

with regard to this resolution after 7 legislative days.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that what is at issue with House Resolution 131 is, in fact, whether the House of Representatives is going to continue to have a credible ethics process that can be effective in protecting the reputation and the integrity of this great institution. And for at least two reasons, the House will not and cannot have a credible ethics process unless the Republican-inspired rules changes made earlier this year are repealed.

First, there cannot be a credible ethics process in the House unless it is genuinely bipartisan. By definition, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct was created as a bipartisan organization within a very partisan body, and its rules have always been fashioned through a bipartisan task force.

□ 2045

Until this year, the House clearly and repeatedly recognized that bipartisanship must extend to the creating of the rules under which the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct conducts its business; and in the past, changes in those rules were made in an open, in a thoughtful, and in a genuinely bipartisan manner.

But this year, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to past tradition, the rules changes were drafted solely on the recommendation of the majority, in a partisan, in a closed, in a secret process in which no one on the Democrat side of the aisle was even consulted. So the rules were adopted on a strict party line vote: all the Republicans voting for; all the Democrats voting against.

Mr. Speaker, this is the most partisan vote we cast in the House of Representatives. Never in the history of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has there been an attempt to impose rules in this manner on the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

Mr. Speaker, the second concern about these rules changes is there has been an attempt to impose them on the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct in a very partisan way, but the rules in and of themselves are extremely damaging. The fact is that, at a minimum, these rules changes will seriously undermine the ability of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to perform its key responsibilities of investigating and making decisions on allegations of wrongdoing.

These rules changes fall into three categories.

First, there is the so-called automatic dismissal rule under which a complaint against a Member that is filed with the committee can be dismissed solely with the passage of time, no consideration of its merits. Under this automatic dismissal rule, that period of time can be as brief as 45 days from the date that the complaint is deemed to satisfy the procedural requirements of the rules. Previously, a complaint could be dismissed only by majority vote of the committee.

The effect of this automatic dismissal rule will be to give the committee members a means by which they can avoid their responsibility to give thoughtful, reasoned consideration to every complaint and to all of the charges in every complaint. Its ultimate effect will be to provoke partisanship and deadlock among committee members as they wait for the clock to run out. Does the majority really want this result?

Another of the rules changes is that it grants certain so-called due process rights to Members. One of those rights is the right to demand that the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct conduct a trial on a matter on which it has not even conducted a formal investigation. This so-called right would place the committee in the position of having to hold a trial on a matter in which it has not issued a single subpoena. Does the majority really want this result?

The third rule change, Mr. Speaker, is the so-called right to counsel provision which might be better characterized as the right to orchestrate testimony provision or the right to allow collusion among the accused and the witnesses. It would provide that one lawyer can represent the accused and all of the witnesses. Does the majority really want this result?

Mr. Speaker, I continue to urge my colleagues to look closely at the rules changes and the partisan manner in which they were adopted. By adoption of House Resolution 131, the House can begin to undo the damage that has been done to the ethics process, and we will be able to have once again an ethics process that commands the confidence and respect of both the Members of this body, and Mr. Speaker, most importantly, the American people, who, I believe, on a bipartisan basis want a bipartisan Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE TO UNITED STATES CAPITOL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). Pursuant to 40 U.S.C. 188a, and the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the United States Capitol Preservation Commission:

Mr. LEWIS, California

Mr. SHUSTER, Pennsylvania.

COMMUNICATION FROM HON. NANCY PELOSI, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, Democratic Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER,
Washington, DC, April 26, 2005.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to (40 U.S.C. 188a), I hereby appoint Representative MARCY KAPTUR of Ohio to the United States Capitol Preservation Commission.

Best regards,

NANCY PELOSI.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, votes on motions to suspend the rules postponed earlier today will be taken tomorrow.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again, it is a pleasure to be before the House along with my colleagues of the 30-something Working Group. We would like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing us, once again, to address the Members of the House and the American people on issues that are facing the 30-somethings and the entire population of the United States.

I think it is important as Members of Congress that we understand our obligation to the American people, making sure that they fully understand what happens in their house of democracy.

Many times in Washington, D.C., we are here, we are making decisions that are going to affect all of our constituents and even ourselves and our families. So I think it is important we take it very seriously.

We come back again tonight. Of course, we have the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and also the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), my good friend from south Florida; and we are here to talk about Social Security. So I think we will just start off just kind of talking about some of the things and some of the events that took place today.

This was a very eventful day for Social Security and making sure that Americans are able to get what they deserve as it relates to their full benefits on Social Security and making sure that we do not gamble with their retirement.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Absolutely, this was a unique day.

Apparently, we reached the 60th day that the President has been out in America trying to sell the American people on his vague outlines of his proposal to privatize Social Security; and quite honestly, at the conclusion of the

60 days, apparently he has said that he wants to go out for another 120 days.

We had a rally today with more than 1,000 people in the crowd and over a hundred Members of Congress from both the House and the Senate Democratic caucuses, standing completely united in opposition to pulling the safety net out from under our retirees' retirement security, and we stood strong. We stood together. We stood together when people did not think that that was possible, that there was definitely, over the last few months, a lack of confidence that the Democrats would stand together united opposing privatization. We have all the way up until today and we will continue to be standing in opposition to privatizing Social Security.

Actually, at the conclusion of today's rally, we stood together and said, Mr. President, please do go out for another 120 days and tell the American people that you want to pull the safety net out from under their retirement security because apparently the more he talks about it, the less the American people like it. So we encourage the President to continue to go out and talk about it, continue to restrict the crowds and limit the access to his town hall meetings where he checks tickets at the door, checks people's philosophies at the door, as opposed to our effort where we are being as inclusive as possible.

We do not screen our crowds. We had more than 400 town hall meetings across the country in our districts as House and Senate Democrats, and we take all comers. Some of us have had maybe a couple of people here and there who have come to our meetings and said why do you not give the President's proposal a try, but almost universally our Members have experienced the communication from our constituents that, above all else, they expect us to be up here in Washington and protect their retirement security.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. No doubt about it, of all the Social Security meetings that I have had, not one citizen in my district has stood up and said anything to the effect of let us take a close look at these private accounts. Young people included have been coming. I have three universities in my district, and even the young students still recognize it.

We get kind of cynical maybe every now and again up here and think that somehow that spin and manipulation somehow will always work; and the facts maybe do not always get out, but I find it very heartening that the President can go out and try to sell a proposal and poll after poll after poll continues to show him losing support on this. I think it is very heartening to know that the American people pay very close attention to these issues especially when they affect their pocket-

book like Social Security does, and they look closely at what the President is talking about, and yet they still disagree with what the President is saying.

It is very good, and I think that the key factor is that the President's proposal weakens Social Security. It does not strengthen it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think it is important to highlight, again, this is the 60th day of the President's nationwide, cross-country tour; and one would have expected with the bully pulpit that he has the momentum that he believed that he was going to be able to build behind his vague proposal that by the 60th day, by today, that he would have Americans swinging from the chandeliers in the Capitol, insisting that we take up his proposal and that somebody file a bill.

We have yet to see a bill offered in this Chamber or in the Chamber across the rotunda, and I think it is interesting to note that these are some of the comments and analyses that have been made at the conclusion of his 60-day tour:

"The President's campaign has frightened people, raising concerns that guaranteed benefits could be cut," said William Schneider, who is a public opinion scholar and CNN analyst. "There's very little evidence in polls that Bush's campaign has been effective."

"As he nears the end of a 60-day cross-country campaign, President Bush appears to be further from achieving his signature goal of transforming Social Security than when he began." That was from USA Today just yesterday, and that was the tip of the iceberg in terms of the commentary and analysis.

I just wonder when the President and the leadership of this body are going to get it. When are they going to tell us, when are they going to come to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) and to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) and say, okay, we are taking privatization off the table; clearly we do not have any support for that; Americans do not want us to compromise their retirement security, and we are ready to come to the table and compromise, like they did in 1983 when Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan came together and preserved Social Security for generations to come. It is just mind-boggling. It really is.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, it makes you wonder. You go 60 days. You do not sell your program. In fact, it gets progressively worse every trip that you make, and then you decide that, well, we are going to go out for another 60 days.

It makes you wonder if this thing is not a distraction from some of the real issues that we are facing today, and I hate to be cynical in the 30-something group. We are supposed to be the opti-

mists of this body, but it is very difficult for me to believe that this maybe is not a little ploy to distract and say, look over here while we cut Medicaid, we cut food stamps, we cut community development block grants, we cut veterans benefits. Look at the real issues today. The President is trying to say this is a great crisis; 2042 is when we have before there is any structural change at all in the program.

Gas prices, I am sure my colleague is hearing about that in her district because of the oil costs, health care, immigration, issues, the Chinese and manipulation of their currency and dumping into our markets. Instead of saying we need to focus on an alternative energy program so that we could somehow reduce the cost of gas at the pumps, we are talking about a manufactured crisis that starts in 2042, not dealing with the day-to-day pocket-book issues that the people in my community and Florida have to deal with every day.

□ 2100

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that my colleague was able to get that thought out, because it is so very, very important, what he was saying.

I tell you this: I was encouraged. I was not only encouraged by the polling numbers released recently but also about the number of people that showed up at the rally today here at the Capitol; and many of them looking forward to getting to that Social Security age were not silver and blue-haired individuals saying it is about me right now. These were hardworking Americans that came to this Capitol, to this great democracy we speak of, so their voice can be heard. I can tell you that I was encouraged.

Mr. Speaker, I may digress a little as it relates to talking about what Social Security is all about, but I think it is worth saying that Democrats, not only here but in the other body across the hall, and in general here in Washington, D.C., we believe in bipartisanship. We talk about the 1983 vote an awful lot, but I want to let you know that in 1983, when Ronald Reagan, then President, and Tip O'Neill, then Speaker in a Democratic House, passed a bipartisan Social Security plan that would keep Social Security solvent for another 47 to 50 years, as it relates from this point on, from right now, today, as I speak, 100 percent of benefits going to the individuals that would be receiving it, be it in survivor benefits or retirement benefits, and it was a bill of bipartisan nature. In 1983, we passed a bill saving Social Security, with 243 Members voting for it and 102 voted against it. Eighty Republicans voted for it, 163 Democrats voted for it. That is bipartisanship. That is a bipartisan bill.

And we are not going to get there if the individuals that are in charge, the majority seems to be the Republicans in this House, do not come to grips in

having a true bipartisan dialogue in saving Social Security, and not the rhetoric of someone else wanting Social Security to be privatized. I am not talking about Wall Street, which is going to benefit by some \$940 billion if Social Security is privatized. That is a guarantee to them. But what is a guarantee to the people, our constituents, Democrats, Republicans, independents alike? The only thing they have guaranteed is their \$26,000-and-change in a Federal debt they are going to have to pay because the President wants to continue to talk about this privatization piece.

One other thing I just want to add. I think it is important people understand the numbers on Social Security. Forty-eight million Americans are enjoying those benefits right now. Some people want to talk about where is the Democratic plan? Well, where is the Republican plan? Right now, we are talking about philosophy. There was a hearing over in the Senate. Well, there are hundreds of hearings on this Hill every day. Still, we are not at the point to where we can come to grips on a bipartisan approach. On this side of the aisle we are saying we want to be bipartisan.

Now, hats off to Americans. The reason why no one is marching with a plan and we do not have a binded copy of some plan is the fact that the Republicans know full well, the Republican leadership, and there are some colleagues on the other side of the aisle that are saying no way, Jose, if I can say that.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You can say that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No way we are going to hand up our constituents because someone else wants to privatize Social Security. I did not sign up for that. That is what I am hearing some of these Republicans saying. It is a very small number, hopefully a growing number, because I believe for those that are speaking boldly about privatization of Social Security, I think they are making a career decision, a career decision in a democracy where people believe in having the retirement that they were promised.

The other point I want to make here is to mention today's newspapers, and I took some sections out. Account after account of Americans not being with the President on this. I am sorry, this is not the Meek-Wasserman-Schultz-Ryan Report. This is reality. Now, if the President wants to burn Federal jet fuel, taxpayers' dollars, at \$55,000 an hour to fly on Air Force One to go tell people, and I might add these are canned crowds of individuals who have love and respect for the President, and I also have respect for the President, for the office that he holds, because he is my President too. He is President to us all. We support him as our Commander in Chief. But when we are wrong, we are wrong.

So I do not care how many times you say, oh, well, privatization is good and we will save Social Security. Matter of

fact, he said to the contrary; that it would not alone save Social Security. So I am proud of the people that are out there saying what they are saying. But I think it is important that we remember if this is about future generations, then the President is doing just the opposite. We are talking about \$26,349.67, the average 30-something; the average college student that is graduating with a postgraduate degree or what have you, on average, \$20,000 in debt. Add to that the \$26,000 of the Federal debt they are going to have to pay, and you might as well make that \$46,000 and some change.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And growing.

Mr. MEEK. And growing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if I may interrupt the gentleman, I would add that tuition costs are doubling, and this number keeps growing every week. Every single day this clock is actually ticking here, \$7.79 trillion. We lifted the debt ceiling a few months back, and this number is also ticking. So we are talking in a few months you are going to be up to owing the government or student loans or banks \$50,000.

Imagine a kid being born today owes \$26,000. Is that opportunity? Is that ownership? Is that freedom? All the big themes that we like to talk about in Washington, D.C. This is trapping a generation of kids.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And that is a perfect point, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes in our spare time, as we fly back and forth from our districts that we represent, I do a little something with that number, that \$26,349.67 and counting. You could buy a new car for that, every American, not just Americans living in certain parts of the country.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. A pretty decent car.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Yes, a pretty decent car. You could pay for 4 years of education at a public university. I got that from the College Board. For some of our young people, freedom in America, that buys about 2,250 CDs. I mean, we are talking to America here. You could also go on a luxury cruise around the world for four. You could buy groceries for five families for a year. That is from the Congressional Budget Office. You can put a down payment on a home. Well, that sounds like a great idea. We want more Americans to be in homes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Bingo.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You could start a small business. You could fly from New York to Hawaii and back 12 times.

The President is marching around here, and the majority side is marching around here saying we are trying to preserve Social Security for future generations; meanwhile it is not tax and spend, it is borrow and spend, and continuing to borrow. They are on borrowfest. They cannot stop themselves. So when folks start talking about, well, the President is flying around and burning taxpayers' dollars at \$55,000 an hour, that is more than

two or three people make in a year in America.

Now, I am not shocked, because the evidence speaks to the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. He cannot help himself. Neither can the members of the majority side help themselves. And I cannot understand how the leadership, and I say the leadership because I do have friends on the other side that get it, and it is up to us here in Congress to make sure. Here on the Democratic side we have our act together, and a number of Members have that number outside their office to remind people when they come walking the halls to see their Member of Congress, this debt is continuing to click. So we have to make sure as Americans that we vote principle over politics. Principle over politics.

So if you are working right now, and if Americans pull their check stubs out right now and look at what they pay in Social Security, and they have the majority side here saying, the leadership once again and the President saying we are looking out for you, meanwhile we are going to add \$5 trillion onto that number, meanwhile we are going to cut your benefits.

What they put out as it relates to their plan, they are going to lose 20 percent of their benefits right now, or more, on a gamble of privatization. I cannot understand it. But I can tell you one thing: The American people are not buying it because the polling numbers are reflecting that.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I from Florida are parents, and I know the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) probably plans one day to be a parent. This is the 30-something Working Group.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If my wife says it is okay.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Exactly. Once you get permission. And, believe me, I know that is definitely something that moms need to grant, or potential moms need to grant permission on. But we have little kids, and anyone out there that is a parent can understand what I am going to talk about now in this way.

It is mind-boggling that the President has not gotten off, after 60 days, the concept of privatization. I liken it to when my children do not like that I have told them no and they stamp their feet and they throw a tantrum. Now, I generally try not to give in, like we are not.

I feel like the Democratic Caucus in the House and Senate are the parents of a child in the White House throwing a temper tantrum, who is insisting that he get his way. And regardless of how many times he is told that he cannot have his way, that sometimes we have to compromise, sometimes we cannot have it exactly the way we want it; just like I explain to my children and I try to sit down and rationally explain to them that we are going to try to give you some of what you want but you are not going to have it

all your way, he continues to stamp his foot just like my kids sometimes do.

It was not lost on me that that was an appropriate analogy. I am certainly hopeful, like I am hopeful with my own kids, that one day they will grow out of it. We keep waiting for the President to grow out of the temper tantrums. It should not be surprising, because we come from a State where his sibling engages in similar activities. It seems to be a family trait. They do not seem to get the message when they are told by their constituents that they are not in agreement with what they are suggesting. They do not appear to be willing to let go and come to the table and compromise.

Now, another analogy I want to draw would be if we were, as Democrats, sticking our heads in the sand because we support Social Security so strongly. If we were here saying there is no problem, Social Security is fine, we should not do anything, then we would be just as guilty as the President and the leadership of this Congress are. But we are not saying that. What we have said from day one is that there is no crisis; that the crisis is manufactured, as my colleague from Ohio said; that we acknowledge that there is a problem, but there is not a problem that reaches anything that we should be significantly concerned about until we in this 30-something Working Group are well into our seventies.

Literally, 36 years from now, in 2041, I will be 74 years old, long past retirement age. When we ask most of our peers, if you ask your friends and our neighbors and friends who are our age, do you think Social Security is going to be there for you, most of our peers do not think it will. But the reality is that it will be there even if we do nothing. And we are not suggesting that we not do anything. We are suggesting that, just like in 1983, that reasonable people on both sides of this debate should come to the table, should try to find some common ground, and should not continue to kick and scream and insist that it is their way or the highway.

Another thing that I wanted to point out, and this is difficult to say, but it is hard to feel that the President is sincere on this issue. When I have a town hall meeting, and I am sure it is this way for my colleagues, I know it is for my colleague from Florida because I have done town hall meetings with him, I really want to know what people think. That is why I do not screen or ask for tickets or check people's opinion at the door.

Literally, the Secret Service this week sent agents to Denver to probe allegations by three area Democrats that they were ousted from President Bush's March 21 event. The three did not stage any protest at the rally and were later told by the Secret Service they were removed because their vehicle displayed an anti-Bush bumper sticker. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the man who removed

them was a GOP volunteer, but apparently Mr. McClellan refused to divulge his name or whether he works in Colorado or Washington.

What Mr. McClellan said to this reporter is if someone is coming to an event to disrupt it, they are going to be asked to leave. Apparently, if you have an opinion that differs from the President's and from the message that is designed for that particular town hall meeting, you are not welcome, even if you plan on sitting there and saying nothing.

Now, I heard the President's State of the Union, I heard his Inaugural address, and I heard him talk about democracy. I heard him talk about promoting democracy around the world and how important it was that the greatest democracy in the world set an example, that we be the shining beacon of democracy around the world and that we export democracy.

□ 2115

Well, you know what, how do we do that if we are not setting the best example of what democracy is all about. Would we like it if other nations, other fledgling democracies, started mirroring the conduct that the President is engaged in? I do not think so. I think if we heard an independent news report about some of the activities that the President has engaged in in this debate, we would be outraged.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And we see where the Russians and Mr. Putin are beginning to crack down on a lot of the democratic movements, taking over a lot of the media, and when a guy like Mr. Yushchenko comes here from the Ukraine, with the scars to prove his fight for democracy, and he stands in front of this Chamber to address our constitutional body that we have, what kind of example is this to send? Yet in the same breath talk about freedom, talk about opportunity. Members would think that as either a legislator or executive, you would want to hear what the dissent is so if you were right, then you would be able to address the issue and explain why you are right.

I think why we see the President's numbers going down, he is speechifying. It is not a give and take at town hall meetings. He is kicking people out if they have an anti-Bush bumper sticker on their car, and pretending like they are the Secret Service. And that is reported. It happened out in Denver, and they are investigating it now.

Answer the concerns of the country, and we will see progress as you begin to advocate and argue for your side.

Funny, the gentlewoman would say that on her flight in from Florida she crunched some numbers, and my flight from Ohio is only an hour, from Cleveland; but I was able to work some numbers, too. We have mentioned here before that if we implement the President's proposal of diverting money into the private accounts, there will be a \$5 trillion hole in our budget. Somehow

we have to plug the hole. We are going to have to borrow the money and pay interest in order to fund the private accounts.

I did some math trying to figure out what \$5 trillion could do for other programs. And since this is the 30-something Hour, I wanted to focus on Pell grants and we were able to get it printed off the cocktail napkin that comes with the Diet Coke and the peanuts on the plane. For Pell Grants, \$5 trillion over 20 years could raise the maximum Pell Grant from \$4,050 to \$59,500. Right now 5.3 million students get the \$4,000 maximum, but with the \$5 trillion we could have 23.7 million students receive \$59,500 worth of college grants to go to schools.

Mr. Speaker, \$60,000 would take care of undergrad, masters, and Ph.D. It would get students educated. Many people do not need \$60,000 for just a bachelor's degree, so we could cut it in half and give \$30,000 to 47 million students.

This is just to illustrate a point. Just think if we plug a hole in a risky ponzi scheme that we are going to have. But imagine if we made this significant investment in education. Imagine the value that would be created from that.

We did a study in Ohio, and for every dollar the State of Ohio spent on higher ed, the State of Ohio would get \$2 back in tax money. Imagine what the return on this investment would be. It would be significant. We would have educated, well-rounded citizens participating in democracy, more tolerant, more creative, creating wealth in our society.

What kinds of investments are we making otherwise? We are going to borrow and plug a hole with \$5 trillion. What value do we get from that? We are losing jobs left and right, and the biggest crisis is a problem that is in 2041 when we are 70 years old.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, what the gentleman is saying is absolutely true, and to just continue on the same theme the gentleman is referring to, if we are going to talk about crisis and things that are looming that we need to deal with, why are we not talking about Medicare? The President should be stumping around the country to get the Congress to address the looming crisis in Medicare because it could be more easily argued that Medicare's insolvency, which is much sooner than Social Security, is really going to cause us some tremendous problems.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and I are from a State that if Members want to talk about a crisis, if we have a crisis in Medicare, our constituents are really going to have a dire, serious problem. If that problem is not addressed, then there are senior citizens across this country who will die. There is no question if we do not preserve the ability to provide health care to senior citizens who under this proposal are already going to be in jeopardy because their retirement security is going to be pulled out from

under them, on top of that if we do not fix Medicare, we will not provide them with health care.

I would love to see the President stumping to try to address that problem. I can assure the President he would have a lot more willing participants, at least on our side, at least from me and from Members who represent States with significant senior populations.

Social Security is often thought of as just a program that benefits senior citizens; and people think if you did a man or woman interview on the street, and asked people who benefits from Social Security, virtually everyone on the street would say that Social Security benefits senior citizens.

In Florida, for example, children who are under 17, there are 174,500 current Social Security beneficiaries, kids who are receiving Social Security either because they are dependents of people receiving SSI because they are disabled or they are survivors of a deceased Social Security recipient. Again, that number is 174,530 kids under 17. And between the ages of 18 and 39, 71,870 Floridians receive Social Security benefits.

That is one of the things that has been lost that each week we have been trying to drive home, lost in this privatization debate. The President has basically wiped the table, or essentially wiped the floor, to be a little more direct about it, when it comes to the people who collect Social Security because they are disabled, which is a third, who are disabled, who are survivors and are receiving survivor benefits. They do not earn an income, so what happens to them when we privatize Social Security? Or when there are annuities and we yank Social Security benefits out from under people who are earning an income, and we are doing nothing for people who are survivors or who are disabled? It is like they do not exist. It is like if we ignore them, maybe they will go away.

I have yet to hear a response from the President or the leadership of this Congress about what we are going to do to help people who are disabled and who are survivors of Social Security recipients when Social Security is privatized and then shrivels up and blows away.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, from where I come from, that is a moral issue. That is a moral issue. What do we do with those people who need the help, who access or utilize this program as an insurance program when they lose a spouse at a young age and they have kids, they have survivors, which is a third of the program. That is a moral issue, and we talk a lot about morality, and it has been so narrow and focused on just a couple of issues.

Are we going to say as a country you are on your own again and roll it back to before we implemented the Social Security program? It has been successful. It works, and there are a lot of people out there who have benefited. This

was an issue at one of my town hall meetings. There were three or four who came, and it was strictly based on survivorship, disability, and people who have just had a lot of bad luck.

We try to pin labels and say this certain segment is lazy, they do not want to work, they want the easy way out. There is a lot of people trying to make their way out working very, very hard. And for one reason or another, they are sick and make a couple of bad decisions. It is amazing. The more I get out and hear these stories, how many people, one car accident, one sick family member, one death in the family, and the whole thing collapses. This program has been there to say to those folks we are here for you and the government is going to be here, society is going to be here to help you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is important that everyone understands we come to this floor once a week to share with Americans the truth about what is going on here in Washington, D.C. We are the 30-something Working Group, but this affects the entire family. When there is a family member who has a problem, Social Security is there for them. That alleviates the financial burden on the rest of the family. To be able to say we are a big family and we are going to take care of one another, guess what, times are not good for everybody. You are going to run into those real-life issues. Someone is working now and they pass on, for those individuals that are 17 and under, the only thing they have are survivor benefits. That is something that you leave for your child.

Spiritually, emotionally, the best contribution and the highest contribution you can make to society is to make sure that your children and grandchildren have a better opportunity than you have had. The gentlewoman talked about the President coming to this Chamber during the State of the Union and talking about Social Security. The first thing the President said, if you are over 55, do not worry about it. So I guess folks over 55 are supposed to say, son, daughter, brother, sister, good luck. I am okay, I am over 55, but you better start saving.

Let me say I cannot believe the information that this administration and the majority-side leadership give us. Now, I said this last week, I said it the week before, I said it the week before that, and I will continue to say it because we have to remind Americans you cannot believe everything that your leaders say. This is not about the President and do we like him or not. The election is over. He cannot run again constitutionally. They may try to change that, but as it stands right now, the President cannot run again. So this is not about somebody standing in judgment of his political future.

During the Medicaid-Medicare prescription drug debate it came to the floor, and the President and his office said it would be \$350 billion for a pre-

scription drug plan, or lack thereof. Later it moved up to \$400 billion. This is from news accounts and also from official documents here in the Congress.

After the debate, after we passed the bill, and I voted against it because we could not negotiate for lower prices. I am from Florida. This is real-life experience. There are seniors, and in that \$26,000 number, you can pay for prescription drugs for 11 Americans for the entire year. We are talking real money here on the whole borrow-and-spend issue.

Then we found out recently that the true cost is \$724 billion, which is all borrowed. This is not money that we have stacked up on the shelf somewhere, and this is real money, and this is what we are spending.

Folks say, where is the Democratic plan? Guess what, the Democratic plan is in your wallet right now. The bipartisan Democratic plan, the bipartisan continuation of that plan is in your wallet right now. It is those Social Security numbers that you write down every day or every time you fill out an application or you are applying for some sort of credit card. That is the original Democratic plan.

□ 2130

We have 48 million Americans that are celebrating benefits right now from Social Security because we held our word on the deal that it will be there for them when they need it. Thirty-three million of those Americans are receiving retirement benefits of the 48 million. So we have 33 million.

The President says do not worry about it. I say be very worried from what we know right now and what history speaks to as it relates to accurate information. Forty-eight percent of the 48 million that are receiving benefits right now, 48 percent of them would be under the poverty line if it was not for Social Security.

This is serious business. This is not if one likes the President or not. This is not a popularity contest. This is for real. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, under his plan, or under his philosophy, they will only receive 80 percent of what they have right now and they will only receive \$516 a month. Under the plan right now, original Democratic plan, continuation in 1983, the bipartisan plan that was handed to the American people, as we stand right now, will be in force for the next 47 to 50 years, and then after that 80 percent of the benefits will be there for them. On average they get \$955 a month. Imagine going from \$955 a month down to \$516 based on a privatization gamble.

Some Members say there are some Members that are emotional about this. They are right. I am emotional about it because I have constituents who woke up early one day on a Tuesday and went down and voted not only for me but for democracy and to make sure that their voice is heard in this Chamber. And I guarantee my colleagues, as long as I am a Member, as

well as the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and I am pretty sure all of us, they are going to be represented. I do not care if they are Republican or Democrat or Independent or Green Party or what have you. Even if they do not have a voter registration card, it is important that we stand on their behalf.

So wrong is wrong and right and right. And I will tell my colleagues right now some Members on the majority side, especially the leadership, are dead wrong on this issue. And let us just talk a little bit about 1101 grass roots, what happens here within the rules of this House. If we were in the majority, and when I say "we," mean Democrats, with our present leadership right now, if the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) was the Speaker of this House, the conversation would be a lot different. It would be about saving Social Security, continuing to save Social Security, a bipartisan plan, if that was the issue of the day, because the real crisis, going back to what the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) said, is we do not have health care. We have 46 million Americans working, not sitting at home cracking their toes saying the job situation looks sad. These are individuals that wake up every day and go to work that do not have health care insurance. And local communities are falling to their knees because public hospitals are going under, because the Federal Government is just not there.

For another 3, 3½ years, if left up to the mechanics of this House, if something does not change in the next election as it relates to leadership, look forward to having to pay through the nose for health care insurance. That is a crisis. And I have companies in my district now that are telling people that are coming for jobs, to apply for Medicaid, they get more benefits. Hello. Apply for Medicaid, they get more benefits? Because they cannot afford the premiums on the insurance. And meanwhile we are running around here talking about a pie-in-the-sky privatization plan that is risky at best, and we are asking Americans to gamble, and we are spending their money, telling them something that the polling has indicated and a number of Members in this Congress, especially on the Democratic side, have said it is just not going to work.

So this is something that we have to continue to work very hard on. Some people say why are we all talking about Social Security? It is our issue. It is an American issue. It is an issue that is facing every American. It is a \$26,340.67 issue.

The baby who was just born when we started this Special Order here tonight already owes the Federal Government \$26,000 and change, and climbing. So we have to put a stop to this, and we have to make sure that Americans fully understand that what they have right now in their wallet, the Social Security

they have been writing down as their ID number when they went to school to better themselves, go to college, those that went into vocational trade school or what have you, vocational education school, Social Security is there and it is an American-produced program that the rest of the world envies. They envy this.

So in closing, before I yield to my colleagues, I am just going to say that this is extreme. I am going to use the word. It is extreme. It is extreme for people to say or for the leadership to say that private accounts are good, "It is good for you and it is good for me." That is not true. It is extreme.

When folks are running around here saying we want to change the rules because we are not getting 110 percent of the judges to get confirmed through the other body there, that is extreme. And extremism is not going to help us come together as Americans. It is going to divide us. And I guarantee my colleagues this: I said it on this night, if I have got to stand by myself on it, the American people will make those individuals pay for being extreme. And I think the 109th Congress, unfortunately, will be remembered for taking extreme measures in a time when we should have been focusing on other issues such as health care, such as prescription drug care, such as making sure that our children are not in overcrowded classrooms and making sure that our teachers have what they need to be able to teach our future generations and small businesses are able to get loans to be able to keep our economy going. There are a number of issues, and I could go on and on and on, as my colleagues know.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a point. He mentioned dissent and debate, and we talked a little bit about it here tonight. This body has a constitutional obligation to voice our concerns and our opinions. And that is why the rules of the House are set up so that we can get an hour here to talk about it and voice our concerns and talk about what we believe and what our approach would be. And I think it is important that we do get out here, and I think the Democrats have done a great job, leaders in both Chambers have done a great job, of fulfilling our obligation to our constituents to go out there and at least recognize that the President's plan is not resonating, and that we have an obligation to go out there and be critical if we need to be and say that the plan is extreme and say the plan is radical.

I do not think there is anything wrong with that, because in 1994 and the years leading up, the other side was very critical of the President for a long while. They have gone back on what they said they were going to do in 1994, balanced budget amendments and bal-

ancing the budget, and this thing just keeps going up and up and up. So they obviously have not fulfilled some of their goals that they set, but they were critical of the President, and they had a right to do that, and they won the House back. And now they are overstepping. Now we are being critical. And I think the American people are going to see that the Democratic Party has something to offer.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I think it is really safe to say that both of their remarks are cogent, and I think it is safe to say that we are really disturbed about the direction that this country is going in and the direction that the leadership is taking us. It is time to restore some balance.

We have got a Congress that sees nothing wrong with inserting itself in the midst of a private family tragedy a few weeks ago. Now they want to take Social Security, the most successful program that supports Americans throughout their retirement years, 70 years of success, they want to take it off the tracks. They want to yank the safety net out from under our retirees and under our generation. Because if the President is ensuring that people 55 and over are going to be okay, what is he saying to the rest of us? "You may not be okay but I do not care." I mean that is a really foreboding message that he is sending to our generation.

And I tell the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) I do not think he has to worry about standing alone, because there were more than 3,000 people at that rally with us today, more than 100 Members of Congress, and it appears in the feedback we have gotten from across this country that we are standing together, not alone; that we have lots of people behind us and they are trying to send a very strong message to the leadership of this Congress and to the President that privatization needs to be dropped, that we need to stop talking about it, that we need to come to the table together and compromise, that we need to right the train.

And I am going to just take the privilege of my gender here for a couple of minutes, since I am the woman of the three of us, and just talk about the possibility of privatization's impact on women, because it is disproportionate. It really is. More than 40 years after the Equal Pay Act, women still only earn 76 cents on the dollar for what a man earns, 76 cents. One cannot save what they do not earn. This proposal will disproportionately impact women.

In fact, because of childbearing years and care for sick or elderly parents, on average, women are generally out of the work force for about 12 years. Older women are less likely than older men to receive pension income. Only about 28 percent of women compared to 43

percent of men have a pension. So when they do receive pensions, the benefit to women is only about half what a man will receive.

So what that boils down to is that when a woman received her Social Security retirement benefits in 2003, the average monthly benefit for a woman was only \$798, which is about \$241 less than the average man's monthly retirement.

What will happen to women, because we have got 20 percent of single women who are widowed, who are Social Security beneficiaries who are collecting Social Security today, about 20 percent of those women, the only source of their retirement income is Social Security?

We are just yanking out the security and the safety that we have guaranteed where we are going from a guaranteed benefit to a guaranteed gamble. And that is what the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) has been saying and leading us at the rally today and all the way leading up to today. We cannot shift the whole nature of Social Security from a guaranteed benefit to a guaranteed gamble. We have to keep the security in Social Security. That is the bottom line.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, no doubt about it. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), in fact, today was at Columbia University, New York City, 300 young people at 8:30 in the morning. College students, when that alarm goes off at 7 o'clock, 7:30 when they are in college, they hit that snooze button and they hope they make their 10 o'clock class. But there is so much concern here for this, and we know it is resonating.

And I think this group especially, since the gentlewoman from Florida joined us specifically, we have had more of an impact here, but I think we have seen the polls and the decline in support by young people for this kind of risky scheme, this risky proposal. And I think we will continue to see it because they recognize the fact that long term this is bad for them.

And one thing I would mention to the people that are watching at home, ask themselves is this legislative body, is this President addressing issues that face them day to day, affect their day-to-day life? Are we dealing with issues that will help them? And I think the answer is no. We are not dealing with oil, gas prices. We are not doing anything to try to find alternative energy sources. We are not doing anything to increase funding for Pell grants or No Child Left Behind. We are actually cutting benefits for veterans. If a veteran is sitting at home right now, their copay is going to go from \$7 to \$15, and there are going to be user fees assessed to them. All these things are happening. So if people are sitting at home and they are not involved or engaged in

the political process at all, they have to ask themselves, "What are they doing in Washington, D.C. that is going to help my life?" And really nothing. We are talking about a manufactured crisis that is going to happen in 2042.

I want to read one quick e-mail. I know we have gotten hundreds of these, but I want to read one. This is from last week. "My name is Susan Parker." Susan lives in Severna Park, Maryland. She is 33, becoming ever more involved in politics. A few weeks ago she watched the dynamic trio up here on C-SPAN discussing why the Bush administration's plan was not good for the citizens of the country.

"I was glued to the TV. I started taking notes, and from those notes I e-mailed letters to my Representative, Senators, and several letters to the editor. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the inspiration and for speaking out so consistently."

□ 2145

So these young people are starting to get involved, engaged, writing.

Before I part ways, I am going to have this hanging in my office. This is "Rock the Boat," the little coffee stand on it. "I Love Social Security." You can go to rocktheboat.com and get some information, or e-mail us at 30-something Democrats at mail.house.gov, or go to the Web site, democraticleader.house.gov/30something. So this is it right here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am sure glad the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) shared his closing there, and also showed us his sign.

This is something I picked up today: "Stop Privatization. Americans for Social Security." They have a Web site, dot com. It is actually good water.

Also, this sign here: "Keep Your Hands Off of My Social Security." I think it is important. We know whose hands they are talking about, those who want to privatize, not our hands.

I also want to say thank you, because it is important. The reason why the polling numbers are what they are and Americans feel the way they are now, we want to thank the American Baptist Churches, USA, AFL-CIO, ACORN, Campaign For America's Future, Center For Budget Policy and Priorities, the Center For Economic Policy and Research, Children's Defense Fund, the Coalition of Human Needs, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the Economic Policy Institute, the Labor Council of Latin American Advancement, the Consortium of Citizens With Disabilities, the League of Rural Voters, the League of United Latin American Citizens, Links, Inc., the NAACP, the National Committee To Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the National Congress of American Indians, the National Council of Churches, and I can go on and on and on.

They are the individuals out there, individual Americans, that have taken upon themselves to carry the fight on.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank both of these gentle-

men. I am losing the prop board here, but I wanted to close by quoting the President. He said, "Leadership means not passing problems on to future generations and future Presidents."

This plan passes trillions of dollars of debt on to our children and our grandchildren, and it is time that we all exercise some leadership, come together and think about the direction that this country is going in, bring it back to the center, restore some balance, come to the table and compromise, and take privatizing Social Security off the table and not yank the safety net from under our constituents.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, that is what this is about. When the country goes in the wrong direction, the population, the population can shift it and move it in the right direction. That is what is happening here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) again. It is wonderful being with you all once again. We would like to thank the Democratic leadership, mainly the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), for allowing us to be here.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

INSTITUTING TORT REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise in this Chamber and discuss here tonight what has been a part of my life for my entire adult years, and that is the legal system of the United States, the attitudes of the American people about the legal system of the United States and where we are going in justice for America.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege and the honor to serve as a member of the judiciary for over 20 years of my life. I had the honor to appear before good judges and good juries for an additional about 12 years of my life. I am and have been a part of the legal system of the United States of America. I am a lawyer, I am proud to be a lawyer, and I feel I come from an honorable profession.

But it is also the duty of those of us who practice in a profession, whatever