No matter what J.D. Hayworth says, there is no sterner stuff than the backbone and courage that defines Jack Murtha's character and conscience.

Dennis Hastert—the Speaker of the House who never served—called Jack Murtha a coward and accused him of wanting to cut and run. Well let me tell you, Jack Murtha wasn't a coward when he put himself in harm's way for his country in Vietnam and earned two purple hearts—he was a patriot then, and he is a patriot today. Jack Murtha didn't cut and run when his courage in combat earned him a Bronze Star, and his voice should be heard, not silenced by those who still today cut and run from the truth.

Just a day after Dick Cheney, who had 5 deferments from Vietnam, accused Democrats of being unpatriotic—the White House accused Jack Murtha of surrendering. Jack Murtha served 37 years in the Marine Corps. He doesn't know how to surrender—not to enemy combatants, and not to politicians in Washington who say speaking his conscience is unpatriotic.

Robert Kennedy once said, 'The sharpest criticism often goes hand in hand with the deepest idealism and love of country.' Chuck Hagel showed he hasn't forgotten that when he said, 'The Bush administration must understand that each American has a right to question our policies in Iraq and should not be demonized for disagreeing with them.' But too many in the Republican Party forgot that long ago. They forgot that asking tough questions isn't pessimism; it's patriotism.

We've seen the politics of fear and smear too many times. Whenever challenged, Republican leaders engage in the politics of personal destruction rather than debate the issues. It doesn't matter who you are. When they did it to John McCain, we saw it doesn't matter what political party you're in. When they did it to Max Cleland, we saw it doesn't matter if your service put you in a wheelchair. And when they did it to Jack Murtha yesterday, perhaps the most respected voice on military matters in all of Congress, we saw that this administration will go to any lengths to crush any dissent.

Once again, they're engaged in the lowest form of smear and fear politics because they're afraid of actually debating a senior congressman who has advised presidents of both parties on how to best defend our country. They're afraid to debate a decorated veteran who lives and breathes the concerns of our troops, not the empty slogans of an Administration that sent our brave troops to war without body armor. They're terrified of actually leveling with the American people about the way they misled America into war, and admitting they have no clear plan to finish the job and get our troops home.

RIDING ROUGHSHOD OVER RIGHTS IN BELARUS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission and the sponsor of the Belarus Democracy Act, I remain deeply concerned about the violations of human rights occurring every day in Lukashenka's Belarus.

During a recent news conference, the autocratic Belarusian leader expressed confidence in his victory in the presidential election scheduled for next year, rhetorically asking why should he be rigging this election. Given his intensified assault on civil society, his dismal human rights record, and penchant for rigged elections, Mr. Lukashenka's statements ring hollow. Yet, Lukashenka's actions against democratic forces, non-governmental organizations and the independent media belie his stated confidence regarding electoral victory.

Last week, the lower chamber of Lukashenka's pocket parliament passed a law endorsing tougher new penalties for activities ''directed against people and public security,'' a proposal submitted to the parliament only days before passage. These changes to the Criminal Code increase penalties for participation in organizations that were liquidated or warned to stop their pro-democratic activities, or for the training and other preparations for unauthorized demonstrations or other civic actions.

Mr. Speaker, to cite just one of the draconian provisions, the Code now gives authorities the leeway to jail an individual for up to 2 years for ''providing a foreign country, a foreign or international organization with patently false information about the political, economic, social, military, and international situation of the Republic of Belarus.'' Putting aside the matter of such a provision violating free speech norms, if the past is any guide, it is clear who would be the arbiter of what constitutes ''false information.'' There can be no doubt that the law aims to stifle the democratic opposition, and the head of the KGB (yes, in Belarus it is still called the KGB) himself recently admitted that the reasons for the law is to discourage street protests during the upcoming presidential race.

This law, while particularly blatant, is part and parcel of other actions designed to strengthen the regime's control and deny the Belarusian people any alternative voices as the presidential election campaign unfolds. Last month, a new law further controlling political parties came into force. A recent Council of Ministers decree clamps down on organizations that conduct public opinion polls. A Lukashenka decree further discriminates against independent trade unions, stipulating that only trade unions belonging to the pro-governmental federation are granted the right to premises at no cost. Yet another decree considerably limits students' opportunities to travel abroad.

Meanwhile, opposition activists are routinely beaten up or detained. Just last week, for instance, Ales Kalita was detained and at the hands of the police suffered a dislocated arm for merely distributing the independent newspaper ''Narodna Volya''. Viktor Syritsya, a lecturer at Baranavichi College was fired for organizing a meeting of students with presidential opposition candidate Alexander Milinkevich. Belarusian State Economic University in Minsk expelled fourth-year student Tatsyana Khoma because she took a brief trip to France, where she was elected to the executive committee of the Brussels-based National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), an umbrella organization of 44 national student unions from 34 countries. The police beat activist Mikita Sasim. They detained youth activists Yauhen Afnagel and others. Other repressive actions include frequent arrests of activists of democratic youth movements such as ZUBR, a ban on worship by some religious congregations and other repressive actions against selected religious minorities, and continued harassment of members of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

Moreover, there is an emerging pattern of the regime putting obstacles in the way of Mr. Milinkevich. Recently, a public meeting he held in Borbuisk was disrupted by the authorities, with participants being told by the authorities to go home and threatened with tax inspections. During a press conference, the electricity in the room was cut off, as well as a ''hot-line'' phone with town residents.

Especially egregious has been the regime's intensification of the war against the already repressed and struggling independent media. Newspaper closures, suspensions, threats, and exorbitant and absurd libel fines, pressures on advertisers and other forms of harassment have become routine. Outright police confiscations of independent newspapers are also not uncommon. A seemingly more subtle tactic, implemented just a few weeks ago, involved the decision by Belarus' monopoly state postal service to stop delivery to subscribers of a dozen private periodicals. Meanwhile, the suspicious murder in 2004 of journalist Veronika Charkasova has not been resolved. Authorities have refused to open a criminal investigation into journalist Vasil Hrodnikau's death. Lukashenka himself recently admitted to Russian journalists that his regime applies very serious pressure on the media, somewhat incongruously adding that ''this does not mean I am crushing them.''

Mr. Speaker, what I have cited is by no means an exhaustive list of abuses perpetrated by the Lukashenka regime, merely a sampling of the types of repressive actions employed on a daily basis by Europe's last dictator. As Helsinki Commission Co-Chair, I will continue to monitor closely and speak out forcefully regarding these and other violations of Belarus' freely undertaken OSCE commitments. I urge the Bush Administration to step up efforts to break the Lukashenka regime's near monopoly over the country's information space and provide timely assistance to pro-democracy forces in Belarus.

It is clear that Mr. Lukashenka and his minions are laying the groundwork for yet another un-free and unfair election—similar to the 2001 presidential elections and the 2000 and 2004 parliamentary elections—that will fall far short of OSCE standards. Lukashenka is once again showing that, despite his confident rhetoric, he fears his own people and profoundly fails to respect their dignity as citizens and as human beings.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SAVING ITS MEMBERS FROM DANGEROUS DRUGS VIOXX AND CELEBREX

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Veterans Affairs buys drugs for about half the market price, saving the American taxpayer billions of dollars. It does this by insisting on the best price offered to other customers, by negotiating for further discounts, and by moving market share through the use of a formulary or preferred drug list.

The formulary is an excellent one that provides Veterans with the drugs they need that are safe and effective.

This formulary is under attack by 'think tanks' that may receive a lot of money from drug companies. PhRMA wants to convince the American public that, like the children of Lake Woebegon, all drugs are above average and should be readily available to be marketed to all Americans at whatever price the companies want to charge. The fact is, most drugs—about 80 to 85 percent in recent years—are me-too drugs: copies of stuff already on the market that bring little or nothing new to the fight against diseases. There is no need to cover all these drugs on a formulary. Rather, by using a formulary to list only the safest, most effective drugs, a buyer can obtain huge discounts from the companies. An exceptions and appeals process can ensure that in those rare cases where a non-formulary drug is needed, it will be available.

Listing all new drugs on a formulary can also be dangerous, because many drugs are approved after only six months or so of testing on a few thousand people or less. As doctor and Senator FRIST has said, there should be a 2 year moratorium on the mass advertising of new drugs, because we really don't know how safe they are. Vioxx and Celebrex are classic examples of drugs that added little new but have unacceptable risks.

The VA formulary never listed Vioxx and Celebrex. Good for them. Vioxx alone has been estimated to have caused up to 40,000 unnecessary deaths and another 100,000 heart attacks or strokes.

But the Manhattan Institute has just published a paper by a Frank R. Lichtenberg who says he is a Professor at Columbia University's School of Business. The thesis of the paper is that because the VA does not immediately cover every drug, like Vioxx and Celebrex, veterans are starting to die earlier. The Professor includes in his paper one of the most hilarious, or saddest examples of sophistry I've ever seen. He plots on a graph the life expectancy at birth of all males, and shows it rising from 72 years in 1991 to 74.5 years in 2002. He also plots veterans' life expectancy, which rises from about 77.6 years to 80.5 years by 2004. But then he does something that, if he were a student, would earn an "F". He superimposes the two life expectancy lines in different colors on the same chart but uses different vertical lines to represent the two different populations. The Veterans' axis on the left starts at 77.0 years and rises to 81.5 years. The life expectancy at birth of all males axis on the right side of the chart starts at 70.5 and rises to 75.0. By doing this, he makes it appear to the quick scanner or casual reader (i.e., most of us), that Veterans are dying sooner than the rest of American males. Instead, Veterans are living 6 years longer.

The Professor deserves an "F"—and so does the drug industry for trying to libel the VA drug system.

We need a system like the VA's for Medicare. It would save us hundreds of billions of dollars in the years to come—and save us from the Vioxx's of the future.

NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK STATEMENT

HON. W. TODD AKIN

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, it was my great pleasure to serve this year as the Congressional Co-chair for the House of Representatives for National Bible Week, November 20 though November 27, 2005.

The Bible was foundational to development of our country. The English Puritans came to the New World to follow the Bible according to the convictions of their own consciences. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, 24 had what today would be considered Bible college or seminary educations. Only a few years later, in 1782, Congress itself authorized the printing of the Bible.

The Bible has found its way into everything from casual conversation—expressions like "by the sweat of your brow" and ""the salt of the earth" and myriad others all come from Scripture—to the landscape of America. From Corinth, Maine to Bethel, Alaska, the Bible has marked our national map.

More than any map, however, the Bible has marked who we are as a people. Earlier generations of Americans almost inhaled the words of Scripture as they inhaled the air. To read the inaugural addresses of our Presidents, from George Washington to George W. Bush, is to read repeated allusions to or quotations of biblical texts.

The Bible speaks to the uniqueness of man—that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. It speaks of the greatness of God—that He is the object of true worship, the fount of all blessings and the Redeemer, Lawgiver, Friend, Savior and Judge.

Historically, we have been a people of the Book. We lose our allegiance to and our reliance on the Bible to our grave peril.

The Bible can be hard to understand. Yet as the theologian R.C. Sproul has written, "We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work."

And it is worthwhile work. There can be nothing nobler than seeking not only to know the Bible's teachings but to know the Bible's God.

It was President Lincoln who said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book." Or, as Jesus Himself remarked, "Search the Scriptures . . . for they testify of Me."

Today, Mr. Speaker, I echo Abraham Lincoln's comments and urge my colleagues and all Americans to reacquaint themselves with the Bible. As literature, it is unmatched. As philosophy, it is unparalleled. And as truth, it will make you free.

I commend the National Bible Association for its outstanding work to bring the Bible to the attention of all Americans of every faith and creed. And I am humbled by the opportunity to serve in such a way as to draw attention to this most precious of books.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN B. GABUSI

HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to John B. Gabusi, an Arizona native known nationally and internationally, who retired September 30 as Vice Chancellor of Pima Community College.

Mr. Gabusi was an accomplished administrator who brought excitement, enthusiasm and excellence to his endeavors and his relationships. He possesses a superior intellect, is extremely well informed, and has an amazing ability to analyze information quickly and accurately. He is a compassionate human being with a particular affection for the less fortunate. He extends his help quietly, hoping only that others will overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Mr. Gabusi joined Pima College in 1991. He established the economic development office, then moved on to create a government relations program. From there, he undertook a myriad of successful activities for the College. Among his other remarkable achievements was a marketing campaign that increased the school's enrollment by 30 percent over a five-year period and a counseling-mentor program that increased the number of area high school graduates who enrolled at Pima by more than 60 percent over a three-year period.

Mr. Gabusi grew up in the mining town of Clifton. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in 1964, and was studying for a Ph.D. in political science when, in 1966, he and classmate Earl deBerge created a Tucson polling firm known as Survey Research Associates. He departed the partnership in 1968 to join the staff of U.S. Representative Morris K. Udall, whose congressional district then encompassed the entire State outside of Phoenix and Maricopa County. His friend deBerge continued the firm, which now is based in Phoenix and known as the Behavior Research Center Inc.

He spent 23 years away from Arizona, most of the time in Washington, DC.

Mr. Gabusi walked the halls of Congress as a Udall aide, and served as Udall's principal staffer for the Postal Reorganization Act of 1971, the first step toward today's independent postal system. Mr. Gabusi managed four of Udall's congressional campaigns and directed the congressman's attempted bid for the 1976 Democratic Presidential nomination.

President Jimmy Carter reached out for his help in 1977, appointing Mr. Gabusi as Assistant Director for Management and Budget of the Community Services Administration. He oversaw a $2 billion annual budget at an agency with 1,800 employees between Washington and 10 regional offices.

Two years later, President Carter chose Mr. Gabusi for another major position: Assistant Secretary for Management in the fledgling Department of Education. Among other things, he managed the inter-agency task force that designed and implemented all of the required systems to create the Cabinet-level department.

Both jobs required Senate confirmation and Mr. Gabusi was one of a handful of appointees to undergo that process on two occasions.