

But, no. This would have eaten into drug company profits and threatened the friendship that exists between the Republicans and the drug companies.

Mr. Speaker, we can still correct this injustice visited upon our seniors before we recess. Today, we should give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the power to bargain those prices down and permanently close the donut hole.

America needs a new direction.

IN HONOR OF SMEAD MANUFACTURING ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. KLINE. Madam Speaker, there has been much celebration this year in the little town of Hastings, Minnesota. I rise today to recognize a small business icon in the State, a document management company with a rich heritage of innovation and quality.

This year, Smead Manufacturing celebrates its 100th anniversary. A cornerstone of the Hastings community, Smead is the world's leading provider of filing and organizational products.

For 100 years, Smead has been committed to one purpose, keeping business organized. For the last 51 years, Smead has been a woman-owned company which now employs more than 2,700 workers in 15 plants. I have enjoyed the opportunity to visit the Hastings facility and meet many of the dedicated employees. On the occasion of this milestone achievement, I want to thank the men and women of Smead Manufacturing for their service to the community and the State of Minnesota. I commend the employees and leaders of this great institution and wish them much continued success.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

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

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, this Republican Congress has failed the American people. Nobody can deny that this is the most do-nothing Congress in our history. On every front, from Iraq to Social Security, Republicans have sided with the lobbyists' special interest agenda instead of working for the American people. Time and time again, they have said "no" to the needs and concerns of the American people.

"No" to increasing the minimum wage.

"No" to balancing the budget.

"No" to fully implementing the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

"No" to filling the donut hole for millions of American seniors struggling with their drugs.

"No" to tough penalties on big oil companies that price gouge.

"No" to finding a new strategy for Iraq.

Republican inaction on issues of critical concern to the American people has led to rising drug costs, higher energy prices than a year ago, and billions of taxpayer money being wasted in Iraq on no-bid contracts for administration cronies like Halliburton.

The American people are fed up with a Congress that refuses to do its job. It's time for a change.

□ 1030

THE NEED FOR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, as my friend Mr. ENGEL from New York knows, gas prices are coming down. I am glad about it. A friend of mine, a son, actually filled up last weekend for \$1.89 a gallon.

But Mr. ENGEL and I know that the pressure upon the gas supply brought about by new drivers in India and China and all over the world means increased demand with a very limited supply of oil. We have got to wean ourselves off of Middle East oil and foreign oil as much as possible.

Mr. ENGEL and I have introduced H.R. 4409, which moves us toward alternative fuels. Ethanol, hydrogen, biomass, technologies that are already out there. We just need to invest more money and accelerate our commitment towards fuel independence.

Imagine driving through a rural area, cornfields on both sides of you, with assurance that that is your next tank of gas. Would that not be great?

This is something that we can work on as Democrats and Republicans. Mr. ENGEL and I have put the bill forward. We are glad to have a lot of Democrats and a lot of Republicans on it. I hope we can get it to the floor for a vote because I think it is extremely important.

THE WORLD IS LESS SAFE

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

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, America is less safe today than before 9/11 attacks. That is according to the National Intelligence Estimate that was leaked out over the weekend. According to the report, the war in Iraq is actually fueling terror worldwide, undermining our efforts to fight terrorism, and making Americans less safe at home and abroad.

This is the second report that questioned our efforts in Iraq, by the GAO. The GAO report asked three specific questions that, unfortunately, this do-nothing Congress should be asking if we had not abdicated our role.

First, what are the key political, economic, and security conditions that must be achieved for U.S. forces to begin to withdraw? Americans want to know.

Two, why have security conditions continued to deteriorate in Iraq even though Iraq has reached political milestones and increased the number of trained and equipped security forces? The American people want to know.

And, three, if existing U.S. political, economic, and security measures are not reducing the violence in Iraq, what measures, if any, does the administration propose to end the violence? The American people want to know.

It is time that we make Americans safer and fully implement the 9/11 recommendations. It is time for a new direction.

FAILURES OF THE CONGRESS UNDER REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

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

Mr. COOPER. Madam Speaker, we are in the final hours of this Congress. How will historians judge our work? Very harshly.

There has probably not been a more incompetent or corrupt Congress in modern times than this one. Don't take my word for it. Look at the book called "The Broken Branch," by Norm Orenstein and Thomas Mann. It chronicles the failures of this institution under its recent Republican leadership.

Another objective measure is the lack of workdays in this body. Norm Orenstein pointed out only yesterday that we will have worked only 60 real days this entire year. Sixty days, 2 months of work, and yet we draw 12 months of pay.

Where are the hearings? Where are the debates? Where is the action on American priorities? Where is the immigration bill? Nowhere. Where is the defense bill? And we are in the middle of two wars. Crucial, vital pieces of legislation for America, and this leadership says it simply does not have the time.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1045 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1045

Resolved, That it shall be in order at any time through the legislative day of September 29, 2006, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules. The Speaker or his designee shall consult with the Minority Leader or her designee on the designation of any matter for consideration pursuant to this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 1045 provides that suspensions will be in order at any time through the legislative day of September 29, 2006. Further, it provides that the Speaker or his designee will consult with the minority leader or her designee on any suspension considered under the rule.

This is the last week before Congress will recess until November so that Members can return home and spend their time meeting and working with those that they represent. Currently, there are several necessary and non-controversial bills that are waiting consideration by the House of Representatives. It is important that the House be able to consider these bills before adjourning.

The suspension authority provided in this resolution will ensure that Congress can complete some additional key work by allowing for consideration of a number of important bills through the legislative day of September 29, 2006.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this rule.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, at the end of the week, this Congress will adjourn so that its Members can go home to campaign for their seats. I like to think of a campaign as a long job interview. Everyone in the body will have to convince his or her constituents that they are the best person for the job, that they have spent their time here in Washington doing whatever they can to better the lives of the people back home in their districts.

Madam Speaker, this Republican Congress has not made that task easy. It isn't just what the Congress has done with its time that is so disappointing, for example, yesterday's passage of a military detainee bill that undermines some of our most cherished and fundamental principles. It is also what the Congress has not done. All the challenges it has not addressed. The responsibilities it has not lived up to. It is all going to leave voters wondering what we have been doing these last 2 years.

The American people do not need us to tell them why their country is head-

ed in the wrong direction. Every day that Congress fails to implement the critical recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, they feel less safe. Every day they struggle to get by on real wages that continue to decline, they feel less secure. And every day that seniors and those with disabilities cannot afford their prescription drugs, that students and their families lie awake worrying about how they are going to be able to afford college tuition payments, and that tens of millions of commuters break the bank trying to afford their drive to work in the morning, every day these problems remain unresolved, and people ask themselves why this Congress doesn't seem to care about what really matters to them.

They need it to take their troubles and concerns seriously and for us to spend our time passing meaningful bills that will actually help them live their lives and provide for their families.

So today, my fellow Democrats and I are offering one last opportunity to our Republican colleagues to make the 109th Congress really mean something. This rule will give us the ability to consider numerous important suspension bills today and tomorrow. In that short amount of time, we can pass legislation that will go a long way towards giving our constituents and fellow citizens the help they need to live in safety and security, to achieve their goals and ensure a brighter future for their children.

I want to briefly mention five goals that we should all pledge to reach before we adjourn. Since 9/11, this administration and Republican Congress have tried to convince us that we are in a war for civilization. They used the urgency of that supposed fight to justify reductions in our fundamental liberties and wars that have cost our citizens dearly.

And yet they have largely failed to implement the overwhelming majority of the 41 security recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission, recommendations designed to prevent another attack here at home. And as was made clear by the response to Hurricane Katrina, this government is not prepared to respond to disasters. Nor has it adequately addressed weaknesses in our security system that could be exploited at any time, weaknesses in our energy infrastructure, at our ports, and in our intelligence community.

And that is why I call on this Congress to immediately pass legislation putting the commonsense recommendations of the 9/11 Commission into law. We have no reason for inaction, and the American people won't accept any more excuses.

Threats to the security of our citizens do not come from the outside alone, Madam Speaker. They are threats to that security right here at home. Working families cannot hope to feel secure if they are living paycheck to paycheck and deeply in debt. And if

those paychecks are not enough to live on, they do not have much cause for hope left. The real wages of America's workers have fallen for years, squeezing the middle class and making it harder for our 7 million minimum wage workers to even get by. One way to alleviate that pressure would be to increase our minimum wage.

The majority leader bragged a few weeks ago that he has spent his entire career in Congress voting against minimum wage increases. And he isn't alone. Under Republican control, Congress has refused to raise the minimum wage for 9 years, not even to adjust it for an increased cost of living. On the other hand, that cost-of-living adjustment has been made to the congressional salaries numerous times.

Well, enough is enough. My Democrat colleagues and I pledge here and now we will not support another congressional pay raise until we give America's minimum wage workers a raise as well. There is an easy way to do it. We can immediately pass Representative GEORGE MILLER's Fair Minimum Wage Act or a similar amendment that Representative HOYER authored to the Labor, Health and Human Services bill. Doing so would have an immediate and profound effect on millions of lives.

Madam Speaker, the deeply flawed Medicare part D legislation rammed through Congress last year has already come home to roost. Millions of Americans face prescription drug premiums they cannot afford, a reality that weighs especially heavy on the elderly and the disabled.

This Congress should immediately give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices. This would immediately help countless men and women get the lifesaving prescription drugs that they need.

Nor should we focus only on the present. If we hope to secure a strong future for our country, we must make access to higher education a right instead of a privilege. In our increasingly competitive global economy, knowledge is power like never before, and a good education is more priceless than ever. And what a shame it is that so many of our soldiers serving us now have joined the Guard and Reserve simply to be able to get an education.

During this Congress, Republicans responded to this challenge by cutting \$12 billion in Federal student aid intended for our Nation's college students. It was a shortsighted and harmful decision, and it should be immediately reversed.

I hope all my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join the Democrats in restoring higher-education funding and expanding the size and availability of Pell Grants. We can do it by passing an improved Labor-HHS bill, and Democrats have the legislation to get it done.

Finally, Madam Speaker, while energy costs have compounded the daily

troubles of so many ordinary people, Congress has handed out huge tax breaks to the Nation's largest oil companies and done it while they have made some of the greatest profits ever earned by American corporations. Since Republicans passed an energy bill in 2001, authored in secret by the administration and those same companies, it has been clear whom the Republicans stand with on this issue. But the Democrats always fault for an energy agenda that works for all Americans, not just for the oil industry. We should immediately begin rolling back tax breaks for big oil and using the savings to invest in alternative fuels that would give us true national energy independence and real relief at the pump and force them to pay the royalties they owe this government for their use of public lands.

Madam Speaker, today and tomorrow we will be presenting bills that will accomplish all these goals. I ask my friends on the other side of the aisle to think about the questions they will be asked when they go home in October. I ask them to think about how they are going to respond to a constituent who asks what they have done to lower tuition prices, to make our ports and mass transit systems more safe, to get prescription drugs into the hands of those who need it, and to increase the quality of life for minimum wage earners. I ask them to no longer ignore these critical questions and these critical needs of our citizens.

In 2 days, with just a few simple bills, this Congress can improve the lives of tens of millions of people. The only real question left to ask is, why would we let such a precious opportunity pass us by?

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1045

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, first let me thank the gentlewoman from New York, the ranking member of the Rules Committee, Ms. SLAUGHTER, for yielding me time. Let me associate myself with her comments.

Normally a rule that would allow us to consider suspension bills today would not be controversial. Suspension bills, after all, are usually bills that if they do not pass unanimously, they pass pretty much close to unanimously. They are naming of post offices, there are things that quite frankly are nice but they are not crucial for this Nation.

And, you know, I come to the floor today, along with others, to object to this because this Congress is about to recess and it has not done the people's business. This Republican Congress has failed to make college education more affordable. This Republican Congress

has failed on retirement security. This Republican Congress has failed on energy. It has failed on health care. It has failed on jobs and wages. And it has failed on Iraq and national security.

I mean, we are about to recess, and this Congress has not increased the Federal minimum wage. It is stuck at \$5.15 an hour. I mean, Congress has not raised the minimum wage in 9 years. During that same period of time, Congress voted themselves a \$31,600 pay raise. We do not have the time to increase the Federal minimum wage, but we have time to increase our salaries by \$31,600? Please, give me a break. Where are our priorities?

We have the time right now to raise the Federal minimum wage. I think that is more important than naming a post office before we recess before the elections.

On the issue of energy, I mean where is our energy policy? Where is our commitment to renewable and safe and clean alternative sources of energy?

I mean, there is nothing. We have seen gas prices go way up. And, guess what? They are mysteriously coming down before the election. But I am going to make a bet with you that right after the election they will go back up again. You know, these oil executives, they are smart. They know where their bread is buttered. They do not want accountability. They do not want a Congress that is going to hold their feet to the fire when it comes to price gouging the American people.

On the issue of Iraq, a National Intelligence Estimate tells us that this war in Iraq has created more terrorists rather than decreased the number of terrorists. And yet what do we have going on here in this Congress? Nothing. There is no accountability with regard to this administration's policy.

President Bush tells us to stay the course, which is code for stay forever. This war began in 2003. And whether you supported it or opposed it, I think everybody can agree it has not unfolded as advertised. I mean, we are now a referee in a civil war.

We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars not on schools, not on senior citizens and retirement security, not on economic development, not on infrastructure, not even on reducing our enormous debt, we have spent it in a mistaken war in Iraq that gets worse and worse every day, and yet this Congress, this Congress refuses to hold the administration accountable, refuses to do the oversight necessary to try to take this failed policy and bring it to an end.

I mean, we have lots and lots to do before we recess. We have important matters that every single person in this country cares about, whether they are a Democrat or a Republican. Instead, we are told, no, we do not have the time, we are going to come here and we are going to spend more of our time doing suspension bills.

I mean, there is a reason why this Congress only has a 25 percent approval

rating by the American people. People get it. People know that this is a do-nothing Congress. People are frustrated that this Congress has become a place where trivial issues get debated passionately and important ones not at all.

People understand that there is something wrong when Congress cannot find the time to increase the Federal minimum wage and when they try to do it they play politics with it by attaching it to a tax cut to wealthy people.

There is something wrong when Congress cannot increase the national minimum wage, but we have time to vote ourselves a pay raise. There is a disconnect. I think the people are way ahead of us here in Washington. People understand that this Congress has failed them time and time and time again.

It is time for a new direction. It is time for a change, and it is time to get this Congress to behave in a mature, responsible fashion. And that means dealing with issues like the affordability of a college education. It means dealing with issues that people care about.

With that, Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote against this rule.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, there have been several references today and in the past few days about the issue of the minimum wage. I think that we need to set the record straight as exactly what this House has done regarding that issue, because the issue has been around some time.

Before we went on our district work period in August, the week before we left at the end of July, this House did pass, did pass and sent over to the Senate, an increase in the minimum wage.

Yes, it was attached to other bills, or other issues. That is not anything that is unusual in this body. That goes on all of the time. But what were those other issues? Those other issues provided tax relief for certain Americans. One of that was sales tax deductibility, for example, for States that do not have an income tax. My State happens to be one of those. Broad support in both Houses of the Congress.

The other was the, not the elimination, but capping of the death tax. That has support in both Houses. It unfortunately does not have the required filibuster-proof support in the other body. But that was part of that tax bill.

There is also a provision for research and development tax credits to keep our economy moving. That has broad support in both Houses. That was part of that tax bill. And then there were some other provisions in that also.

Attached to that, yes, was the minimum wage. I voted for that. I have to say, Madam Speaker, I am not one that is generally in favor of the minimum wage. But I felt coupling that together

with these other important measures to keep our economy going, to take care of those taxpayers in States that do not enjoy broad parity with other States, I thought it was important.

So if the issue then is to pass a minimum wage, it seems to me the message ought to be sent to the other body, because that bill is still waiting over there. All they have to do in the final days of this session is to stop the filibuster and pass that bill over there, and we will have the minimum wage increase that we keep hearing over and over and over.

So, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to set the record straight that this House has acted on that, and I think in a very responsible way.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, let me just point out that the minimum wage bill passed here was buried in a bill that gave billions in tax breaks to the Nation's wealthiest.

Madam Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), the ranking member on Homeland Security.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Madam Speaker, homeland security is not a red or blue State issue. It is a red, white and blue issue. It is an American issue. When al Qaeda struck us 5 years ago, it did not distinguish its victims. The terrorists did not care if you were from a red or blue State.

Party distinctions mattered little to terrorists. Mother nature, too, had little use for arbitrary partisan labels as we learned with Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Those terrible storms inflicted suffering on all the people of the gulf coast.

The American people expect that homeland security is one of our top national priorities, and the 9/11 Commission, the bipartisan panel we created, said it must be a priority. Congress told that panel to get to the bottom of what happened on 9/11 and give us a road map to guard against future attacks.

They did their part, Madam Speaker. This do-nothing, do-over Congress, squandered time and resources and is now trying to pass off do-little rhetoric as real action.

Where has all of that gotten us? Where in the world has Congress been for 5 years? That is the question that the 9/11 Commission chair and vice-chair asked a few weeks ago on the fifth anniversary of the attacks, as this Congress chose to spend the week leading up to the 9/11 anniversary on a horse slaughter bill, and little else.

Mr. Kean and Mr. Hamilton lamented the lack of urgency across the board. Democrats agree with Mr. Kean and Mr. Hamilton, the adoption of the 9/11 Commission recommendations should be a no-brainer. And unless this Congress acts immediately, it will add do-not-care to its do-nothing label.

When we adjourn in a few days, Madam Speaker, this Congress will

have failed, for example, to enact risk-based first responder funding. As a result, Washington and New York, areas we know the terrorists still want to attack, will still be vulnerable.

Congress has done even worse on interoperable communications. Just this week the Republicans have refused to include funding and resources in FEMA provisions attached to the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

The House leadership can spend a day talking about protecting the lives of horses on the floor, but can't find the time to debate legislation that will protect the lives of our first responders. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but as a former volunteer firefighter, I would trade a horse any day for interoperable communications.

Madam Speaker, Democrats stand united in calling for the enactment of the 9/11 Commission recommendations. We insist, no, demand that Congress act immediately to provide first responders with the equipment, training and resources they need.

We call for stronger transportation and critical infrastructure security planning and support. It saddens me that the House in discussing the port security bill with the Senate refuses to provide funding for protecting subways, trains and buses across our Nation.

Did we not learn anything from the attacks in London, Madrid and Mumbai? Democrats want to secure our border, and we want to do it right.

Five years ago the President announced that he was creating an Office of Homeland Security to provide a robust and effective border security program. Half a decade later, Southwest Governors were forced to declare border emergencies, and the National Guard was sent to the U.S.-Mexican border to assist with the growing border crisis.

Yet despite the urgency of the situation, Madam Speaker, this Congress refuses to allow us to vote on a complete overhaul of our immigration system, adequate funding for border personnel, equipment and resources for border personnel, a system for addressing what to do with 12 million people without documentation in this country.

Instead, Madam Speaker, the House leadership chose to vote and revote on a fence without setting aside enough money to build it. Democrats also believe we must strengthen the relationship between the intelligence community and State and local law enforcement.

Today, as ranking member of Homeland Security, I am releasing a report entitled, "LEAP", Law Enforcement Assistance and Partnership strategy, that lays out a strategy for doing this.

Democrats absolutely believe we need clear and robust Congressional oversight of homeland security efforts. Too much money has been wasted in our current efforts with few checks in place.

Lastly, Democrats have and will continue to ensure that the war on ter-

rorism does not cost us our privacy and civil liberties. As the Gilmore Commission told us a few years ago, counterterrorism initiatives must not undermine our unalienable rights. These rights are essential to the strength and security of our Nation, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Madam Speaker, I agree with the Gilmore Commission that there is probably nothing more strategic that our Nation must do than ensure our civil liberties.

Madam Speaker, it is time for this Congress to stand up and do something. This Congress cannot continue to be the Congress that left security behind.

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

□ 1100

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding and I thank her for her leadership on the Rules Committee in one of probably the most frustrating jobs on this Hill, because we have not had open debate.

Dana Milbank wrote about that this morning. Dana Milbank quoted DAVID DREIER. DAVID DREIER criticized Democrats yesterday for not having alternatives. DAVID DREIER's Rules Committee prevented the Democrats from offering any amendments to yesterday's commission bill. How ironic.

Mr. Speaker, I adopt the comments made by the distinguished gentleman from Mississippi who was right on point, in my opinion. I truly hope the American people are watching today because, if they do, they will see why this Republican Congress is the do-less-than-the-do-nothing Congress of 1948, which is failing to address the priorities of the American people. That is what the gentleman from Mississippi was talking about.

Let us look at the facts. This do-less-than-the-do-nothing Republican Congress is projected to be in session just 93 days prior to leaving for the elections. The do-nothing Congress met 111 days. That is 17 fewer days in session than the do-nothing Congress of 1948, which was famously derided by President Truman. Now, if we had done a lot of work in those 93 days one could say, well, we did not need to meet as much because we did a lot of substantive work. Let us look at the record.

Today on this House floor, we have the time to consider a bill recognizing the 225th anniversary of the American and French victory at Yorktown, Virginia, during the Revolutionary War. That was a critical juncture in our history and deserves recognition. Yet, we have still failed to enact a budget. We do not have a budget. Now Mr. and Mrs. America probably know that the budget year begins just 4 days from today, but we have not enacted a budget for the American people.

Today on this House floor, we have time to consider a bill congratulating the Columbus Northern Little League Baseball Team from Columbus, Georgia. I think they are world champions. They are deserving of recognition. I do not resent the fact that we are doing that. God bless them. Congratulations. Yet, this Republican-controlled Congress has failed to enact the recommendations, as was pointed out by the gentleman from Mississippi, of the 9/11 Commission.

One of our most important responsibilities is keeping America and Americans safe. That is what the 9/11 Commission was about. Republicans and Democrats came together. Governor Kean, former Republican governor of New Jersey, and Lee Hamilton, distinguished former Member of this body, a Democrat, came together and made recommendations, said we can make America safer, but they have given us Fs and Ds on our performance.

Today on this House floor, we have time to consider 12 post office renamings. I am sure that every American is concerned about the name of their post office. Me, too. Yet we have failed to enact a long overdue increase in the Federal minimum wage which has not been raised since 1997. People in America, the richest Nation on the face of the earth, 6.6 million working 40 hours a week and living in poverty, but we can rename 12 post offices.

We failed to enact real immigration reform to keep our borders safe, failed to address the fact that 46 million Americans have no health insurance. Yet we rename 12 post offices. And we have failed to enact legislation that moves us toward energy independence, a security issue, an economic issue and an environmental issue.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, this Republican Congress is failing the American people, and the fact that the Republican majority is here today asking us to consider noncontroversial bills while key priorities go unaddressed is the clearest evidence of that failure.

I go around this country and Americans tell me they want a change. They want to move in a new direction.

As Tom Mann, a congressional scholar at the Brookings Institution, and Norm Ornstein, one of the most respected congressional scholars in America who works at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote yesterday in the Los Angeles Times, "This Congress hit the ground stumbling and has not lifted itself into an upright position. The output of the 109th Congress," they went on to say, "is pathetic measured against its predecessors." Republican and Democrat.

Mr. Speaker, this Republican rule is nothing less than a mission of failure and ineffectiveness. Even our Republican colleagues have a hard time denying that. Let me quote JACK KINGSTON from Georgia, who has been such a prominent part of the Republican leadership, who said it best earlier this

week. I quote Republican JACK KINGSTON, part of the Republican leadership, "It is disappointing where we are, and I think Republicans need to be up front about this. We have not accomplished what we need to accomplish." If I were in church, the people would say "Amen."

It is time, Madam Speaker, for a new direction in America.

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

Madam Speaker, I will be asking Members to vote "no" on the previous question so that I can amend the rule to provide that the House will immediately consider five important legislative initiatives that will actually do something to help American workers and their families.

Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment and extraneous materials immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, my amendment would provide for immediate consideration of five bills. The first one would implement the recommendation of the 9/11 Commission, something the House should have done years ago.

The next bill would provide for an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour. It has been more than 9 years since hardworking Americans have seen a change in the minimum wage, and this increase is long overdue.

The amendment would also allow the House to immediately consider a bill to provide authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Last week, megastores like Wal-Mart and Target announced that they were cutting prescription drug prices due in part to their ability to negotiate with drug companies. Why should the government not be allowed to negotiate as well?

Under my amendment, we will also take up a bill to repeal the massive cuts in college tuition assistance imposed by the Congress and to expand the size and availability of Pell grants.

And finally, a "no" vote on the previous question will provide for immediate consideration of the bill to roll back the massive tax breaks for large oil companies and to invest those savings in alternative fuels to achieve energy independence.

Madam Speaker, these are all measures that will actually do something to help improve the quality of life for all Americans, and will make them safer as well. That is what we were sent here to do.

So vote "no" on the previous question so that we can consider these important bills today and show the people of this great Nation that they come first.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I just want to touch on a couple of issues that were brought up here, and hopefully set the record straight as to what has happened.

There has been talk about Medicare. I just remind my colleagues that the Medicare legislation that had the prescription drug benefit was passed by a prior Congress. To be sure, it was put in place and implemented during this Congress, and that was done because we were really blazing new ground with that Medicare prescription drug reform and the Medicare reform in general. I might add, too, Madam Speaker, for 40 years when the other side controlled this body, there was no prescription drug benefits available at all for anybody on Medicare. So this was new ground, and we put into place, I think, some very innovative reforms that, frankly, have proven to have been very well accepted by people across the country.

I think the most important part of this Medicare reform was that we made it voluntary. It was not a mandatory program. To suggest that people once they turned 65 cannot make decisions, I think, is wholly underestimating senior citizens. In my district, for example, when the Medicare plan was fully put in place there were 30 plans to choose from in my district. Seniors had a number of choices. I had a forum where a number of seniors came up, asked questions and then made their decisions before the sign-up time. They will have another opportunity to sign up, again, of course in November.

While this program is only in place now for less than a year being implemented, by and large, across the country, it is being well accepted because it provides the coverage that was not available before, and I think that point needs to be emphasized.

I might add that when we reformed this program there was a lot of criticism about the cost of this program. Sure, anytime you have a Federal program, it is going to cost some money, but their substitute plan cost infinitely more than what our plan was that we put into place.

So I just wanted to set that record straight, and I think it is important.

Secondly, I want to talk a bit about border security and the overall war on terror. I just remind ourselves, earlier this month, we passed the 5-year time period when we were brutally attacked by terrorists on 9/11/2001, and let us remind ourselves, we have not been attacked in this country since that time. Other countries have faced international terrorism in London, in Spain, and in Indonesia comes to mind right off the top. Same people are behind this as international terrorist group.

So what we have done is to try to secure our country, and since we are involved in this war on terror, I think it

is clearly in our best interests to try to engage them on their turf. We have been successful thus far, but as President Bush has said, this is going to be a long, long process, but keep in mind, there is no question that the ultimate target in this international war on terrorism is our way of life.

In response to that, we have secured our border. There is absolutely no question about that. In some cases, it was passed with bipartisan support, and in some cases, it was not, but the record, Madam Speaker, I think needs to be said, and that is that we are doing things to secure our border and make America safe.

The fact that we have not been attacked I think is credit to those that do that work to secure us on the homeland security, on the border, the first responders. They have all responded. Our intelligence community is much, much more robust than it was before and that has added to our security.

So, Madam Speaker, there has been a lot that has been accomplished in this Congress, and I think that we can go into this break before the elections with a very high head.

The material previously referred to by Ms. SLAUGHTER is as follows:

PREVIOUS QUESTION FOR H. RES. 1045 PROVIDING FOR MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

At the end of the resolution add the following new Sections:

Sec. 2. Notwithstanding any other provisions in this resolution and without intervention of any point of order it shall be in order immediately upon adoption of this resolution for the House to consider the bills listed in Sec. 3:

Sec. 3. The bills referred to in Sec. 2. are as follows:

(1) a bill to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

(2) a bill to increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour.

(3) a bill to provide authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower prescription drug prices for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

(4) a bill to repeal the massive cuts in college tuition assistance imposed by the Congress and to expand the size and availability of Pell Grants.

(5) a bill to roll back tax breaks for large petroleum companies and to invest those savings in alternative fuels to achieve energy independence.

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

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

Mr. Clarence Cannon's *Precedents of the House of Representatives*, (VI, 308-311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as "a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge." To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that "the refusal of the House to sustain the de-

mand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition" in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: "The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition."

Because the vote today may look bad for the Republican majority they will say "the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever." But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the Republican Leadership Manual on the Legislative Process in the United States House of Representatives, (6th edition, page 135). Here's how the Republicans describe the previous question vote in their own manual: Although it is generally not possible to amend the rule because the majority Member controlling the time will not yield for the purpose of offering an amendment, the same result may be achieved by voting down the previous question on the rule . . . When the motion for the previous question is defeated, control of the time passes to the Member who led the opposition to ordering the previous question. That Member, because he then controls the time, may offer an amendment to the rule, or yield for the purpose of amendment."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 6(a) OF RULE XIII WITH RESPECT TO CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I

call up House Resolution 1046 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1046

Resolved, That the requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported on the legislative day of September 28, 2006, providing for consideration or disposition of any of the following measures:

(1) A bill to authorize trial by military commission for violations of the law of war, and for other purposes.

(2) A bill to update the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978.

(3) A conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 5441) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

SEC. 2. House Resolutions 654 and 767 are laid upon the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

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

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 1046 is a same-day rule that allows the consideration today of certain legislation that may be reported from the Rules Committee.

□ 1115

Specifically, it allows for the consideration or disposition of a bill to authorize the trial by military commission for violations of the laws of war, a bill to update the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, and the Homeland Security appropriations conference report for fiscal year 2007: Three very significant pieces of legislation that need to move through this body before we break for the October District Work Period.

It is imperative that we pass this same-day rule. This resolution lays the foundation so that the House can complete its business and send outstanding legislation to the Senate and to the President's desk. We are working to move this process along toward the adjournment of the 109th Congress.

The House Committee on Rules will meet later today to provide the rules for possible consideration of these items, such as the Homeland Security appropriations bill, the legislation to deal with these violations of the laws of war, modernizing our approach to dealing with terrorists and those who plot to blow up airliners over the Atlantic, who fly planes into the symbols of our military power, the symbols of our economic power, those who would blow up our embassies, those who would target innocent civilians in a