deepest debt it has ever been in, leaving our children to clean up this mess. I believe they should be ashamed of themselves.

As I prepare to yield back, I again want to express my appreciation for the efforts of the House Democrats on that Budget Committee fighting this fight and getting the word out. We should not fund today's good times based on tomorrow's debt that our kids are going to have to take care of. We ought to pay our own way, and I intend to work with Republicans and Democrats to get us back to that point. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. I thank the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) for his extraordinary leadership and his very deep and genuine concern over the fiscal policy direction of this country.

Even beyond the immorality of this wild, profligate spending and then sending the bill to our children to pay, what American family would take a credit card, max it out, and then tell the credit card company, Do not worry about it. Send the bill to my kids after I die.

And that is what is going to happen. The amount of debt and even the interest on that debt is going to cripple generations to come.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield to my good friend from Virginia.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. I thank my good friend from Florida, the son of one of our most distinguished Members, who is rapidly becoming a leader in his own right.

I mentioned to him that yesterday I stood transfixed at the television set watching his speech on the floor, and it brought up the issue of security. And I trust the gentleman will underscore the national security implications of this budget deficit, because the only way that we are able to spend so profligately, get away with it, is that we have found people who are willing to buy our debt. Not here, but overseas. And for some reason, China seems just as happy as they could be to increase the amount of American debt that they hold by 300 percent over the last 5 years. Billions of dollars they hold; and all they have to do is to say, we do not think that we are going to buy your debt in the manner and to the extent that we have in the past, and our stock market, our economy would crumble.

Imagine putting this country into that kind of vulnerability where we are dependent upon a communist nation buying our debt just so we can continue this misguided fiscal policy.

I thank the gentleman for his leadership, and I look forward to watching him and reading his statement in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD tomorrow too. You have been terrific on this. Thank you, Congressman MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you. We in the 30-something Working Group, and as other Members come to the floor, we talk about these issues that are facing Americans and this issue of selling off our country, borrowing off of our country to foreign nations. You start talking about China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, even the Caribbean countries. They cannot do it by themselves. They have been able to accumulate over 45 percent of your debt thus far because the Republican majority has handed it to them.

I must say, you are a part of Congress, and a number of you who are part of Congress were on the floor when we balanced the budget. The Republicans are talking about cutting it in half. We actually have experience in following through on our side. So we have to continue to come to the floor and share not only with the Members but with the American people about what we can do and what we want to do. We do not want to sell off our country, and that is what it is all about.

The work that you all do in the Budget Committee is so very, very important to us all.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are welcome. I must say, Madam Speaker, it is an honor to come to the floor once again. I know that the Members appreciate the information that we provide to not only the Democratic Members but also Members of the Republican side, the majority. I think it is also important for us to point out issues that are working against Americans and those issues and bipartisan pieces of legislation that are working for America. And we have to see more of that.

I think it is important for us to also reflect on the fact that right now more than ever we need to have a forward lean in getting our fiscal house in order as we start moving through this budget process and also making sure we come clean with the American people on all fronts.

This afternoon we are going to not only talk about our fiscal house but we are also going to talk about making sure we are straight with the American people. The whole reason we come to the floor is there are so many disturbing things that are happening in our country. I am not talking about everyday Americans. I am talking about those who are elected to come here and represent, need it be a lack of oversight or need it be something that the executive branch has done, that this Congress, the majority side has rubber stamped.

Here on this side we have a number of examples of how we have tried to put America back on the right track, not only in leveling with them on homeland security, leveling with the American people as it relates to protecting our ports and our airports and seaports, but also as it relates to the dollar. A lot has happened in the last 4 years, and we have to share that information with them.

I am so glad my good friend and also a part of the 30-something Working Group, Mr. ARTUR DAVIS from Alabama, is continuing on. I know you were part of the last hour with the Budget Committee. I appreciate the work that you all have done thus far, the work that you are doing, looking at what the President has done.

I was hoping maybe you could shed some light on when we start talking about the President during the State of the Union. We were both here. He talked about innovation. He talked about it; and when he released his budget, I heard the talk, but I did not see the walk afterwards as it relates to the fiscal situation. But I appreciate your work on the committee, and maybe you can shed some more light on this, sir.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I am always pleased to see you and Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ lend your eloquence on these issues.

Let me make a couple of points. You touched on something enormously important about the President's commitment to more competitiveness in the economy and the strengthening of our workforce. You and I remember, we both came one Congress ago. We came here in January, 2003, and I remember the President's first State of the Union. He was standing not far from where we stand now. And the only line, frankly, I recall from that speech was a rather memorable one.

He said that this Congress should not put off what future Congresses would do and this generation should not put off for future generations what it could do for itself. That sounded good. It sounded like a bold President saying that we have real opportunities today if we are daring. Well, you look several budgets later. You have a verbal commitment to make the economy stronger. You have a pattern of cutting student loans and making them harder to get, and by the way, changing the eligibility outside the budget process in the dead of night in a way that it is not even debated by this Congress.

You have a promise of more effort to make the country competitive. You see reductions every year in workforce development programs. You see promises every year to strengthen our schools, and you see continued cuts in all of the educational programs in this country or so many of them, and the outright elimination of many of those programs. In fact, almost half of the title items in No Child Left Behind are gone with the wind now as we approach reauthorization.

And you see a promise by this President to make America stronger; but it appears, Mr. MEEK, that making America stronger does not include making our workers stronger and creating

more fair, stronger conditions for them.

As I said in the last hour, that is what this debate is about. It is not about cutting spending. You are not serious about cutting spending when you say, I am going to cut $45 billion and then cut taxes another $70 billion. The math works against you on that.

You are not serious about cutting spending when you have had the greatest level of discretionary spending increase in the last 10 years, in the last several budgets. You are not serious about those things. What we have is an administration and a Congress that, frankly, is not somewhat serious about cutting spending. They are very serious about changing the definition of what we owe each other as Americans.

They want to move us away from a world where we feel connected and obligated to each other across all kinds of lines, and they want to more or less move us to a place where you have got to take care of yourself.

These 13 million families on Medicaid who have got to dig deeper in their pocket now to go to the doctor, well, we have decided that it is such an important proposition that poor people pay more for health care that we rammed that into the budget reconciliation several weeks ago, or they rammed it in.

They think it is so important to spend less money on child support that they rammed that into the reconciliation package several months ago. It goes on and on. But the question is what exactly do we think we owe each other as Americans.

There are some people and some of them sit on the other side of the aisle who believe that we owe each other very little. There are some of us who believe that we can be no stronger than some of our people who are weak and who are hurting through no fault of their own.

□ 1630

There are a lot of kids in this country who will be pushed off Medicaid because of this reconciliation bill a few weeks ago. There are a lot of kids in this country who will not get the doctor visits they need because the Federal Government changed them the Medicare rules a few weeks ago. Those kids are blameless. They did not ask to be born into families under Medicaid or the distressed communities they live in.

So it is very much a matter of priorities and values and choices, but as I close out, I want to make one other point.

You talked about the importance of candor with the American people and the importance of leveling with the American people, not promising you are cutting and spending when you are actually causing the deficit to go up. You talked about the importance of not pretending that you are not taking people off programs, but in fact, you are moving them off programs.

I do not know if your office has been like mine in the last week. I have received so many phone calls from people wondering why their government cannot be more straight with them on what is going on with our ports right now. So many people have called our office and they are wondering exactly why we do not have a stronger shipping industry in the United States, why we have not built stronger port operators in this United States and why we have to keep delegating this stuff out. They hear all the procedural stuff about the 45-day review period, but really, what they wonder is why in the world are we doing a $6 billion deal with a country that helped launder money for the people who attacked our towers, a country that is a very strong and vociferous opponent of our strongest ally in the region, why are we doing business with a country that does not follow any of the rules that we said we want for good trading partners.

It is interesting. It is as if the administration's policy on this issue is completely unconnected to common sense and, frankly, completely unconnected from values because one value would be if you want to do business with the United States, well, maybe you need to do better in terms of your human rights policies; if you want to do business with the United States, maybe you need strong money laundering laws so people cannot pervert your system and finance terrorists; if you want to do business with the United States, maybe you need to be far stronger than this country has shown itself to be on the question of freedom around the world.

These are the values the President talks about every time he stands up there and does a State of the Union. He talks about exporting democracy. He talks about we are this great beacon of democratic freedom. He talks about countries all over the world that are not up to our standard. If that is the case, what signal are we sending?

The last point I want to make is the President wanted to know what signal are we sending to our friends in the Arab world if we do not do this deal. The question is, what signal are we sending if we do it? Here is the signal. The signal is you can fall short of every value and standard that we have in this country, and we will pick you up on the back end and we can make a good enough deal with you.

Now, this is the administration that said it built a foreign policy based on our best moral values. Those moral values appear to be watered down to the way to do a deal, have we got a deal for you, and that is wrong. It has upset people all over this country. It does tie into this debate about the deficit because I think people are wondering who is it we are trying to help; why are we not standing up more for our people who need help and why are we not being more candid about what we are doing.

I really predict to you, as I close today, I think when we come back here after the elections in November, I think that our side of the House will be the side that has got more people. I think the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) will honor us by being the first female Speaker of the House. I am being stronger convinced that you will be the new chair of the subcommittee that you serve on so ably as ranking member, and Mr. RYAN and I will get to move up the dais, too, because I think the American people are getting this. They are getting that the side that says it is strong and says it is serious is neither as strong nor as serious as they have said.

People are really smart. They are smart in my district and yours and all over the country, and I think that what we will see is a change in the politics of this country, a change in the leadership of the House. I welcome it when we stand up here next year crafting the budget, and it will matter. The Democratic alternative we are putting together right now, it will really matter next year because we are going to be in the majority, and we will be crafting a budget and sending it to the President and saying, Mr. President, we dare you to veto a stronger commitment to education and health care and growing our economy; we dare you to veto a stronger commitment to strengthening working families. I would be happy to. He has not vetoed anything in 6 years.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, our friend Mr. DAVIS is on the Budget Committee, and I think when he talks about you are preparing a substitute right now, what the Democrats are going to do when we are in charge, Madam Speaker, we have a track record already, and Mr. MEEK has the statistics, and we have the charts here.

MIKE THOMPSON from California offered a vote on pay-as-you-go to make sure everything we spend money on was budget neutral, so we did not go into deficit. CHARLIE STENHOLM, when he was in office, offered it. Republicans voted against that, and voted against MIKE THOMPSON's bill.

DENNIS MOORE of Kansas offered a pay-as-you-go amendment to a piece of legislation that got shot down. Every Democrat voted for it. Every Republican voted against it.

Mr. SPRATT offered amendments within our budget that we were providing to try to amend the budget resolution, on two occasions, in March of 2005 and again in March of 2004. Zero Republicans voted for this.

So when Mr. DAVIS says this is what the Democrats are going to do when we are in charge, that is what we are talking about here, making sure you pay for your bills as you go along, not this reckless spending.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, let me follow up on what my friend from Ohio just said.

This PAYGO rule you talk about, we call it PAYGO for various reasons. Really, it is the be-like-the-American-family rule. Every family I know,

yours, mine, every other one, has to decide, if we are going to go out and buy some new things, we better make some more money or we better pull into our savings. All this rule says is if you are going to have new spending, you have got to pay for it. You can do it one of two ways, with spending cuts by making changes in the marginal rate or changes in revenue. That is the honesty stuff, that is the candor stuff.

The reality is, why would anybody not want to do that? If you are a fiscal conservative, why would you not want to go to a world that says let us just be no better or worse than the American family?

So this is an argument, once again, about whether we follow the same rules and the same principles that people follow all around the country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I mean, we are willing to follow the rules. We are ready. We are ready to do what we have to do to be able to put this country on the right track.

The bottom line is that the Republican majority, time after time, because they are not doing their job by keeping the executive branch in check, Madam Speaker, things like videos that are broadcast throughout the world, commander-in-chief says I did not know anything about Hurricane Katrina, it was a shock to me, I learned 72 hours after the hurricane, blankets and everything is on the way to New Orleans, and we are going to do what we have got to do. Then lo and behold, in this great democracy of ours, a video surfaces where the President was informed of the power of this hurricane and that 12,000 people evacuated or went to some sort of high ground in the Superdome and that we are going to have massive flooding, and that this was bigger than Hurricane Andrew that hit my community almost 12 years ago, Madam Speaker. The President's in Crawford, Texas, on video phone, and he says we are ready and we are prepared to respond. Then he shows up a couple of days later, goes back to the White House acting like he is shocked.

That is what I am talking about, leveling with the people, but it is easy to say that you do not know because you have said it before. Well, I did not know anything about the intelligence, no one told me, no one told me about a special port deal dealing with the questionable, quote, unquote, new ally. No one told me; I did not know. I feel sorry for the White House spokesperson. Goodness gracious. I mean, the guy must have an ulcer by now because he has to come week after week, day after day now, and say, well, you know, we did not know, we did not know.

I am sick and tired, and I do not care, if I had no party affiliation in this House, I am sick and tired of folks here in Washington saying they do not know. Somebody knows. This stuff just does not happen on its own, and it is very, very wrong for someone to sit up here and insult the American people. I think the American people have had enough of this stuff. The polling indicates they have had enough of it and the Republican majority.

We are here saying let us get together on innovation. Let us make sure our country is ahead of other countries in innovation and the sciences and math. Let us educate our children in broadband access. We are here with this innovation document almost every day. Madam Speaker, we encourage Members to go on housedemocrats.gov. We say it every day. This has been out for several weeks. The ink's pretty dry. We can bring the big binder down here if someone wants to get a copy of that.

They do not want to level with the American people. We have got men and women in harm's way right now based on weapons of mass destruction, and a lot of folks are running around here saying we did not know. We have got CIA agents that have been outed; oh, I did not know anything about that; I do not know how that happened; I do not even know the lady. Okay.

I just want to go down memory lane here, and it is continuing to unfold. Here the Republican majority just last year this time, well, let us just put it this way, 3 months ago, this time embracing and boasting about the K Street Project. Yes, we have the K Street Project, and guess what, if the lobbyists are not in tune with us, then they do not even get to come into our office, if they are not a part of the K Street Project.

It is basically you pay your dues to the Republican National Committee or the Republican Congressional Committee and you get access. Oh, well, that is fine. And are you a part of that project? And Democrats, who if they even have a Democratic affiliation, they could not even go into a lobbying firm. They had to be okayed and checked off by this so-called K Street Project that grew out of the Capitol, not into the Capitol.

So I do not blame lobbyists and special interests for that. I blame folks that walk in here and have voting cards just like we do on the majority side.

I am going to say this, too, Madam Speaker, it is disturbing. Folks run around here saying we need lobbying reform. Well, you know, I do not recall the lobbyists walking in here knocking on the door of the Republican majority, saying you know something, I want you to make me contribute to your campaign; I want you to make me hire your ex-staffers; I want you to make me do things that I ordinarily would not do because I think I need to have some sort of approach for the best person; but if you send a person to me and I want to have access to this House, to this Senate and to the White House, I have got to play by your rules.

I doubt if that happened. I guarantee you that did not happen, and now after a certain lobbyist has said guess what, you are an attorney and you were educated at one of the best schools here in this country. A man says, okay, I know you accuse me of being a part of the Washington inside game, what a lobbyist does, he goes to trial, do we have to go through a jury pool selection? The guy says I am guilty, right here, handcuff me, please hurry up before I do something else, and I am willing to help you with some folks on Capitol Hill that I did business with on a daily basis for access into the process, okay, then the Republican majority comes out and says that K Street Project, hey, that is wrong. All right. Well, there is something really, really wrong with that.

Then you wonder exactly what you are talking about, how did we get to allowing countries to borrow $1.16 trillion of the American apple pie. How did Japan infiltrate the United States of America, owning a piece of the American pie? How did Red China get into it? How did the OPEC Nations like Saudi Arabia and other questionable lists get there when people start talking about this?

So when folks come to the floor and try to have a moment of clarity, I have to kind of just stand up and say, hey, the 30 Something Working Group, we have been talking about this stuff. Folks can talk about a green assault or they can come with a positive message. I am going to take from Mr. RYAN. You show me a way to talk positively, how we are selling our country off to foreign Nations and we will do it if it is okay.

I know Mr. RYAN wants to say something, and I am going to go to Mr. DAVIS because he has been holding something for a very long time, but I had to get that out, because as an American, let us just put the Democratic thing aside.

This is our country, too. This is our country, too, but Madam Speaker, I may represent too many veterans, too many troops in harm's way, allowing us to salute one flag. Maybe I am just a little bit too attached to my constituency, but I tell you one thing, they defended this country for us to be up here in this chamber representing them in a way they should be represented.

I will be doggone if we let whoever it is in the majority or what have you run this country, continue to run this country into the ground, and we do not have the prerogative to say anything.

We are in the minority. There is very little we can do because we cannot put a bill on the floor, but we are going to do everything we can do to step on the line, cross the line, because this country's being sold over to foreign Nations, and folks are running around here talking about security. They do not even want to level with the American people even about a hurricane.

□ 1645

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. I thank the gentleman for yielding. All of my colleague's points are so powerful that they inspire other thoughts and ideas

that just want to tumble out of you. So let me go back a little bit to what you were saying, because you make a very important point.

I think there has been an interesting flip between where our party was at one point and where the Republicans are at this point. We are all fairly young guys. This is a little bit before our time, but we hit a zone as a party in the 1970s and 1980s where we would make decisions as a party and sometimes they would not be smart decisions. But we, frankly, couldn't and wouldn't defend them.

We would just say to the American people and some folks in our party would say to the American people, you know what, trust us. We have the facts, we are diligent, we know what is right, we have more information than you do, so you ought to just trust us. And, frankly, Mr. MEEK, that didn't work terribly well as a strategy for our party and people started to lose confidence in us. And they started to think, well, we put you there, so you have to tell us more, you have to level with us more.

Now, what have we seen in the last several weeks, essentially, when everybody all over the country is saying, why can't we find a country that doesn't have a history of terrorist ties to help police our ports, pretty simple question? What do they say? They say, trust us. They say we have got the facts, we have got information you don't have, we know more than you do, let us do our jobs. Trust us.

And they have said it before. They say it with these budgets. They say, yes, there is a lot of stuff in here nobody understands, and they bring them to the floor and we get a few hours to look at it. But they say, trust us, we have the information, we have the facts and we know what is right for the American people.

And I am sure a lot of folks are probably thinking right now that they did that back in March 2003, and they said, no, you don't have all the intel, you don't have all the evidence, but we do. Trust us and we will get us in and out of this war real quick. And if you doubt that, well, trust us.

This ''just trust us'' politics took us from having, what was the number we had, it was 292, was the maximum we got to. We had 292 seats here at one point, but we lapsed into the ''just trust us'' politics and now we are down to 203.

Well, I think now they are the ''just trust us'' folks, and they have started to move down the scale in the numbers, and I think they are going to be moving from around 231 to about 208 or 209 or so in not too long.

The American people put us here. We get whatever little authority we derive from the Constitution and from them. So we do owe them candor, we do owe them explanations, we do owe them a sense of direction. It is not enough to say, just trust us, is it?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, Mr. DAVIS, the bottom line is, and Mr. RYAN said it last night and I will say it again, the American public is very coachable. The bottom line is: So shall it be written, so shall it be done out of the White House, and we have got to protect the President.

Let me tell you something. The President has Secret Service, all that good stuff, and about 100 staffers, or more than that.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Actually 1,000, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. A thousand staffers. A whole army of them wearing suits. And I will tell you this. Everyone respects the commander in chief, but the thing about our Constitution, our democracy, and the three branches of government means that we don't have to follow the President when he is heading us down the road.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. He is not a king, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. He is not a king. Thank you, Mr. RYAN. Thank you for making that very clear.

But it seems that folks don't understand that that is the case.

Now, I have Republican constituents that are very highly upset. Some of them got into the Republican Party looking for fiscal responsibility because that is all they sold, Madam Speaker. But the bottom line is, when you look in the final analysis, who is spending the money now? Who is borrowing the money now?

The thing is, we balanced the budget. We had surpluses as far as the eye could see, yet within a matter of a few, short, single-digit years this country is far beyond a point of return if we don't stop this Republican Congress from doing what they are doing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman will yield, I thought it was very interesting when our friend talked about trust. I couldn't help but see earlier our friends, the Truth Squad, and they were talking about all the spending increases and spending increases, all borrowed money. All of it is borrowed. And it is not having results. We are talking about results. We are talking about having an impact.

And as my friend, Mr. DAVIS, said, who I just enjoy being around him. I mean he is good.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. He is real good.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I want to be friends with you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are friends, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am friends with him.

But the point that he made, Mr. MEEK, talking about their saying, trust us; and Republicans say that the American people should trust them. But we have a history here that says we have trusted you and you have misled us.

You misled us with the facts of the war, you misled us on the economy, you misled us on the results of what the tax cuts would be, you misled us when you said government was going to be smaller under your reign, you misled us when you said government would be more responsible under your reign. It has failed time and time again.

I have two images in my head, Mr. MEEK, about the real incompetence of the Republican majority to be able to run government. I have a picture of 11,000 trailers that are sitting in Hope, Arkansas, in the mud right now that cost the taxpayers $300 million that are sitting in the mud, and we still have people that are not in their homes in the gulf coast. That is a government that does not work.

And what the Democrats are saying is that we have solutions to this. We are not going to participate in cronyism and the lack of responsibility and responsiveness on the Republican side for not providing any oversight to all this.

Then we have the administration come out and say they didn't know anything about it, but memos leak out, and we find out they knew about it. Now, all of a sudden we get videos that are out saying that the administration knew exactly what the threat was and what would happen yet still not being able to respond.

That is the bottom line. The people of this country, Mr. MEEK, want a responsive government. It doesn't have to be big, and in today's society, government should not be big, but it should be responsive, effective, efficient, nimble, flexible, able to change with different scenarios as the scenarios change and as society changes.

Our Republican friends, and I mean that sincerely because I consider many of them friends, they just lack the ideas to try to move the country forward. So it is not anything personal, it is just that they do not have the ideas, Madam Speaker, to move this ahead.

What the Democrats offer, and this is the thing, Mr. MEEK, for us personally, definitely in the 30-somethings, and I know our Democratic friends believe, profit is not a dirty word. Profit is good. Greed is bad; profit is good. We want more profit, because that means more people are going to get hired. But in the end, our friends on the other side, on the Republican side, cannot put forth an adequate reform agenda that will move the country forward.

All we have to do, Mr. MEEK, is look at what the budget looks like right now. Look at what the budget looks like right now.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ just joined us, and I can tell both my colleagues right now what is wrong here. We talk about folks not leveling with the American people, which is wrong, and they are still not. They are still not.

We come to the floor because we think it is important that people understand what is going on. We have been talking about the debt ceiling being raised, and I want to be able to raise this again, because this stuff is historic. We know it, but I want to make sure the Members know what is going on. This is historic.

It is historic in a way that in the middle of the holiday season last year, on the 29th of December, when I was with my family.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Getting ready for New Year's.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Getting ready for New Year's, looking forward to the New Year, and Members of Congress were back in their districts, as we all should be, with pies being baked and all kind of good stuff.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Cabbage and sauerkraut.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Yes, things like that. And Secretary Snow obviously was in his office that day, the 29th of December 2005, Madam Speaker, and he wrote this letter to one of our Senators informing him of the current $8.1 billion ceiling that we had.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Sorry to interrupt, Mr. MEEK. It's trillion.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Currently, the debt limit is $8.1 trillion. He wrote billion in this letter. I am just reading what he says there. It says billion. It doesn't say trillion, it says billion.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Wrong.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, it could be a typo.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is a big typo.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. But he is basically just talking about the debt ceiling, that it will be reached in 2006; at this time, unless the debt ceiling is raised, we will no longer be able to continue financing government operations.

This is on the 29th of December. On February the 16th he writes another letter, Secretary Snow. We talk about him. We have his portrait here. He is a nice guy. He is just trying to figure out how to run this thing because the Republican Congress is handing him a fixed deck.

He writes John Spratt, who is the ranking minority member on the Budget Committee here in the House, an honorable man, and he says, on December 29th I wrote the Congress regarding the need to increase the statutory debt limit. Because the debt limit has not been raised, I must inform the Congress that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8438(h)(2) that it is my determination that by reason of the fact the public debt limit has not been raised, I can no longer pay into the retirement system.

That is the retirement system that we call the G Fund, which basically puts forth the dollars for us to be able to invest in the retirement system of the Federal employees. He can no longer do it. He goes on, to relieve the Federal employees, that when the debt ceiling is raised that he would be able to continue the investment there.

Now, if you can just bear with me for 1 second, because I have to go through this and make sure everyone is clear. Again, this chart is one of the most famous charts; one day it may appear somewhere over in the National Archives, because it is history. It is history in our country. Unfortunately, it is bad history, not good history. And we keep things because we have to make sure we never make this mistake again.

In the 224 years prior to this President and the Republican Congress getting their opportunity to have free rein on borrowing, 42 Presidents before President Bush only borrowed $1.01 trillion. That is a fact. Anyone can check it out. This is the U.S. Department of Treasury. That is our third-party validator, Madam Speaker.

President Bush, along with friends and colleagues in the Republican Congress, has borrowed $1.01 trillion and counting from foreign nations.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Unbelievable.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let us talk about these foreign nations just for a second. This is a silhouette and map of the United States of America, one of the greatest countries on the face of the Earth. I think it is important that we talk about the people that own all the parts of the American apple pie.

I challenge Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and any Member of this U.S. House of Representatives, Democrat or Republican, that can explain to me a better way to say that this is a good thing for the American people.

Canada. We will put that up there. They own $53.8 billion of the American apple pie.

□ 1700

Korea, they own $65.5 billion of the American apple pie that we have borrowed from these countries. $65.7 billion, Germany owns a piece of the American apple pie, thanks to the Republican majority and the President, with their policies. The UK, some may say friend and ally, they are friends and allies of our efforts that are going on. They own a piece of America right now at $223.2 billion. That is a lot of money. OPEC nations. I am going to put that here, down there by Texas. They own $67.8 billion of the American apple pie. And I think it is important.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. MEEK, will you yield for one moment?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I will yield.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I just want to let the Members know according to the Department of Treasury, again, third-party validator, the OPEC designation includes those countries, what is it, $65 billion?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. $67.8 billion and counting, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Okay. That is what we have borrowed from them. Iran, Iraq, Libya, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Ecuador, Oman, Venezuela, Qatar, Nigeria, Kuwait, Indonesia.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Did you say Iran?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I said Iran and I also said Iraq. I also said UAE, which has been in the news lately. But I just wanted to clarify for you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. So it is not shocking from this administration to get anything from folks that may have a questionable past in the effort against terrorism. Am I correct, sir?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Iran, all the nuclear issues, all the conflict and controversy, we are borrowing money from them to finance the Republican spending spree that is rewarding their wealthy contributors.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. So they hold the note on the United States of America?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Them, along with a lot of other countries, yes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Be happy to yield.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Because, Mr. MEEK, what you are saying here, it is not simply a matter of fact. It goes beyond just factual accuracy that you are talking about. There is risk when it comes to this much debt being owned, this much of our debt being owned by another country. And then that doesn't even take into consideration whether the country that owns that debt, how friendly they are towards us.

Let us just talk about some recent comments by some of the leaders of the nations that own our debt. The Japanese Prime Minister, obviously Japan is an ally of ours and not one that we have to do a lot of hand wringing about, but Prime Minister Hashimoto just recently, I think this was a couple of weeks ago, stated, ''We hope we don't have to succumb to the temptation to sell off U.S. Treasury bills.'' And later that same day the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 192 points, one of the largest declines in points in history. So there is real risk to accumulating that much debt in each of these nations economically in our country and economically across the world.

I have heard many of our colleagues, very flippantly on the other side of the aisle, write off the issue of debt as if it is not a big deal. Debt, in someone's household individually, would be a big deal. When we talk about the deficit and deficit spending, which is obviously a separate issue, that is a very big deal. Debt is something that we should begin to move away from. Yet, instead of that, what Secretary Snow has been asking us to do is continually increase it. And what did they do recently, just during that February 16 letter when the Secretary indicated that the debt limit needed to be raised again? Because the Congress has not done that, he had to dip into the pension fund. He actually had to, because something has to give. If Congress is not raising the debt limit, then he has got to cover that debt somewhere.

What I have found ironic for a very long time is that the Republicans like to throw around the L word when it comes to us and that we are tax-and-spenders. Honestly, first of all, that certainly is incorrect. But beyond that, what has been equally, if not more, irresponsible since they have been stewards of this economy is the borrow-and-spend philosophy that they have engaged in, because during the Clinton years there was a surplus. We were

only arguing over what we were going to do with that surplus. And now we don't have the ability to talk about that. So how much we are borrowing and dipping into our reserves, so to speak, other people's reserves, is really inappropriate.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are 110 percent right, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are not done yet.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There are so many people, so many countries, questionable and nonquestionable, ally and non-ally, Madam Speaker, that have a part of the American apple pie.

China. There are a lot of concerns about China. Red China, Communist China. Guess what? In the shining example of a democracy, they own $249.8 billion of our debt. They have it.

Taiwan, a lot of things are made there in Taiwan. $71.3 billion in Taiwan that they own of U.S. debt.

Japan. You heard of Japan and we just finished talking about Japan, $682.8 billion.

Now, Mr. RYAN, if you were to take all of the State budgets, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and all of us, you were a senator, State senator, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and I were State Senators once upon a time, we understand State budgets. They have to balance. But I guarantee you can put all of the State budgets together in the United States, including Alaska and Puerto Rico and Hawaii, you name it. It doesn't total up to the amount of debt that Japan owns of the United States, which is the $682.8 billion.

Now, that is history and that is the present. The only one way we can have a paradigm shift, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, is to do what Mr. RYAN talked about earlier. We share with the Members, time, examples, page, routing numbers, all of those things that the American people and these Members and the Republican Members can go back and see where we have tried to stop them from doing this. You pay as you go, like you said.

If you end up finding yourself in a financial situation, what do you do, go out and get another credit card? No, you start saying I have to pay for things because I can't get any more credit.

But the thing about this Republican majority, Madam Speaker, and the President of the United States, they just feel it is okay. Oh, I can go out and talk to one of our other friends and say, buy our debt.

Mr. RYAN, would you take that chart where you talk about domestic borrowing. You go over that, but I want to make sure that you share with the Members exactly what they are doing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, let us do this here. This is the debt increases that you were referring to in the letter. Already, this President, and this Republican Congress have raised the debt ceiling, which means this country can now go out and borrow more money from the countries that Mr. MEEK was talking about.

June 2002, this Republican Congress okayed raising this debt ceiling by $450 billion. In May of 2003, $984 billion increase in the debt ceiling. November of 2004, $800 billion, raising the level of the debt ceiling again. And then the pending increase, $781 billion increase in our debt ceiling. That is a total of $3 trillion, $3 trillion that this Republican Congress has okayed, Madam Speaker, and will go out and borrow from the countries that Mr. MEEK just spoke of.

Now, real quick, of that increase, since 2001, this country has borrowed $1.18 trillion, which is signified by the blue bar there on the far left. Of that money, of the $1.18 trillion, $1.16 trillion, the orange bar is foreign debt borrowed from foreign countries. And over here, this bar, you could barely see, Mr. MEEK, that is domestic borrowing. So of all these, of this debt of the money we are borrowing, it is almost 100 percent from foreign countries. Piece by piece by piece.

It is not just the ports. It is not just the ports, Mr. MEEK, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It is our future. It is this country that is getting mortgaged, and we have to pay interest on that.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I yield to you to talk about that.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, because, you know, the concept of the debt and the deficit is kind of hard to get your mind around sometimes because the numbers are so big and the concepts are somewhat complex. So we always try, in our 30-something hours, to translate these concepts into what it means to everyday people. So let us just talk about the interest payments on the debt that we owe to these countries that Mr. MEEK slapped up on our Nation's map.

What we could do with the money, just on the interest payments, just the interest payments on the debt that we pay for veterans: we could be spending about $35 billion, billion with a B, more money on services for our Nation's veterans.

We could be spending about $20 billion on homeland security. Billion with a B. Certainly we could dedicate all that money to port security, because we spent about $18 billion since 2001 and 9/11 on airport security. I think we could probably equal it out just with the interest payment on the debt.

Let us take a look at education. We are seriously underfunding the No Child Left Behind Act and preventing children from getting themselves prepared for the path that they choose in life. And we could take just the interest payments on the debt and spend that on education. That would be about $75 billion for education. Or we could continue to spend it on the interest, which is now at $250 billion.

Let us take it a little bit further and translate that even more specifically. What else could the government do with the interest that the country pays every day on this publicly held debt?

We could invest $1 million a day in every single congressional district. Now, I think all 435 of us could find something good we could do to improve the quality of people's lives with $1 million a day.

We could provide health care to almost 80,000, 79,925 more veterans in this country. And we know each of us in our districts hears from our veterans about the pitiful health care services that they are receiving and the struggle that they have in just getting an appointment to get health care from the Veterans Administration.

We can enroll 60,790 more children in the Head Start program, which we are going in the wrong direction in right now and enrolling fewer because we are not funding it adequately.

Or we could improve the solvency of Social Security, which this President has said is in crisis. We have differed with his definition of crisis; but even if it is half as big a problem as he says, we can improve Social Security solvency by almost half a billion dollars, just by using the interest that this Nation pays on the national foreign debt that other countries hold.

Now, if you went to a town hall meeting in each of our districts and asked our constituents, and the three of us have a diverse constituency. We represent all different kinds of folks between the three communities that we represent. Universally, they would prefer that that money be available to be spent on these items rather than making interest payments on debt that we owe to foreign countries.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Absolutely.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And in addition to the money that we could be investing, and those are all investments, those are paying our Head Start, a million per Congressional district that is going to get spent on health and education and pushing it into our future making sure that we keep our promise to our veterans who we have promised that we would provide health care for.

But at the same time, when you balance the budget, you keep interest rates low. And we notice now how interest rates are starting to creep up every few months another quarter point, quarter point, half. It keeps going up. We want to balance the budget here like President Clinton and the Democratic Congress did in 1993 without one Republican vote, Madam Speaker, without one Republican vote, balanced the budget. Interest rates stayed low, and people went out and borrowed and invested in the economy.

So it is not government's job to go out and create work. We have a responsibility, and one of the things is to keep the budget balanced, keep interest rates low, and then allow that money to be borrowed by the private sector, so people can go out and make a profit and hire people and put that money back into the economy.

Be happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, the bottom line is that you really started to paint a picture here. What has happened over the last 4 to 5 years of this Republican Congress rubber stamping what the President has proposed has driven this country almost to the point of the 50 percent mark of foreign countries owning the United States of America financially. We owe them. Countries that don't even recognize, folks want to talk about an effort against terrorism.

Right now there is something major going on in the Middle East. You have the countries that are a part of this port deal that don't even recognize Israel. I mean, they are like, well, we don't even want to do business with them. Okay? As a matter of fact, Iran wants to blow Israel off the map. You have folks that are there saying all these statements every week about our friends and allies: if this is about the war on terror, we have to make sure that we do what we need to do and stick close to our friends.

□ 1715

And what is wrong here, Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, is that the President is still making statements, Madam Speaker, such as, well, I have not changed my mind. They are going to have their 45-day review and all that kind of stuff.

It happens to be a U.S. statute, I must add.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. A small detail.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Saying that if anyone, anyone, raised any concerns, any concerns, one of the lowest bars of statutory language, that there should automatically be a 45-day review.

Do you remember that we went for 72 hours, Madam Speaker, and no one bothered to open the statute books to say we should have had an investigation because there is a questionable pass of this country and that it should be done. But the administration came out stonewalling and trying to strongarm this House of Representatives and the Senate, saying, we are going to do what we have got to do and we are going to stick with it, and we think it is the right thing to do. And the statutes were on our side, on the people's side, saying, no, there should be a 45-day review.

So we are going to see what is going to happen.

But I hope, Madam Speaker, that the Republican majority here in the House and in the Senate no longer says, well, Mr. President, we still have our stamp. If you say we should do it, we will figure out a way to do it, and we will not object because we have got to be close to our friends.

Well, we are going to find out the leaders from the followers. The bottom line, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN, is, are you with them or are you with our allies, our true allies? That is the question.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Yesterday the amazing thing about this whole port deal that you are alluding to, in the Financial Services Committee we had an opportunity to question the representatives of the administration. Do you know that they testified that six different entities within the White House were aware of the proposal to close this Dubai Ports World deal, and the President still did not know about it, with six of his offices in the White House knowing about it? No explanation in committee for why that happened.

Really, this picture says it all. We are essentially outsourcing America's security to a foreign-government-owned company. We are not talking about just a foreign company.

I think I can tell you that I recognize that we are not going to shut down foreign companies from owning and operating facilities in our Nation's ports. We are a global economy now. But is it appropriate to allow foreign governments to have intimate knowledge about America's security in our ports and run the terminal operations inside those ports? Overwhelmingly, I think Republicans and Democrats in Congress are saying ''no.'' Why is the President saying ''yes''? This is a person who supposedly thinks that America's national security should be a priority. It has left Americans scratching their heads.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think, at the end of the day, this is symbolic of what is happening in all these other areas that we talked about tonight. It puts a face, so to speak, on what is happening, that Mr. MEEK talked about, all the foreign borrowing, the deficits and everything else. Now, it is like, well, it is our ports, my goodness gracious. Well, that is just the tip of the iceberg, unfortunately.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It is indifference, Mr. RYAN. It is indifference, that there is a total disconnect between what the American people care about and understand are their needs and what this administration and this President understand.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. As we have been saying for a long time in the 30-something group, we have got to try to convince, Madam Speaker, the Republican majority to start putting the country before their own political party, and I think we would be okay.

The Web site, www.housedemocrats.gov/30something, Madam Speaker, for all the Members who want to access this. All the charts that you saw here tonight, Madam Speaker, are accessible on this Web site for Members to access.

To my friend from Florida, I thank you for the opportunity to be here with you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. With that, Madam Speaker, we would like to thank Mr. Jim Moran, who was with us earlier, Mr. Artur Davis also and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and definitely Mr. RYAN for coming to the floor. We would like to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have the hour.

APPOINTMENT AS INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). Pursuant to clause 6 of rule II, and the order of the House of December 18, 2005, the Chair announces the joint appointment by the Speaker, the majority leader and the minority leader of Mr. James J. Cornell of Springfield, Virginia, as Inspector General for the United States House of Representatives to fill the existing vacancy.

OMMISSION FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2006, AT PAGE H447

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was take from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2141. An act to make improvements to the Federal Deposit Insurance Act; to the Committee on Financial Services; in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HINCHEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Mr. HINOJOSA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of business in the district.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of illness.

Mr. SWEENEY (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for February 28 and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

Mrs. BONO (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of illness.

Mr. GOHMERT (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. NORWOOD (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of a death in the family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.