

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). The Chair reminds Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. TOM
PRICE OF GEORGIA TO ACT AS
SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO
SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND
JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH
APRIL 19, 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM PRICE to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions through April 19, 2005.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

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

(Mr. DREIER 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 California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is once again a pleasure to address the House of Representatives and also to talk about a very important issue to all Americans, which is Social Security. I would also like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to come to the floor once again to talk about issues that are facing not only young Americans but Americans in general.

Through her leadership and through others that are in the Democratic Caucus, the Democratic whip, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER); the chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ); and also the vice chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), we have been able to come to the floor to share facts, not fiction, to bring accuracy to the Social Security debate as it stands now.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just share a few things as relates to Social Security. We encourage the

Members to continue to keep an open mind. First of all, I want to commend Members on the Democratic side of the aisle for having so many town hall meetings, a number of town hall meetings, hundreds of town hall meetings in their own districts and that have traveled outside of their districts to share with Americans the truth about Social Security and how we protect Social Security and how we continue to have the benefit structure that so many, 48 million Americans, are celebrating now today.

I must also add that I would like to commend some of my Republican colleagues that have the courage to stand up to the forces of leadership, to say that they are willing to make sure that their constituents are able to celebrate and to be able to survive in a program that they have been promised that will be there for them in their time of retirement.

I would also like to thank those Members on both sides of the aisle who see the benefit of protecting Social Security, not coming up with a privatization scheme, not because someone said it is a way that we can be innovative, not subscribing to saying that there is some sort of Federal emergency as it relates to the protection of Social Security, not the fact that the President is flying around the country some 60 days burning Federal jet fuel at taxpayers' expense, higher than at any other time in the history of this country since Presidents have been flying, to persuade Americans that there is some Federal emergency. We will try to address that a little later. We are going to celebrate not only within the moment but within the future.

I want to just share a few things, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to how many Americans that are not only beneficiaries of Social Security but also Americans who look forward to benefiting from Social Security.

Social Security is the foundation of all retirement for the American worker. Like I mentioned earlier, 48 million Americans celebrate and take part in the benefits that Social Security has to provide. Retirees receiving Social Security benefits are 33 million. That is a great number of Americans that have served our country well. Seniors who live within the poverty line, 48 percent of those individuals, of the 48 million, receive those benefits. The average monthly benefit is \$955. That is making ends meet for so many Americans, some 48 million Americans.

The size of the average benefit, like I mentioned, is \$955; but the real issue is the fact that the benefits will be there for almost 50 years. Some may say 48, some may say 49, but for almost 50 years, the present benefit structure as we see it now for Social Security recipients, including those individuals that are receiving survivor benefits that I must add, Mr. Speaker, those survivor benefits is the legacy of the commitment that their parents made that have passed on, that have gone on to glory. The only thing that they were able to leave for their child are sur-

vivor benefits. And the benefits will be here until 2052; 2052, Mr. Speaker. That is not tomorrow. That is not next week. That is not even 2 years. 2052.

And so many of the individuals that are running around here saying that we need to call the fire department because Social Security is on fire are not really telling the truth. One may say that the administration has a plan or the majority side leadership has a plan for Social Security. That is also not true. One may say that the President, like I said, the administration, has a plan. That is not true. Is there posturing on the majority side about the fact that they are going to come up with a plan? Yes, there is some conversation going on, but Washington is known for conversation. There is nothing wrong with conversation as long as it is bipartisan. And that is not happening. Leadership is about a bipartisan dialogue to improve Social Security. So if it is going to be addressed in this Congress, for us to move in a productive way, we are going to have to work together. And there is no leadership from the majority side for us to work together.

Some may say, well, where is the Democratic plan? Well, I think the Democratic plan is celebrated by 48 million Americans today, not fiction, not something that may happen in the future; and in the 1980s it was a Democratic Congress that came together with Speaker Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan and saved Social Security. A supermajority of Democrats voted for it, and even the creation of it.

So when one starts to argue about, well, where is the Democratic plan, the Democratic plan is in the wallets of 48 million Americans. And those Americans that are walking around working now with a Social Security card can say, wow, I am glad we have Social Security in the way we have it. And for those retirees that take their card out with those digits on them, they can thank the leadership of the Democratic Congress when it was created and also the Democratic Congress that saved Social Security to make sure that every American can have the maximum amount of benefits possible to them to help that 48 percent of the 48 million Americans that without Social Security would be living in poverty, to help 33 million of those retirees that are now, this is fact, not fiction, able to receive Social Security because, let us say, for instance, in that 33 million Americans, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, a number of their companies have gone back on their commitment on retirement. But Social Security is there for them. For those individuals that have passed on and gone on to glory, they were able to leave legacy benefits for their children.

Let us talk a little bit about the private accounts, because I think it is important that we talk about the privatization scheme that some people in this

town have in store or would like to put forth to the American people. Before I get into that, I would also like to add, since we are talking about the positive points of Social Security, that Social Security is important to stabilize the American way of life. If we start having benefits cut back, especially in this era of no health care, I must add, one may want to talk about health care accounts or special savings accounts and all of those things that are talked about from time to time.

Forty-seven million Americans are working without health care. These are not individuals that are sitting at home cracking their toes, saying the job situation looks sad. These are individuals that go to work every day. So if we start getting along with our friends in Wall Street and saying we are going to have private accounts and we are going to shore up some more money for Wall Street, then that is a gamble that I am not willing to take.

On the majority side, they are talking about, we need to privatize these accounts. Let me tell you, it is going to make it harder for everyone to achieve financial security, and I do mean everyone. Not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just independents, not just people of color, not just Asian Americans. Every American will suffer under it. The size of the benefit cuts proposed in the philosophy that the majority side has is 46 percent. The average reduction of benefits a retiree would see over their lifetime would be \$152,000. The amount that Wall Street would profit from the private accounts would be \$940 billion. That is the only real bright spot here for some. The issue as it relates to our risk as it relates to this risky plan for private accounts, \$2 trillion. The amount of government tax on private accounts would be 80 percent.

If the Republican proposal to cut Social Security benefits were in place today, the average senior monthly benefit would be \$516. This is very real, ladies and gentlemen. Remember, I said right now, as in the present, today. If we look at the clock right now, if we look at today's date right now, the average benefit is \$955.

□ 1715

Under the proposed philosophy that the majority side has, it would be \$516. That is not something to be proud of.

There are a lot of other things that were mentioned recently in the media, and we will talk a little bit about that. But as we start, as we continue to talk about the issue as it relates to the price tag of privatization, it is staggering. It is a lose-lose proposition, as presently presented, the philosophy that the President has. More than a 40 percent cut in benefits, adds nearly \$5 trillion in additional debt over a 20-year period; 70 percent privatization tax, which on average takes back 70 cents on every dollar in private accounts. Some argue 80 percent. I mentioned this a minute ago: \$152,000 in

benefit cuts for young people is based on the price index.

So I think it is important that we look at this, especially as Americans are forced to start thinking about this, something that is 50 years away of being a problem. And I must say, after 50 years, Mr. Speaker, 80 percent of the benefits that are now offered in Social Security will still be intact. In 2052, 2053, people will still be able to receive 80 percent of the benefits. So I am wondering, where is the fire?

I can tell the Members what is the fire right now, if we can use that as a metaphor, or the emergency. The emergency now is the fact that we have Americans working without health care. Emergency is the fact that we are not able to provide benefits to our veterans that are now paying more for health care that they were promised that would be free. Emergency is the fact that we have a Department of Homeland Security, that we are rated as an F as it relates to protecting our information technology. Those are true emergencies.

Emergency is the fact that we cannot protect our borders. Those are true emergencies. Emergency is the fact that we have local districts, local cities, counties and State governments that are suffering through the acts of this Congress in what we call devolution of taxation. We will cut taxes, but we are going to make them raise them on the local level. Those are emergencies. Those are right now pocket-book, wallet issues that are facing Americans right now.

I am glad the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) joined me. I am starting to think that some people in this town may want us to say that something is an emergency, and it is actually not, while we are not looking at the ever-growing federal debt, the highest in the history of the republic; the fact that we are not looking at the fact that Americans do not have health care; the fact that we really do not have anything going on as it relates to making the dollar stronger; the fact that we do not want to address gas prices. Maybe this is the reason why we are spending all of this Federal jet fuel that the President is using flying around the country to try to persuade people to believe in a philosophy of privatization of Social Security when he himself has said privatization of Social Security alone will not save Social Security.

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio, my good friend.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I think he makes a great point, and I think the phrase that he has used in the past that is applicable to the Social Security debate is the "Potomac two-step." They want us looking at Social Security over here and having this debate and flying around the country and talking about what needs fixing and a

crisis that really does not exist, and we have numbers that say it does not exist, but we still want to have this debate over here.

Meanwhile, on this end, we are cutting Medicaid. Health care costs have gone up 50 percent over the last 5 years; education costs of college tuition up 36 percent. No one wants to talk about these issues. No one wants to talk about the fact that Youngstown city schools, the district that I represent, 85 percent of the kids who go to that school qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We do not want to have that debate. We want to have a manufactured debate. And I think the gentleman is exactly right. That is exactly what is happening here, and I think it becomes more and more important on us to fight this on a couple of different fronts. One is to make the argument that Social Security is solid up until 2041 and that we need to make some corrections maybe on a bipartisan way but make sure that the benefits are guaranteed, make sure that no American is going to get a reduction in their benefits, especially the 50 percent of the people who qualify for Social Security, in which Social Security lifts them out of poverty. So I think it is very important for us to broaden this debate over here and not just talk about Social Security but to talk about all these other issues.

One of the issues that I have been working on with Members of the other side, trying to somehow get the attention of the administration, is the issue of China, manipulating their currency up to 40 percent. We had a hearing today in the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. A joint hearing, I must add, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. A joint hearing with the Committee on International Relations and the Committee on Armed Services. I appreciate the gentleman's correcting me.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I just want to make sure that we are factual, sir.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Constructive criticism. I appreciate that.

We had a discussion about the Europeans wanting to lift the arms embargo on China, which has been the Europeans cannot sell all these different types of military arms to the Chinese. The ban has been on since Tiananmen Square in 1989. Now the Europeans are saying we want to sell to the Chinese. So here we have this huge country that is growing at a rapid rate, and now we have even some of our allies wanting to sell arms to a rapidly growing Chinese government.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think it is important that we realize the urgency of so many issues that are before us. And the issue as it relates to Social Security, as the majority side or as the administration would like for us Americans to see it, is that it is not rocket science. It is not a Federal emergency.

Forty-eight million Americans celebrate Social Security right now. Thirty-three million of those Americans would be living in poverty if it was not for it. We have a number of young people that are going to school solely on survivor benefits because their family members have moved on.

And I can tell the Members what is even further appalling is the President saying to the African American that I am pushing private accounts because African American males do not live as long as Anglos.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Unbelievable.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that is very wrong. But it goes to show us the desperation that some majority leaders on the majority side have to try to do this because they can.

But I can tell the gentleman the reason why we do not have a bill on this floor yet is not because we have staff or Members here that are lazy and do not want to write a bill. The reason why it is not here is that Americans are not with the administration and some Members of the majority side on messing with Social Security, especially as it comes down to private accounts on a risky scheme, because if not the number one, it is one of the main reasons why so many Americans appreciate this Federal Government, that we will keep our word, that we will stand by what we said we will do.

So when we start looking at these issues, the American people are not necessarily with the administration and some Members on the majority side as it relates to trying to change Social Security on a scheme of private accounts. That is why there is not a bill here. That is the reason why we hear some posturing here and there and an article saying we are going to start marking some up pretty soon.

I am going to tell the gentleman right now that discussion has been going on since 1978, and the reason why that discussion has been going on as it relates to private accounts since 1978 is the fact that the American people are not marching up and down the street saying, "We want a reduction in our benefits; we want to gamble on our retirement." They are not saying that. What they are saying is that "I have a Social Security card and guess what. When I reach the age I should be able to receive Social Security, I look forward to it. I want you to stand next to your word."

So earlier I commended not only all of my Democratic colleagues but even some of the Members on the majority side that have the courage to stand up and say, I am here on behalf of my constituents, I am not here on behalf of myself, on being accepted by those who are trying to persuade them to do otherwise.

So when we start looking at it in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, I am starting to believe more and more it is one of these things, look over here and think Social Security is Social Security.

Meanwhile, we have the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. In Florida, that is a real issue; and I guarantee the reason why there are a number of Members of the Florida delegation that are not necessarily with the administration and the majority side and even some of those Members on the majority side are not with the majority side on the issue of privatization of Social Security, because eventually many of the gentleman from Ohio's constituents will be my constituents in the end in Florida.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman would further yield, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely right. Maybe one day I will even be his constituent, that one day I will move to Florida.

But I think the point that the gentleman from Florida brought up is the issue of the perennial budget deficits that we are having it seems every year in this Chamber, \$400 to \$500 billion a year, and I think when we talk in the 30-something group that we have established here, the reason we like to talk about and highlight the deficit is because long term that is going to have the most detrimental effect on members of the 30-something generation, 20-something, teenagers, born today.

We have huge numbers. Our debt is rising. Our deficit is going up and up and up every single year. And now to implement the Social Security plan, \$5 trillion to implement the President's version of his privatization, \$5 trillion over the next 20 years. We already have almost an \$8 trillion national debt. Let me move this over.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And those are as-of-today numbers.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. These are today's numbers. And this clock is ticking by the second. But \$7.7 trillion is the national debt today and ticking. Maybe we will be able to get the technology here where this will keep moving, \$7.79 trillion national debt today.

And I think this is the most staggering number. Someone sitting at home watching this or sitting up in the gallery, their individual share of the national debt is \$26,300. So if one is born today, welcome to being born in the United States of America, they have a \$26,000 tag on their head.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think it is important for the Members to understand and also for many Americans to understand that we did not just draw that number up in the back, that we were back there drinking a bottle of water, saying can we come up with a number that is a big number?

I know some of the Members are in their offices, and I think it is important that they know that national debt number as of today, and Americans and Members can go to the official Website of the U.S. Treasury. They have to go a couple of clicks, but I am going to share with the Members how they can get directly to that number and that ticker. Because if I am in the Treasury Department, I am going to have people

go into two or three different clicks once they go to my home page and maybe, just maybe, they will get to the ticker because it is nothing that we can be proud of.

□ 1730

Also, as it relates, we need to talk a little bit about those countries that have bought our debt and we are beholden to foreign countries. The gentleman does that better than me. But the Web site is www.ustreas.gov. That is the Department of Treasury Web site. www.ustreas.gov. Or you can go directly to when you go on the page, because we are trying to share with the Members and educate the Members and make sure the American people understand exactly what is happening here, because it is not a badge of honor to be a Member of the 109th Congress and for history to reflect that we made the decisions to have the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. That is just not something that one can be proud of. But you can go if you want directly to www.house.gov/budget_democrats. That is www.house.gov/budget_democrats.

It is important, because our Democratic budget committee has really worked hard in making sure that we can pull this information out, that not only it should be useful to the Members on both sides of the aisle, but also to the American people.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman will yield, I appreciate the gentleman sharing that information.

The real question is, we have to agree on this, and it is not a Democrat or Republican thing. This baby that is born with a \$26,000 debt on their head, we do not know if that baby is a Democrat or a Republican. We have an obligation here for the next generation. And for many, many, many years our colleagues were standing in the well on that side talking about a balanced budget amendment, talking about fiscal discipline, talking about tax and spend. Now we are borrowing and spending.

This is worse. It is bad to tax and spend, and I do not think any of us advocate that. But to borrow and spend, because you are borrowing, you are spending and then you are paying interest on the money that you borrow, primarily from the Japanese and the Chinese banks. That is reckless. It is bad foreign policy, it is bad domestic policy, it is not conducive to providing opportunity for the next generation, your kids and the young kids that are coming up.

When you talk about funding health care, Medicare, Medicaid, education, tuition costs, Pell grants, No Child Left Behind, how are we going to compete with 1.3 billion Chinese, how are we going to compete with over 1 billion Indians in the next couple of decades, when we have kids, students, that are unhealthy and not getting the proper education that they need, and at the same time we are leaving this kind of burden on their backs?

Now, I have to excuse myself. I have a meeting I have to be at 3 minutes ago. But I want the gentleman to carry on here because this is important. I think the best thing we can do in our 30-something Caucus and our 30-something Working Group that our leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), has helped us establish, is talk about this, because if there is one thing I hope that I can say in my tenure in Congress and the gentleman's is that somehow we were able to fix this and make the kind of investments that the young students need and that they deserve and that will lead to the kind of opportunity that the gentleman and I have had.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, before the gentleman leaves for his meeting, that I am pretty sure is very, very important, the gentleman is going to have to not only give the information on the Web site, because we want to hear from Members, we want to hear from Americans, to make sure that we get the information from them on how they feel, especially as it relates to Social Security, the Federal deficit and other issues, because it is important that we share this, not only with young people.

We have the 30-something Working Group. But in our age range, I say to the gentleman, there are a number of young parents that are out there, and so many times here in Washington, people say, well, we are doing this for the future generation.

Well, the future generation has \$26,000 in debt right now and climbing. So I do not know. I do not feel good about my daughter and my son having to worry about college and all these other things, and then worry about the Federal debt at the same time.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman will yield further, exactly. When you add on it the \$26,000 that you are born with that is going to keep accumulating every day, especially when we are running \$500 billion annual deficits, and you add on to that, just picture the baby born today, and this clock ticking, 18 to 22 years out, say 22 years out, that number keeps going up and up and up, and maybe next week we will have the math and figure out what it will be based on inflation. And then add on to that college costs rising at the rate they have been over the past 4 years.

I know in Ohio alone they have doubled, and I think average college students graduates with a \$20,000-some debt, and that is not even if they go after a masters or Ph.D. or law degree. It is about \$22,000 for the average college student's debt.

So you take the 26, you add on the 22, now you are talking close to \$50,000; and then project that out 22 years. So your baby born today, if you want them to go to college or get a masters degree or law degree or Ph.D., you are talking at least \$100,000, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. That is not providing opportunity. At the same time, they are competing

with billions, over 1 billion Chinese workers and over 1 billion Indians. So this is becoming very dangerous for the long-term prospects of our country.

If you want to e-mail us, 30something democrats @mail.house.gov. 30something democrats@mail.house.gov.

I have enjoyed this. I look forward to us coming back next week. I hope this in some way has broadened the discussion and deepened the discussion on the issues facing the country.

I yield back to my very good friend from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I want to thank the gentleman for co-chairing this 30-something Working Group that consists of 16 or 18 Members on the Democratic side of Members of the House. We, like I said earlier, try to come together and share this information, not only with Members of the Congress on what is important to the American people, but also what is important to young people that are trying to raise their families and have a good future for their children.

I think that it is important once again to know that on the Democratic side when we start talking about Social Security or we start talking about Social Security reform, I think it is important that the American people understand that we want to strengthen Social Security without slashing the benefits that Americans have earned. I think that is important.

I think that when you start talking about what Americans have earned, I believe that is paramount in this debate. And I think when they earn something, I think we need to make sure that we stand by our promise.

Now, when we have a forecast for the present benefit structure that will for almost 50 years be in place, and then beyond those 50 years 80 percent of those benefits will be provided, I think that is standing next to our promise.

I think there are some things that we need to do to make sure that the Social Security trust fund is solvent for years to come. One is to stop deficit spending in such a large amount of money every Congress; every budget that is passed, deficit spending. The whole philosophy of pay-as-you-go is no longer a philosophy as it relates to the majority. It is putting it on the credit cards. It is saying it is okay for foreign countries to buy our debt. It is saying that we will forestall it off to future generations.

I do not believe that that is something that we should subscribe to. I think we should work hard in bringing the debt down and paying back into the Social Security trust fund. That will have us continue to provide the kind of benefits that we look forward to, that many Americans look forward to.

When the President starts off in saying it is going to be \$5 trillion to put forth his philosophy, I think that is problematic at the beginning, saying we are going to save you money, but we are going to borrow money to help

you save money. It sounds like the Potomac Two-Step once again. And so it is important that we realize the gravity of this situation, knowing that there are issues that are greater than an emerging problem in 50-some-odd years.

So it is important that we do as we always do as Americans, come together to save great programs and to be able to help our elderly and frail, to be able to help those individuals that have worked all their lives, the 48 million Americans I speak of that are already receiving Social Security benefits and that are counting on them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look on the bright end of things as I start heading towards a close here. The 48 million Americans that are celebrating Social Security right now, that are receiving on average \$550 a month right now, which we know as of today if the majority side and the President's philosophy was in force, because there is no plan, that those benefits would be \$516. That is easy math. That makes a world of difference to someone that is on a fixed income.

We know that 33 million of those 48 million are retirees. So when the 30-something Working Group starts to look at priorities, we want to watch out for our parents, we want to watch out for our future and for our children's future.

So when we were here in the state of the union and the President started talking about, well, people over 55 do not worry about it, my proposal will not affect your benefits, are we promoting two Americas, or are we promoting unity? I am glad my mom did not call me up and say, Kendrick, guess what? I am okay. You are not. Good luck. That is not what Social Security is about. It is not the "Kendrick Meek Report." This is what took place here in this Chamber, in the state of the union, with both Houses coming together at that time.

So it is important that we realize what is being said and what is being done. Forty-eight percent of those individuals, of the 48 million, would be living in poverty if it was not for Social Security. That is important to the 30-something Working Group, especially for those young professionals that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) talked about when they leave their higher educational experience on average \$20,000 in debt.

For those individuals, I mean, I thank God for the ability to have had the opportunity to go to school on a football scholarship and I left college without being in debt. But, guess what? Everyone is not an athlete. Every student going to college did not go on a scholarship. Some people had to get a student loan. And even for those that went on scholarships that had parents that could not afford it, Mr. Speaker, the money that it takes to buy books and other things that scholarships do not provide, they leave college or a post-graduate degree \$20,000 in debt.

So if we start messing around with the benefit structure under the privatization scheme, guess what? We are going to have to take care of our parents and our grandparents. We are going to have to subsidize their income. We do now, but it will be greater. So that is the reason why this is important, that the facts are put forth. Forty-seven years of solvency, the way Social Security is right now will continue.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward, as long as there are those that are in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber that are sharing with the Americans inaccurate information and saying that privatization is good and it is going to be a really nice thing for all Americans and we all should do it, the 30-something Working Group will continue to work not only with the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), who is our whip, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), who is our chairman of the Democratic Caucus, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN), who is our vice chair of the Democratic Caucus, and sharing accurate information with the American people and staying in the fight of informing them on the truth about what is happening right now; not what might happen, what is happening right now and what is going to happen for years to come.

□ 1745

Because, remember, I say to my colleagues, Social Security in the 1980s was saved by a Democratic House, working along with Ronald Reagan in the White House, doing what we had to do on behalf of individuals that were carrying Social Security cards to keep our promise to them. We did the right thing, and we will continue to do the right thing. But the right thing is not increasing the Federal debt, and it is not taking a gamble on private accounts.

So we will continue to share this information. I want to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to have this hour. We look forward to being back next week, sharing good and accurate information, and the topic will be Social Security, with the Members of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND U.S. ENERGY POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of the Republican leadership in the House. It has been so interesting listening over the past hour as my col-

leagues from across the aisle have talked about various and sundry issues, as they have gotten around to talking about Social Security.

I am here to talk about energy tonight, but before I do that, I want to spend just a few moments and dispel some of the myths that we have been listening to for the last hour.

I think that possibly my colleagues do not intentionally mean to misrepresent the facts. I think, though, that they are just sadly misinformed many times and have a misunderstanding of some of the facts. I would like to, if I can, clarify a few of these, dispel a couple of myths.

We have heard that Social Security is fine until 2052. Then we have turned around and heard that benefits are going to be cut immediately, and that is of concern to me.

I think we all know that there is a date, 2018, and 2018 is the date when the Social Security system will stop running a surplus. Now, this is important to us, because it is at that point in time when those IOUs that the government has been writing, the Social Security system, the Social Security fund, those are going to come due in 2018. Now, 2042 is the date that the IOUs run out. The question for us to answer is this: what are we going to do? How are we going to pay it from 2018 until 2042.

My colleagues have come against the President for raising this issue. I would like to commend the President for having this discussion with the American people, for encouraging us to talk about how we go about addressing Social Security. It is important for those of us, the Members of the House elected from 435 districts around this great Nation, to decide what is going to be the best way to address Social Security.

With my constituents, we look at it as two tracks. One, the stabilization and solvency, how are we going to address this? The other we look at is the enhancements. That is where we begin talking about the personal accounts.

Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues today has called it a privatization scheme, and I find that very sad. Because the money that men and women, each and every one of us, pay into Social Security is money we have earned, and that is something that we deserve to have, that our children deserve to have as a nest egg to build from as they get ready to retire. It is not a scheme. It is called working and earning a living and setting aside, and that is money that you have earned and you deserve to have, to be able to pass on to your heirs.

Personal accounts is your own personal lockbox to be certain that that money is going to be there at the time that you get ready to retire.

I have also heard them talk about we need to stop deficit spending. Well, lo and behold, I would just love it if they would join us as we as the majority try to work on deficit spending. But do my colleagues know what happens? Every

single time we talk about reducing a program, every single time we talk about eliminating a program that has outlived its usefulness, every single time we talk about government efficiencies, what do they want to do? They want to grow the program. They do not want to cut a program.

Mr. Speaker, Ronald Reagan said the closest thing to eternal life on earth is a Federal Government program, and he was right. Because once you got it, it is so incredibly difficult to get rid of it. So I invite our colleagues from across the aisle to join us.

We passed a budget this year. We have done some great things this year, and I commend our Republican leadership for some of the steps that we have made, such as the budget. Our budget chairman, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), did a great job working with the committee bringing forward a budget that has a reduction in nondiscretionary, nonhomeland security defense spending. Many of our colleagues wanted to vote against that and did vote against that, because it was not spending enough.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it both ways. So we invite our colleagues to work with us to get the spending down.

We also want to be certain that we take a look at some of the things that need to be addressed as we talk about Social Security, as we talk about the future, as we talk about education for our children, as we talk about opportunity. One of my colleagues said they went to college on a scholarship and talked about scholarship and loans and ways to get through college. A lot of us did like me: worked, worked hard, worked hard selling books door to door to get through college. And for many, many American men and women and young people today, they are working and they are striving to get that education so that they can enjoy hope, opportunity, and benefits of this great Nation, so they can build a nest egg and have a great retirement and a solid future, not only for them but for their children and for their grandchildren.

So we invite our colleagues from across the aisle to join with us to reduce this spending and to address the solvency of the Social Security system, to join with us as we talk about passing a budget that is going to reduce spending, cut the deficit in half in 5 years.

One of the reasons we are here talking about this deficit, and Mr. Speaker, I just cannot let this go by, they say you have to cut it, you have to stop spending. We have this national debt.

Do my colleagues know how we got here? We got here because of 40 years, 40 years of Democrat control, Democrat spending, programs that were growing and growing and growing and were not being called into accountability; 40 years of just taking that credit card and running those numbers off, swiping them away, run it up, run it up, run it up. Pass that debt on. Let