

proving to be a crashing failure. This war is in its 10th year, and we still haven't vanquished the Taliban. We still haven't brought a stable democracy to Afghanistan. And we still haven't trained the Afghans to take responsibility for their own security.

The Republicans want to cut wasteful, ineffective government programs. Well, if that is true, I suggest the majority start with Afghanistan before going after American seniors, school-children, and working people. My Republican colleagues believe in limited government as long as the things they're limiting are taxes paid by special interests and investments in people who need a helping hand. When it comes to foreign invasions and decade-long military occupations, Republicans are the biggest spenders of all.

With these priorities, not only have they lost their moral compass, they've lost the American people as well. Recent polling shows that overwhelming majorities want to see spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and education increased or stay the same. By contrast, nearly two-thirds of Americans are fed up with the war in Afghanistan and don't think it's worth fighting.

It's impossible, Madam Speaker, to take seriously any budget proposal that doesn't even mention Afghanistan or Iraq and doesn't cut billions and billions in wasteful war spending from the budget.

It's time to bring our troops home. It's the right thing to do. It's what the people want. It's a sensible, humane, and compassionate path to fiscal responsibility.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, earlier this year, an irresponsible bigot burned a Koran in Florida. That was a despicable act. But unfortunately, a number of far worse acts eventuated; that is, the murder, calculated and deliberate murder, of a number of innocent people in Afghanistan by people purporting to be defending their religion against the burning of a book in Florida by massacring innocent civilians in Afghanistan.

And I am pleased that people, including General Petraeus and others, condemned the irresponsibility of the Koran burning, but there needs to be even greater condemnation of the notion that that in any way justifies murder. That includes a kind of condemnation, in my judgment, of the President of Afghanistan, our increasingly unimpressive ally Mr. Karzai, who, I believe, added to the furor there by insisting that the man who burned the Koran should have been prosecuted. Well, under American law, he was not

prosecuted. He should not have been. The right to do obnoxious things is a very important part of the First Amendment.

But what is most appalling is that people purported, in the name of religion, then not even to do anything against that individual, and that would have been unjustified. I am not suggesting that there is any justification for any violence against him. But violence against people in Afghanistan, employees of the United Nations there for humanitarian reasons, other citizens of Western countries, for them to have been assaulted and murdered by people purporting to be acting in the name of religion, that is the true outrage.

And I hope people will resist any temptation even to equate the two. An act of stupid and offensive bigotry against a book should be criticized. Murder of innocent people in the name of a religion—and it's particularly ironic that people who committed these murders claim to be vindicating their religion. Indeed, no denigration of a religion could be greater than to murder innocent people in its name. If I were to be asked what did I think more detracted from the image of Islam, this irresponsible publicity seeker in Florida burning a Koran or people in the name of the religion murdering innocent people including those who went to Afghanistan only to help, it is clearly the latter.

So, Madam Speaker, let's be very clear that nothing in what happened with the burning of a Koran comes close to justifying the outrageous, murderous behavior of people in Afghanistan. And I am pleased that there is attention given to this, but the condemnation should be of this kind of attack on innocent citizens, and we ought to keep this in some perspective.

CONGRESSMAN PAUL RYAN'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. Yesterday, Congressman PAUL RYAN introduced the Republican Party's fiscal year 2012 road-to-ruin budget.

We have been back to work in the House for 14 weeks. And for 14 straight weeks, the Republican majority has done nothing to create jobs. They haven't even put a single jobs bill on the House floor. In fact, their proposed spending bill for 2011 actually costs America 700,000 jobs.

Now, Congressman RYAN and the Republican leadership want to extend their job-killing policies and permanently eliminate the middle class. The Republicans' road to ruin is nothing short of an attack on working families, seniors, students, and children.

It attacks America's seniors by ending the Medicare guarantee and put-

ting your fate in the hands of private insurance companies. It attacks America's workers by not doing anything to create jobs and by gutting job training. It attacks America's students by cutting education and raising college costs for nearly 10 million students.

Now, no matter what side of the aisle we are on, we can all agree that deficit reduction is important. But the question is how do we do it. What we can't do is balance the budget on the backs of America's middle class, our seniors, our students, and our children.

But I do know some things we can't afford. At a time when middle class families can't pay their bills, we can't afford to keep spending billions in subsidies for Big Oil and giveaways for special interests. At a time when our senior population is growing, we can't afford to slash funding for nursing homes and put health insurance companies back in control of health care. At a time when our economy needs an infusion of the best and brightest workers, we can't afford to cut public education while protecting tax breaks for companies who ship jobs overseas and spending billions of dollars in tax breaks on people already making upward of half a million dollars.

A budget isn't just about dollars and cents; it's about priorities and values. And as representatives of the American people, our priorities and values should reflect their values: Jobs, a secure retirement, the promise of educational opportunity, and the certainty that if your child is sick then you will be able to afford to see the doctor.

If you vote for this bill, then who amongst us could go home and look senior citizens in the eye knowing we ended Medicare as we know it? Who could look an unemployed worker in the eye knowing we didn't do anything to create jobs? Who could look a student in the eye knowing we took away their opportunity to succeed with a quality education?

I want to reduce our deficit. I know it's vital for our fiscal future. But I also want to look my constituents in the eye and tell them I stood up for their priorities and not those of Big Oil, international corporations, and special interests.

The truth is we can do both. We can get our deficit under control. And we can do it without cuts that hurt hard-working families.

□ 1040

CONGRESSMAN PAUL RYAN'S PRIVATIZED FISCAL FUTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Yesterday, PAUL RYAN of Wisconsin, Republican chair of the Budget Committee, revealed his projected future for seniors in America

and their health insurance coverage. It's very interesting.

What he says is, starting with people who are age 55 and younger, there would be no traditional Medicare. That's a pretty radical departure. But he says don't worry. What we will do, what in the Republican vision we will do, is the government will take money and it will give it to private health insurance companies. Seniors would be forced to go to those private health insurance companies and buy a policy from them, and it would be offset by the amount of money that the Federal Government gave to the private health insurance industry. And market discipline would prevail in the PAUL RYAN view of the world. Isn't that a wonderful thing?

Well, guess what? We've got that today. We have an unregulated health insurance industry in this country exempt from anti-trust law, unlike any other business in America. And over the last 10 years, premiums for people who buy health insurance have doubled in my State, pretty much the same all around the country. Some places more than doubled, other places a little bit less. But that's over 10 years.

But in PAUL RYAN's view of the world, that's a success. Why is it a success? Well, because insurance company profits are up very dramatically. So what if people are paying twice as much for their policies and they have more and more exclusions every year?

There's another little problem with his proposal. Other than the fact that this is not a competitive industry, they are allowed to collude, red-line people. They are allowed to get together and collude and drive up prices. They are allowed to get together and collude and decide which States they will go into or get out of to help their sister and brother companies make more profits. He would do nothing about that. That system would continue.

Then there's the little problem that he would repeal so-called ObamaCare. Well, one of the things I think most Americans liked about that legislation was it prohibits insurance companies from refusing to sell you a policy because you were sick once. That's called a preexisting condition. It also prohibits insurance companies from taking away your policy the day you get sick, something called a rescission.

In PAUL RYAN's world, those things are back, preexisting condition exclusions.

Guess what. Aging is a preexisting condition. Go out today, if you're 55 years old and you've been sick once in your life, and try to buy at any reasonable price a private health insurance policy. In PAUL RYAN's world, market discipline will take care of that. No.

What he's doing is a massive shifting of costs onto seniors, the kind of thing that drove seniors into bankruptcy back in the 1950s and 1960s and had their poverty rate at 20 percent. That's why we adopted Medicare in this country, so that seniors wouldn't be driven out of their homes and into bankruptcy in their later years when most people

require more health care. In PAUL RYAN's world, the heck with that.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office—which some days he likes when they give him answers he likes, and some days he doesn't like when they give him answers he doesn't like, but it's an impartial group, bipartisan group, and at this point controlled by the Republicans—has said that under PAUL RYAN's world, seniors, instead of paying 25 percent of the costs of their health care, which they do today and they would in the future if we continue Medicare, will pay 68 percent of the costs of their health care.

Now, how many people, how many seniors in this country—other than the people he pals around with on Wall Street and at the country club—but other than them, how many of them can afford to pay 68 percent of their health care costs? What middle class American can afford that in retirement no matter how prudent they've been their whole life, no matter how much money they've saved in their whole life? Very, very, very few.

So we have here a plan to enrich the private health insurance industry, allow them to return to all of their bad old ways—recisions, pre-existing condition exclusions and all of that—so that the government can give them money. And he says this will save the government a lot of money. Well, it might, but it's going to kill a lot of seniors or drive them into bankruptcy, just like the days before we had Medicare.

If one looks at the other Republican creation of the last decade, Medicare Part D—you know, that thing where we helped seniors with their pharmaceutical costs, with their drug prescriptions—that wasn't done through Medicare; it was done through the private insurance industry. It cost three-quarters of a trillion dollars, \$650 billion—650 thousand million dollars—over 10 years. Borrowed money. That's PAUL RYAN's world. Give all the money to the insurance companies.

Good work, PAUL.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 50 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Bishop Henry Fernandez, The Faith Center, Sunrise, Florida, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this day, for truly this is the day that the Lord has made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it.

I pray that our government will seek Your divine will in the affairs of this great Nation, the United States of America. I ask for Your lead in everything this 112th Congress will work on. Give them wisdom to make the right decisions that will cause all of us to be progressive and successful.

May each Member of this House remember the words spoken by Paul: "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor."

Bless them and their families with good health and long life.

And let Your peace rest upon them and this great Nation, as we continue to live out the words written over the chair of the Speaker of the House: "In God we trust."

In Jesus' name, amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. HARTZLER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING BISHOP HENRY FERNANDEZ

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is with great privilege that I welcome my dear friend, Bishop Henry Fernandez, as our guest chaplain for today's opening prayer.

He is an anointed speaker, educator, accomplished author, and entrepreneur. Henry B. Fernandez answered the call of God on his life in 1985 and later became an ordained minister in 1988.

In July 1991, Bishop Fernandez began to demonstrate his faith in God and a commitment to "walk by faith" in