefits on Filipino World War II Veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.