

used to defray the costs of home school education. In addition to tuition, the money can be used for books, supplies, equipment, tutoring, services for children with special needs, Internet access, et cetera. These accounts are open to taxpayers earning less than \$220,000 a year for couples.

Another option, as I conclude, Mr. Speaker, is the 529 plan. These are tax-deferred educational savings programs that put contributions under management like pension programs. They are often State-sponsored and provide good flexibility. Contributions can be made in a lump sum or in installments, and many States also contribute when a person starts spending that money for a college education. In Michigan, we contribute \$1 for every \$3 deposited.

I would encourage every friend and family member to think about educational savings for their children, their grandchildren, their nephews, their nieces. The expense of college education is daunting, but investing some now will allow for compound interest and growth over time. For example, even with the current low prospects for a return on earnings, saving just \$80 in a month can grow to \$31,000 over the 18 years it takes a child to be ready for college. It is important to get started right away.

Mr. Speaker, education is important. Everybody should be looking at the advantages of saving now.

PERHAPS PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR WILL ANSWER CONGRESS' QUESTIONS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE ON IRAQ

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, Thursday will be a very historic day. Prime Minister Tony Blair of England will be scheduled to appear in this room before a joint session to make a speech and perhaps receive the Congressional Gold Medal. I understand it is not ready yet so he probably will not get it just now.

It was also in this very same room that President Bush said in his State of the Union speech that "the British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." It turns out that information Mr. Bush had was already understood to be bogus. Our CIA had already told the British that. Yet the President included that fact in his State of the Union message. Apparently, the British indicated they had other information in addition to the crude forgeries indicating that Iraq was trying to buy uranium from Niger.

This has put President Bush in an awkward position. As people in the administration seek to blame one another and now the British and now the French and now the Italians, why and how did this happen?

Mr. Speaker, we have an historic opportunity. In Parliament, the Prime Minister faces MPs and responds directly to their questions. If we had the British system, we could go to Mr. Bush directly to solve this conundrum instead of relying on Ari Fleischer. Perhaps Mr. Blair will be kind enough to allow us the privilege that British MPs enjoy and we can ask him what happened. I really want to know. Don't my colleagues?

When we debated the award for Mr. Blair for the Congressional Gold Medal, I objected. I said it was either too early or too late. Either it should have been done when we did not know what was going on, or now that we have got some real questions, it is too late to give it to him. We have got to solve the question of what happened.

I feel even more strongly now that we ought not to proceed in the absence of answers to our questions. It appears that Mr. Blair may have misled our President or at least our President's speechwriters about whether good information existed indicating that Iraq was in the process of buying the components of nuclear weapons.

This is not a small thing. Perhaps Mr. Blair was responsible for the administration's discredited claim that one of the September 11 hijackers met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague. Perhaps Mr. Blair was the source of the administration's discredited claim that Iraq was buying special aluminum tubes for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. These and many more statements made by Mr. Powell, Mr. Rumsfeld, Dr. Rice, Mr. Fleischer and even the President have been found to be incorrect.

We have not been told why our officials made so many misstatements about Iraq prior to going to war. If our leaders were led astray by the Prime Minister, we surely should not honor them with the Congressional Gold Medal. Of course, we certainly ought not to subcontract our decisions on war and peace to a foreign country's intelligence apparatus. How much we may like Mr. Blair means nothing. We ought to trust our own people.

So maybe the problem is with ourselves. For example, why do we spend \$30 billion on intelligence and yet no one is capable of fact-checking a State of the Union speech? Why have we sacrificed the lives of more than 200 young Americans? We have been told they would protect our country from immediate danger posed by Saddam's barrels of nerve gas and biological toxins and nuclear weapons and al Qaeda and all the rest, but the information was weak, bad and apparently manipulated.

I think the people of Iraq are better off than they were before the United States took out the Saddam Hussein regime, but I am not sure that these Americans who died there were supposed to die to improve the lives of Iraqis. I think they were ready to die to protect their own country, the United States of America, from weap-

ons of mass destruction that threaten our shores and our people.

I am sure that the young people from Britain who have died were similarly protecting their own country.

Perhaps Mr. Blair will answer our questions when he comes to the Chamber on Thursday. Perhaps as Head of State Mr. Blair will take personal responsibility for the errors that pervaded the intelligence he repeatedly cited and not let people who work for him take the blame. Perhaps Mr. Blair will set an example for our own President to follow. That would be worth a Congressional Gold Medal.

HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise again tonight to talk about the high cost of prescription drugs, and I am going to be showing a chart and talking about what I think are some pretty stubborn facts. But before I do, I just want to remind the Members of something that Abraham Lincoln said over 100 years ago: You can fool some of the people some of the time, you can even fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

Earlier, my colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), rose and showed some righteous indignation about some of the kinds of advertising that are going on right now, and they are now saying that somehow if we are in favor of opening up markets to give Americans access to world-class drugs at world-market prices that somehow we are in favor of abortion, which is just a ludicrous argument to make. It says a lot about those groups, and I think my colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), raised some of the questions about the ethics of those groups who are sending out those brochures and running those ads.

I think it is fair to ask where the money really comes from, and I think we all know where the money really comes from, but at the end of the day I think we ought to ask ourselves about the ethics of the pharmaceutical companies, the companies who are actually paying for those ads, the companies who actually develop and sell RU-486.

Why is it that they want to change the subject? Why is it they do not want to talk about the real issue? They want to talk about anything they can except this chart.

The reason is simple. They cannot defend this chart. They cannot even explain this chart. I have asked them to explain this chart. Let me go through some of the numbers on this chart.

These are not somebody else's numbers. This is not some goofball group from Florida. This is not some left wing or right wing extremist. These