

on how to do that. The half-baked plan being touted in the Senate fundamentally misses the goal here, which is to strengthen Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are not fools. They have rejected the President's proposal for privatization, and they will undoubtedly reject this new proposal. People like the security that comes with Social Security.

GUANTANAMO BAY PRISONERS EAT WELL

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, pancakes with syrup, whole wheat bagels, scrambled eggs. That is not what I had for breakfast this morning, but there is a good chance that the terrorist prisoners at Guantanamo Bay were eating this morning. And it is not something that prisoners held by the Nazis, the Soviets, Pol Pot, or any other despot would eat.

Yet some on the other side of the aisle have advocated closure of the prison at Guantanamo Bay. The prison there has held 800 suspected al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists; 235 have already been released; 61 are awaiting release or transfer.

The information shared by these prisoners has saved countless lives here and around the world. We go to great lengths to ensure proper treatment of detainees. In addition to good meals, we take care to offer the freedom of worship freely, like supplying copies of the Koran and prayer rugs. Each person is treated according to the Geneva Convention, though none of these prisoners meets the qualifications of soldiers under that treaty.

The left is content to criticize and demagogue, but Gitmo is a part of the war on terror. And as long as it stands, the soldiers there will be treated properly. That is more than I can say for dozens of prisoners executed by al Qaeda in the past.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, two reports from today's New York Times which prove why we need to continue to move in the direction of bringing our troops home from Iraq: The first, a new classified assessment by the Central Intelligence Agency says Iraq may prove to be an even more effective training ground for Islamic extremists than Afghanistan was in al Qaeda's early days, because it is serving as a real-world laboratory for urban combat. The report goes on to say that officials have said Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and other countries would soon have to contend with militants who leave Iraq equipped with considerable experience and training.

The next report says the following: that Iraqi rebels are refining bomb skills and pushing the G.I. toll even higher. Improved explosive devices are now sufficiently sophisticated to destroy armored Humvees. That means our soldiers are more vulnerable and that casualty rates will go higher than ever.

It is time to bring our troops home. Support House Joint Resolution 55, a bipartisan bill to bring our troops home.

THE PRIORITY FOR THIS NATION

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, this is the 68th session day that we have had in this 109th Congress. We have passed bankruptcy reform, class action reform, an aggressive agenda, and many of the Democrats are voting for this agenda.

And today we are continuing to move forward with an appropriations bill. We are going to be passing the Labor, HHS, and Education appropriations bill. And I would like to take a moment to commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. REGULA), subcommittee chairman, and the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), the Committee on Appropriations chairman, on a provision in this bill. This bill will do something we have talked about doing a lot: reducing spending, prioritizing. Fifty-six programs will be terminated, programs that have outlived their usefulness. It will be a \$3.8 billion savings for the taxpayers.

And why do we have our focus on priorities? Why does this majority have its focus on priorities? Because we know funding the war on terror, keeping this homeland safe, preserving freedom, is the priority for this great Nation.

I commend the leadership for their good work. I look forward to the debate on this bill.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE CONGRESSMAN JAKE PICKLE

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to pay tribute to the late Congressman Jake Pickle, who will be funeralized today in Austin, TX. What a giant. What a generous spirit. What an outstanding patriot and leader. And I am grateful that he served the people of Texas and the United States of America.

Yes, he was someone who had the common touch. In fact, many would speak of his travels from Washington to Austin where he worked the airplane aisles to shake hands with all the constituents and others who were flying back and forth with him.

He was committed to justice in this country and made a powerful vote

when he voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. He made it out of conscience and passion and what was right.

And then I think what he thought was his greatest achievement because of his common touch, he helped fix Social Security in the right way, in a bipartisan manner, and had it to last for 40 and 50 years.

We are grateful for his life and my deepest sympathy to his family and friends. But all we can say today is farewell to our friend. We thank him for his service. We thank him for being a great patriot. We thank him for loving America and thank him for loving Texas.

THE WRIGHT AMENDMENT

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, almost 3 decades ago, the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth came together and made an historic agreement to have one regional airport. This local agreement was codified by congressional action known as the Wright amendment.

There are those in Congress today who now seek to repeal the Wright amendment. But, Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that if there is a change to occur to that agreement that it should come from the local level and not from Washington. I think the mayors and county officials on both sides of the Trinity River should make this decision, and if they come to us, if they propose a change to the agreement, then and only then should Congress become involved.

Our community in North Texas is fortunate to have two thriving airports. We serve millions of satisfied customers and employ hundreds of thousands of North Texans. We should not jeopardize that which is working well already.

As a Republican, I am all for competition. But as a Republican, I am also for local control, and I do not believe in a Washington top-down approach to problems. And, finally, as a Republican, I believe it is important to keep our word and keep our covenant, and that is exactly what we should do with the Wright amendment today.

WHY AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION IS NEEDED

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, last week the Iraqi Bureau Chief for Newsweek Magazine left Iraq after being there for 2 years and wrote one final report entitled "Good Intentions Gone Bad." Rod Nordland said the turning point in the war was the Abu Ghraib scandal. Nordland wrote: "The abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib alienated a broad swath of the Iraqi public. There is no evidence that all the mistreatment and

humiliation saved a single American life or led to the capture of any major terrorist.”

The abuse of detainees in U.S. custody has severely undermined our Nation's position in the world. And yet congressional Republicans are still unwilling to call for an independent investigation to determine what exactly is happening in these prisons.

How can we possibly regain our credibility in the world until we actually investigate the possibilities of abuse? We still do not know why these abuses took place.

RONNIE EARLE AND ETHICS

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I may be new to Washington politics. I may be new to this partisan game played here. But it appears to me there is more politics masquerading in legalese and ethics today.

The coordinated attack strategy by the Democrat leadership against our Republican leadership has been shown for what it is, once again. It is a political side show with partisanship as its base that is attempting to assassinate our good leaders' on the Republican side rights.

Yesterday's National Review reports that Ronnie Earle, the Texas prosecutor who is the designated hit man for the Democrats, has been indicting several companies over alleged campaign finance violations. But he dropped those charges when they would pay and make contributions to his pet projects, his pet causes. An end for those charges, those contributions, have been made. Dollars for dismissal, Mr. Speaker. Pay off the left-wing prosecutor with big donations to pretty pink projects, and they might get off the hook.

It turns out that the prosecutor has also been on a witch hunt against our leadership, and he has, in fact, appeared at Democrat fundraisers to brag about. It is more Democrat side show politics, and that is what this is all about.

REPUBLICAN ABUSES OF POWER: REPUBLICANS DO NOT WANT ETHICS COMMITTEE TO MEET

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, last week the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), majority leader, blamed House Democrats for the fact that the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has still been unable to hear the case against him. Mr. Speaker, House Democrats are trying to abide by the rules that this House passed at the beginning of the year. It is the Republicans and the chairman who refuse to follow the rules. They want to ap-

point a partisan staff director to lead their efforts on the committee despite House rules that explicitly state staffers be nonpartisan professionals.

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is supposed to be a place where Members can get straight, unbiased, trustworthy ethics guidance. How can Members who might have disagreements with the House leadership feel comfortable going to the committee for advice if they fear committee staff members are incapable of performing their official duties in a nonpartisan fashion?

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, why the Republicans want to appoint partisan staffers to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Could it be that they like a partisan staffer in a room when decisions are made about certain Members of this House? We have to wonder.

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Social Security reform is an idea whose time has come. And thanks to the leadership of President George W. Bush, we are engaged in a national conversation about addressing the long-term 21st century challenges that the Social Security system faces when some 40 million retirees become 80 million retirees.

The American people, candidly, Mr. Speaker, have not agreed on what the right thing to do is yet. But most of my constituents know that we ought to stop doing the wrong thing. It has simply been wrong these last 4 decades for the Congress of the United States to take the Social Security surplus and apply it to spending on big government.

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We need to stop raiding the Social Security trust fund. Use those resources to give younger Americans voluntary personal savings accounts and that will begin the reform of this critical entitlement. Let us stop the raid on the Social Security trust funds. Let us give younger Americans more choice. It is time to reform Social Security. Let the debate begin.

REALITY DISCONNECT

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Bush administration continues to paint a rosy picture of the situation in Iraq, Congress should really be investigating why exactly the administration is misleading both the American public and Members of this institution.

While most Republicans in this Chamber continue to take the Bush administration's rhetoric as fact, Repub-

lican Senator CHUCK HAGEL of Nebraska states in this week's U.S. News and World Report: "The White House is completely disconnected from reality. It's like they're just making it up as they go along."

That is a Republican Senator. It would be nice if other Republicans would follow suit. For some reason Republicans think they are supporting troops in Iraq if they remain silent about what is going on there. Are Republicans supporting our troops when they refuse to question misleading statements like that from Vice President CHENEY that the Iraqi insurgents are in their "last throes"? Are Republicans supporting our troops when they refuse to support investigation into prisoner abuse scandals, scandals that many, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, believe are harming both our reputation and our troops?

Silence is not the best way to help our troops.

FALLEN HEROES CAMPAIGN

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I wish to praise the admirable actions of First Coast Energy Shell Corporation, a Jacksonville-based company from my congressional district.

During the third annual Tribute to Heroes campaign, First Coast Energy Shell has pledged to raise \$75,000 for the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. This fund provides military families whose loved ones have been killed or wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan with financial and emotional support.

Beginning on Memorial Day and continuing through the Fourth of July, First Coast Energy Shell will donate a portion of all gasoline sales to this fund. I share in First Coast Energy's belief that "the military is an important part of our community" and that we should all actively support and honor those heroes who have sacrificed so much for our country.

I am proud to represent such patriotic and generous constituents and strongly urge my fellow Members to visit www.fallenheroesfund.org to learn more about this very good campaign.

GREAT SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, I welcome the born again saviors of Social Security on the Republican side of the aisle. They have been looting the program for years, and now they want to make it right.

The President this year will borrow \$168 billion from Social Security, money only extracted from people who work for wages and salary, and will transfer part of it to the wealthiest in