

is that radical group known as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a set of groups in local communities that, to quote them, "pray at each meeting that families and those who have no home quickly may find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life."

Here is what this subversive organization of deeply religious people dedicated to trying to help the poor have to say:

"Our members live in communities across the country. They serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to own their own homes. They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote, regardless of where they live; and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so."

COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES,  
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,  
St. Louis, MO, November 2, 2005.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,  
Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. FRANK: As National President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul representing 116,000 members across the United States in 4,000 parishes, I urge you to:

1. Support the Affordable Housing Fund in the GSE legislation (H.R. 1461), but without restricting an organization's right to engage in voter registration.

2. Oppose any language that restricts voter registration and freedom of affiliation by non-profit and public organizations when using their own funds.

3. Tell House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Financial Service Chairman Mike Oxley (R-OH) to reject these restrictions and bring the bill to the floor for a vote without this language.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul pray at each meeting "that families and those who have no home may quickly find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life." I ask that you help us to continue to make this a reality.

It is our belief that it is the right of every American to vote. Access to the privilege to register to vote should not be conditioned upon where people live or what their financial condition is. Nonprofit organizations such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, work tirelessly to serve the poor. It is irresponsible to hold organizations hostage by this restrictive measure that impinges on the rights of poor Americans and upon those who seek to help give a face and a voice to the many that are voiceless. We see from the recent tragedies in the south that there are many poor and today many more homeless who need shelter. Adding such limitations on those who are trying so hard to help is wrong.

The Society has been serving the poor in America for over 150 years. Our members live in communities across the country. They regularly visit and serve individuals and families with no homes, families on the verge of homelessness, and families who live in hazardous and substandard conditions. We see what they are going through. Many Councils of the Society provide shelter and housing for the poor. The poor need a voice just as much as Americans who have the financial ability to afford their own homes.

They, too, should be allowed the privilege to register to vote regardless of where they live, and nonprofits should not be penalized for providing them an opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH FLANNIGAN,  
National President,  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

□ 1330

#### ASSURED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2005

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, this is the week upon which the Nation will solemnly recognize the holiday known as Veterans Day, a day out of the year when we should pause to recognize the sacrifice of those 25 million who have served our Nation and the 2.2 million people serving today in uniform, many on the front lines in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in other hot spots around the world.

This is not the only day in which we should recognize the sacrifice that those who have served in the past have given or the current sacrifice of the veterans and the active-duty military and their families, but we should do that every day. And the way Congress could do that best would be to assure veterans that the United States Government will keep its promises, promises that were made to them and their families at the time of enlistment.

Unfortunately, we have fallen short. Until this year the administration had consistently underfunded veterans' benefits, and in fact, even earlier this year the President's proposed budget would have claimed a substantial increase in health care funding for veterans, but actually would have done that by taxing veterans with a \$250 enrollment fee for 2.2 million veterans and doubling the prescription drug copayment. It was not too many years ago that we had no required copayment for veterans. We should return to that time for vets in need.

These are quotes from the Veterans of Foreign Wars; since we do not want this to be a partisan issue, let us quote from a nonpartisan group about the President's budget:

"This budget will cause veterans health care to be delayed and may result in the return of 6-month-long waiting periods. That is especially shameful during a time of war." This is from the VFW, February 7, 2005.

"The message that this budget communicates is that part of the Federal Government deficit will be balanced on the back of military veterans," he said,

"because it's clear that the proper funding of veterans health care and other programs is not an administration policy." Again, a quote from the VFW.

The American Legion, same day: "This is not acceptable," said Thomas P. Cadmus, national commander. "It's nothing more than a health care tax designed to increase revenue at the expense of veterans who served their country." He went on to say that during his visits to VA hospitals, he had not run into Bill Gates, Donald Trump, or Ross Perot seeking care. He sees mostly veterans, many on small fixed incomes, trying to make ends meet and exercising their very best health care option, Cadmus observed.

"No active-duty servicemember in harm's way should ever have to question the Nation's commitment to veterans. This is the wrong message at the wrong time to the wrong constituent." Again, the commander of the American Legion.

Why is the Republican-led Congress not listening to that? This week they are going to struggle mightily to cut programs important to middle-income families, student loans and other programs. Then, in the near future, they are going to struggle mightily to pass \$70 billion of new tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year. But are they going to struggle or are they even going to allow a vote here on the floor of the House of Representatives on H.R. 515, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act?

There is no better way that the elected Representatives could celebrate Veterans Day here in the United States than by bringing up and passing this legislation that would, for all future budgets, assure that there would be adequate funding for veterans. They are already threatening a 2 percent across-the-board cut on that side of the aisle after they do the tax cuts for the rich people, because then we will be having to increase the size of the deficit despite the cuts to middle- and low-income programs, and that, of course, would hit hard again on veterans' programs.

We need assurances that that is not going to happen again. We need to properly recognize their service. The pay raises for Members of Congress, those are going forward in the House, although I oppose them. But somehow we cannot get the additional funding and the assured funding we need for our Nation's veterans.

Please, to the leadership, my Republican colleagues, and those on my side of the aisle, let us not just go home and march in the parades and tell people we are with the veterans. Let us demonstrate that with a vote of support on assured funding, mandatory funding, for every future budget year so that we will not go through these future struggles.

I have had too many calls from too many veterans to my district office where we have tried to help them get

in for critically needed care because of the extraordinary waiting lists in my part of the country, and I know that is not unique. We have got to do away with those waiting lists and deliver on the promises we have made.

Happy Veterans Day.

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.)

#### NICS AND HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, every week I stand here and I talk about common-sense approaches to reducing gun violence in this country, and yet this body sees fit to chip away at existing laws. So tonight I want to talk about the effects of gun violence in terms that everybody in this body understands, dollars and cents.

Throughout America our States are experiencing extraordinary budget problems, forcing them to cut spending on many important initiatives. A great deal of these budget woes are caused by skyrocketing health care costs, and the proposed cuts for Medicaid are not going to help the situation.

Among the initiatives being neglected because of State budget crunches is the National Instant Criminal Background Check. NICS is the database used to determine whether an individual is legally allowed to purchase a gun or not. Since its inception in 1994, NICS has been a great success. More than 700,000 individuals have been denied a gun for failing a background check.

However, the NICS system is only as good as the information that is in it, and because of tight budgets, updating the NICS database has fallen off the radar for many States. But as Congress continues to weaken our gun laws, we increasingly rely on the National Instant Background Check System to assure our constituents that guns do not fall into the wrong hands. But, unfortunately, the NICS database has become dangerously incomplete.

For example, half of all States have entered less than 60 percent of their convicted felons into the NICS system. Thirteen States have failed to enter the subjects of restraining orders stemming from domestic violence into the NICS system. And, of course, in all 50 States, people who are listed on the terrorist watch list cannot get on a plane, but they can buy a gun. This defies common sense.

I have introduced H.R. 1415, legislation that will require States to enter in all NICS information as quickly as possible. My bill would also provide grants to States that do not have the resources needed to update their data-

bases. These grants will not only keep guns out of the hands of felons, but will reduce the States' out-of-control health care costs as well.

Of course, Congress will not allow funding for the Centers for Disease Control to study the economic impact of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources. Independent sources have shown gun violence costs our economy over \$100 billion a year, \$100 billion a year. In fact, each gun death costs our economy \$2.8 million. And much of the cost is picked up by the State and local governments.

Gun violence increases law enforcement spending. Gun violence costs the economy lost productivity. And while Congress will not let us learn the exact amount, gun violence costs our health care system billions each and every year. And since gun violence plagues so many low-income communities, victims are often uninsured. And who picks up the tab for uninsured victims of gun violence? American taxpayers. That is who.

Passage of H.R. 1415 would serve as preventive medicine for the public health care system in many States. This legislation would prevent gun violence without infringing on anyone's second amendment rights. Nobody in this body believes convicted felons should be able to own guns. In fact, H.R. 1415 passed the House by a voice vote in the 107th Congress. Unfortunately, the other body did not have time to pick the bill up. But the bill had the support of several Senators who are known for their strong support of gun rights.

We have an opportunity to reduce health care costs and save lives by improving the NICS system. Mr. Speaker, let us pass H.R. 1415, the NICS Enforcement and Improvement Act, before the end of the year. Let us give the States the help that they need.

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

(Mr. OSBORNE 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. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

#### THE REPUBLICANS' BUDGET CHOICES

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, more than 10 years have passed since the Republican Party issued its "Contract With America."

This week Congress will vote on budget cuts and sacrifices that only middle-class America is asked to bear. These budget cuts have less to do with deficit reduction than they have to do with making the richest among us more comfortable in the face of bad economic times, massive health care costs and unfunded mandates passed on to State and local governments.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, middle America is waking up to the bad news that Democrats have long known, and that is that the budget choices put forth by Republicans show that Republicans have a "Contract on America."

In the release of The Status of Working Families in Indiana, Indiana has had a dramatic increase in the number of persons in poverty during the past few years and has seen household incomes decline for the sixth year in a row. Job growth has been slow and wages have continued to be stagnant. The poverty rate for children in Indiana has jumped sharply in the past 3 years from 10.5 percent in 2002 to 18.5 percent in 2004. Indiana's childhood poverty rate is now greater than the Nation's, which is 17.8 percent.

Employment: From May, 2000, to January, 2002, Indiana lost 122,000 jobs due to the national economic slowdown and recession. Since September, 2003, Indiana has been on the road to recovery, but as of July, 2005, it was still 46,000 jobs below the level reached 5 years ago.

Wages: Indiana's wages have been stagnant for the past several years and have not kept pace with the average wages in the United States. By 2004, the average annual wage in Indiana had fallen to just over 88 percent of the U.S.

Incomes: Based on 2-year averages, Indiana's median household income has declined steadily since 1998 and 1999, when it was \$46,136. By 2003 to 2004, it had fallen to \$42,946.

In our rush to cut the budget on the backs of the poorest of Americans, we need, Mr. Speaker, to counteract that abusive act against middle-class and poor people and restore some economic sanity to the Nation's budget, to the United States of America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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