It was just back on March 16 that Vice President CHENEY declared to the Nation that the most important rationale for war with Iraq was the fact Iraq had all of these weapons of mass destruction. And I think as the weeks go by and as the lives of young Americans are lost, that more and more of our American families are asking: Why is it that each morning we hear that the body of another young American has been found, but we hear nothing about the location of any weapons of mass destruction? In fact, that term has almost been banned now from administration speeches justifying the war in Iraq.

So desperate is the administration to make the claim about weapons of mass destruction that incredibly, yesterday, Secretary of State Powell went to the scene of a horrific crime involving weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but it was a crime that happened 15 years ago, in 1988; and no evidence was provided suggesting any weapons of mass destruction had been located that would justify the loss of the lives of our sons and daughters in Iraq.

Now, surely, with thousands of people being paid by American taxpayers at this very moment to comb Iraq for weapons of mass destruction, sooner or later they will find at least a trace. But an honest assessment of this whole weapons of mass destruction question requires asking whether this third-rate tyrant, Saddam Hussein, unable to effectively defend himself and his own family, really ever had the capability to pose an imminent threat to our families here in America. Meanwhile, Americans continue to do most all of the dying, and American taxpayers are asked to continue to do most all of the paying for the cost of this administration's war justified by weapons of mass destruction.

In view of this, more and more Americans are contacting us here in Congress about the weapons of mass destruction question. Many of these people have done so through the organization called moveon.org, a citizens' organization to advance concerns in a way that I think is very healthy. I just want to share with my colleagues tonight the thoughts of some of those people from central Texas who share my concern about the rationale the administration used, how quickly it is walking away from that rationale, and the tremendous cost in the meantime, not only in dollars, but in blood.

Glee Ingram. Glee is a small business owner in Austin, and she writes: ''I strongly support an independent investigation of the claims that were made by the Bush administration as a prelude to declaring war on Iraq. Using deception to create support to go to war is absolutely unacceptable. We, the citizens who must reap the consequences of this decision, are due all honesty,'' and indeed they are. And it is particularly questionable why this administration that made such bold claims about how weapons of mass destruction posed a danger to our families now resists a complete investigation of why they have been unable to find them.

Chantal Tetreault, who is a University of Texas student, contacted me saying: ''Please support an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. My confidence in the government is shattered and will only be restored if the American people are given the truth about government intelligence prior to the Iraqi war. Innocent Americans have died and continue to die, along with many Iraqi civilians in this war.''

I think she raises some important questions, as does Kathy Goodwin, who is an Austin social worker who contacted me saying: ''I firmly believe that when we witnessed the bombing of September 11, people everywhere shared our grief and millions in the United States and all over the world have since come to the conclusion that war will not solve all our problems. The terrorism that caused 9–11 will not be stopped through a war with Iraq. We need the truth.'' And that is what an independent investigation of the whole WMD controversy would get to.

I believe the voices of these Austinites and others across the country should be heeded. We need action now to find out why and what occurred here.

SUPPORT H.R. 693, THE MILITARY DEATH GRATUITY TAX REPEAL ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am back on the floor tonight to say to the House and to the other body, the Senate, that we need to pass legislation to remove the tax that is sent to the families of those who have given their loved one to die for this country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce my colleagues to a young man whose name is Tyler Jordan. Tyler's father, gunny sergeant Phillip Jordan, died for this country. He died in Iraq. He gave his life for this country. Yet, Mr. Speaker, because we have not removed a tax on the death gratuity that will be sent to his family this year, next year his family will have to pay a tax on $6,000.

Last year I put a bill in that would remove this tax; and it was supported by both parties, Democrat and Republican. It was sent in a larger bill to the Senate, but the Senate could not find the time to pass the legislation. This year again, the House, in a bipartisan way, Democrat and Republican, have sent to the Senate a larger bill with this provision in it to remove this tax on this death gratuity, and the Senate still has not taken the time to pass it.

Behind me are faces of those who have given their lives for this country. Their families next year will receive a tax bill from Uncle Sam. Mr. Speaker, I think when a family gives a loved one dying for freedom, the least that the House and the Senate can do is to repeal this tax.

The history of this is that in the early 1990s, there was a $3,000 death gratuity sent to the family. It was increased to $6,000, but the Congress did not take off the tax on the additional $3,000, so that means on the $6,000 death gratuity that is sent to the family, a tax will have to be paid. Mr. Speaker, I am going to call on the House leadership, both Republican and Democrat, the Senate leadership, and the President of the United States that we not leave here in November of this year and say to the families who have given a loved one that you are going to receive a tax bill from Uncle Sam.

I look at this young man that I hold up again, his name is Tyler Jordan. His father, Phillip, a Marine, gunny sergeant, died for this country. Yet not only did he give up his father, but also his family is going to be asked to pay a tax. This is unacceptable. There are many issues that we debate here in the House of Representatives, many issues that are so important; but is there anything more important than to say to a family, you gave a loved one for this country. The least we can do is to eliminate this tax.

So I am asking my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle to please help me encourage the House leadership, both Republican and Democrat, that we not leave this year without sending to the floor of the House H.R. 693, a bill that I have introduced supported by both sides, the military death gratuity tax repeal, get it to the floor and pass it. Because I do not want to come back here in 2004 and think that we have asked a family that gave a loved one that they had to pay a tax.

Let me give my colleagues a quick example. On September 11 of 2001, over 292 military families paid a tax on the gift of a loved one. In the year 2002, if this bill had passed last year, but since it did not pass, 1,700 families had to pay a tax on the gift of a loved one who died for freedom in America.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is my hope as I conclude tonight that as we look at the faces of these who have given their lives for America, we look at the little boy who gave his father for this country, that we will not leave here in November without passing H.R. 693 on the floor of this House and let us send it to the other body and ask them to pass that legislation. I am going to write a letter to the President of the United States, send it tomorrow, and ask the President to please get behind this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I close as I do in my district and I did last night: I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless their families, and I ask God to please in his loving way in

his arms to hold the families who have given their loved ones dying for freedom. I ask God to please bless the American people, to bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God Almighty. I ask God to please be with the President of the United States so that he will do what is right for the future of this country. And I ask three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

SUPPORT LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES THROUGH FREE MARKET ACCESS

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, people from around the world come to America for their medical care, yet Americans are forced to travel the world for their medications. A recent Families USA study found that the prices of the 50 drugs most commonly used by seniors in America increased by an average of 3.5 times the rate of inflation over the past year. Between 2000 and 2003, seniors' expenditures on prescription drugs increased by 44 percent. For too long, seniors have been paying premium prices for the same prescription drugs that are available in Canada and European countries at 30, 40, 50 percent reductions.

What we are proposing through the market access bill is allowing people here in the United States to buy medications in Canada and Europe, is free market competition, allowing the market to work. That competition will bring prices down in the United States and save our consumers and our taxpayers thousands upon thousands of dollars.

We as public officials are entrusted by the American people to represent them. We are not entrusted to ensure that they pay the most expensive price, but get the best price for the medications they paid for the research on. A recent USA Today Gallup poll showed that 71 percent of the American people showed support for allowing them to buy their medications in Canada or Europe.

I stood just Sunday with the Governor of Illinois who announced that for the first State ever in the Union, that they will now study what would be the savings to the taxpayers of Illinois if the 230,000 retirees and State employees would be allowed to buy their medications in Canada. In the last year, the cost to the State for prescription drugs increased by 15 percent. Illinois now spends $340 million a year for prescription drugs for their employees and retirees. It is projected in the Illinois budget that that will increase by 17 percent next year and another 15 percent the following year after that.

There are early predictions of what the savings will be, but I will wait for that study to be produced. The Governor asked for two actions: a, report back in a period of time for the savings to the State, if there are any; and, b, if there are savings, to then open up the health care contracts that the State has for its employees and retirees so they can cover prescription drugs bought in Canada.

That is the same program that the AARP does for its own seniors today. United Health covers 96,000 seniors who buy their medications in Canada and covers it with an insurance policy.

Now, nobody believes that the AARP would risk the health and welfare of our grandparents. Now, if there is an ability for a State government to save $50 million to $60 million, rather than lay off teachers, rather than lay off police officers, rather than close prisons, I think they have an obligation to the taxpayers and to their employees to get them those savings.

We too will face that choice. Just in July, prior to going home for the August recess, a bipartisan majority of the House Members came together and voted across party lines to allow market access, to allow Americans to buy the medications, the name-brand drugs that they need for cholesterol control, blood pressure control, arthritis, other types of medications, either in Canada or in Europe. That passed with an overwhelming majority. This is not a decision of Democrat versus Republican, or right versus left, but of right versus wrong. We can do better for the American people. We can give them the choice and the competition they deserve so that they can get the savings they deserve.

The irony of all of this situation is that Americans pay 50 percent more for the medications that their colleagues in France, Germany, England, Italy, Ireland, and Canada pay.

□ 2000

And yet what is ironic is every cancer drug, every AIDS drug, every major medication in this country was developed by the taxpayer funded research through the tax credit research and development credit or through direct funding by the National Institutes of Health.

The American taxpayers and consumers today are not only underwriting the research in this country, they are underwriting the profits of the American pharmaceutical companies. I have nothing against profits. I think they are a good thing. But they do not need to make up their profits in the United States from our seniors and our consumers when they can actually have the free market operate in the appropriate way so we can get the best price for our consumers and our seniors and for our taxpayers.

As we embark on this largest expansion of an entitlement in over 40 years, thinking of adding $400 billion to Medicare to cover a prescription drug plan, I think we owe the decency and respect to the taxpayers to ensure that we get them the best price, not the most expensive price for that $400 billion.

Now, those medications exist out there. Today you take Tamoxifen, which is a major cancer fighting drug, it costs $360 million here in the United States. In Canada that same medication for the same amount cost $33. In Germany it cost $60. You can go drug by drug and there is a major 40 to 50 percent reduction.

I would call on our colleague and I call on governors and mayors around the country to look at what we did in Illinois and see if you cannot save your taxpayers and your employees the cost that they need so we can plow that back into other health care coverage for the uninsured, to expanding our school, retaining our teachers, doing teacher training, and make sure that our police are on our street making them safe. Those are the right choices we owe to our employees, our consumers, and, most importantly, the taxpayers.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

REJECT IRAQ WAR APPROPRIATION

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the neo-conservative media machine has been hard