own budget analysis, shows that it is going to do anything other than increase the debt.

And we are not even talking about paying for the war, the war that we all pray will not come, but it looks like it is; and I am behind my commander in chief 100 percent. But the rhetoric of the economy in the budget does not match the rhetoric of what is needed as the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) spoke so eloquently on a moment ago. The debt tax consumed 18 percent of all government revenues to pay interest on the $6.4 trillion debt last year. That debt tax will go up to 19.5 percent by 2008 under the economic game plan that we are being asked to support.

I ask my colleagues as one Democrat who used to vote with you and we passed the balanced budget constitutional amendment in 1995, what has happened to you? What has caused you to suddenly start saying, deficits do not matter, balancing the budget does not matter?

The Blue Dogs stand ready to work with our President and with the majority in seeing that we do not increase the taxes on our children through the debt tax.

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

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

SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF MIGUEL ESTRADA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in support of the nomination of Miguel Estrada. If Miguel Estrada were considered for Federal bench on merits alone, we would not be still debating his qualifications. He would already be serving.

Estrada was given the very highest recommendation by the American Bar Association, not what those who seek to tar and feather him would consider a right wing organization. While we prefer our Tennessee law schools, we do know that some consider Harvard to be a pretty good alternative. Mr. Estrada not only graduated from Harvard, but was the editor of the Law Review. Again, Harvard is not what Estrada's critics would consider a right wing organization. And in what can only be described as a stellar career, he went on to clerk for Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, who is also not considered by those on the left to be part of the right wing.

I think my point is clear. Partisan politics are behind the attacks on his character and the delay in his nomination.

With the country on alert for terrorist attacks, a potential conflict in Iraq, and effort on the way to enact economic stimulus, it is time to stand behind this extremely qualified candidate.

CHENEY TASK FORCE RECORDS AND GAO AUTHORITY

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

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, last Friday, February 7, the General Accounting Office abandoned its efforts to obtain basic records about the operation of the Vice President's Task Force on Energy Policy. This action received only limited attention, and few people fully understand its profound consequences.

When we have divided government, the public can expect Congress to conduct needed oversight over the executive branch. But today we are living in an era of one-party control. This means the House and the Senate are not going to conduct meaningful oversight of the Bush administration. When there is one-party control of both the White House and Congress, there is only one entity that can hold the administration accountable, and that is the independent General Accounting Office. But now GAO has been forced to surrender this fundamental independence.

When GAO decided not to appeal the District Court decision in Walker v. Cheney, it made a fateful decision. In the Comptroller General's words, GAO will now require ''an affirmative statement of support from at least one full committee with jurisdiction over any records they seek to access prior to any future court action by GAO.'' Translated, what this means is that GAO will bring future actions to enforce its rights to documents only with the blessings of the majority party in Congress.

This is a fundamental shift in our system of checks and balances. For all practical purposes, the Bush administration is now immune from effective oversight by the Congress. Some people say GAO should never have brought legal action to obtain information about the energy task force, but in reality GAO had no choice.

The Bush administration's penchant for secrecy has been demonstrated time and time again. The Department of Justice has issued a directive curtailing public access to information under the Freedom of Information Act. The White House has restricted access to Presidential records. The administration has refused to provide information about the identity of over 1,000 individuals detained in the name of homeland security.

The White House deliberately picked this fight with GAO in order to secure its power to run the government in secret. From the start, the White House assumed a hostile and uncompromising position, arguing that GAO's investigation ''would unconstitutionally interfere with the functioning of the executive branch.'' Even when GAO voluntarily scaled back its request, dropping its demand for minutes and notes, the Vice President's office was intransigent. Faced with an administration that had no interest in reaching an accommodation, GAO was left with no choice. Reluctantly on February 22, 2002, GAO filed its first-ever lawsuit against the executive branch to obtain access to information.

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In December, the district court in the case issued a sweeping decision in favor of the Bush administration, ruling that GAO had no standing to sue the executive branch. The judge in the case was a recent Bush appointee who served as a deputy to Ken Starr during the Independent Counsel investigation of the Clinton administration. The judge's reasoning contorted the law, and it ignored both Supreme Court and appellate court precedent recognizing GAO's right to use the courts to enforce its statutory rights to information.

Before deciding whether to pursue an appeal, the Comptroller General consulted with congressional leaders. He found no support from Republican leaders for an appeal.

This hypocrisy is simply breathtaking. During the 1990s, it was the Republicans in Congress who embarked on a concerted effort to undermine the authority of the President. Congressional committees spent over $15 million investigating the White House. They demanded and received information on the innermost workings of the White House. They subpoenaed top White House officials to testify about the advice they gave the President. They forced the White House to disclose internal White House documents, memos, e-mails, phone records, and even lists of guests at White House movie showings. They abused congressional powers, and they launched countless GAO investigations.

But now that President Bush and Vice President CHENEY are in office—

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 1 additional minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot entertain the motion. The gentleman's time has expired.

THE BUSH RECESSION AND ITS IMPACT ON MINORITY WORKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN).

CHENEY TASK FORCE RECORDS AND GAO AUTHORITY

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, because