

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, this week the House will consider a Democratic budget that will strengthen our economy and make America safer. After years of devastating cuts by the Bush administration, our budget is fiscally responsible, while also ensuring that we invest in the American people's priorities.

At a time of economic uncertainty, the Democratic budget rejects President Bush's cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, while also adding \$4.9 billion for veterans health care.

Despite the President's repeated vetoes of our legislation to ensure that 10 million children have access to health care, our budget accommodates the \$50 billion that would be needed over the next 5 years to make this goal a reality. We're still hopeful that enough Republicans will join us in overriding the President's ill-advised and non-compassionate veto.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic budget is able to address all of the health care needs while balancing the budget by 2012 without raising taxes.

EARMARKS

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I am the first House appropriator to swear off earmarks and join 32 of my colleagues, including Senators FEINGOLD and MCCAIN, as well as Chairman WAXMAN and Leader BOEHNER. I'm told that Senators CLINTON and OBAMA are considering supporting this effort.

The Constitution put the spending power in the House, and I used this to support my district. But like other powers, this congressional power could be abused; and, increasingly, we approve low- or no-quality spending to win approval for our own community: you get yours, I get mine, and the kids get the bill.

No more for this appropriator. We should ask: Should the taxpayers pay for a \$320 million bridge to connect a town of 8,000 to an island, population 50? No.

Should the taxpayers spend \$243,000 on Chez Panisse to create a gourmet organic school lunch program featuring "Comte cheese souffle with mache salad" or "Meyer lemon eclairs with huckleberry coulis"? No.

Common sense says we should put an end to such spending. I would urge the House to enact the Wolf-Kingston reforms with a moratorium on earmarks.

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PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE NOT BUYING INTO SCARE TACTICS OF BUSH AND REPUBLICANS

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that no one is buying into the scare tactics created by the President and some Republicans regarding the expiration of the President's Protect America Act. Newspapers around the country are rightfully asking Republicans that if this law were so crucial to national security, why did they oppose an extension of it last month?

The Saint Louis Post-Dispatch called this intimidation and "fear mongering at its most craven." The Oregonian wasn't fooled by the President's political actions, writing: "If the Protect America Act is as crucial as he says it is, then he is taking a terrible gamble with the safety of his country's citizens." The Palm Beach Post recognized that "political distraction" is more important to this administration than the law. They wrote, "The law that Mr. Bush and some Republicans say is vital could have been extended for 3 weeks. Instead, they let it die."

Mr. Speaker, House Democrats are serious about passing a strong FISA law that provides our intelligence community with the tools necessary to protect our national security, and we urge congressional Republicans and the White House to join us at the table.

FISA AMENDMENTS ACT

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

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the FISA Amendments Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978.

It is imperative that we provide our intelligence community with the tools it needs to conduct surveillance on foreign terrorists without getting tied up in the courts, and this bill would do just that. The Senate passed this bipartisan legislation almost a month ago, but the House leadership has irresponsibly refused to bring up this bill, which is critical to our Nation's security.

I have chosen to cosponsor the measure because I believe that in today's world, we cannot shortchange our ability to confront emerging and ongoing threats. Therefore, I urge the majority to bring this crucial legislation to a vote.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TO LISTEN

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, if you ask Mr. and Mrs. America who are in the rural hamlets and the urban cities across America, they will tell you whether there is a recession or not. If you ask the automobile dealers, the home builders, if you ask the individuals who are attempting to

put their children through college or even to make ends meet, they will tell you that bad news is already here; 63,000 jobs were lost last month.

I am glad the Democrats are taking the opportunity to strengthen our economy and create jobs. Democratic leaders last week held a second economic forum. The forum convened national experts and talked about how we can create jobs. The New Direction Congress has already passed a bipartisan economic stimulus of which thousands of Americans will be receiving a payment because of the leadership of our Democratic majority. We are helping to create 500,000 jobs. But it is well to recognize that this administration just last month lost 63,000 jobs.

What we need to do is bring our troops home, lower health care costs, and increase health care quality. We need to vote in the CHIP bill and stop the President's veto. We need to ensure that we lower energy prices through alternative fuels by creating hundreds of thousands of new green jobs. We have got to make college more affordable and K-12 classrooms more successful.

We can empower America with our own initiative and our own genius. But we cannot do it if we have an administration that doesn't listen. Sixty-three thousand jobs lost tells the story, and Mr. and Mrs. America say, "wake up and provide an opportunity for Americans." They want the Democrats to lead and to be able to create the opportunity for the economic engine that will save jobs and create jobs.

NATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS WEEK

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, this week, March 10-17, is National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week. The goal of this annual event is to raise awareness of this disease for those individuals and their families who are impacted by it.

Every hour in the United States, someone new is diagnosed with MS. It is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system. Many Americans know a person living with multiple sclerosis, a mother or father, a son or daughter, another family member or friend, or even a colleague.

For me, it was a member of my staff. This brave and strong woman inspired me to get more involved in the battle to live in a world free of multiple sclerosis. As a medical doctor prior to coming to Congress, I'm working here to find sensible solutions for the health care challenges that Americans face. As the cochair of the newly formed Congressional Multiple Sclerosis Caucus, I intend to bring the needs of those individuals into the larger discussion of quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, we must work together to improve access to quality health