

Americans who get up every morning and do the things that make this country run. I am proud of standing with them. I am proud of the Americans that work overtime and deserve overtime compensation, and I will stand against any legislation that desires to eliminate overtime compensation for comp time that may be given or may not, just as I am willing to stand for all the teachers' aides, nurses' aides, all of the hardworking bus drivers, all the hardworking sanitation workers and anybody else that works hard every day helping this country run.

I want people to have a child tax credit, 6.5 million families, 12 million children. Any day of this year, any day of my career, I will stand with the hardworking Americans over those folks who are fat and happy talking about they pay taxes. Americans who work hard pay taxes, too.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. JONES of Ohio addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OWENS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

VETERANS BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I think the folks watching C-SPAN may sometimes get confused because they hear us stand here and give confusing or contradictory arguments. They do not know perhaps who to believe, but I want to speak about two things that we have done in the House recently, and I would challenge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle or the leadership within this administration to contradict what I am saying.

This House passed a budget not many weeks ago that cut veterans benefits over the next 10 years by \$6.2 billion. That is a fact. It is an absolute fact, and tonight, in the United States of America, while we have young men and women defending our Nation in Iraq, we are rationing health care to our Nation's veterans, rationing health care.

This administration has decided to say to a whole host of veterans, which they call priority eight veterans, you are high income and, consequently, you are out of here, you cannot participate in the VA health care system.

What do they mean by high income? In my District, they can be making as little as \$22,000 a year and be considered high income. Think of that. Not

only are they wanting to simply deny care for many veterans, but for others they want to impose additional financial burdens. They want to increase the cost of a prescription drug from \$7 to \$15 a prescription. They want to add a new annual enrollment fee of \$250. They want to increase the cost of a clinic visit from \$15 to \$20.

Mr. Speaker, when is it going to stop? When are we going to stop requiring more out of our veterans so that we can give larger tax cuts to the richest people in this country, many of whom have never served in the military?

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But we did something else in this House a few days ago. We passed a tax cut bill. And in that tax cut bill we took care of the millionaires. In fact, in that bill, if you have an annual income of \$1 million, you get a tax cut of about \$93,000. But we did something else that is shameful. We actually excluded children of poor working families from receiving the child tax credit benefit. It was not a mistake. It was done purposefully. We excluded about 12 million of America's children from that benefit. Think of that.

CNN reported that "Mr. DELAY, the conservative Texan, brushed aside criticism that the last bill didn't make an expanded child tax credit available to millions of poor families. But he said the House Republicans might support doing so if it prodded seniors to vote for a broader tax relief package."

In other words, the majority leader is going to hold poor children hostage in an attempt to get a larger tax break for his wealthy friends. I think that is shameful. I know of no other word that accurately describes that policy.

But do not take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. I hope those watching on C-SPAN do not just assume that because I am a Democrat that I am standing up here and taking an unfair shot at the Republicans. Senator JOHN MCCAIN is quoted in this same CNN story as saying, in regard to this leaving out 12 million children in the Republican tax plan, "My God, what kind of message are we sending when we leave out low-income families?"

And exactly in that category are the enlisted men and women who are fighting in Iraq. At this moment, in Iraq, are moms and dads who have children waiting here in this country. And the Republican tax plan excludes those children from this tax credit benefit.

Senator MCCAIN concludes his remarks by saying, "it's beyond belief." That is not a Democrat talking, that is Republican Senator JOHN MCCAIN.

Mr. Speaker, this issue gets to the heart of who we are as a people. We are willing to give huge tax cuts to the richest among us and exclude 12 million of America's children who live in poor families.

REPUBLICAN TAX RELIEF BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Under

a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we all could bring a picture, as some of my colleagues have done, of a family who has contacted them and told them a story. Mine today was from a woman, a grandmother, who told me "I can't understand the unfairness of this bill. Why should my son and his wife and two children not be eligible for any kind of tax relief?"

Her son works at a job where he gets \$11 an hour. If you multiply that out times 40 hours a week, times 52 weeks a year, no vacation, you are going to wind up around \$22,000. And one of the interesting things is the answer that comes from deep in the heart of Texas, and that is "there are a lot of other things that are more important than that," giving tax breaks to this family. "To me, it is a little difficult to give tax relief to people that do not pay income tax."

Now, those are the words of our distinguished majority leader on the other side, which really reveals where he is coming from. He says, if you do not pay income taxes. Now, every single one, including my family and the family that the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) had up here and the family the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) had up here all pay payroll taxes. They pay for Social Security and they pay for Medicare. They pay 7 percent of their paycheck for that, which means that my family that makes \$22,000 pays \$1,400 in taxes into the Medicare account and into the Social Security account.

The Republicans say we are going to take that money out of the Social Security account and that money out of the Medicare account and give it to the rich people, and we are not going to give one thin dime to somebody who is working 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. Not one thin dime. But we are going to give his payroll taxes to the rich. That is the only way we could be \$400 billion in debt this year is to keep borrowing from every account possible, including Medicare and Social Security.

Now, I want to take it a little bit further here. We have got more important things to do, the majority leader said. Well, what were the more important things we have to do? Today, we did not have a vote until 4:30. Oh, it is only, I suppose, a happenstance that that is when people got off the green from the Kemper Open golf course. That was what was more important than working on that issue.

Or, if you want to look at what we have done on the calendar this week, what have we done? Well, we congratulated Sammy Sosa for hitting 500 home runs. We renamed a post office in North Carolina. We dealt with some Indian water rights in the southwest. We did a land exchange in the Grand Teton National Park. We named a courthouse