Today we salute Dana's work and send our prayers to those who loved her, especially her son Will, who is 13 years old; and her two grown stepchildren, Matthew and Alexandra; her father and her two sisters.

I take the time to talk about her contribution because it is significant for all of us, and I know that she would have wanted me to use any time talking about her to talk about the cause. Today we have learned that former Governor Ann Richards of Texas has cancer of the esophagus. She made that announcement herself. I know that she will face this with courage and the resoluteness that is her signature. She never saw something wrong that she did not make right, but this, and so many others, makes clear the need for clear commitment to women's health in this country.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Governor Richards and her family today. I know she will beat this. We were so proud of her when she was Governor of Texas, and she makes us proud every day that she speaks out for the American people, women, children, families and Democrats.

I was fortunate enough to have her daughter Cecile work with me in my office. So I feel particularly, particularly blessed by the contributions that Ann Richards is making to our country.

In recognition of the theme of Women's History Month: Women, Builders of Community and Dreams, we cannot fail to recognize that there are dreams and communities left to build, especially on our gulf coast because of Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

Last week Speaker HASTERT and I led more than 30 Members of the House to the gulf coast. There we met women who were telling us about their struggle to rebuild their communities, to rebuild their dreams, the theme of Women's History Month.

Those women represent the thousands more who are struggling to rebuild, without the support they need from the Federal Government, and I hope that after our trip that support will soon come.

Despite the stories of loss, I also saw the spirit at work to rebuild the gulf coast to a region that is healthy, strong and prosperous. Women of the storm are particularly noteworthy in their effort, as a group of 100 Louisiana women who are fighting to rebuild a devastated gulf coast. That means not only Louisiana; Mississippi, Alabama, those affected in Florida, those affected in Texas.

One of the most compassionate members of the gulf coast community is Congresswoman and Ambassador Lindy Boggs, who we had the privilege of seeing when we were in Louisiana. I met with her last week. This week Lindy Boggs is celebrating her 90th birthday. Long before your time, my colleagues, when many of us served here with Lindy Boggs in the House of Representatives, indeed she came to Washington in 1941 with her husband, Hale Boggs, and he was serving, and he became the Democratic whip of the House. Tragically his life was lost in an airplane accident, and she then indeed became a Member of Congress.

A woman of great intellect, graciousness and courage, Lindy Boggs taught all of us who served with her a great deal about politics, a great deal about the future of our country, and a great deal about how to do it in the nicest possible way. It worked for some; it did not work for others of us.

In any case, I can assure everyone that Lindy is as vivacious as always. When she left here, she went to be an Ambassador to the Vatican. And she was very proud to represent our country as the representative to the Holy See.

On the occasion of Women's History Month, I salute her and all of the lessons, thank her for all the lessons she taught Members of Congress and the great contribution that she is making to our country.

As we honor the accomplishments of great heroines who have restored hope in the face of impossible odds, we recognize that women are working to strengthen their communities today. We know their power. Women's History Month reminds us that women can and do change the course of history for all of us.

And today being International Women's Day, I was pleased that on Capitol Hill we had women legislators and public figures from Northern Ireland that I met, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other countries. I just wanted to point out on this that we also received news from Speaker HASTERT, and I am very grateful to him, that we will have a joint session of Congress next week where we will hear from the newly elected President and newly inaugurated President of Liberia Johnson-Sirleaf, who will be visiting the United States on a state visit next week.

She will address a joint session of Congress. She is the first woman to ever be elected President of an African country. And I think I only remember one other woman addressing the Congress, a joint session of Congress. So it is very exiting and an appropriate way for us to celebrate International Women's Day and National Women's Month.

With that, again I salute my colleagues for calling this Special Order. More importantly, I salute them for their tremendous contribution to our country at their early ages. Congresswoman LINDA SÁNCHEZ is the first Hispanic woman, first Latino, ever to serve on the Judiciary Committee. She makes a great contribution to our country from that important, important post.

Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ is on the Financial Services Committee where she fights for consumers and for including everyone in the economic success of our country.

And Congresswoman HERSETH and her valuable contribution on the Agriculture Committee, and other committees, on the Veterans Committee where she is already a ranking member of the committee so soon. How wonderful.

Well, I congratulate you all. I thank you and appreciate what you are doing this evening and what you are doing for our country.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much for joining us. Normally when we do our 30-Something hour, Madam Leader, we thank you in absentia for the opportunity to spend the time during this hour talking about the things that are a priority to our generation. So it is a privilege to be able to personally thank you for this opportunity that you give us each night. It is an honor to serve under your leadership.

Ms. PELOSI. Well, I appreciate you saying that, because what we are about here is the future. Everything we do should be about are we honoring our responsibility to make the future better for the next generation? That has been the tradition in America from our Founders until the present. And I hope that we can prevail in this fight to make the future better for the next generation. We owe it to our children. We owe it to the next generation.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Leader, the way we close our time usually with the 30-Something Working Group is by plugging our Web site, www.housedemocrats.gov/30somethings. We encourage our colleagues and anyone who cares to sign on to that. We have a lot of charts and interesting facts and figures that are important to the next generation.

I want to thank my colleagues from California and South Dakota for joining me tonight and welcome you back any time because we are here every night.

Mr. Speaker, with that we yield back.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the House tonight. I want to thank the leadership for allowing me to participate in this hour. I thank the conference chair, Congresswoman PRYCE, for her leadership.

And I want to come tonight with a number of colleagues, and we come with what we call the Official Truth Squad. And we call it that because a group of freshman Congressmen, in our class there are 25 or so freshman Congressman, who have now served in Congress for about 15 months, and when we get together on a regular basis, one of the overarching concerns that we voice to each other over and over and over

again was the tone in Washington and the remarkable partisanship in Washington. And we kind of brainstormed about what could we do to change that tone, to make a difference.

And so we came up with the Official Truth Squad. And we try to come every evening and share with the American people what we believe to be the truthful situation on whatever the topic is.

This instance tonight we are going to talk a little bit about the economy in just a short time. But I think what you have heard, Mr. Speaker, over the last hour, and much of it veiled in some very kind words, but what you have heard is a clear example of the politics of division. And it is the politics of division that many of our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to be wedded to, and I cannot tell you why that is.

It disturbs me. It is very distressing, because I think that it does not serve the greater purpose of why we are all here, why we are all elected to Congress, to try to solve the remarkable challenges that we have.

But the politics of division is, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is pitting one group against another in some really political way that really does not make a whole lot of sense. But it is appealing to people's lowest common denominator. It is appealing to their fears and to their basic instinct, and that, again, does a great disservice to us as a Nation.

I have quoted on this floor before something that I have attributed to President Abraham Lincoln. And I was so pleased that there are folks who are out there and interested in what we are talking about. And I stand corrected on that. It was felt to be consistent with President Lincoln's philosophy, but, in fact, it is attributable to Reverend William Boetcker, who was a leader and a public speaker in America born in 1873, died in 1962.

□ 2100

He talked about the politics of division. He talked about it a lot. He talked about the need for appropriate discourse and a social philosophy that he felt was consistent with President Lincoln's, and it has been confused with that in the past.

So I wish to share that with you again tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I think it really crystallizes what we ought not do here in the people's House because it does a disservice. And the quote goes like this:

''You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot encourage the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could do for themselves.''

And I may add another one tonight: that you cannot empower women by tearing down men.

So the politics of division do truly a disservice to us as a Nation. It is disheartening to the public discourse, frankly. So I urge my colleagues to try to endeavor as we are talking about issues and the challenges that confront us to remember that truth is important and truth is vital in everything that we do.

In my real job I was a physician. I was an orthopedic surgeon. And I am fond of telling folks that if I did not get truthful information either from the patient or from whatever laboratory study or examination we were doing, if we did not get truthful information, then we could not make the right diagnosis. If you do not make the right diagnosis, then you cannot treat the right disease. And if you do not treat the right disease, it is hard to get the patient cured.

It is the same in public policy. If you are not dealing in truth, if you are not making the right diagnosis, if you are not treating the right disease, you cannot get to the right solution. So, again, I challenge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to try as hard as they can to avoid the politics of division. It really is shameful and it does a disservice to the public debate, and it really does not do any credit to the party itself.

So I am pleased to be able to have the opportunity tonight to come and talk about many different things, but we are going to talk about the economy for a good length of time here this evening.

I have been joined by a good friend and colleague, a member of the freshman class, Congressman WESTMORELAND, a fellow Georgian. Congressman WESTMORELAND is a small businessman and a fellow Georgian. I served in the State legislature with him. He has come to share some of that truthful information about the economy.

Congressman WESTMORELAND, I welcome you and thank you for joining us tonight.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Thank you, Mr. PRICE. And I want to thank you, my friend from Georgia, for hosting this hour to highlight some of the truth.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you know that the truth sometimes hurts. And so when you are exposing the truth, it might be even seen by some as being hurtful, but I believe Mr. Haley Barbour quoted, Mr. Speaker, that ''The truth is a lot of things to a lot of people. But in the end, the truth is the truth.''

I want to talk a little bit tonight about the success of the Republican economic policies and to expose the half-truths of our opponents who want to raise taxes on the American families.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence speaks for itself. Republican principles and action lead to economic growth, more jobs, higher standards of living and increased revenue to the Federal Treasury. Since 2003, the U.S. economy has created hundreds of thousands of new jobs while the unemployment rate has dropped down below 5 percent, which is an extremely low number by historical standards. The increases in employment and wages seen last year are also expected to continue, which will help consumer spending. Household net worth has risen for 12 consecutive quarters under the Republican administration and leadership of this House.

Wealth has not risen just because of housing. Checking accounts, savings accounts, and so on are at a record high and are a larger share of after-tax income than any other time since 1993. Economic activity had considerable momentum last year, and that will carry into 2006, 2007 and on. The Congressional Budget Office forecasted the real GDP will grow by 3.6 percent this year and by 3.4 percent in 2007.

With these numbers it is obvious that the tax cuts, passed and renewed since 2001, have bolstered the American economy even after the incredible cost of September 11, 2001, the terrible destruction caused on the gulf coast by the series of hurricanes that hit there, and the high price tag of the war on terror.

Despite many challenges, the state of our economy is strong. As our economy grows, as we create new jobs and as wages grow, more money comes into the Federal Treasury. That is right. Despite all of the belly-aching from the other side about the cost of the tax cuts, the Federal Treasury is taking in plenty of money. Last year the Federal Government took in $2.15 trillion, the highest dollar amount that has ever been received.

I would like to ask my friend from Georgia if he has got a chart there that shows the revenues that came in last year. I think it will show that we do not have a revenue problem. What we have here is a spending problem. And the chart will show you that the revenues will go up as the tax cuts go into full swing to a record high. So we do not have a revenue problem.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate you pointing that out. I am sorry, I had this a little bit later, but this is the chart that you refer to.

It really is amazing when people hear this because it is kind of counterintuitive. If you decrease taxes then people say, well, surely you decrease money coming into the government. But it does not work that way, does it? And what we see here is exactly what you described.

You decrease this line right here. This is the years down here, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003. This line is when the tax decreases, the tax cuts, went into effect; and the red line is the revenue into the United States Treasury.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Because, Mr. Speaker and my friend from Georgia, people are reinvesting their money. They have more money to spend. That

is a direct result of the tax cuts. In fact, we need to make these tax cuts permanent; and I think the people of this country would like to see that also. Despite this growth in revenue, we have seen an even greater growth in spending, and this has got to stop.

The fact is we can and have cut back on discretionary spending in this Congress, but in order to really return our budget to fiscal sanity, we have no choice but to tackle serious entitlement reform.

On this floor, our colleagues from the Democratic Caucus, the other side of the aisle, complain about the deficit. Yet when this Republican Congress and our Republican leadership took a stand to modestly reform entitlements and modestly curb the rate of growth and spending in the Deficit Reduction Act, no Democrats voted for that bill.

Where were the so-called deficit hawks and the Blue Dog Democrats? Where were the Democrats in the 30-Something Group who say they would do a better job of taming the deficit?

When it came time to make the tough choices, their votes did not match their rhetoric on the deficit. In fact, when it comes to offering solutions, attacks and hollow rhetoric are all we hear from the other side. What we do not hear from the other side is a plan of action. What we don't hear from the other side is a set of principles. What we do not hear from the other side is a strategy for securing our Nation while expanding our economy.

These are truths, and sometimes the truth does hurt. Republicans, in contrast, have a plan for leading this Nation. The Republican Study Committee today released its proposal for balancing our budget, a recommitment to the contract on America. That budget recognizes that we must take serious steps to tame our budget deficit. If the Democrats had a plan, which they do not, their plan would include hefty tax hikes on American families and American job creators, and that is the only truth that can come out of that. You cannot be unwilling to cut spending and expect the deficit to go away.

Our budget recognizes that we do not need more revenue. We have never had more revenue. But we still have to make tough choices. In a world of tough choices we can raise the price of the buffet or we can curb our appetites. With our waistlines bulging, the choice is clear. We must go on a spending diet until our pants fit again.

We have a plan for trimming down the budget. We have a plan for continuing our economic growth. We have a plan for strengthening the economic security of American families. And I think that plan should include making these tax cuts permanent so people can afford to plan their future and to know what is ahead of them.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I came up with another chart that highlighted exactly what you said because so often, as we have talked about on the Official Truth Squad, we get one word out of one side of a person's mouth and what they do when they actually vote is something completely different.

You mentioned about the balanced budget amendment and the opportunities that our friends on the other side of the aisle have had to support a balanced budget amendment and, in fact, their deed has not matched their word. They talk a good game, they really do. They talk about supporting a balanced budget amendment. But here are votes that were taken in 1990; 145 Democrats voted no on a balanced budget amendment; 1992, 150 vote no; 1994, 151 vote no; 1995, 129 vote no. And the most recent time they had an opportunity to do that, 1997, 8 Democrats voted yes, 194 voted against calling for a balanced budget amendment.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. To my friend from Georgia, my mother always told me that actions speak louder than words. And anybody can go anywhere and say anything, but when you are given an opportunity to take those words that you spoke and put them into action, and for the American people to be able to see that you are sincere in what you are saying, your votes should match what your words are.

As we know, as all of us have been in politics, and I see the gentlewoman from Tennessee has joined us here, but in politics you can tell your constituents anything in the world, but they will know honestly how you feel when you vote. And that is what they should do and we should all be held accountable for our votes. And hopefully we will. Hopefully the truth will come out.

I just appreciate so much you taking the time to do this and all the efforts that you have put forward to get the good Republican principled message out: that we are about American families. We are about them having more money in their pockets that they can use on discretionary spending for their families and to be able to plan for their future. Thank you very much.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thanks for your participation, and your words tonight really were right to the point.

We are fond of saying in the Official Truth Squad, quoting Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had a wonderful quote that goes, ''Everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.''

And that is what this is about, the Official Truth Squad. You know as well as anybody that this is not Washington's money. This is the people's money. And that is what is so important to get across to folks. It is the people's money. It is not Washington's money.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Do you think that after so long this money starts looking like play money and you start talking about billions of dollars and trillions of dollars and that is unrealistic to most people? I think when you start to think of a billion dollars is ten hundred million, and most of us will never know what a million dollars is. It is not just play money. It is money that has come out of the taxpayers' pockets and we have got to be accountable for it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. It is their money and they deserve to spend it as they please. Thank you so much for your participation.

We are talking about the economy tonight in the Official Truth Squad and trying to bring some light to some of the wonderful things that are happening in the economy and put statistics down where statistics ought to be and show the truth.

We are joined tonight by Congresswoman BLACKBURN from Tennessee. We are so pleased to have you join us again on the Official Truth Squad and share some of your perspective on the United States economy right now.

□ 2115

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding and for his leadership and the energy that he is putting into being certain that we communicate the message from our Republican agenda. Thank you for this, and thank you and the freshman class for tackling this project and being certain that we are talking about the things that are happening in our economy and the good news that is there to share.

A couple of points that I would like to make tonight as we are talking about the economy and the growth in the economy is Mr. WESTMORELAND was just talking about leaving more money with American families, with all of our constituents, with their families. That is what one of our goals is, to be certain that we take less from those paychecks, so that the family, when they sit down to work out their budget, they have more that they are working with.

I think that it is an absolute travesty that the single largest item in a family's budget is taxes. How did we get to this, that the largest item a family is left with is taxes? More than food, housing, clothing, transportation and education, more than lessons for children. How did we get to the point that it is taxes?

How wonderful that we could make decisions in 2003, we had the opportunity to vote to roll back some of those taxes so that we take less. It is time that we end the Federal Government having first right of refusal on your paycheck and let you and your family have that paycheck and make those decisions of what to do with those hard-earned dollars.

When we talk about women's issues, all issues are women's issues. Economic issues are definitely women's issues.

One of the things that I hear regularly, wherever I am in this great and wonderful land, is that wherever you have the fastest-growing sector of that town, of that county, of that area's economy, most likely it is going to be women-owned small businesses, and I think that is so exciting that that entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well.

One of the first issues that women will raise with me are taxes, the overburdensome nature of taxes, the cost of compliance for small businesses, how they would love to be growing that business, but with the taxes, with compliance costs, then they have less to spend in growing that business.

So as we look at extending our tax reductions, as we look at being certain we do not raise taxes, that they do not go up, that we hold what we have in those tax reductions, it is so important that we realize that that benefits so many American women who are starting those businesses and are realizing the American dream and those gifts and opportunities and prosperities for their themselves and for their families.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I think that is such an incredibly important point that you just made, and that is not to raise taxes.

What most of my constituents do not understand or appreciate is that Congress has to act in order for the current tax decreases, the current tax cuts, to continue, and that if we do nothing, if the other side is successful in making it so that Congress is inactive and does not do anything, then a tax increase will take effect; is that not the case?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If the gentleman will yield, yes, indeed, that is the case. You know what we are trying to do is hold the line. We are trying to hold the line, and to keep them from pushing tax increases over that line, and that is our goal, to hold these reductions we have been able to put in place, to be certain that we do not see taxes raised on our families, on our small businesses.

It is so important for these small businesses. I had a young lady in my office this week, and it is such a great story. She said, Mrs. BLACKBURN, 4 years ago I was working at McDonald's; I thought, well, I will never get that higher education. She attended a career college, and she gave me her business card where she is working.

I hear story after story after story of this, of women who have moved back in to see their educational dreams come true, to get that degree, to get that diploma, to complete that trade school and move into either working for themselves or working with someone else, but having that job, earning that paycheck, and they all want to be certain. We have a focus on what we are going to do about keeping their taxes low, what we are going to do about creating, creating the right environment so that jobs growth can take place.

I know that you join me in looking forward to the numbers that are going to come out on Friday when we are going to see about jobs growth for this first quarter of the year, and everybody is excited about looking at this because we know that this economy is on a good, solid track. We are seeing plenty of help in it, and much of it has to do with reducing regulation, reducing taxation and putting the focus on what we do to be certain that we have a healthy economy.

One of the things we talk about so often in my district, because I have a district where we have a lot of small businesses, small businesses are the number one employer. Upwards of 90 percent of all the jobs are attributed to small business growth, and my constituents, they keep me honest, and I love it because they remind me regularly that government does not create jobs, that they are the ones that are creating jobs. It is our job to be certain that the environment is right for those jobs to be created, and I am always running around with these little plastic pens with somebody's logo on it. I pick these up from employers in my district, and it reminds me these are the guys that are putting the pen to the paper, and they are the ones that are making jobs growth happen in our district.

And I will yield to the gentleman for this poster which tells the story.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. It really does. A picture really is worth 1,000 or a million words, certainly, and this one certainly is. In fact, it is worth 4.73 million words, because every one of those 4.73 million new jobs is demonstrated on this picture here, on this graph here, from January 2002 all the way to January 2006. You see the trend that happened during this administration, during the Republican leadership and what happened when it crossed the line with tax decreases, the tax cuts you talked about.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. So many of these jobs, sometimes I have people say, tell me where these are being created, tell me where these jobs are being created.

What we have seen happen is that we are into the knowledge economy. We are into a technology-based economy, and we are seeing this jobs growth in different areas, and it is so wonderful because so many of the individuals that live in our districts are jumping in there. They are getting jobs retraining, they are getting computer skills retraining, and they are working in a million different careers that they never, ever thought would be available to them.

And as we are watching the technology growth in our districts, all across this country, it is small business manufacturing industries that are growing. Their numbers are better than they have been in 10 years. I think that is such a sign of encouragement. Or whether they are working in service industry-related jobs, what we are seeing is new jobs, in new industries, which tell us that an economic renaissance is on that horizon. It is imperative that we make certain we do not see tax increases and that we do not see regulation increases and we keep an eye on having that right environment take place.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much for joining us this evening on this Official Truth Squad and bringing us some truthful numbers, some truthful comments, and highlighting so well the wonder of the small business community across this Nation, because the small business community really is the engine that drives the job creation in our Nation, and this is why the environment to make certain that small business, mom and pop, the corner drugstore, the corner cleaners, those folks who are just working as hard as they can, that the environment for them to be able to succeed and be able to thrive is so doggone important. That is what we are here to try to do and make certain that we continue that economic environment.

We have been joined by Congressman MIKE CONAWAY. Congresswoman MARSHA BLACKBURN was with us. Congressman MIKE CONAWAY is another fellow freshman member of the Official Truth Squad and very, very helpful. He is a CPA by profession. That is exactly what we need are more CPAs in Congress who can tell us exactly what the right number ought to be, and I want to welcome Congressman CONAWAY and look forward to your comments this evening, the truthful comments about our economy.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia and appreciate the gentleman from Georgia inviting me here tonight to allow me to share this time with him.

Almost 16 years ago I participated in a Midland introspective. This was a look at what was going wrong and what was going right in Midland, Texas, where I am from, led by the United Way and a bunch of other folks who helped fund the introspective. We did a statistically valid survey of the community to find out what the needs were. This was a needs assessment, and we asked people what was happening in their neighborhoods and their cities and their homes, and to come up with some sort of sense as to how we should be addressing the social issues within our communities.

Once we got the data back, again, it was statistically valid, we came up with our top 10 list of needs that Midlanders told us were Midland's needs, as opposed to those of us in certain organizations trying to decide on behalf of Midland what it was. Anyway, it was an idea that we could do this periodically to try to track how we were doing.

If you look at the top 10 needs within our communities, nine of those needs would have been positively impacted by a job. The needs were family needs and needs for child care. The needs were health care. Every single one of them except one, and I probably ought to remember what that one was that was not directly associated with the solution being a job, because when a family gets a job, those 4.73 million jobs, I suspect, are associated with probably half that number or better, families, moms, dads, children whose lives are better every single day because someone in that family now has a job, someone's bringing in a paycheck, someone is creating an environment within that family so that the

children see mom and dad working, the children understand responsibility, the children understand how families work. The families are so much better off when they have got a job.

So we have 4.73 million jobs, and the number of families that are affected by that cannot be understated. In a body on the floor where hyperbole and overstating and overreaching and puffing is an art form, I probably ought to be able to come up with some flowery language that would help communicate how important job growth is, but I am burdened, though, by being a CPA, and we just do not puff and brag and all those kinds of things very well, and other folks it do it much better than us.

What I really want to talk about tonight is what I see as the single biggest threat to our way of life that we face. I serve on the Armed Services Committee. We are a country at war, and I suspect most of our colleagues in the House tonight would think I would talk about the war being our single biggest threat to our way of life.

I think it is the growth of Federal Government and the growth of spending that represents the single biggest threat to our way of life. Federal spending is a drag on the terrific economy that we have got going. Federal spending does not create wealth. As we all know, it may create a few jobs, but those jobs are dependent upon programs. So the real effective jobs that create wealth and help families are those created in the private sector.

The CBO, Congressional Budget Office, has recently published a study that is posted on their Web site that anybody can go to, cbo.gov, that looks at the 50-year trend in the growth in this Federal Government.

□ 2130

If you look at 2050, and they have several different scenarios that they run through, but the one that seems to make the most sense to me would show that by the year 2050, 45 years from now, that the Federal Government, left unchecked, left unchanged, will consume 50 percent of the gross domestic product of this country.

We are currently at about 20 percent, and in my mind that is about the gag threshold for a Federal economy. So at 50 percent plus, there has never been a free market, free enterprise system anywhere in history that has allowed the central government to take half and allowed the rest of us to prosper on the other half, prosper in terms of an improved standard of living, of opportunities, of the kinds of things of the America that, quite frankly, my colleague and I inherited from our moms and dads and our grandparents.

I have six grandchildren, six terrific grandchildren, and it is unfair of me as an adult to pass on to them a world that doesn't look better than the one I inherited. That ought to be our role as parents and grandparents, to make this world better for our children and our grandchildren. Well, in 2050, my oldest grandson will be about 53 years old. He will be where we are right now. Maybe he will be in Congress. That would be kind of cool. But he and his colleagues in that bracket will be where we are today. And if we don't do something beginning now to address this issue, then they will inherit a world that is radically different than ours, that is fundamentally different than the one you and I currently enjoy. And that is just wrong.

Let me drive this point home. Who among us as grandparents, or any of us who want to be grandparents, would take, in my instance, my six grandkids down to the nearest bank and say, Mr. Banker, I want to borrow every single dollar in your bank, and I want you to prepare notes that my six grandchildren will sign. I am going to take the money and I am going to spend it the way I want to. I will spend it on some good stuff, but I am going to spend all of it, and you are going to have to look to these six grandkids for repayment of that debt.

In all the times I have used this anecdote, or used this story, I have never found one grandparent who would say that they would in fact do that with their grandchildren. But collectively, somehow this mob mentality, that is exactly what you and I and our colleagues are doing in America, is that we are spending money today that we don't have and we are creating debt that our grandchildren are going to have to pay off.

I spoke earlier today to a trade association and was asked for questions. And one of the guys in the audience asked about the budget deficits that we are experiencing and should we, in effect, continue to borrow this money that our grandkids are going to have to pay off; shouldn't we do something to address that? Well, I said, yes, we should, but it should not be a tax increase.

Now, you and a couple of our colleagues have already talked about this. We do not have a revenue problem in America. The Federal Government does not have a revenue problem. We will have record tax collections this year. We had record tax collections last year. And our tax revenues, our ability to grow those is growing at about 5 percent a year. Collectively, we should be able to live within that spending frame. So I would disagree with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who call for increased taxes, who call for a bigger share, a bigger take out of our working families and working people's take-home pay to help with our spending problem. So we don't have a revenue problem; we, in effect, have a spending problem. We just are simply spending too much.

I know that my colleague and I belong to an organization that is going to bring forth a pretty radical budget scenario that could balance the budget within 5 years, and it is going to call for some pretty radical changes. The problem with cutting Federal spending, whether it is discretionary spending or mandatory spending, every single dollar that the Treasury writes a check for winds up on somebody's deposit slip. Somebody gets that money. They feed their families with it and do things with it that they think are important. They believe the Federal program that generates that check or that dollar is probably the single most important Federal program that we have going out there.

It is much like surgery. You are a surgeon. If we are cutting on one of our colleagues, then it is minor surgery. But if that same surgery is being performed on me, it is major surgery. So cutting Federal spending is much the same way. We are going to see, once this budget is prepared by the Republican Study Committee, once it is published, and we have already seen it from the President's budget, we will see an awful lot of people who represent every single one of those dollars that are going out and the constituents for those dollars, the special interest groups for those dollars are going to be in pushback mode trying to convince you and I and others that we need to cut somewhere else. Not their program, some other program needs to be cut.

This is going to be a little self-serving, and I don't want to intrude on your time tonight, but I introduced a bill last week that would require you and I, every Member of the House, every Member of the Senate, and our senior staffers to once a year read the Constitution. Now, it is going to be interesting as I begin to make the rounds and try to get our colleagues to agree with that to see what kind of pushback I get.

As a physician, you had continuing education hours that you had to do every year to stay current in your profession and your field. I had, as a CPA, about 40 hours a year to keep current. It seems to me, and you and I have taken an oath to defend and protect that Constitution, you and I who write laws that implement some of the powers that are granted to the Federal Government under that Constitution, you and I who propose amendments to that Constitution, that this is kind of a novel approach, that we ought to know what is in it.

So reading the Constitution once a year may help us begin to think about just big areas that this Federal Government should not be associated with. Not denigrate the area itself. That is not the issue here. Our Founding Fathers were incredibly brilliant. As modern-day Americans we have a pretty jaded view of other peoples and certainly other times, and we think we are the brightest and the smartest generation to have ever lived. But as you read our founding documents and read the Constitution, and as you think about what people did 230, 240 years ago, there were some pretty bright folks that put this thing in place.

And I think every single one of them, including Alexander Hamilton, who

wanted the most expansive Federal Government he could think of, would be really shocked to see what collectively you and I and all of us have done with that document, with those authorities and powers. They had envisioned a pretty limited Federal Government, a pretty limited role. Everything else was to go to the States.

Clearly, some of the roles we would all agree on, national security, homeland defense, border security, those are things everyone agrees is the Federal Government's job, period. It is not the States' job or local municipalities' jobs. It is ours, as representatives of the Federal Government, to get that done well. But we have an awful lot of areas that the Federal Government has crept into. And in order to make substantive changes in that growth in government, in that growth to 50 percent of GDP that CBO thinks is an inevitable track, that we are going to have to make some very strong substantive changes in the way we are doing business.

As your colleague talked about earlier today, there are probably 10,000 reasons in that budget that is going to be proposed for every single Member of Congress to vote against it. I have got six reasons why we ought to seriously consider it. Reason number one is named Michael; reason number two is named Caleb; reason number three is named Cameron; reason number four is named Emily Kate; reason number 5 is Conally, and reason number six is Alexandria. Those are the first names of my six grandkids.

So that is what we ought to be about doing. It is going to be hard work and it is going to require some tough, tough choices, some tough things to tell people. Some folks are going to have to figure out a different way to feed their families and they will have to figure out ways to provide the goods and services that they think the Federal Government is currently doing that we don't think under our Constitution is an appropriate role. And it is going to be hard. We are going to have to ask people to make some sacrifices and do things in a whole lot different way than they have been doing it.

Almost every one of us have grandchildren or will have grandchildren. And the path we are on, the path you and I inherited and that we are perpetuating, is one that leads to a very ugly conclusion.

Now, as a CPA, that sounds like pretty standard stuff we say, and it is awfully downer talk, and it is not particularly uplifting, but it needs to be a clarion call. Our issue is that you and I and our colleagues are pretty good at handling stuff tomorrow, next week, and maybe some into 2007. But when we look beyond that, that is an eternity. This issue, this growth in Federal Government is 20 years, 30 years, 40 years down the road. And so because it is far enough down the road, it is very easy for us to stick our heads in the sand and let it be someone else's responsibility, let it be someone else's decisions as to how to fix it.

So if I don't do anything else tonight, hopefully I can scare some of our colleagues into at least taking a look at that CBO study. Don't take my word for it, go look at it for yourself. And, look, if the number is only 40 percent of GDP, if it is 60 percent of GDP, it is a number that is unsustainable. It is a world that is fundamentally different than the one you and I currently enjoy, the opportunities we have and our colleagues have, and it is just patently unfair for us to hand that off to our children.

I want to thank my good colleague for letting me rant tonight and share with you and other members of this Truth Squad, and I thank you for organizing this and getting it done.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much, Congressman CONAWAY. You said you didn't have the flowery speech, but you do. And in addition to that flowery speech, you speak the truth. Because so oftentimes here we don't refer to that document, the Constitution, that I carry with me every single day and that highlights our principles; that is the founding document that says what our guidelines ought to be.

Where are our walls and fences? What should we be doing? We ought to hear every single day on the floor of this House, is that the responsibility of the Federal Government? We ought to be asking ourselves that on every single thing we do.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for just a moment, your good colleague from Georgia was sharing with us last night an experience he had with a town hall meeting. Somebody asked him about a proposed cut of the President, and I will not name the particular policy area because I don't want to get off into that kind of thing, because it just distracts us. But anyway, they asked, why are you in favor of cutting whatever?

His great answer back, and I am going to steal it from him, was to look at them and say, okay, how many in here think that is the Federal Government's responsibility; that particular area of public policy? And not one person raised their hand. And this is an area that is very important to our country, very vital to our country, but it is just not the Federal Government's role.

And he did it again. Somebody else brought up another area. And he thought, well, it worked once so let me try it again. How many people here think that is a role that the Federal Government should be doing? Not one hand raised.

So I think Americans are like that. They understand that if we begin to pose things in that frame, questions just like that, that we will begin to get the political will and the political backbone and support for getting back to basics and getting back to the constitutional Republic that we have.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate so much, again, the gentleman's coming. Really, it is a positive picture, because what it says is that we ought to be looking at our founding document. That is a positive uplifting picture.

I guess what is one of the most distressing things about what you have said is that you described this budget that is going to be proposed as a radical budget, but it is a balanced budget. There is nothing radical about a balanced budget within a 5-year period of time, which is, as I understand it, what will be proposed. So it is not radical.

In fact, doing anything else is harmful, is not compassionate, and is probably radical because it puts us on that track for the GDP percentage being consumed by the Federal Government that you pointed to of 50 percent in the year 2050. And as you say, that is unsustainable. It means it doesn't work. Can't work.

So thank you so much for joining me tonight, and I really appreciate your perspective and your insight and your acumen that you bring from the private sector to us here in Congress.

I have talked about Senator Moynihan's wonderful quote that ''Everyone's entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.'' What we try to do on the Truth Squad is to highlight some of the comments that have been made on the floor of the House of Representatives and to point out what in fact the truth is. And we have heard an awful lot, an awful lot lately about the Dubai Ports situation, the potential transfer or sale of management of six of our Nation's ports to Dubai Ports World.

And regardless of what you think about that, there are some real questions that many of us have about that. But in the context of that discussion, we have heard over and over and over again that no money has gone to port security, the money has been slashed to port security, and the Congress hasn't been responsible in what it has done with port security. So what I have done tonight is to bring two new highlights for the Official Truth Squad that talk about port security funding.

This first one highlights the funding to the six ports that are in question here as it relates to the current topic.

□ 2145

This chart says since September 11, 2001, Congress has authorized a 700 percent increase. That is not a cut, that is not flat, that is an increase in funding for port security, and in particular Congress has authorized the following amounts for six of the most high-risk ports: $43.7 million to the port of New York and New Jersey; $32.7 million to the port of Miami; $27.4 million to the port of New Orleans; $16.2 million to the port of Baltimore; and $15.8 million to Philadelphia, a 700 percent increase in port security since September 11, and nowhere do you see a decrease.

That is highlighted even more so on this chart here that demonstrates and

shows the port security funding in fiscal year 2001, and you see the remarkable increases we have had since September 11, 2001; fiscal year 2006 and the 2007 request is nearly $3 billion for money that would be utilized in the area of port security.

What you hear and what the truth is oftentimes are two different things. I am pleased to be able to bring this kind of information to the floor and to talk about the truth, talk about the kind of numbers that in fact we are dealing with in the House of Representatives and to try to get through a lot of partisanship, to try to get above a lot of hyperbole and misinformation that is rampant and does a disservice to the debate.

We oftentimes do not get to debate a whole lot in Congress. Like what is occurring tonight, one side presents their issues and the other side presents their issues. It goes back and forth. It really is not a debate, it is not an interchange. It is not the kind of thing that I would think of as a debate and probably most Americans would think of, but what is occurring with the Official Truth Squad coming here night after night after night is we are beginning to have some dialogue, some back and forth with our friends on the other side of the aisle, and they have made some interesting comments and I thought I should bring them to the American people.

Last night there was a group of folks in the House that call themselves the Blue Dogs, and they talked about what we do in the Truth Squad in a certain way.

They said, ''Following us this evening, I am pretty confident that the other side will show up and they will probably talk about how we had an opportunity to cut, to cut $40 billion in spending and how we, the Blue Dogs, voted against it. But what they will not tell you is it was $40 million in cuts to the most vulnerable people in our society: Medicaid, 8 out 10 seniors in Arkansas on Medicaid; 1 out of 5 people in Arkansas are on Medicaid. Cuts to Medicaid, cuts to student loans to the tune of $40 billion.''

Now that is what they said. But the Official Truth Squad is here because what we are interested in doing is looking at the real numbers. What is the truth in that? That is a pretty significant charge that was made, significant cuts in Medicaid and to education, to student loans. What is the truth? What really has Congress done?

Madam Speaker, here is the chart that puts the Medicaid situation into perspective. This chart goes from 1995 to 2005. It talks about the amount of money, the Federal outlays in billions of dollars to the Medicaid program. In fact, what this square says is that spending more than doubled over the last 10 years on Medicaid for an average growth of 7.4 percent per year. Average growth in Medicaid for the past 10 years, 7.4 percent. That may not sound like a lot, but look at the actual numbers. In 1995, $89.1 billion. In the year 2000, $208 billion. In 2005, $181.7 billion in Medicaid funding.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know that people oftentimes like to talk about a cut. As I talked about before, that is the politics of division. It does not help anybody. All it does is put fear into folks reliant on the program who oftentimes are the most vulnerable.

What we have done in the United States House of Representatives under Republican leadership is cut waste, cut fraud, worked to cut the abuse of the system, but continually increasing the amount of revenue that is going because that population, regretfully, has increased. So it is appropriate to have more money go into that area, not cuts, not cuts to the program.

What about education? They mentioned education. These cuts that they quote for education; well, in fact, it is the same kind of picture. Here we have a chart, the year 2000 all of the way up to 2005. This is the annual growth in Federal education spending over the past 5 years. The year 2000, a little under $40 billion. The year 2005, nearly $60 billion. Total education spending has grown an average of 9.1 percent per year over the past 5 years. That is certainly faster than the inflation rate. It is faster than the population in that area. It is not a cut, not a cut.

And then they talk about student loans. What is happening with student loans? We had some significant changes to student loans last year, but they were loans that put more money into the hands of the students and less money into the hands of the borrowers. Still, if we look at the actual money, this is the truth, the Official Truth Squad, Pell grant funding has grown 10.3 percent per year since the year 2000, $12.4 billion for fiscal year 2005. The graph demonstrates clearly annual growth every single year.

So, Madam Speaker, when people hear that the cuts are occurring and when they hear the discussion about the cuts as was mentioned earlier in the budget, the balanced budget within 5 years that is going to be proposed, again, it is not honest, it is not fair to the discussion. It results in this politics of division which pits one group against another, all of which is not positive for our Nation and it does not assist in the debate. It does not help us reach solutions. I encourage my colleagues to kind of rethink how they are approaching this debate.

We would love to have an open and honest discussion about these things and be able to work together to solve the problems because these are not Republican problems, these are not Democrat problems, these are American problems. They are challenges that all of us have. It works best, our system works best when we all work together to solve the challenges that we have.

Madam Speaker, we live in a wondrous and a glorious Nation. It is still a Nation where men and women around the world, they look to us with optimism, they look to us as being a beacon of liberty and a vessel of hope. They view us as being an example that they might be able to follow. I am proud to serve in the United States House of Representatives. I am proud to serve with men and women who are willing to stand up and to say how much they love America and how much they believe that the policies that we are putting forward are moving us in the right direction. I am proud to serve with those men and women who joined us this evening and talked about truth, talked about issues that are so important for the American people to understand and put a little positive perspective on the challenges that we have before us. I look forward to coming back at some point in the future.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. Foxx). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I thank the Speaker for according me the time. I am claiming it on behalf of my colleagues who will be here shortly with me, Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN, the cofounders of the 30-Something Working Group. We will be exploring an array of issues this evening dealing with many of the subjects that my colleague and the gentleman from the other side of the aisle discussed this evening.

Much of what the gentleman said or some of what he said I would agree with. It certainly would be a contribution to the public discourse if there were an open and transparent debate and discussion on the issues that are confronting the American people.

I only wish that were the truth, not just the official truth but the real truth because what is lacking within this institution, this body, is an open and transparent and real discussion, genuine debate and respectful discourse.

I find it interesting that the gentleman talks about cutting spending and indicates that this side of the aisle supports raising taxes. Well, that is just simply inaccurate.

I think the only tax that we can agree on that ought to be cut is the tax that is in the form of waste and fraud and abuse. Tragically, what we have observed over the course of the past 6 years is an abundance of fraud and waste, a corruption tax, if you will, Madam Speaker. But what we have not seen is an open and transparent and respectful process to discuss these particular issues.

If the Chair would bear with me for a moment, I am going to read excerpts into the RECORD of a deal that was struck between conferees on the Senate side and on the House side that did not include the Members of the minority party. How can you have a discourse or