

passing commonsense gun legislation. We can do a better job. We are fighting wars around the world. We are also fighting wars here in our own country. Every single day someone dies of gun violence. We can do a better job. We can make sure that the criminals have a harder time getting the weapons that are on our streets. We must have uniform Federal laws to protect our citizens.

LANCE CORPORAL ROBERT
"ROBBIE" MARTINEZ, TEXAS MA-
RINE

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the great General Douglas MacArthur of World War II once commented, "I have just returned from visiting the Marines at the front, and there is not a finer fighting organization in the world." Lance Corporal Robert "Robbie" Alexander Martinez was a member of this fine fighting organization. He was killed December 1 while fighting and serving our Nation in Iraq. He was a member of the Second Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, based at Marine Corps Air Ground and Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, California.

Mr. Speaker, to date, there have been 185 Texans killed since the war began in March 2003. Lance Corporal Martinez was just 20 years of age. He was on his second Iraqi tour. He had already spent 7 months on the Syrian border in 2004. He went to Iraq and into Fallujah this past June. He and nine other Marines were killed last Thursday when a roadside bomb exploded next to them in the deadliest attack against American troops in Iraq in 4 months. Martinez was scheduled to come home this past Monday but at the last minute his tour was extended for a month and a half.

Just a week ago, Robbie Martinez had just called his mother and asked her to buy a diamond because he was coming home. He had planned to propose to his "love at first sight" girlfriend, Taylor Wilkenson, as soon as he got back.

Robbie Martinez graduated from Cleveland High School in Cleveland, Texas, in 2003. While in high school, he was known as the peacemaker. By the time he started his senior year, he had already signed up for the Marines. He pre-enlisted at the age of 17 so he could be activated as soon as he graduated from high school. Martinez was a baseball pitcher at Cleveland High and dreamed of getting his degree in education and becoming a baseball coach. He put his dreams on hold to join the elite fighting forces of the United States Marine Corps. He left for basic training 2 days after he graduated from high school.

Lance Corporal Martinez's stepfather, Jeremy Hunt, called Robbie his "diamond in the rough" and one of the

greatest things that had ever come into his life. He said Robbie loved being in the Corps and was proud of it. He was proud of being a Marine. He knew he was there for a reason and he was resolving the situation in Iraq and looking forward to coming home. He had requested lots of candy in his care packages from Texas. This candy was not for him because he would hand it out to the Iraqi children that he would see.

He is remembered for his infectious smile and someone who loved spending time with his family and friends, barbecuing and making people smile. Robbie's mother, Kelly Hunt, said that her 14-year-old son Mikie wants to join the military, just like his brother.

President Ronald Reagan once said, "Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world, but the Marines don't have that problem." Lance Corporal Martinez was working to make a difference in the world when he gave his life. His bravery, his dedication, his patriotism will not be forgotten by his friends, his family and freedom-loving peoples throughout the world.

Lance Corporal Martinez died for this country, the Iraqi people and for that word freedom. His Nation made the call and he responded without hesitation with his unwavering courage and his commitment. He served his country with honor and distinction. He wanted to be in the Marines since he was 12 years of age.

Mr. Speaker, as we extend our prayers and our condolences to his parents, his relatives, his friends and his fellow students at Cleveland High School in Texas, we take time to reflect on this American hero's devotion to country and to the people of Iraq. He is a heroic representative of the State of Texas and an honorable defender of liberty and freedom.

Country music singer Brad Cotter wrote the following in his tribute to American soldiers and it is fitting right now:

"Thank God for Americans in uniform. Those who fight to keep our freedom every day. Thank God for Americans in uniform. Those who fight to keep us safe along our way."

Semper Fi, Lance Corporal Martinez.
Semper Fi.

THE FEDERAL BUDGET AND COLLEGE TUITION

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, at 2 a.m. before Congress adjourned a couple of weeks ago, we passed something called the reconciliation bill, theoretically the first attempt to begin to deal with the flood of red ink that is drowning our Nation. But these were kind of mean-spirited cuts that hit at those who really can't afford to give too

much in order to protect the very wealthy.

Here is how it worked. The biggest single category of cuts in that bill was \$14.3 billion out of student loans. On the Republican side, they said, We didn't cut student loans. All we did was increase the cost of student loans. Well, it is the same impact on the students. They are going to double the origination fee on the student loans, they are going to charge students a fee to fix the rate, and they are going to give them a really high fixed interest rate instead of the rather reasonable rate that is available now. It is estimated for the average Oregonian going to a public school who borrows the maximum amount for 4 years, they will incur another \$5,800 in loan costs.

I went out to see what the students in Oregon thought about this and how they were doing. I was inspired. I went to the University of Oregon and Oregon State both, met with student government leaders and regular students who are getting financial aid. The stories were inspiring, what these young people are doing to try and better themselves. There was one couple, they had both been displaced workers. They have a child. They went through Lane Community College to get associate's degrees because it was cheaper and they borrowed \$40,000 to do it. They are now at the U of O. They estimate they will graduate with over \$100,000 in debt. There was the young woman who is holding three jobs, three jobs, and 14 credit hours. She said, Congressman, I'm going to have to reduce my credit hours. You know what that means. It's going to take me longer to finish school, which means I'm going to have to borrow more money.

They said, when you were young and you went to school, and I think a lot of the Republicans have not thought about this maybe, you could take a summer job and save enough money to pay tuition at a public school. That was true. They said, If we get a summer job and save really well, we get just about enough money to buy our books. You can work full-time year round at a minimum wage job in Oregon where the minimum wage is considerably higher than the Federal minimum wage and still not have enough money to eat and pay your tuition, let alone your housing costs.

This is a dire situation. The response of the Republicans is that these are the people who should sacrifice. These are the people who can afford to pay more to help rein in the reckless, wanton spending and debt being piled up on that side of the aisle. What is the trade-off the Republicans want? They are going to take the \$14.3 billion that these students will have to pay in additional costs, many of them will probably have to give up on getting a higher education and just go to work in a dead-end job, and they are going to give it to the richest among us. It is

going to continue the tax cuts for people who are lucky enough to clip coupons off of stocks, dividends. The trade-off is almost exact.

So students will pay more for their loans, kids who are trying to get ahead, start a life, start a family, do better, become productive citizens, have a good living and pay taxes so that the richest among us will not have to pay taxes on their investments. But under their bizarre theory of trickle-down economics, somehow those students and everybody else is going to benefit by the fact that the richest among us, those who live off dividends on stocks, will pay a lower rate of taxes. What a bizarre view of the world from that side of the aisle. What a mean-spirited cut.

□ 1945

I wonder how many people from that side of the aisle went and talked to students about this during the break. They probably went to the country club and chortled with the rich people over champagne after Thanksgiving dinner, but they did not go out and talk to the students who they are sticking it to nor the seniors who they are sticking it to in this bill or the hungry primary and secondary school kids whose school lunch programs they are cutting. Those are the people who have to sacrifice so the richest among us can have their tax cuts continue.

Last year, according to the Internal Revenue Service, 99 percent of the people in America saw their incomes decline in real dollars. One percent saw an increase, those over \$300,000; and they did not even do really that well. It is only 4 percent for between \$300,000 and 1.3 million, but the people over 1.3 million, the people that these students are going to pay for their tax cuts, they saw a 10 percent increase in their income.

There is something wrong here when we have young people working hard, trying to get ahead, and we are saying you are going to pay for the rich folks' free ride.

OP-ED: IRAQ

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, certainly the last 2 weeks we have seen a great deal written and spoken about the conflict in the country of Iraq. The middle of this month we will see the third popular election held in the country of Iraq this year.

Stay the course or pull out now, these seem to be the two recurrent themes debated in this House and on the editorial pages across the country.

Our military action was really never popular with the press here at home, and it has been portrayed in the most negative possible fashion for the past 2½ years. The result, predictably, is de-

clining popular support for military activity in Iraq in this country and the very real possibility that the United States will lose its political will to complete the mission in Iraq. This would be truly tragic as we are so tantalizingly close to success in this effort.

I was not a Member of Congress when the vote was taken to provide the President the necessary authority for military action in Iraq. I do believe it was the right decision, and I believe I would have voted affirmatively had I been here. I do not recall ever believing that it would be easy, but I do recall believing that it was justified and necessary.

When the House and the Senate considered and approved the resolution authorizing the President to use military force to bring Saddam Hussein in compliance with the United Nations resolutions, several strong reasons were made for the foundation of this decision: weapons of mass destruction, to be sure; a gathering threat; violation of the no-fly zone; targeting our aircraft; endangering our pilots; violations of U.N. sanctions; violations of the terms of surrender from the first Gulf War in 1991; failure to account for Kuwaitis taken prisoner in the first Gulf War; failure to make restitution to the country of Kuwait; mass murder; mass graves; and the only world leader to have ever used weapons of mass destruction in an offensive fashion.

These were the details of the resolution supported by a bipartisan majority of Members of Congress. The policy of the United States as laid out by law in 1998, passed by the Congress, signed by the President was to effect regime change in the country of Iraq. In 2002, by approving this resolution, the Congress and President Bush were finally enforcing this long-standing U.S. foreign policy goal in an environment radically changed by September 11, 2001, and the gathering threat that Iraq and other rogue nations represent to the safety and the security of the American people.

The failure to find warehouses stockpiling weapons of mass destruction has now somehow morphed into allegations that the President misled the American public.

Opponents of this war argue that President Bush and other leaders misled the American people through dishonorable misrepresentations of the Iraqi intelligence; but those allegations are, in fact, themselves lies, refuted and discredited; and this type of representation has only emboldened our enemies to target the United States personnel overseas. Debating how the war has been executed is a debate that we should be having in this country, but attempting to change the facts in the lead-up to the war is disingenuous and has more pernicious ramifications than temporary political advantage.

I have been to Iraq four times in the past 2 years. It is my impression that

one day the big story will be that the press missed the big story in Iraq. What you see in the country of Iraq and what is reported by the press in this country are two completely different worlds.

Every time I have been there, I have been struck by how much progress has been made by American troops. Each time I have traveled to Iraq, I have been moved by the dedication of our military and their commitment to the completion of this mission.

My first visit to the Baghdad airport in August of 2003 left me thinking that the place looked like the city dump. During visits in January and August of this year, the airport was a clean environment, with obvious evidence of commercial aviation having resumed.

This is a picture of the Baghdad power plant in August of 2003. This is a rusted, burned up generator that Saddam Hussein had charged his engineers with keeping running under pain of death.

Contrast that to August of this year, 2005. This is a generator in the city of Kirkuk called the "mother of all generators." This generator was taken across the desert at great risk to our Marines and has been installed in the city of Kirkuk. It is now providing about 12 percent of Iraq's generating power, truly an amazing success story by our Marines. I do not recall having read about it in the press back home here.

Another picture, flying over the town of Kirkuk, and I was taking pictures randomly out the window of our Black Hawk helicopter and did not notice until later, there are two small figures here. One is waving at the helicopter; and if you look very closely and I have done this, she is waving with all five fingers but, very importantly, next to her is a small male child, probably her brother. Think of this, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Kirkuk, prior to our taking out Saddam Hussein, this sister could not mention the fact she had a brother. In fact, her family probably has a crawl space in the wall of this house where the boy could be hidden when Saddam's conscriptionists came through town.

It truly is an amazing transformation in that country. We are very close to having the third and final election for this year. We are close to having sufficient Iraqi forces trained and equipped to participate in their own security operations. Our soldiers are very close to having completed their mission. Congress should not desert them now.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS ON IRAQ

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the good news, I suppose, is that nearly 3