

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated example. A recent Time Magazine inquiry found that in filling positions at vital government agencies, the Bush administration has put connections ahead of credentials. Time notes in a September 25 article that "connections, not qualifications, have helped an unusually high number of Bush appointees land vitally important jobs in the Federal Government."

Madam Speaker, this cronyism must end. Our tax dollars should pay for government that works for everyone, not just the President's friends. The American people deserve better.

SECURITY AGENDA

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, while the Democrats are working to develop a message for the upcoming year, Republicans have more than a message. We have an agenda: the security agenda.

We know that Americans have strong views on how this country ought to run, and this Republican majority represents those views. We believe in focusing on four areas: retirement security, homeland security, economic security, and moral security.

We are aggressively fighting terrorism both here at home and abroad to strengthen our national and homeland security. We continue to work to be certain that our seniors are taken care of and provided for in their retirement years. We are working to keep taxes low, regulation light, and shrink the growth of government to be certain that our economic security is not threatened.

Madam Speaker, we want to preserve the right of every American to worship as we choose, defend the sanctity of marriage, and we are fighting to advance the culture of life in order to guard our Nation's moral security.

Madam Speaker, Republicans are focused on these security issues. We know this is an agenda where the American people join us in the actions they would like to see.

WHITE HOUSE STONEWALLING OF VALERIE PLAME LEAK INVESTIGATION

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

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, sadly, 2,000 American troops have now died in Iraq due to a war based on fabrications of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Two years have passed since the Bush White House breached national security by leaking a covert CIA agent's name to reporters to smear a former ambassador who questioned their misleading case for war. Why has President Bush not acted on this reprehensible act?

Anyone who follows the news now knows that the White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove is implicated in leaking Valerie Plame's identity to Time reporter Matthew Cooper. We also know that it was the Vice President's Chief of Staff, Scooter Libby, at the heart of charges leaking Plame's identity to New York Times reporter Judith Miller.

Two years ago the White House press secretary told reporters, "If anyone in this administration was involved in it, they would no longer be in this administration." But that was before it was clear that Karl Rove was indeed involved. President Bush now says staffers will only be fired if they committed a crime.

Talk about lowering the bar. The Bush administration was right at first when it said that anyone involved in this serious breach of our national security would be handed their walking papers.

The stonewalling and the coverup of the White House must finally come to an end. Our country must do better. The world is watching.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

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

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In West Virginia alone, 270 women will lose their lives to breast cancer in 2005 while an estimated 1,410 new cases will be diagnosed.

The impact of breast cancer goes well beyond the individual to impact her family, her friends, as well as change the path in life the woman is leading.

Regular breast self-examinations, mammograms, and regular visits with a doctor give a woman her greatest chance for overcoming breast cancer.

These reasons are why women, especially women over 50 and women who have a history of breast cancer, should visit their doctor regularly. My husband Charlie lost his mother and his aunt to breast cancer over 30 years ago. Since that time advancements in treatment and educational efforts have increased the 5-year survival rate to 98 percent if the cancer is found and treated before it spreads.

As this Republican-led Congress continues its commitment to fund research efforts, we must also continue efforts to educate women and ensure they have access to proper health care. We owe it to thousands of women, and their families, we have lost to breast cancer. We owe it to ourselves and our daughters for their futures.

THE SAD MILESTONE OF 2,000 U.S. TROOPS KILLED IN IRAQ

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, we mark another sad and tragic milestone in the war in Iraq. Two thousand American soldiers have been killed in the war in Iraq.

We must end this war. How many more of America's finest have to die for this war before we realize that the quagmire in Iraq cannot be solved by military force, and that our occupation is counterproductive?

Iraq has been a colossal failure of American policy. From the beginning this administration has waged a campaign of misinformation and has continued to deliberately mislead the public and this Congress about the realities on the ground. The truth is that Iraq will never be free and the insurgency will not end until we end our occupation and allow the decisions about the future of Iraq to be made in Baghdad, not Washington.

As Americans we lament the loss of every American life and every American injury and every Iraqi civilian casualty. We mourn the first casualties as much as the 2,000th casualty.

Now more than ever, we need to support the troops. Support the troops by bringing them home.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF THE PATRIOTISM OF KATELIN RICHTER OF WATERTOWN, MINNESOTA

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

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize 16-year-old Katelin Richter, a student at Watertown-Mayer High School in my hometown.

Katelin recently wrote an essay on the importance and relevance of the Pledge of Allegiance, which was published in a large newspaper in our home State. The theme of Katelin's essay is that the language of the Pledge of Allegiance is the core values held by Americans, that we are one Nation under God, and that it should not be attacked by activist judges.

I think she is right.

Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize the patriotism of Katelin Richter. It is through young voices such as hers that our great Nation will remain strong.

CRONYISM IN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION: DAVID SAFAVIAN, THE MICHAEL BROWN OF PROCUREMENT

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

Mr. OWENS. Madam Speaker, together Americans can do better in showing Iraq and the rest of the world how true democracy will not tolerate corruption. We must set better examples than the Bush administration has set.

One glaring example of Bush corruption came when President Bush nominated a former lobbyist, David Safavian, as the Chief Procurement Officer for the Federal Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Safavian had limited experience with procurement when President Bush chose him for that powerful position. What he did have, however, were strong connections to powerful Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The two lobbyists, Safavian and Abramoff, shared clients at the firm where they worked in the early 1990s. Later, through his position at the GSA, Safavian helped Abramoff lease Federal property for office space. In exchange, Abramoff took Safavian on an expensive golf trip to Scotland.

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Not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, David Safavian was arrested last month for obstructing a Federal examination into Jack Abramoff's questionable business dealings with Washington Republicans. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Safavian was a multibillion-dollar Hurricane Katrina contract awardee.

Together, America, we can do better.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a fiscal conservative, and, more importantly, as a Member who believes in making the tough choices and tightening the belt of the Federal budget. Every American family knows that you do not spend money on big purchases unless you have a way to pay for it. Yet our Federal Government does this every day.

There are two ways to get our fiscal house back in order: we can raise taxes, as some of our colleagues across the aisle have suggested; or we can rein in government spending. Well, we Republicans believe that American families already pay too high a price in taxes, and we know that there are too many places where our bureaucracy is bloated and our programs are redundant and ineffective.

So rather than making the American taxpayers shoulder the burden of excessive Federal spending, I say we put the weight on ourselves, the Congress, and work our hardest to cut the fat out of the Federal budget.

I believe that government should tailor its spending to accommodate lower taxes, rather than tailoring its taxes to accommodate higher spending called for by the Democrats. Now is the time to treat our Federal budget as we would our household budget. We need to make the tough decisions.

WORRYING ABOUT THE REST OF AMERICA

(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, that was an interesting speech, but it defies reality. If the government eliminated every general fund program, everything the government does except the Department of Defense, guess what? We would still have a deficit. We would still be borrowing money.

The Republicans are borrowing \$1.2 billion a day to run the government, and now they are the party of fiscal responsibility, and, oh, it is those poor working people they are concerned about. Except what they do not talk about is the tax cuts they are talking about, the ones that would cost \$70 billion and increase the deficit, flow predominantly to people who earn over \$300,000 a year, mostly over \$1 million a year, and to estates worth more than \$6 million. That is the hard-working families they are worried about, one-tenth of 1 percent of the people in America.

Well, I am worried about the rest of America who are getting screwed by these kinds of priorities.

GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC GROWTH POLICIES WORKING

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, we are soon going to debate how we pay for the relief for the devastating hurricanes that hit our gulf coast. There are only three ways: Either, number one, we are going to raise taxes yet again on the American people; number two, we are going to pass debt on to our children; or, number three, we are going to moderate the growth of the Federal budget so that families do not have to moderate the growth of their budget.

Now, you have heard the Democrats claim that somehow the Republicans want to cut, slash, and burn the Federal budget. Since I have been on the face of the planet, the Federal budget has grown seven times faster than the family budget. How much Federal Government do we need? And even if we offset all of this hurricane spending, what most people view as mandatory welfare spending will end up growing at 6.3 percent, instead of 6.4 percent.

Compassion for the poor is not measured by the number of government checks you print. It is measured by the number of jobs you create. Under tax relief policies and economic growth policies of this administration and this Republican Congress, we have created over 4 million new jobs so that families can go out and do their spending and create their American Dream.

TIME TO END IRAQ WAR

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today we mark another sad milestone in our involvement in Iraq with the announcement that 2,000 Americans have died.

It is time to end this war. This war was based on fiction: there were no weapons of mass destruction, no ties to al Qaeda, no imminent threat. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on this war. We are bankrupting our Nation.

Great nations, Mr. Speaker, sometimes make mistakes, as I believe we have done in this case. This war was a mistake. It is wrong; let us fix it. America can do better. Not one more dollar, not one more death.

ENDING FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS

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

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, as a State district judge for over 20 years in Texas, I presided over my fair share of frivolous lawsuits. I have seen firsthand the effect they have on small businesses and families.

The current tort system is costing Americans over \$200 million a year. Small businesses rank the cost and availability of liability insurance as second only to the cost of health care as their top priority. Both problems are fueled by frivolous lawsuits.

Frivolous lawsuits make small businesses and workers suffer. This year the Nation's oldest ladder manufacturer, family-owned John S. Tilley Ladders Company of New York, filed for bankruptcy protection and sold off most of its assets due to litigation costs.

Founded in 1855, the Tilley firm could not handle the cost of liability insurance, which had risen from 6 percent of sales a decade ago to 29 percent, even though the company never lost an actual court judgment. "We could see the handwriting on the wall and just want to end this whole thing," said Robert Howland, a descendant of the founder, John Tilley.

Mr. Speaker, let us put an end to frivolous lawsuits that are ruining the American Dream.

PRIORITIZING CUTS IN FEDERAL COVERAGE OF HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I note that the majority party is considering a number of actions to cut spending, including actions to cut back child health care under Medicaid and including actions to cut back SSI payments to disabled Americans.

I wonder if some of those same Members of Congress would be willing to eliminate Federal coverage for health care for Members of Congress before