

Some of this is difficult, some of it just takes common sense, and we have already seen that when we raised our voices some of those common sense measures have been taken.

I am grateful that the White House announced just last week that it was opening White House tours to children if they left their Social Security number. Soon I hope families who leave their Social Security numbers will follow. We have seen the reopening of tours here in the Capitol, simply by having people go in the trailer to be screened first. We saw the White House lighting of the Christmas tree open simply because they moved the glass that they put around the President at the inauguration to the Christmas tree site. It is not rocket science, but it does mean somebody does have to sit down and not have a knee-jerk reaction to security without considering all the options.

In 1968, when our country faced an unprecedented racial crisis, the President had the good sense to say we do not already know it all, and so he called together the Kerner Commission. I believe that the problem posed to our free and open institutions is just as serious in 2002 as the racial crisis was in 1968. A presidential commission would bring to bear the Nation's best thinking on this unique issue and give it the thorough and rigorous investigation it deserves, with the result of advice we could take or not take. But at least we would have the satisfaction of knowing that there are people in our society who have thought about the most difficult problems in our society and given us some food for thought.

#### STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE NATION IN 2002

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, the President of the United States is going to give his first official State of the Union Address. It will be the third time he has spoken before a joint session. I think the challenges facing this Nation are great.

The President certainly is going to talk about the success so far in our war against terror, but I suspect he is also going to remind us of the tremendous challenge that we have, as a Congress, as an American people, to continue this fight. We do not know how long this war is going to go on. It could be for generations. The best defense against terror in this case is a good offense to get rid of the terror cells around the world.

I think this is an excellent opportunity for this country and the rest of the free world to push as vigorously to resolve, hopefully once and for all, the conflicts in Ireland, between Palestine

and Israel, and certainly dispute between the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan looking at Kashmir. Many things can be done.

I hope this Congress can continue to work with this President, even though this is an election year. Most people understand that in an election year the Republicans would like to regain a majority in the Senate and keep a majority in the House. Democrats would like to do what they can to retake a majority of the House and keep their majority in the Senate.

I think the challenges are also great on spending. We have already acknowledged that we are going to reach into the surpluses of the Social Security Trust Fund and spend those revenues for other government spending. We had an emergency in this country on September 11, and like any family or any business that has a serious emergency, you come up with the funds to accommodate and fix that emergency as best you can.

Those families and those businesses normally say, look, we are going to put aside less important expenditures and we are going to deal with the emergency. I hope that the President says the same thing ultimately, that, look, we now have to do a better job at prioritizing spending. We are going to deal with this emergency the way we have to. We will win the war on terrorism, but let us not drive this country deeper and deeper into debt, which means that we put our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids at risk in paying for the overexpenditure of this government.

Prioritizing to me means that we cut down on some of the social programs that we were so willing to expand after the Cold War, as we cut down on military, as we cut down on our intelligence community efforts, and left ourselves weaker than we should have been September 11. I think a good example in showing how much spending has grown and become the problem of us running into a deficit is our projections of 1997.

In 1998, we promised that we were going to balance the budget by 2002. At that time the projections for revenues for 2002 was a little over \$1.4 trillion, and we were going to balance the budget because we were disciplining ourselves on spending. Actually the revenues projected last week for 2002 by CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, were approximately \$1.9 trillion. So more revenues coming into the Federal Government than we thought was possible but still a deficit. Why? Because spending has increased even more than the dramatic increase in revenues in this country.

So the question is and the challenge is, will the President tonight push this Congress and the American people to start prioritizing? Can we minimize the partisan bickering and blaming as we try to come to grips with a budget that is going to be challenging, if we are to avoid jeopardizing Social Security and

Medicare and other programs by overspending, and borrowing more, and going deeper in debt?

Welfare reform I hope the President talks about because the welfare reform bill that we passed in 1996 is expiring this year. There has already been some suggestions from some of the Senators that we have to modify work provisions. I think the welfare reform bill has been extremely successful, and we have got to be very careful not to pass a bad welfare bill.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, tonight we will hear from our President on the State of the Union. I look forward to hearing his remarks, especially because he is committed to spending \$190 billion over the next decade to overhaul Medicare and provide prescription drug benefits to our elderly.

This is an important first step but, Madam Speaker, we need more and we need it now. The average Medicare beneficiary fills 18 different prescriptions in 1 year alone, yet at least one in three people in the Medicare population have no drug coverage in the course of a year and spend on average 83 percent more for their medicines than those with drug coverage.

In my own State of Rhode Island, seniors are choosing between food or health care on a daily basis. In July of last year, I commissioned a study to assess what my constituents are paying for prescription drugs. This study found that uninsured elderly pay on average 78 percent more for most prescription drugs than do seniors in foreign countries.

What is most disturbing about these numbers is that almost half of all Medicare beneficiaries with no prescription drug coverage have incomes less than 175 percent of poverty, which was \$15,000 in 2001.

The lack of prescription drug coverage for our seniors is a national crisis. Medicare+Choice, Medigap coverage, discount card programs and other accounts to chip away at this problem are not the answer. We must provide comprehensive drug coverage under Medicare and we must do it now.

Madam Speaker, I urge the President and my colleagues in both Chambers of Congress to work together to ensure that we pass this legislation this year.

#### SECURING OUR BORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, the events of September 11 forever changed