

passed away, could at least rest in peace knowing that her life and her work had provided for her children's future benefit even in death.

And that is the type of rug that we are pulling out from under people if we go in this direction.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a comment on the AARP. These attack ads, the same consultant groups that attacked Presidential candidate KERRY, the same groups that did the Swift Boat ads are now attacking AARP, and they are saying that AARP is for gay marriage and against the troops. And the reason I want to comment on that is because their reference is to the Ohio AARP chapter, which was against an issue that was on the ballot in Ohio, and I believe it was Issue 1. The issue was to ban gay marriage, but it was written so broadly that it eliminated civil unions between men and women who were older, who were senior citizens. And I have people in my district, friends of mine, who were married and their spouses passed away and they were senior citizens and they were 70-something-years-old and they had families on both sides and kids and grandkids. They did not want to get married, but they wanted a legal binding contract. So the AARP, obviously, was against that because it took away the civil unions for senior citizens. Now all of a sudden here come the attack ads against AARP just to try to slam them because they are not for the President's proposal.

So I just wanted to clarify that to the folks in Ohio. That is why AARP was against Issue 1 because it is eliminating the ability for two human beings, American citizens, to write a contract between each other, man and woman, a contract not allowed in Ohio.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I guess as we really start to look at this and as we wrap up in the next 3 or 4 minutes, I just want to say tomorrow one of those groups that I did not mention, Rock the Vote, will be having a townhall meeting with some Democratic Senators and will also have a college campus tour as they start to go around and talk about this issue, and Republican Senators that have spoken out against this.

And I must add that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) and I join, in the single digits, I must add, members of the Florida delegation in this House that are opposing the President's philosophy at this time, rightfully so, because their constituents are not with them on this. And that is the way democracy is supposed to work.

We are not up here to fly up here every week and walk around with congressional pins on and showing our card, walking in and out of this Cap-

itol, and saying that we are here to represent ourselves. We are here to represent the people that have sent us here. And believe me, if I were walking around here saying I support the President's philosophy and the majority's philosophy, my constituents, and the gentlewoman from Florida knows them well, would be up in arms. So I am a representation of what they voted for. So that is the reason why we are here.

I want to just add a few more things, and then I will yield to my colleagues to make closing comments. I must say I want to share with the American people again that 48 million Americans are receiving benefits of Social Security; 33 million are retirees already. That is the AARP group, and the AARP is against this. We also have seniors that would be in poverty if it were not for the 48 percent of those are within the 48 million. The average monthly benefit is \$955. And Social Security will be solvent, will be there at what we see at present levels for the next 47 years-and-some-change.

So I just want to make sure that people understand there is an issue, but there is not a crisis. There is a concern, but it is not an emergency. So it is important that we realize we have a war going on in Iraq, as a matter of fact, two of them, in Afghanistan. We have this other little thing that we are calling, which is a big issue, \$724 billion in the prescription drug plan, and then we also have, and I must add, this supplemental. We have an \$80 billion supplemental that is coming before us, and the Department of Homeland Security to protect the homeland is only \$40 billion. So when we look at it in the big scheme of things, sheriffs, mayors, elected officials on the local level, they are looking for the dollars to come down, and they can see where they fall as it relates to receiving their fair share of protecting the home front.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, actually what I want to close with is I want to quote the President because the President has said that leadership means not passing problems on to future generations and future Presidents. And I take him at his word, and I am hopeful that we do not go forward with this proposal because this plan to privatize Social Security flies in the face of his stated belief that we need to exercise some leadership and make sure that Social Security is preserved into the future for our generation and for our children's generation. And I look forward to working with both gentlemen.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I hope we continue this discussion. It is nice because it is not a 30-second ad. We can actually talk about the facts and get into a little more discussion.

I want to do this before we go. If there are any 30-somethings or 40-somethings or 20-somethings or anyone out there who wants to e-mail us, it is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, or they can get us on our Web site [democraticleader.house.gov/30something](http://democraticleader.house.gov/30something), but they can send us an e-mail if they have any comments or stories that they want us to share, and we will pick a few next week and maybe read them on the House floor here.

But I think it is important that we recognize that this is long term and bad for our generation for all the reasons that we stated and I think most significantly \$5 trillion that we have to borrow primarily from the Chinese.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure coming to the floor. We want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and we appreciate the opportunity to address the House.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. CARSON (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. FARR (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for February 17 on account of a family emergency.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and part of March 2 on account of congressional business in the district.

Mr. GILLMOR (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness in the family.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. OSBORNE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today and March 2.

Mr. OSBORNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KING of Iowa, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MIKE ROGERS of Michigan, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FORTUÑO, for 5 minutes, March 2.