

to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in our government.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Mississippi for joining us tonight.

I yield to my colleague from Texas for any final remarks that he may have.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Congress should approach Federal budgeting in a more businesslike manner. I, too, do not understand how underperforming Federal agencies or programs can continue to receive funding year after year without being held to account. In the real world, a business owner who manages his or her own business this way would soon find themselves out of business. Instead, Washington seems to reward that behavior.

Mr. Speaker, our President has proposed a budget that will serve as a good starting point for Members of this Congress as we begin to craft a budget that respects and honors the wishes of the hard-working American taxpayer. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in crafting solutions, and not just blind opposition, to wasteful programs that hamper our Federal Government.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for joining us this evening.

Mr. Speaker, before I came to Congress, I had the opportunity to represent Tennessee's 23rd State senate district. While I was in that body, I had worked on government reform issues and came up with a plan that would have called for across-the-board spending cuts. I certainly believed that State agencies could get in there and find waste, fraud, and abuse within their operations, and they could cut it and better serve the taxpayers of my State.

Of course, at the time that I came up with my plan, the 5 Percent Solution, it was criticized by so many as being too harsh. The word was, well, people will not accept that kind of accountability. A few years later, many of those reductions were actually put in place. And do my colleagues know what? Things started working a little bit better in Tennessee.

Today, we see some of that same press in Tennessee calling the taxpayers and the President's plan, Congress' plan far too harsh. I read some of those headlines earlier. But I do not think that some of the media, the liberal media has been paying attention to what has been taking place in some of our States.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, in fiscal year 2002, 26 States implemented across-the-board spending cuts, 15 States downsized State government employment, and 13 States streamlined government programs. We hear all the time that our State governments are great laboratories for new programs and new projects and creative government solutions, and this should be a

lesson to us here at the Federal level, because it is not impossible to root out waste, fraud, and abuse. It is our responsibility to do so.

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Here are some of the headlines that we have found of what is going on in some of the States. In Alaska where Governor McCaskey proposed cutting 21 State programs and 200 jobs; in Colorado where the legislature passed an \$809 million budget-balancing package which eliminated some 200 State employees.

We are looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to working with the leadership in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 418, REAL ID ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-3) on the resolution (H. Res. 71) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 418) to establish and rapidly implement regulations for State driver's license and identification document security standards, to prevent terrorists from abusing the asylum laws of the United States, to unify terrorism-related grounds for inadmissibility and removal, and to ensure expeditious construction of the San Diego border fence, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, for some time now, several of my colleagues and myself have come to the floor of the House to address issues surrounding our national policy in Iraq, and tonight we intend to have a few comments in that regard, particularly in regard to the budget and how the budget refers to our ongoing efforts in Iraq. And I was thinking about that in combination with the President's suggested budget the other day.

That same day I was looking at the President's budget, I was reading a story about 3 GIs who were walking through a town in central Iraq, and they were trying to alert people about essentially the polling activity and the election activity that was going to go on, but they knew they were in a very hostile environment when they were doing so. And a group of them, about nine soldiers were walking through an area, and they were just sort of handing out leaflets to folks about the election activity to let them know where they could vote and what kind of security was going to be provided, and a shot rang out. The leader of the platoon was shot and went down, and they immediately started to receive fire from all points of the compass.

The thing that struck me is that it said what immediately happened is two of the soldiers who were near the fellow who was shot immediately, instead of taking cover, jumped up and sort of literally sort of shielded the injured GI with themselves as they returned fire. That is just one of the many acts of heroism that our troops have been involved with in Iraq.

What it made me think about was, to ask the question frankly, whether back home we are matching the responsibility and the values and the heroism that are going on in Iraq. Because whatever you think about the Iraq policy, and I voted against the Iraq war. I thought the President's assertion that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction was overstated, that his assertion that Saddam was responsible for September 11 was inaccurate, and I voted against the war. But, nonetheless, all of us respect what our GIs, Marines, and other service personnel are doing in Iraq.

And the question I was just thinking about is whether or not their courage and responsibility and the values, American values they are displaying in Iraq are sort of met on the domestic side here in Washington, D.C., particularly in regard to the budget that this administration has just proposed to the people in the U.S. Congress.

I was thinking about how you would test the budget that the President has proposed against the values that we are seeing by our troops in Iraq. And in thinking about it, it became pretty clear to me that there are some real questions about that, about whether this budget really is up to snuff and up to the level of character that we have seen of our people in Iraq.

Let me give the first example that comes to mind. We now have literally thousands of our sons and daughters, husband and wives coming home injured from Iraq, some very, very seriously. In fact, one of the most disturbing things about this war is, because of our excellent medical care, we are actually having people come back from Iraq with more devastating injuries than other wars because we have been successful in saving lives. But people are coming back with very, very debilitating injuries. And they are coming back to a system that we would like to see is eminently successful in treating them, the veterans health care system.

The first question I think we ought to ask about the President's budget is does the President's budget in the veterans health care system meet the heroism and the commitment and the sacrifice that our troops have put on the line in Iraq?

So when I looked at the President's budget I was absolutely flabbergasted to see what the budget proposal from this administration has in mind for our injured people coming home from Iraq. Now, one would think that an administration that took our country into war in Iraq, sent our sons and daughters