of homeless veterans who rely on Brecksville and who now will be forced to find another way and go somewhere else.

For whatever reason, the administration chose the same month in which we honored our war heroes on the anniversary of D-Day and dedicated the World War II Memorial to close those three health care VA facilities.

Ohio is home to more than 1 million veterans. That number obviously is increasing with our commitments abroad. There are 61,000 active Reserve or National Guardsmen and -women from Ohio, 9,000 serving in Iraq and in Afghanistan. When these brave men and women serving our Nation come home to Ohio, they face, as a result of the administration's negligence and policies, they face cuts to health care benefits, cuts to VA hospital closures; and they face, in some cases, loss of their livelihoods.

Not since World War II has the U.S. made such heavy use of part-time soldiers.

Twenty-seven percent of self-employed Reservists said their businesses were irreparably damaged while deployed in Iraq. Other Reservists and Guardsmen and -women have taken pay cuts in order to fight for our Nation in Iraq. When they return home, many of these veterans will have to take out second mortgages to repair their businesses and to get back on their economic feet.

While they struggle to rebuild their source of income and economic support to their communities, they are forced to pay more for prescription drugs, and they are forced to travel further for their health care needs.

How do we look a veteran in the eye and ask a veteran to go to Canada to buy less expensive prescription drugs?

While our brave men and women serve our country, their benefits and their ability to support their families are being threatened by this administration's policies that hurt America's veterans. In only 3½ years, we have seen rising costs for prescription drugs from a $3 copay per drug per month to a $7 copay per drug per month, and now the Bush administration wants a $15 copay per drug per month. Mr. Speaker, 330,000 veterans have unprocessed claims and 100,000 veterans are waiting for appeals decisions. New enrollment fees and increased costs of prescription drugs will cost veterans $2 billion over the next 5 years. All of this has happened since President Bush took office.

The President opposes the renewal of ''imminent danger'' pay for families of active duty soldiers in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

The President opposes mandatory funding for veterans health care; and maybe most importantly, the President, in his campaign in 2000, told veterans that ''help is on the way.'' Three years later, this administration continues year after year after year to cut veterans benefits. We must do better than that.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA).

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

There was no objection.

RESTORING FREEDOM OF SPEECH REGARDING MORAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am back on the floor tonight, because when I think about the sacrifice of our many men and women in uniform from the beginning of America through and including today, I think about the fact that many have fought and died and been injured for freedom. Yet in America today, our churches do not have the freedom to speak about the moral and political issues of the day.

I share that because for the last 4 years, I, along with many others, have been working to try to return that first amendment right that was taken away in 1954. Prior to 1954, any minister, priest, or rabbi or cleric in this great Nation could speak on the policies and the political issues of the day. Many times when they are speaking, it is based on the teachings of their religion; and, therefore, they are very important to maintaining the Judeo-Christian values that have made America the great Nation that it is.

I want to share with my colleagues that 2 or 3 weeks ago, the Bishop of Colorado Springs, Bishop Sheridan, issued what is called a pastoral letter to every member of his diocese in that region of Colorado. In his letter, let me just share this with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. It goes on to assert, the letter says, ''Dear friends in Christ: I exhort you with all my heart to take courage and claim the gospel of life to those who will stand for elected office this fall. It is by your prayers and by your vote that politicians who are unconditionally pro-life and pro-family will serve our country. Conversely, if our voices remain silent, or if, God forbid, we vote contrary to our informed conscience, we will see our country led down a short path to ruin.''

Now, let me make this clear. This is the teachings of the Catholic Church. I happen to be a Catholic, and I know for a fact that our church for years and centuries has stood for protecting the unborn and their life.

What really upsets me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Bishop Sheridan wrote a pastoral letter reminding the parishioners of the teachings of the church and what the church stands for. Because of that pastoral letter, a letter was written to the Internal Revenue Service by Barry Lynn to complain that the bishop violated the Johnson amendment, which I am trying and would love to have more support to change so that our ministers can speak as they did in 1953 without any restriction. He filed a complaint with the Internal Revenue Service and said that he violated the Johnson amendment.

Now, let me make it clear. He did not violate the Johnson amendment. What he did was, in the rulemaking authority of the Internal Revenue Service, there is a section, not because of the Congress, not because of the Johnson amendment, but they took it upon themselves in the early 1990s to expand the Johnson amendment; and any time a minister might say pro-life or pro-choice, liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, then the IRS is saying that they have violated the Johnson amendment.

I think it is so sad. There is a young man who is here tonight that I cannot mention who has returned from Iraq. He lost a limb for this great Nation. Yet last night I was with the Prime Minister of the Ukraine, and I asked him the question, I said, in the Ukraine, can your ministers stand up and talk about the people running for office in your country? He said, yes, sir. They can say anything that they want to say. And I said, Mr. Prime Minister, they could here in this great Nation until 1954. They could say anything and everything that they thought should be shared with their congregation.

I want to share, if I might, as I begin to close, Mr. Speaker, that Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who is one of the finest men in this great Nation, is a strong supporter of this legislation. I cannot find right now the statement that he sent to me, but Rabbi Lapin understands that America's strength is the fact that we continue to support Judeo-Christian principles.

I would like to say that I believe that every minister in this country, every priest, every rabbi, every cleric that would like to speak on the issues of the day should be allowed to do so without the Federal Government intervening in their sermon or their dialectic or whatever it might be, that they should be set free to talk about these issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I close this way because of our men and women in uniform. America's greatness is dependent on the fact that we remain a country of morality, that we remain a country that remembers the Judeo-Christian foundation of America. So I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless their families, and

I ask God to please, please, save America. We are in trouble.

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

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

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

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

PRESIDENT BUSH'S RECORD ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I am joined tonight by several of my colleagues to do a short series of 5-minutes to help shed light on President Bush's record on women. We are very grateful to the National Women's Law Center that produced a report called ''Slip-sliding Away: The Erosion of Hard-won Gains For Women Under the Bush Administration,'' and the National Center For Research on Women that wrote a report called ''Missing: Information About Women's Lives.'' They compiled reports on the actions taken by the Bush administration that have eroded hard-won gains for women. These are rights and guarantees for equality that my colleagues and I, and those who came before us, have worked for years to gain in order that our daughters and our granddaughters would not have to endure inequality, violence, or lack of opportunity.

During the last 3½ years, so many of those gains have been rolled back, chipped away and, in some cases, obliterated all together. My colleagues will elaborate on some of these actions, but let me at least provide my colleagues with a list of the administration's actions. I have only 5 minutes, so this list will be a sample rather than an exhaustive list.

Despite a persistent wage gap and barriers to equal opportunity like sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination, the Bush administration has advocated policies that make the situation worse for women at work.

The Bush administration has completely eliminated the Equal Pay Matters initiative.

The Department of Justice has weakened enforcement of the laws against job discrimination and abandoned pending sex discrimination suits without notice or explanation.

The Department of Labor repealed regulations that allowed paid family leave to be made available through State unemployment compensation funds.

The Bush administration has proposed new regulations that would deprive millions of women the right to overtime pay.

The Bush administration has been proactive in undermining title IX, a program that promotes equality for girls in education and sports, a landmark piece of legislation that our late dear colleague, Patsy Mink, had so much to do with passing.

The Department of Education ''archived'' a guidance on sexual harassment in violation of title IX, making this guidance unavailable to victims of harassment, parents, schools, and the public.

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The administration has tried to eliminate funding for the Women's Education Equity Act, which provides curricula and materials to help schools comply with Title IX and research on model programs to promote gender equity.

The Justice Department urged the Supreme Court to strike down the use of affirmative action to achieve diversity in higher education, while the Department of Education encouraged colleges and universities to avoid using affirmative action instead of guiding them on ways they can permissibly do so.

The Department of Education has proposed removing existing safeguards that ensure all girl and all boy classes and schools do not perpetuate stereotypes and second-class status for girls.

President Bush's most recent budget proposal would result in 300,000 children losing child care assistance by 2009.

The Bush administration has proposed modifications to the welfare law that would impose harsh new work requirements on mothers in poverty while opposing increases in their child care assistance.

The Bush administration has proposed privatizing Social Security which would hit older women especially hard by siphoning money out of the system, thus reducing benefits for poor women.

The administration has proposed eliminating the savers credit that gives additional tax credits to low and moderate income individuals and families who contribute to retirement accounts. At the same time, the President has proposed weakening the protections for low and moderate income individuals in employer pension plans.

President Bush signed a Medicare bill that prohibits the government from using its bargaining power to get lower costs on prescription drugs hurting the 80 percent of older women who use prescription drugs every day.

The Bush administration has proposed changes in Medicaid that would result in the denial of health care coverage to many poor women who are now eligible for Medicaid.

President Bush, for the first time since Roe versus Wade, was decided in 1973 signed into law a bill that unconstitutionally restricts a women's right to choose and that blatantly disregards any consideration for possible threats to a woman's health.

President Bush has cut millions of dollars in funding for international women's family planning which is used to promote maternal and infant health and reduce unwanted pregnancies and infant death.

Too bad I could not get through the long list which was just a summary in itself of the ways that women's rights have been eroded under this administration.

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

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

''W'' IS FOR WAR ON WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, along with my Democrat women colleagues, I want to express my outrage at the Bush administration's way to wage devastating war on women from the first day he took office.

The women in America knew from the past 4 years that ''W'' is for War on Women, and the two reports that my colleague the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) discussed highlight this fact.

I would also like to mention another report issued earlier this year by the Union of Concerned Scientists entitled ''Scientific Integrity in Policy Making and Investigation Into the Bush Administration's Misuse of Science.'' This report documents the unprecedented manipulation, suppression, and misrepresentation of science across disciplines ranking from the environment and climate change to military intelligence and public health as well as attacks on issues that specifically affect women.

As a microbiologist, I am particularly concerned with Mr. Bush's blatant disregard for science. As these three reports demonstrate, the President is clearly engaged in a war on women with particularly vicious attacks on women's reproductive rights.

Let me give you a few examples. President Bush is doing everything in his power to restrict and eventually eliminate a women's constitutionally protected right to abortion. The Bush administration supports and is vigorously defending the first Federal law that bans medically necessary abortion procedures since Roe v. Wade, a law that contains no exception to protect a woman's health. It is plainly unconstitutional.