race and gender off the table. Please contact Eleni Constantine with Rep. Maloney at 5–7944 by 6 p.m. today if you would like to sign the letter.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY,
Member of Congress.
FRANK PALLONE, Jr.,
Member of Congress.

JANUARY 26, 2005.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
President,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We were appalled to hear Ways & Means Chairman Bill Thomas propose Sunday on ''Meet the Press'' that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. Chairman Thomas said that Congress ''needs to consider how many years of retirement you get based on your race'' and that women should receive fewer benefits each year because they tend to live longer than men. Asked if Congress would accept such an idea, Chairman Thomas didn't seem to know the answer.

The answer is ''No,'' Mr. President. We, the undersigned members of Congress, will not accept a Social Security formula that is based on race or gender. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. We call on you to repudiate it. We request a meeting with you to give you our views in person and receive your response.

Cutting benefits to those who need them most is counter to the core principles on which Social Security was founded. That great program is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age—and all workers are entitled to its benefits regardless of gender or race. Social Security's formulas are race and gender neutral and must remain so. To propose that women should receive fewer benefits because they tend to live longer denies benefits to retired women workers who depend on them to survive and is fundamentally wrong. To advocate that minorities should receive different benefits on the basis of their race is repugnant in a society that has renounced racial discrimination and where all men are equal before the law.

Chairman Thomas' proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us. Retired women workers are twice as likely than men to live below the poverty line and to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support. For African-Americans, Social Security cuts the poverty rate from 59 percent to 21 percent.

Yesterday was not the first time Chairman Thomas has proposed basing Social Security on race and gender, but it was the first time he made clear on national TV that he will advance this outrageous agenda in the Congress. It is time to make clear that Congress will not accept it. Nor should you or your Administration, Chairman Thomas' proposal goes against everything this great nation stands for. It is counter to our deepest moral values. We call on you to renounce clearly and unambiguously any change to Social Security benefits premised on race or gender.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN MALONEY,
Member of Congress.
FRANK PALLONE, Jr.,
Member of Congress.

THE NATIONAL DEFICIT

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

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate that my first address to this body should be on a large subject, and there are few subjects larger than our national deficit.

The latest reports are forecasting a record $427 billion deficit, the largest budget deficit in our Nation's history. $427 billion is an amount so enormous that it is practically impossible for many to put it in context.

The simple fact is that we are spending more money than we are bringing in, and this is digging a hole that we are going to have a hard time getting out of.

This financial irresponsibility is punishing the prosperity for our future generations. When we are unable to pay our bills, we pass that burden on to our children and grandchildren, strapping them with a deficit that grows higher each day.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to run record deficits is dangerous, it is irresponsible, it is reckless; and we have a solemn responsibility to do better than this.

Every time we spend more money than we have or every time we borrow some record amount, we are trading short-term gains for long-term pain.

Before I was elected to Congress, I served 14 years on the Athens-Clarke County Commission. During that time I never once voted to increase taxes, and that is a record I am proud of. Not only that, I put together a perfect record of voting for balanced budgets, year after year; and that is also a record I am proud of.

On the commission, we kept taxes low, we kept the budget balanced, and we made the most out of the people's money. We treated the people's money the same way that working families and small businesses manage their money, we lived within our means.

We always kept one eye on the bottom line and one eye on the road ahead. When we made investments, we invested in the long-term future. When we borrowed money, we borrowed for long-term interests, not simply to pay that month's light bill.

Mr. Speaker, if working families can live within their means, or if a small city council of just 10 members can find a way not to spend more than they have, then the United States Congress ought to be able to do the same thing. It is not rocket science. It is just fiscal common sense and good government public service.

We have many commitments: we must continue to support our troops in the war on terror; we must keep the promise of Social Security; we must find ways to lower the tax burden for all of our working families. But we have to start keeping those commitments by using only the money that we have, without raising taxes and without forcing our children and grandchildren to pay our bills.

As we settle into the 109th Congress, we must commit ourselves to a sound policy of deficit reduction. I hope that my colleagues in the House will join me in working together to bring a new era of fiscal responsibility to this legislative body.

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

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio 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 Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY OF INTERVENTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, what if it was all a big mistake? America's foreign policy of intervention, while still debated in the early 20th century, is today accepted as conventional wisdom by both political parties.

But what if the overall policy is a colossal mistake, a major error in judgment? Not just a bad judgment regarding when and where to impose ourselves, but the entire premise that we have a moral right to meddle in the affairs of others?

Think of the untold harm done by years of fighting, hundreds of thousands of American casualties, hundreds of thousands of foreign civilian casualties and unbelievable human and economic costs. What if it was all needlessly borne by the American people?

If we do conclude that grave foreign policy errors have been made, a very serious question must be asked: What would it take to change our policy to one more compatible with a true republic's goal of peace, commerce and friendship with all nations? Is it not possible that George Washington's admonition to avoid entangling alliances is sound advice even today?

As a physician, I would like to draw an analogy. In medicine, mistakes are made. Man is fallible. Misdiagnoses are made, incorrect treatments are given, and experimental trials of medicine are advocated. A good physician understands the imperfections in medical care, advises close follow-ups and double-checks the diagnoses, treatment and medication. Adjustments are made to assure the best results.

But what if a doctor never checks the success or failure of a treatment or ignores bad results and assumes his omnipotence, refusing to concede that the initial course of treatment was a mistake? Let me assure my colleagues the results would not be good. Litigation