voting to raise the statutory debt ceiling by $690 billion. That is the first in a series of raises, because if you read CBO's report on the President's budget which is essentially embodied in this resolution and run that budget out over 10 years between 2005 and 2014, according to CBO, we will cumulatively incur a debt of $5.132 trillion.

Vote for this rule and you will be voting against any plan or any process to come to terms with this enormous, record-breaking deficit. There is no plan. There is no solution. Do not fool yourself in this resolution. Vote for it and you vote to tread water while the problem gets worse. You vote to kick the can down the road. If you want to deal with the deficit, deal with this debt, vote against this resolution, and send the conferees back to the conference. If you want to dodge the issue for another year while it gets worse, vote for this resolution. I would suggest we vote against it.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I will be urging Members to vote ''no'' on the previous question in order to expose a part of this budget resolution that my Republican colleagues would rather not talk about. When Members vote for this budget conference report, they will be voting to increase the statutory debt limit by almost $700 billion for the next fiscal year. An uncomfortable fact they would rather not talk about today is that this budget raises our national statutory debt limit to the highest level in our history, to more than $8 trillion. This comes on top of the fact that last year Republicans used the budget resolution to slip through a $984 billion increase in the debt limit, the largest increase in the debt limit in the history of the United States of America without an up-or-down vote in this House.

Mr. Speaker, there is an honest disagreement in this House over our Nation's fiscal priorities. Many of us think that with large deficits and the growing costs of the war in Iraq, we need to rethink our budget priorities and figure out how to make our revenues match up better with our spending needs. My Republican colleagues do not seem to think there is a problem. They think it is just fine to continue on with the spending and the tax policies that have led us into this current fiscal mess. They seem to think it is fine to keep building up our national debt and leave it to our kids and our grandkids to figure out how to pay for it.

I would say to my Republican colleagues, if they honestly believe that tax cuts with borrowed money is good economic policy, they should be willing to stand up in this House and vote to increase the national debt to pay for their tax cuts instead of relying on undercover parliamentary tricks. Republicans used to criticize Democrats for using House rules to slip through increases in the national debt without a separate vote. That is exactly what they are doing here today. If they believe in the fiscal policies that are sending the national debt through the roof, they should be willing to stand up on the floor of this House and vote for them.

I want to emphasize that a ''no'' vote will not stop the House from taking up the budget conference report. All it does is require Republicans to take responsibility for a fiscal policy that by the end of this year will cost our kids and our grandkids $8 trillion.

I ask unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, to insert the text of the amendment immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Again I would urge a ''no'' vote on the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important document. It is an important document because this sets the parameters of congressional spending to fund the government for 2005. We have heard a great deal from the other side in this debate about the debt limit. I addressed that earlier. I acknowledge that because we inherited a recession 4 years ago and we were attacked by terrorists and now we are engaged in an international war on terrorism, yes, we have spent more than we have taken in, and we do have to address this issue of raising the debt limit. But if we do not pass a budget resolution, that means we will not have any discipline on the appropriation process as we go through appropriating dollars for fiscal year 2005. That means if we have no discipline that the debt limit will increase higher because that is the way this body has always worked. Passing this budget is very important to put that discipline in place.

I would also make the observation, as I made earlier, every budget substitute amendment that was presented earlier when we were debating the House version of the budget, every one of those budgets acknowledged that we were going to have to address raising the debt limit in the future. Every one of them. They had it in different ways, different opportunities. Nevertheless, everyone acknowledged the fact that we have to address the debt limit problem.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me just suggest this, and I have learned this in the time that you and I have been here in this body. We will go through the appropriation process one way or the other. I think it is better to have the discipline of having a budget. But if we do not have the discipline of having a budget agreed to by both Houses, I suspect that what we will see when we go through the appropriation process from the other side, we will see, continually, amendments offered to raise more spending, which, of course, if it followed what they would be suggesting, we will have to raise the debt limit even higher. Sometimes I wonder what the debate is when I hear their rhetoric as we go through this process.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for the previous question, vote for the rule and the underlying resolution.

The material previously referred to by Mr. MCGOVERN is as follows:

PREVIOUS QUESTION FOR H. RES. 649

H. CON. RES. 95, THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE BUDGET 2004

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 649 OFFERED BY REPRESENTATIVE MCGOVERN

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 4. Upon the adoption of this resolution rule XXVII shall not apply to the conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 95, setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2005 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2006 through 2009.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4200, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 648 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 648

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4200) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2005 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2005, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and the amendments made in order by this resolution and shall not exceed two hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule.

SEC. 2. (a) It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived.

(b) No amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution and amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution.

(c) Each amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report (except as specified in section 4 of this resolution), may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. Each amendment printed in the report shall be debatable for 10 minutes (unless otherwise specified in the report) equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent and shall not be subject to amendment (except that the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services each may offer one pro forma amendment for the purpose of further debate on any pending amendment).

(d) All points of order against amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules or amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time for the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services or his designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services or their designees, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. The original proponent of an amendment included in such amendments en bloc may insert a statement in the Congressional Record immediately before the disposition of the amendments en bloc.

SEC. 4. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may recognize for consideration of any amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution out of the order printed, but not sooner than one hour after the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services or a designee announces from the floor a request to that effect.

SEC. 5. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

□ 1130

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purposes of debate only.

Yesterday, the Committee on Rules met and granted a structured rule for H.R. 4200, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005. The rule provides for 2 hours of general debate equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. Finally, the rule allows that the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may recognize for consideration any amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules out of the order printed, but not sooner than 1 hour after the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services or a designee announces from the floor a request to that effect.

H.R. 4200 comes at a particularly crucial time for our Nation's Armed Forces. The Iraqi conflict and our continuing war on terrorism have brought a renewed and proper focus to national defense. This legislation addresses the needs of a Nation at war on multiple fronts. It contains $422.2 billion for the Department of Defense, DOD, and the national security programs of the Department of Energy, DOE. It also provides an additional $25 billion in emergency budget authority to partially cover the projected costs of continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The primary focus of this legislation is protecting our troops on the battlefield. Our men and women in uniform depend on having the necessary systems and equipment to be successful in accomplishing their mission. Many of us have been concerned about the lack of armor available for our Humvees and other trucks. This bill addresses that concern by providing $829.6 million for production of up-armored Humvees. This improved ballistic Humvee will protect our soldiers from anti-personnel, armor-piercing munitions and improvised explosive devices. These are most commonly referred to as IEDs when we hear news reports.

It also provides $358.2 million for vehicle add-on armor kits for the Army's truck fleet. Most importantly, it gives the military new authorities to speed critical weapons and equipment to the troops in the battlefield.

In the near future, the outcome of our war against terror depends on the courage of our personnel who are on the front lines. We owe so much to our men and women in uniform, and their success in Iraq and Afghanistan is a testimony to their bravery, training, and equipment and their commitment to defend our freedoms. It is the means by which we meet our commitment to provide them a decent quality of life with an across-the-board 3.5 percent pay increase for military personnel.

We need pay to sustain the commitment and professionalism of America's all-volunteer armed services and the families that support them. It increases the limit on hardship duty pay from $300 to $750 per month. It makes permanent the increased rate for imminent danger pay from $150 to $225 a month and more than doubles the rate for the family separation allowance from $100 to $250 per month.

Our soldiers also need to know that while they are deployed, we are praying for them and their safe return. I was told by a soldier in my district that the most important thing to a soldier who is serving overseas was knowing that their family is being taken care of and supported and they are safe at home. If these men and women are willing to lay down their lives for us, then the least we can do for them is to pray for them and to take care of their families while they are gone.

For this purpose, I have created a Web site. It is Honoring Heroes.com. It is a one-stop-shopping resource where folks can go to learn about supporting our troops and their families at home. On the site visitors will find links and resources to help support the families of our men and women who are overseas. And as we approach Memorial Day, one can also find on the Web site a list of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice during the war in Iraq. We must always remember them.

I commend the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member, for crafting this legislation that will really, truly strengthen America's military. It proposes the largest increase in military end strength in decades by increasing the active duty Army by 30,000 personnel and the Marine Corps by 9,000.

Even before Operation Iraqi Freedom, the global war on terrorism, and the commitment to homeland security, the Armed Forces had insufficient manpower for existing wartime and peacetime requirements.

Now more than anytime in our Nation's history, we are relying on these men and women who so faithfully serve our country in the National Guard. H.R. 4200 contains language that will help us to continue to provide strong support for our National Guard.

In my State of North Carolina, universities and community organizations will be coming together to help develop a comprehensive program to effectively support these soldiers. The bill recognizes the importance of this program and provides language to help integrate the National Program for Citizen Soldier support with the Defense Department's ongoing effort to support our men and women in uniform.

The bill also recognizes the importance of our Nation's continued development of advanced weaponry and technology. Included in this bill is the support of further exploration of the use of lithium batteries on the battlefield.

Finding a safe, cost-effective, and portable energy source for our men and women in the Armed Forces should be a top priority of the Department of Defense. I am pleased to see this year's bill addresses the need for our military to develop new and powerful alternative energy sources.

However, there is one amendment the Committee on Rules made in order that I strongly oppose, the Davis of California amendment. It would allow abortions on our military bases overseas. Military treatment centers, which are dedicated to healing and nurturing life, should not be forced to facilitate the taking of the most innocent human life, the child in the womb. For the past 7 years, the House has voted to keep abortion on demand out of military medical facilities, and I urge my colleagues to stay on this course and vote against this amendment.

That said, this is a fair rule. So let us pass the rule and pass the underlying defense authorization bill. At the end of the day, we will be making our homeland safer and we will be supporting our sons and daughters who are serving us in the military. We will be preparing for war, thereby ensuring victory. And at this crucial time in our history, this bill is most important.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FROST asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, the annual defense authorization bill is always one of the most important bills this Congress considers. Having spent my last 25 years in Congress working hard to ensure a strong national defense, it is a bill that I have always supported, and this year the defense authorization bill is more important than ever.

This past December, I spent several days in Iraq where I had the opportunity to meet with rank-and-file soldiers on the front lines and thank them personally for their distinguished service and personal sacrifice. And I was reminded of this enormous sacrifice upon my return. The cargo plane that took us out of Baghdad carried the coffins of two American soldiers who had been killed just 3 days before Christmas.

It seems like almost every night, Americans turn on the news at home and see nothing but reports of the violence in Iraq and hear comments from politicians and pundits debating decisions made here in Washington. But when I turn on NBC News or CNN or any of the other networks, I cannot help but recall the selflessness and courage that I saw in our soldiers, and the mix of pride and sorrow I felt on that flight home.

America's sons and daughters in Iraq represent our country well, but their job continues to be very difficult and very dangerous, and it will not be over anytime soon. It is clear that American troops will be based in Iraq for at least the next year and possibly longer.

And that is why the bill before us today is so important. Before anything else, the defense authorization bill is a bill to support our troops. The funding in the bill today will keep our service men and women in Iraq and around the world safe, provide them with the tools they need to fight the war on terror, and give them and their families a better quality of life.

First and foremost, we provide $25 billion in supplemental funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure that our troops have everything they need to conduct the war on terror and return home to their families safely. We provide over $1 billion for armored Humvees and body armor. We help ensure the strength of our military by adding 39,000 more Army and Marine Corps troops.

We make sure that our troops experience a good quality of life by giving them a 3.5 percent pay raise, and we help ensure that all of our fighting men and women receive health care by expanding TRICARE coverage to Reservists and their dependents.

The bill also helps those who have served our country so honorably over the years by making sure that those who are left behind when a soldier falls receive the full benefits that they deserve through the Survivor Benefit Plan.

And while there are a great many provisions here we can take pride in, Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today is by no means perfect. There remain a number of serious issues that we must resolve.

This morning, in the Committee on Rules, my colleagues and I tried to offer an amendment to the rule which would have more than doubled the amount authorized for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the supplemental. Similarly, we tried to provide $414 million to provide fair pay and benefits for our troops.

There are a great many Members who support these provisions, Mr. Speaker. They have broad support throughout the House, but they were, like dozens of other important amendments offered in the Committee on Rules, denied a vote on the floor by the Republican leadership. That is a shame, Mr. Speaker, because we all want what is best for our troops.

Because this House was denied the opportunity to consider a great many important amendments, I will be voting ''no'' on today's rule. I will also be urging a ''no'' vote on the previous question so that we may consider one of the amendments that was denied, the amendment of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) to provide fair pay and benefits for the troops.

That said, despite what happened at the Committee on Rules this morning, I stand in strong support of the underlying bill and our troops. There has never been any doubt that this House, this Nation, and its people stand 100 percent behind our men and women in uniform, fighting to secure peace the world over.

I hope we can soon continue the discussion on how best to provide for our service men and women and keep our Nation safe. And although I will be voting against the rule today, I will be voting for the underlying bill. It is the right thing to do, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting ''yes'' on the authorization bill today.

I only wish that the majority leadership, in the spirit of bipartisanship that normally surrounds defense measures, had permitted some very important amendments to be offered. And we will be hearing from some of my colleagues in the rest of the debate on this rule about how strongly they feel about their rights being denied here on the floor today.

□ 1145

When we are trying to promote our military and trying to do the right thing around the world, we should promote democracy here on the floor of the House and not stifle it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LINDER), a member of the Committee on Rules.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule for the defense authorization bill. In total, this rule provides 9½ hours of debate on a number of key issues affecting our military and our national defense. The underlying legislation, H.R. 4200, passed the Committee on Armed Services by a vote of 60 to 0, and it meets the challenges of a Nation whose soldiers are at work in Afghanistan, Iraq, and across the globe in the fight against terror.

Following almost 5 hours of hearings yesterday in the Committee on Rules, we have provided the opportunity for further debate by making in order 28 amendments, including 10 Democrat amendments, 15 Republican amendments, and three bipartisan.

This is a fair and traditional rule for a DoD authorization bill that will permit the House to support our Nation's men and women in uniform and ensure that our defense capabilities remain second to none while having excellent debate later today on a wide array of amendments.

Mr. Speaker, this important bill falls well in line with what the Founders envisioned when they crafted article I, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which states that Congress shall have the power to ''raise and support Armies,'' as well as to ''provide and maintain a Navy.''

Mr. Speaker, on September 11, 2001, our Nation bore witness to one of the most horrific crimes in history. Today, our Nation's servicemen and -women are fighting for freedom in the civilized

world on multiple fronts across the globe. Our commitment to these ideals depends on our military and our military personnel, and this bill is a statement that we will continue to defend freedom and ensure that our homeland remains safe.

First, this legislation provides the funding needed to continue the U.S. military's transition into the 21st century. H.R. 4200 authorizes nearly $2 billion for the U.S. Army to procure weapons-tracked combat vehicles; $10 billion for the U.S. Navy for shipbuilding and conversion; and over $13.5 billion for the U.S. Air force to procure additional aircraft. The authorization for these and other programs will help ensure that the U.S. military remains the most efficient, most lethal, and most effective fighting force in the world.

But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot possibly hope to maintain the level of excellence obtained by the U.S. military without the achievements of the men and women who proudly wear the uniform. I am continually impressed by the resolve, patriotism, and commitment exhibited by these heroes day in and day out. As such, this Congress must work to reinforce this strength, and H.R. 4200 makes good progress towards that end.

I am pleased that the underlying legislation contains a 3.5 percent pay increase in base pay for military personnel. H.R. 4200 also recommends the elimination of out-of-pocket expenses military personnel must contribute toward housing costs. Both of these provisions will not only help ease the burden placed on military personnel and their families but should also help to ensure that the U.S. military is able to retain these highly trained personnel.

Mr. Speaker, it is undoubtedly true that not everyone will be satisfied with this measure. What we must remember, however, is that the primary responsibility of this government is to provide for the common defense of this country. As one of the Founders put it, wise and free people direct their attentions first to their own safety.

As such, I urge my colleagues to support both this rule and the underlying measure, H.R. 4200, to not only uphold the obligations of the Congress and the Federal Government, but also to show our men and women in uniform that their service to this Nation and their fellow Americans does not now nor will it ever go unappreciated.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, who was denied the opportunity to offer key amendments.

(Mr. SKELTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Texas for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the rule; I rise in strong opposition to the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorely distressed over this rule. The base bill that our Committee on Armed Services worked on and put out is a pretty good bill. We have done some good things, particularly for the troops. But I raise the question as to why in the world the Committee on Rules, at my request to have 6 hours of debate, 3 hours on each side on a $422 billion bill, has limited it to 2 hours, 1 hour on each side. Is the Committee on Rules majority afraid of debate?

Specifically, there are several issues we need to debate. This is the crucible of democracy; young men, young women in uniform, all across this world, all across the globe, standing firm for democracy and decency and what we stand for. And we are limited in our debate time?

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that they limit us. We should discuss the cost of the war in Iraq; the cost of the war in Afghanistan; the role of contractors. This is a serious role that has arisen recently and that needs to be discussed on the floor of this House.

The issue of the Iraqi prisoner detainee abuse, which has flooded the world news media, needs to be talked about from both sides of the aisle; and the transition to a new government in Iraq, on June 30, which we really have no idea what it will look like, needs a discussion and a thorough airing here in this Chamber. These are important issues, and we are limited to 1 hour on each side to discuss them.

I am sorry that has happened. Two hours is not nearly enough. It does the young men and young women in uniform a disservice, it does democracy in this Chamber a disservice.

Mr. Speaker, I also pointed out four amendments that I wished to be made in order, and only one was approved by the Committee on Rules. I studied the amendments; and, as ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, I thought I spoke with some knowledge.

These are serious, thoughtful amendments which, I believe, deserve full and extended debate on the House floor. These issue areas and the amendments to which I refer are:

Sanchez amendment to modify the Uniform Code of Military Justice to bring it into conformity with modern criminal sexual assault statutes;

Cooper/Ryan amendment authorizing a total of $67 billion for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan;

Spratt amendment on increasing pay for our troops and their quality of life by making targeted cuts in missile defense programs; and

Tauscher amendment on Department of Energy nuclear weapons policy.

Only one of these, the Tauscher amendment, was made in order. This is simply unacceptable. These are serious amendments that try to deal responsibly with complex issues. They reflect broadly held views by members on this side. A meaningful debate on these issues would reflect well on the House and would serve the country well. The failure to make them in order is disappointing, unfair and reflects badly on the House. It is an outrage!

If the previous question is defeated, the House will have the chance to at least partially redress this wrong by considering the Spratt amendment, which will directly benefit the troops.

I strongly urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question and to vote "no" on the rule.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE).

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act and the rule. This bill contains tremendous support for our military. Among those items that I think are particularly noteworthy is increased housing benefits for our troops; a pay raise, including an increased pay raise for hardship duty; additional health care benefits for Reservists; additional armor for Humvees; body armor; better survivor benefits; an increase of 30,000 troops, which I think at the present time we very badly need; and the most efficient weapons system available.

A few months ago, Mr. Speaker, I visited Landstuhl Hospital in Germany, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, and talked to an awful lot of our troops over there; and I was singularly impressed with the quality, the commitment, and the expertise of the troops that I met. This was one week before Christmas, and yet I did not hear one complaint from any one of the soldiers that I talked to. They seemed to have a tremendously strong sense of mission.

A young captain from my home State of Nebraska who had been away from his wife and infant child for 1 year made two comments that stuck with me that I think are worth repeating.

First of all, he said that it is better that we fight terrorists here in the Middle East than we fight them at home. I think that all of us realize we are not completely immune from terrorism on these shores. However, we would also have to recognize the fact that terrorism has certainly been crippled. It has had to focus its attacks primarily in the Middle East. It certainly has made the United States a safer place over the last year and a half.

Then the second comment that he made I think is particularly important. He said it is really important that the American people not lose patience, and I would say that includes Congress as well, because the captain was proud of the accomplishments that our military had accomplished in that area.

What he was pointing out, simply, was the improvement in the infrastructure; the increase in commerce in that part of the world; the improvement in health care; the fact that infants, young people, about 90 percent of them had been vaccinated in Iraq; the improvement in government, at least the potential for a representative government to be formed.

So we certainly believe that the quality of people we have over there is exceptional, they deserve our support, and this bill does that.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

(Mr. SPRATT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I have served here for 22 years and served all those years on the House Committee on Armed Services, and today I am the recognize second ranking Democrat on that committee; and if there is any comity left in this institution, surely I should have the right to offer one well-considered, carefully crafted, very serious amendment. That is what I proposed. That is what I offered.

I knew that the Committee on Rules had been narrowing down the debate for years and years, so I went prepared to the Committee on Rules and asked for simply one amendment.

Now, I do not stand here in personal pique because my amendment has not been made in order. Far from it. It is not that this rule shuts me out or shuts out the people I represent in South Carolina. It shuts out our troops. It shuts out our sergeants and warrant officers. It denies every trooper who goes into combat the opportunity to have $250,000 of group life insurance at Uncle Sam's expense. That is what it does.

The amendment that I proposed would take $414 million out of ballistic missile defense and move it, first of all, $300 million for targeted pay increases for noncommissioned officers, NCOs, who bear the burden of fighting, who are the backbone of our military in Iraq and Afghanistan. These personnel, grades E–5 through E–9, are the troops we need most to keep. If they vote with their feet and leave the Army, we will have a broken Army.

What I proposed is what the Quadrennial Review proposed 3 years ago, what we have voted up twice in the last 2 fiscal years, but do not in this budget, is a targeted increase for these troops.

In addition, I proposed we take 25 to $50 million and say to every soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine going into harm's way, into combat, once you draw imminent danger pay, the Government of the United States of America will pick up the premium, we will provide you with $250,000 in group life insurance, SGLI, a great idea.

It is the least we can do for these troops. After all, we did, and I think rightly, $1.4 million in average benefits for the victims of 9/11. Can we not guarantee our troops in combat at least $250,000 in light of that?

So what they have denied me with this rule is the opportunity to have a hearty, healthy debate on our priorities. Can we take a little bit out of a program that is slated to increase by $1.2 billion, take $400 million out of it and move it around, put it into a pay raise for our NCOs and our warrant officers, put it into a life insurance premium for our troops? And then take a little bit of it and deal with some problems in ballistic missile defense, which this budget, for all it does for BMD, does not do, for example to Patriot-3s. It took out a Tornado, it took out an F/A–18. We need to put more money into IFF, Identification Friend Or Foe.

□ 1200

Roadside bombs, IEDs, we need to put more money in that. Look at the Marine Corps' unfunded requirement list. You will find it at the top of their list.

These are the things that I, if I had the opportunity, would propose that we do with cuts that would not impede or in any way affect the progress of ballistic missile defense.

Give me that opportunity. Vote down the previous question. Vote down the rule. And let us have a full fair and serious debate on national defense.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule. Our country is at war, Mr. Speaker, and this rule and the underlying bill reflect the needs of a country at war.

We have addressed in this bill in particular the needs of the soldier. In fact, the bill is entitled The Year of the Soldier, and to support our soldiers we have addressed issues that have to do with technology. We have addressed issues that have to do with armor, both body and vehicle. We have addressed additional needs that our Special Operations Command has, and we have addressed the need to defend ourselves in terms of chemical and biological protection.

But one of the most important provisions of the bill, Mr. Speaker, is a provision that addresses a need in terms of our military's transformation. Our committee found during a hearing on April 21, 2004, that the DOD acquisition process would not respond in an expeditious manner to the urgent force protection equipment needs of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is something that the bill seeks to change.

At the hearing, the HASC found that it required 6 months from the time a combatant commander made his request to the time that the production for such equipment commenced, 6 months from the time the combatant commander said he needed a device and the time we began to produce it; not when it got to the field, but when we began to produce it.

This provision would authorize the Secretary of Defense to publish a streamlined acquisition process for use when combatant fatalities have occurred. The combatant commander has an urgent need for equipment and the delay would cause the continuation of combat fatalities. This rapid acquisition authority will allow a rapid response to emergency combat situations.

This rapid acquisition authority would allow a rapid response to emergency combat situations, would allow a rapid response to changes in our opponents' battlefield tactics and, most important, this provision would help minimize combat fatalities.

This is a process to be used as a quick-start bridge to the normal acquisition process. The provision is limited, however, limited to $100 million per fiscal year.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, when a country is at war, rule number one is that the sacrifice must be shared. Congress must support our citizen soldiers who answer the call of duty, but who face ongoing financial obligations in their civilian lives. Our Reserves and our National Guard are doing a superb job, but thousands of them are suffering significant hardships due to the discrepancy between their civilian and military pay.

Abandoning them financially is unacceptable. Yet, for the second time in 2 years, the Committee on Rules has rejected my amendment which would have immediately eliminated the pay gap for Federal employees and provided significant incentive for State and municipal governments to do the same. Instead of delaying financial assistance for 1 year, as the bill we are considering proposes, my amendment would have wiped out the pay gap for Reservists and National Guardsmen immediately.

Mr. Speaker, for the soldiers who suffer from the pay gap, the proposal in the legislation we are considering is too little and too late. In a time of war, it is unconscionable to impose all of the sacrifice on one segment of society. Yet, the administration and the Republicans in this House continue to back massive tax cuts for the wealthiest, placing financial burdens on other groups, including the Reservists and members of the National Guard who are already sacrificing so much for all of us.

It is an outrage that this body is not allowed to vote, not allowed to vote on providing members of our National Guard and our Reserves some financial relief. My amendment, which would provide immediate help to the tens of thousands of Reservists and members of the National Guard, was ruled out of order. Why? Because the Republican leadership is convinced that were we to debate my amendment freely on this floor, it would pass overwhelmingly.

It is an outrage to the Reservists and members of the National Guard that we are denied that opportunity. I urge all of my colleagues to oppose this unfair, unequitable and undemocratic rule.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). The gentleman will state his inquiry.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I believe under the rules, procedures and etiquette of the House, that the press is to have access to the gallery here in the House. I am concerned that the doors may be locked. I see only one person in the press gallery today.

I think people all over the country have a right to know that the press has access to the Chamber to cover the travesty of democracy and the arrogance of power that is going on here today.

I would ask the Parliamentarian and the Sergeant at Arms to be sure that the press gallery doors are unlocked so that the press might have access to these terrible proceedings wrought on the House floor by the majority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is not stating a parliamentary inquiry. Accessibility to the House is being observed.

Mr. SNYDER. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker. Do the rules of the House provide for the press to have access to the gallery of the House?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The House is in open session. Anybody has access that meets the standards of security.

Mr. SNYDER. Thank you. And that was a correct parliamentary inquiry.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to note for clarification, there have been press people coming and going ever since we have been doing this rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the distinguished chairman of this committee, who has done a phenomenal job in putting this bill together.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

I want to talk about this bill that was put together in the Committee on Armed Services, which was voted out with a 60 to zero vote, put together and shaped by Democrats and Republicans. I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), my partner on the committee, for all the great work that he has put into it, as well as the subcommittee chairmen, ranking members and all the folks who fill those seats in the Committee on Armed Services who really care about our troops.

In keeping with that, this is the Year of the Troops. We have endeavored to focus on those troops, and in doing that, we have got this 3.5 percent pay raise across the board. We have not increased money for hazardous duty pay. We have increased money for separation pay for folks that are away from their families. And beyond that we try to give our troops the tools that they need to get the job done.

The gentlewoman has mentioned armor, up-armoring of Humvees and trucks, and munitions and surveillance, in all the things that those folks need, those 135,000-plus folks in Iraq and thousands in the Afghanistan theater who are out there fighting right now, braving enemy fire, increasingly oppressive heat, difficult living conditions. And they are doing that for us. They are doing that all as volunteers, and it is our job to give them what they need to get the job done. That is what we do in this bill.

And appended to all of the great things that we have done, and I really applaud the gentleman who just spoke on this rapid acquisition initiative for a battlefield commander. When he is taking casualties, he can say, I want a system and I want it now. And you either have a system within contract of 15 days or you explain to the people in the field or to the Congress why that is not possible. That is very important.

Troops are important. And right now we have put into this bill an additional 10,000 Army troops each year for 3 years for a total of 30,000 troops. We have also put in an additional 3,000 Marines each year for a total of 9,000 additional Marines. And for everybody that hears from their Guard and Reserve and active forces, from the members of their family who say, you know, it looks like it is another Christmas that I will not be home, having more troops helps to alleviate that pressure because the more people you have, the less time an individual has to spend in theater, on duty, in rotation. So that takes a little bit of pressure off these troops.

Additionally, I think we looked at this thing as a committee and said, having additional forces available that are not obligated in the field, that are available for deployment, are insurance for our country. And we decided as a matter of policy that we wanted to have more insurance. So we have those additional forces.

Now, additional to the base bill this year, this $422 billion bill, we have got another thing, and that is this $25 billion authorization for a supplemental that we have bolted onto our bill. And we put that money in because we want to make sure we have plenty of money for operations in the closing months of this year, plenty of money for surveillance.

We have lots of surveillance platforms in here. We want to be able to see the bad guys when they are putting out those IEDs or putting up ambushes or other things. And we want to leverage our technology to do that so we have that additional surveillance money.

We have additional munitions money to put in so the troops have everything from the large rounds right down to M–16 ammunition, and we put in a lot of money for that.

Additionally, we have given the money to the Chief of Staff of the Army, to General Schumacher, to reshape his forces. And I would commend any Member of the House, and all of our members of the Committee on Armed Services have seen this, to have a sit-down with General Schumacher and listen to his blueprint for reshaping our force. He feels, under his blueprint, he can increase the Army from 33 active brigades to an additional three this year, three more next year and four more the next year. And we are helping him do that by putting in this supplemental for equipment for this reset.

I notice the ranking member had stood up to speak, and I just want to recognize him if he had anything to say. Then I know also the gentleman from South Carolina also had a position.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUNTER. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I just learned I can address the Chamber an additional 2 minutes a few minutes from now.

Let me, say on a positive side, I think it is a good thing we are doing, adding to the end strength of the troops. I am not sure if America fully knows, the understanding that we have some 4,000 coming out of Korea toward the Iraqi situation.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER).

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, every fair-minded Member of this House should be outraged at the rule we are being forced to debate under today. Two hours, a giant piece of legislation will be rammed through this House in 2 hours, less than 15 seconds per Member of this body; less than 15 seconds for each 700,000 group of constituents that we have the honor of representing; less than 15 seconds each to talk about over one-half of all the domestic discretionary spending of the United States of America; less than 15 seconds per Member to talk about the defense budget of the United States at a time of war; less than 15 seconds per Member to talk about a defense budget that is larger than every other defense budget in the world put together; less than 15 seconds per Member to talk about the needs of our troops in the field while they are fighting a war.

□ 1215

There will be no real debate allowed under this rule for properly funding our troops. It is true, thank goodness, that finally under pressure that the Republicans have put in $25 billion to fund our troops in kind of an emergency supplemental, but the truth is our troops need more money than that. They are running out of money now. Let me repeat, our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are running out of money now.

The Pentagon is already having to raid every cookie jar in the building to try to fund their needs. We should do better by our troops. We should fully fund their needs. We should tell the truth to the American people about the real cost of this war, which is a lot

closer to $200 billion than any other number.

I had an amendment that we wanted to debate and discuss that would have put in $67 billion for our troops so that funding would not just start in October, as intended by the Republican majority and, as they put it, end in December and January. They are fully funding about 3 or 4 months of this war to disguise the true cost of it. We should fund the needs of our troops for an entire year, and we should be proud of it.

With all the life-threatening risks that our men and women face in uniform overseas, financial uncertainties should not be an additional risk; yet that is what is being imposed on them by this body with this simplistic rule which is 2 hours of debate, less than 15 seconds per Member to talk about the true needs of our troops.

The gentlewoman from North Carolina, unfortunately, was absent from the Committee on Rules when I testified. There were only two Members there. They are hurrying through this so quickly in a rubber-stamp fashion that we are not able to properly discuss one of the most important bills of the year and perhaps of the decade.

Mr. Speaker, our committee has been rated by CSIS, the Center For Strategic and International Studies, as one of the worst Committee on the Armed Services in decades. Why? This is one of the reasons, inability to do our job correctly.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would just like to respond to the gentleman that I am not sure when he testified, but other than having a lunch appointment and voting on the floor, I was in that hearing the whole time; and I would also like to say, there is a total of 9½ hours of debate on this bill. It is not just 2 hours.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, the last speaker from the minority I think misrepresented the situation. This process started in January. We have been through the subcommittee process. The gentleman went through the subcommittee process, had ample time to make his arguments, went through the full committee process.

We forged a document through that process where everybody had ample time, including a debate that started at 10 o'clock in the morning last week and ended at midnight, to make our points; and following that debate, this bill was reported by a unanimous vote. So those who are crying foul today because of this rule are the same people who have worked since January to make their points, 12 hours last week to make their points, and a 9-hour debate today. It seems pretty fair to me.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the time remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). The gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) has 13 minutes remaining. The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) has 8¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, my friend from New Jersey makes reference to 9 hours of debate when, in truth, in fact, we have 2 hours of general debate on this issue.

I recommended to the Committee on Rules four major amendments. I stated the amendments from our committee, and I do not make recommendations lightly; and when I do, I hope the Committee on Rules would take them seriously. Most important is one that deals with quality of life for the soldiers and the troops and their families.

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) had a proposed amendment that would increase pay, increase quality of life. It targeted cuts towards the missile defense program which is being boosted up by well over $1 billion. What more can be said.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) had a proposed amendment to modify the Uniform Code of Military Justice, bringing this law into conformity with the Federal criminal sexual assault statutes. That was passed 18 years ago by this Congress. Now there are some 18 years of appellate history that can be used, and yet that was denied.

The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) had an amendment authorizing a total of $67 billion for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, when in truth and fact, the Committee on Rules set aside a reserve sum of some $50 billion meeting the Cooper/Ryan proposal by more than half.

The gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), thank goodness they allowed an amendment that she has on the Department of Energy nuclear weapons policy.

These are important amendments, important not just to the future of our country, not just important to our policy, important to those who wear the uniform, important to their families, where we are going. It is important, I think, that we vote down this rule and come back with a better one.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the House Republican leadership has allowed more time to debate the renaming of post offices from the floor this year than time to debate the Defense authorization bill during a time of war. It is sad. It is sad that the muzzling of democracy continues here in the United States, even as American citizens die and try to bring democracy to Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, this rule is unfair. I would say that the bill itself has many positive things to it, and I do salute much of the bipartisan effort that went into shaping the Defense authorization bill itself. Let me discuss two specific parts of the bill, one positive and one of great concern to me.

On a positive note, the bill finally improves benefits for pensions for widows of servicemen and -women. This had been long overdue to change this unfair treatment of military widows. The sergeant's wife, for example, that served 20 years in the Army, only receiving a $7,000 a year pension. I salute the Republicans who supported it in committee, and I want to thank the veterans organizations and the 200 Democrats who joined in my petition to pressure a vote on this long overdue consideration.

Second, it is unfortunate that this bill does not take action to continue this next year the largest, most important housing improvement program in our Nation's military history; and it is really sad when we consider tomorrow the House Republican leadership will push a tax cut bill that will provide self-serving tax cuts for Members of Congress; but today, we are saying to 24,000 military families, we cannot afford to improve the housing that they live in, even if their loved one is someone serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Self-serving tax cuts for Members of Congress being more important than improving military housing for those servicemen and -women sacrificing and serving our Nation in Iraq? It is wrong.

This rule is wrong. Vote ''no'' and let us reconsider this bill under new regulations and rules.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of the committee.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just correct my friend because he may have missed it, but we did lift the housing cap for privatization of housing. That was done pursuant to the Miller amendment in the committee. So we did two things, both the survivor benefits and the housing cap.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUNTER. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, if I can ask the gentleman a question, the staff of the committee has told me, and I have asked repeatedly, that it addresses the housing cap for fiscal year 2006, but does not solve the problem for 2005; and as a consequence, 24,000 military families will have their housing improvements put on hold.

Mr. HUNTER. I just say to the gentleman, it is permanent removal of the housing cap.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN).

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly oppose this rule.

Yesterday, in the Committee on Rules, I offered an amendment to the

defense authorization bill whose needs were proven and whose costs was fully offset, and it was sadly rejected.

The Air Force's Joint Surveillance Target Radar System, or the JSTARS, is a program vital to our Nation's security in a time of war and is crucial to the jobs of hard-working men in Louisiana. My amendment would have ensured the continuation of this program in order to build the number of planes that the military requested.

The next generation of JSTARS, the E–10A program, has been delayed twice and will not provide the needs of our military in sufficient time.

Without my amendment made in order, resources will be cut for our troops, plain and simple. Short-changing the military on their order for planes sells short this vital program and endangers valuable military support jobs in Louisiana.

The delay of the E–10A will disrupt our military industrial base and will affect our Nation's responsiveness to production needs.

The need is real, Mr. Speaker. The workforce is in place and our troops deserve the best we can provide. The JSTARS program merits funding and continuation. We will be continuing to discuss this, and it is a shame that we have not had this opportunity on the floor of the House to fully discuss this. The workers in my district deserve consideration to complete their mission, just as we have asked our troops to complete their mission.

I strongly oppose this rule.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS), the chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

(Mr. GOSS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from North Carolina for her kindness in yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, in consideration of the fiscal year 2005 Defense Authorization Act, this comes at a benchmark moment for the United States of America, if not the world, in terms of our history.

Our Nation and our allies are engaged in a global war against terrorism, we all know that, a war that began long before September 11, 2001, and is obviously going to continue well into the future. It is a war fanatics declared on America and its friends. It is a war that we cannot avoid. It is a war that must be fought, and it is a war that will be won.

President Bush understood early on that this sustained conflict would be difficult, and he told us so; and the truth of his words becomes more evident as time goes by, and it is our job to step up and provide for the challenge.

Our Nation's brave men and women in uniform and out face danger every day, not only in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan but actually around the whole world. We have sustained casualties. The inevitability of losses in dangerous work has not deterred us, nor has it diminished, of course, our heartfelt gratitude for the sacrifices made by some of the best our Nation has to offer, some from my home State, Florida, some from my district, as they fought in service of our country, for ideals that we all believe in, ideals that will endure, will prosper, and will better the lives of fellow human beings everywhere.

These people bring credit and honor to us all. They must be remembered and cherished, and I have no doubt they will; and this legislation goes in that direction.

The legislation we consider today provides the resources needed to continue the fight that we are in. H.R. 4200 allows America's military to function at a superior level. It includes programs that look forward, anticipating needs so that they can be met quickly and with precision when and wherever future threats arise.

In addition, the Defense Authorization Act maintains the oversight ability of the Congress. The limited, but nonetheless damaging, instances of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib will be dealt with transparently and fairly to show the world that free societies respect civilized standards and enforce them.

As chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I appreciate that H.R. 4200 includes a strong intelligence component that ensures American war fighters on the ground or in whatever mode are provided with the best possible information; and I am most grateful to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, for understanding this and providing for it.

Timely, accurate information is a vital weapon in the war on terrorism, both for force protection, as the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) well knows, and for mission success. Yes, we can expect more violence in Iraq as the June 30 transfer of sovereignty approaches.

□ 1230

And, yes, unfortunately we can expect terrorists to target other events, including elections in free countries this year. But with the passage this year and maintaining levels of support for our military and intelligence capabilities, we can supply our soldiers and intelligence people with the resources and information they need to win.

This rule considered a lot of things. The committee got a good bill together, and I do not think there is any reason not to go forward with the debate. I urge support for the rule, I urge support for the bill, and I urge a vigorous debate on the information herein.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify the record.

The committee dealt with the housing cap to allow improved military housing starting in fiscal year 2006, but it only adds $1 for the cap in 2005. So that means 24,452 military families will have their housing improvement plans put on hold even as their loved ones are fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Thirteen military bases will have their housing programs basically frozen, even though tomorrow we are going to vote to provide a tax cut for Members of Congress.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), the chairman of the committee.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

The gentleman concurs, as I think our common ground here is that we have permanently lifted this cap, with the lift starting in 2006. However, the housing program can continue under the current cap for the time being. And it is not a certain thing that we are definitely going to run out of money.

I would just say to the gentleman that I would be happy to work with the gentleman and the Committee on the Budget to attempt to accommodate 2005 and make sure there is not a seam between 2005 and 2006.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUNTER. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I understand we will hit the cap as early as this November.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, that is not a certain thing. So telling all the families that they absolutely will not have housing is not a certain thing at this point.

I think the gentleman and I and others can work to make sure there is not a seam between 2005 and 2006.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN), the ranking member on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in strong support of the defense authorization bill, but strong opposition to this rule.

Let me point out, Mr. Speaker, that the rule we are considering leaves out many important amendments which many on our side had hoped to offer. I had one which would have postponed additional expenditures for a ground-based missile system in Alaska which has not met operational testing requirements, and would have put those funds into port security. My amendment reflects the views of 49 Admirals and Generals whose letter to the President is dated March 26.

In my view, as ranking member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the potential

damage from a radiological device coming in through our ports is a much greater risk than the risk of a missile attack from North Korea.

There are, however, some good amendments put in order, one of which I strongly support. The Davis-Sanchez-Harman amendment, which we have offered every year for the last decade, would treat military servicewomen as women in America are treated, by allowing them their constitutional right to the full range of legal reproductive health care in foreign military hospitals, provided they pay for it. Current law prohibits this and requires servicewomen who put their lives on the line on austere fronts in the war on terror to seek approval from their commanding officer in order to travel elsewhere in order to obtain an abortion, as medical facilities may be inadequate or unavailable.

I view current law as unconstitutional. I think it is ridiculous at a time when military women are performing incredible service around the world that they still are treated differently from women in America. So I urge strong support of the Davis-Sanchez-Harman amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I submit herewith for the RECORD the March 26, 2004 letter to President Bush from 49 Admirals and Generals:

49 GENERALS AND ADMIRALS CALL FOR MISSILE DEFENSE POSTPONEMENT

MARCH 26, 2004.

President GEORGE W. BUSH,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: In December 2002, you ordered the deployment of a ground-based strategic mid-course ballistic missile defense (GMD) capability, now scheduled to become operational before the end of September 2004. You explained that its purpose is to defend our nation against rogue states that may attack us with a single or a limited number of ballistic missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction.

To meet this deployment deadline, the Pentagon has waived the operational testing requirements that are essential to determining whether or not this highly complex system of systems is effective and suitable. The Defense Department's Director of Operational Test and Evaluation stated on March 11, 2004, that operational testing is not in the plan ''for the foreseeable future.'' Moreover, the General Accounting Office pointed out in a recent report that only two of 10 critical technologies of the GMD system components have been verified as workable by adequate developmental testing.

Another important consideration is balancing the high costs of missile defense with funding allocated to other national security programs. Since President Reagan's strategic defense initiative speech in March 1983, a conservative estimate of about $130 billion, not adjusted upward for inflation, has been spent on missile defense, much of it on GMD. Your Fiscal Year 2005 budget for missile defense is $10.2 billion, with $3.7 billion allocated to GMD. Some $53 billion is programmed for missile defense over the next five years, with much more to follow. Deploying a highly complex weapons system prior to testing it adequately can increase costs significantly.

U.S. technology, already deployed, can pinpoint the source of a ballistic missile launch. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that any state would dare to attack the U.S. or allow a terrorist to do so from its territory with a missile armed with a weapon of mass destruction, thereby risking annihilation from a devastating U.S. retaliatory strike.

As you have said, Mr. President, our highest priority is to prevent terrorists from acquiring and employing weapons of mass destruction. We agree. We therefore recommend, as the militarily responsible course of action, that you postpone operational deployment of the expensive and untested GMD system and transfer the associated funding to accelerated programs to secure the multitude of facilities containing nuclear weapons and materials and to protect our ports and borders against terrorists who may attempt to smuggle weapons of mass destruction into the United States.

Signed:

Admiral William J. Crowe (USN, ret.), General Alfred G. Hansen (USAF, ret.), General Joseph P. Hoar (USMC, ret.).

Lt. General Henry E. Emerson (USA, ret.), Lt. General Robert G. Gard, Jr. (USA, ret.), Vice Admiral Carl T. Hanson (USN, ret.), Lt. General James F. Hollinsworth (USA, ret.), Lt. General Arlen D. Jameson (USAF, ret.), Lt. General Robert E. Kelley, (USAF, ret.), Lt. General John A. Kjellstrom (USA, ret.), Lt. General Dennis P. McAuliffe (USA, ret.), Lt. General Charles P. Otstott (USA, ret.), Lt. General Thomas M. Rienze (USA, ret.), Vice Admiral John J. Shanahan (USN, ret.), Lt. General Dewitt C. Smith, Jr. (USA, ret.), Lt. General Horace G. Taylor (USA, ret.), Lt. General James M. Thompson (USA, ret.), Lt. General Alexander M. Weyand (USA, ret.).

Major General Robert H. Appleby (AUS, ret.), Major General James G. Boatner (USA, ret.), Major General Jack O. Bradshaw (USA, ret.), Major General Morris J. Brady (USA, ret.), Major General William F. Burns (USA, ret.), Rear Admiral William D. Center (USN, ret.), Major General Albert B. Crawford (USA, ret.), Major General Maurice O. Edmonds (USA, ret.), Rear Admiral Robert C. Elliott, (USN, ret.), Major General John C. Faith (USA, ret.), Rear Admiral Robert H. Gormley (USN, ret.), Major General Richard B. Griffitts (USA, ret.), Rear Admiral Charles D. Grojean (USN, ret.), Major General Raymond E. Haddock (USA, ret.), Major General Jack R. Holbein, Jr. (USAF, ret.), Major General Stanley H. Hyman (USA, ret.), Major General Wayne P. Jackson (USA, ret.), Major General Frederick H. Lawson (AUS, ret.), Major General Vincent P. Luchsinger, Jr. (USAF, ret.), Major General James J. LeCleir (AUS, ret.), Major General William F. Willoughby (USAF, ret.).

Brig. General George C. Cannon, Jr. (USAF, ret.), Brig. General John J. Costa (USA, ret.), Brig. General Alvan E. Cowan (USA, ret.), Brig. General Lee Denson (USAF, ret.), Brig. General Evelyn P. Foote (USA, ret.), Brig. General Leslie R. Forney, Jr. (USA, ret.), Brig. General John H. Grubbs (USA, ret.), Brig. General James E. Hastings (USA, ret.), Brig. General John H. Johns (USA, ret.), Brig. General Maurice D. Roush (USA, ret.).

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON).

Mr. MATHESON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because several worthy amendments to this bill were not ruled in order for consideration, including my own amendment that I offered, which was an amendment that was very simple. It said, if this country is going to resume the testing of nuclear weapons, it would first have to be authorized to do so by Congress.

I think Congress, the people's Representatives, ought to be involved in such a significant decision. This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue about having the people's Representatives involved.

The United States did conduct over 900 nuclear weapons tests at the Nevada test site from 1951 until 1992, and during most of this time, people who lived downwind of the test site were not warned about the adverse health effects associated with radiation exposure.

What is not widely known is that the fallout from weapons testing traveled across the entire country. Studies by the National Cancer Institute concluded that people in every single county in the lower 48 States were exposed to fallout.

A moratorium on nuclear weapons testing was instituted in 1992, but recent funding decisions in the appropriations process by Congress are leading us down the path to renewed nuclear testing and, therefore, as far as I am concerned, it is important that the people's Representatives, the United States Congress, ought to be asked to come up for a vote on whether or not we should resume nuclear testing.

This amendment was not ruled in order and, therefore, I encourage all my colleagues to oppose this rule.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). The gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) has 3 minutes remaining, and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) has 3¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT).

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I think it should be obvious to everybody that we have a huge agenda of meritorious issues that will not be brought to the well of the House. We will not have today a free market of ideas as we deal with and debate one of the most important bills we will bring up.

So when I emphasize to every Member that if you want to have a free and full and serious debate, then you should vote against this rule and you should vote first against the motion to move the previous question. That will open up the process so that we can offer amendments.

And before concluding, I would like to ask the gentlewoman, given the amendment I am proposing that would deal with the needs of our NCOs and an incipient problem, and that is retention and recruitment, will the gentlewoman allow me to make a unanimous consent request to put in order amendment No. 89, which would increase the targeted pay increase for senior enlisted personnel and warrant officers and use, as an offset, a partial reduction in the big increase in the ballistic missile program.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for the approval of my amendment, amendment No. 89.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from South Carolina asks unanimous consent that his amendment, which is not proposed to be made in order by the Committee on Rules, be permitted to be in order. Does the gentlewoman from North Carolina object to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

Mrs. MYRICK. Yes, I do object.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to vote ''no'' on the previous question and on the rule. If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the rule that will make in order the amendment offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), which the Committee on Rules defeated on a straight party-line vote early this morning and for which unanimous consent was just denied.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second year in a row the Republican leadership has chosen to throw away the long-standing tradition of bipartisan cooperation in shaping our national defense policies. Nearly 100 amendments, most of them by Democratic Members, were shut out of the rule, including the Spratt amendment. It is a very sad day for the American people and particularly for those serving in the military.

Partisan politics have absolutely no place when it comes to protecting the brave American men and women who are serving in our military in harm's way. The Spratt amendment would provide $300 million additional dollars to give well-deserved pay raises to the sergeants and warrant officers who train and lead enlisted personnel. His amendment also guarantees military personnel serving in combat zones will have life insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the amendment and extraneous materials be inserted in the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''no'' vote on the previous question and a ''no'' vote on the rule.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this rule, which silenced all three of my amendments.

My first amendment called for the creation of an international commission, with Iraqi, U.S., and U.N. participation, to monitor prison conditions in Iraq. The Geneva Convention is neither quaint nor obsolete, and this amendment would have ensured compliance and help to restore badly damaged U.S. credibility.

My second amendment would have created a database of those who have been detained.

My third amendment prohibited the use of U.S. funds in the overthrow of democratically elected governments. Given the allegations of this government's involvement in the overthrow of President Aristide in Haiti, this amendment would have restored confidence in the protection of democracy.

Once again debate was stifled on many critical issues. The Republican majority continues to abuse its power.

Oppose this rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. FROST is as follows:

PREVIOUS QUESTION FOR H. RES.—RULE ON H.R. 4200 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 6. Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, the amendment printed in section 7 shall be in order as though printed as the first amendment in the report of the Committee on Rules if offered by Representative Spratt of South Carolina or a designee. That amendment shall be debatable for 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent.

SEC. 7. The amendment referred to in section 6 is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H.R. 4200, AS REPORTED

OFFERED BY MR. SPRATT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

In section 421, add after the dollar amount (page 94, line 16) the following: ''(increased by $300,000,000)''.

At the end of subtitle A of title VI (page 209, after line 3), insert the following new section:

SEC. 6___. TARGETED PAY RAISE FOR SENIOR ENLISTED PERSONNEL AND JUNIOR WARRANT OFFICERS.

(a) INCREASE IN BASIC PAY.—The Secretary of Defense shall use $300,000,000 of the amount appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in section 421 to increase the rates of monthly basic pay for enlisted members of the Armed Forces in the pay grades E–5 through E–9 and warrant officers in the pay grades W–1, W–2, and W–3.

(b) RELATION TO OTHER PAY RAISE AUTHORITY.—Pay increases provided members of the Armed Forces pursuant to subsection (a) are in addition to the increase in the rates of monthly basic pay for members required by section 601.

At the end of subtitle B of title VI (page 230, after line 4), insert the following new section:

SEC. 6_____. INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF IMMINENT DANGER PAY TO COVER DEDUCTIONS FROM BASIC PAY FOR SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE.

Section 310 of title 37, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(f) ADDITIONAL INCREASE TO COVER DEDUCTIONS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE.—(1) During the period specified in paragraph (3), in addition to the rate of pay authorized by subsection (a) or (e) for a month, a member who is eligible for special pay under this section for a month and who is insured during that month under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance shall also receive an amount equal to the amount of the deduction from basic pay prescribed for the level of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance coverage obtained by the member under section 1967 of title 38.

''(2) To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall give members who will be assigned to duty under circumstances or in an area for which special pay is provided under this section notice, in advance of the deployment, of the following:

''(A) The availability of additional pay under this subsection for members insured under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

''(B) The ability of members who elected not to be insured under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, or elected less than the authorized maximum coverage, to obtain additional coverage as provided in section 1967(c) of title 38.

''(3) Additional pay under paragraph (1) shall be available only during the period beginning October 1, 2004, and ending December 31, 2005. The total amount expended under such paragraph may not exceed $50,000,000.''.

At the end of subtitle A of title II (page 28, after line 14), insert the following new section:

SEC. 2___. ADDITIONAL MATTERS RELATING TO AMOUNTS FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION.

(a) INCREASE FOR NAVY RDT&E.—The amount in section 201(2) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Navy, is hereby increased by $14,700,000, of which—

(1) $6,400,000 shall be available for the Nonlethal Weapons program element (PE 0603851M); and

(2) $8,300,000 shall be available for the Marine Corps Communications System program element (PE 0206313M), of which—

(A) $3,800,000 shall be available within that element for the Communication Emitter Sensing and Attacking System project; and

(B) $4,500,000 shall be available within that element for the Marine Aviation Command and Control System Sustainment project.

(b) INCREASE FOR ARMY RDT&E.—The amount in section 201(1) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Army, is hereby increased by $49,700,000, to be available for the Patriot PAC–3 Theater Missile Defense program element (PE 0604865A).

(c) REDUCTION IN DEFENSE-WIDE RDT&E.—The amount in section 201(4) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Defense-wide, is hereby reduced by $414,400,000, of which—

(1) $77,000,000 shall be derived from the Ballistic Missile Defense System Interceptor program element (PE 0603886C);

(2) $289,400,000 shall be derived, within the Ballistic Missile Defense Midcourse Defense Segment program element (PE 0603882C), from the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Block 2006 program, to be derived by eliminating funding for—

(A) construction of silos;

(B) a second In-flight Interceptor Communications Systems Data Terminal at Fort Greely, Alaska; and

(C) construction of a second launch complex at Fort Greely, Alaska;

(3) $25,000,000 shall be derived from the Ballistic Missile Defense Technology program element (PE 0603175C); and

(4) $23,000,000 shall be derived from the Ballistic Missile Defense Products program element (PE 0603889C).

(d) PROHIBITION ON SPACE-BASED INTERCEPTOR.—None of the amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available for fiscal year 2005 or any prior fiscal year for the ballistic missile defense may be used to develop the space-based interceptor that is part of the Block 2012 element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System Interceptor program element (PE 0603886C).

(e) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF SILOS.—None of the amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available for fiscal year 2005 or any prior fiscal year for the Ballistic Missile Defense Midcourse Defense Segment program element may be obligated for construction of a missile defense interceptor silo at Fort Greely, Alaska, if construction of that silo would result in the total number of such silos at Fort Greely being a number in excess of 16.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

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

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on the motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later today.

HONORING PAST AND CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES AND ENCOURAGING AMERICANS TO WEAR RED POPPIES ON MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 424) honoring past and current members of the Armed Forces of the United States and encouraging Americans to wear red poppies on Memorial Day.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 424

Whereas the red poppy was the first living plant that sprouted in the battlefields devastated by fighting during World War I;

Whereas red poppies grew abundantly in the trenches and craters of the war-torn battlefields in Northern France and Belgium;

Whereas during World War I, the bloom of red poppies each year and the coming of the warm weather brought hope to those still fighting in the trenches of France and Belgium;

Whereas in 1915, the red poppy inspired Canadian Colonel John McCrae to write the poem ''In Flanders Fields'' in remembrance of the thousands of soldiers who perished during the three battles of Ypres in Belgium;

Whereas in 1918, John McCrae's poem inspired Moina Belle Michael of Athens, Georgia, to write her own poem entitled ''We Shall Keep the Faith'', in which she promised to wear a red poppy to memorialize American soldiers killed in World War I, and later to raise millions of dollars to support and employ disabled American veterans of all wars;

Whereas on November 11, 1921, the first Poppy Day was held in the United Kingdom and was a national success;

Whereas the red poppy is a symbol of sacrifice throughout the world;

Whereas the red poppy has been worn in the United States for more than 80 years as a way to remember those individuals who died fighting for freedom and democracy around the world and to raise money to help disabled veterans; and

Whereas in 2004, wearing a red poppy on Memorial Day is especially timely considering the sacrifices United States soldiers are making in Iraq and Afghanistan for freedom, democracy, and security: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress honors past and current members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their families by encouraging every American to wear a red poppy on Memorial Day as a sign of admiration and thanks to those individuals who died to preserve freedom and democracy in the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 424, the concurrent resolution currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG).

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 424.

Mr. Speaker, many of those watching today's proceedings may notice that many of us here on the floor are wearing the red poppy. It is, in fact, a symbol of Memorial Day and an acknowledgment of the sacrifice made by armed services personnel in fighting for our freedom throughout the world.

Next weekend, our Nation will celebrate Memorial Day. All too often we forget the purposes of those celebrations, but Memorial Day is a very important day set aside to honor and acknowledge the sacrifice of all of those who have served our Nation and died in their service to our Nation. It is a day, as we will hear during this debate, with a long and important history.

It is a day which began as Decoration Day, following the deaths during the Civil War of so many soldiers, a day, as we will hear in this debate, civilians went to the fields to decorate the graves of soldiers who had died in battle and decorated the graves of all soldiers, both Confederate and Union.

Mr. Speaker, it is most fitting that this year, in this resolution, we would call upon the American people to make a special point of wearing a red poppy and of acknowledging the ultimate sacrifice made by our troops. Because this year, on Memorial Day, we will have troops in the field in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and throughout the world, who are serving our Nation and who themselves have been joined by soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

This resolution acknowledges the importance of the red poppy, which has been adopted by the American Legion and by the Auxiliary of the American Legion as the official flower honoring the sacrifice of those who have died in our Nation's service.

□ 1245

It seems to me, as Members will hear in this debate, there was a time in our Nation when all Americans on Memorial Day wore a red poppy to acknowledge sacrifices made by our Armed Forces personnel. It has now become a worldwide tradition.

I commend the gentleman for offering the resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to join in this debate, and I thank them for wearing the red poppy today.

Some 535 red poppies were donated to Congress, and every Member of the House and Senate has a red poppy to wear today and on Memorial Day in recognition of this grand tradition and in recognition of the sacrifice paid by our soldiers, including those who have lost their lives in the recent battles in Afghanistan and Iraq, one of those soldiers being Pat Tillman from my State whose life was tragically lost within the last month.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this resolution.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 424, introduced by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG). This timely resolution honors the men and women who serve in uniform and calls on all Americans to recognize the sacrifices of those who have given their lives to protect our freedom by wearing a red poppy on Memorial Day, May 30.

In 2 weeks, our Nation will observe Memorial Day. Sadly, the true meaning of Memorial Day seems to have faded over the years, and for many young Americans, Memorial Day is often seen as just another holiday or the beginning of summer. This is sad and unfortunate as Memorial Day is a time to remember and honor those who have died in service, defending our Nation.

The resolution before us honors those who have given their lives in service to their country and encourages Americans to wear a red poppy on Memorial Day.

A number of people have asked, ''Why wear a red poppy?'' The red poppy grew abundantly in the battlefields of World War I, and it was the inspiration for several poems at the time, including such notable poems as ''Flanders Fields,'' written by John McCrae in May, 1915, and a poem by Moina Michael, entitled ''We Shall Keep the Faith,'' written in November, 1918.

The first Poppy Day was held in England on November 11, 1921, and since that time, the red poppy has been a