

no longer have a surplus, we have a deficit, every tax cut we have passed since that time has been funded with money that we are borrowing from places like China.

In 2000, we had borrowed a total of \$62 billion from China. From 1976 up until 2000 we owed \$62 billion to China, and at the end of 2005 we owed \$257 billion to China. Japan, \$668.3 billion. Our government, we are borrowing \$1 billion a day and spending half a billion a day paying interest on the debt we have already got. That is half a billion that can't go to fund our agricultural research centers or build I-49 or I-69 or many other opportunities and priorities and needs we have in Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District, because our Nation is in debt and running record deficits and borrowing money from all these foreign investors and foreign central banks.

Put it this way: Foreign lenders currently hold a total \$2.174 trillion of our public debt. Compare that to only \$23 billion in foreign holdings back in 1993.

Here is the top 10 list. Here is who is funding your tax cuts. Here is who is funding our government. We have borrowed \$668.3 billion from Japan; we owe now \$262.6 billion, and it goes up every week, to China; the United Kingdom, \$244.8 billion, Caribbean banking centers, have you ever heard of that? I never heard of a Caribbean banking center before, but we have borrowed \$97.9 billion from them; Taiwan, \$71.6 billion; OPEC, you wonder why gas is \$2.50 a gallon? We have now borrowed \$77.6 billion from OPEC; Korea, \$68.3 billion; Germany, \$65.2 billion; Canada, \$54.9 billion; and Hong Kong, \$48.3 billion. Those are the top 10 countries that we are borrowing money from to help fund tax cuts in our country to pay for tax cuts for those earning over \$400,000 a year.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. And here is the danger. Here is the danger when you put your financial security in the hands of foreign nations at the rate that we are doing it. Now we have to worry that some of these nations could very well sell their U.S. dollars in their reserves and then they could switch their currency into other nations. They could do a lot of things when they have our debt.

What happens if they lose patience here? By having so much of our debt in the hands of foreign interests, we place our whole financial security in great peril.

China now has \$250 billion of our debt, Japan has \$687 billion of our debt, Taiwan has \$117 billion of our debt and Hong Kong has \$67 billion of our debt. I mention these because these are countries in the Asian Basin. If collectively they came together, for surely geography puts their direct interests more at stake than it does us over here in the Western Hemisphere, if they came together with a pact and just made a decision on what to do with our

debt or whether they are going to sell U.S. dollars or reinvest in other countries or do things that will drive down our financial security, look at the bad position that places us in. And when you combine that with the fact that India and China have taken over our manufacturing capabilities, it shows the seriousness of the situation.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Georgia and the gentlewoman from Illinois for joining me this evening.

At the beginning of this special order, this was the national debt, \$8,378,143,406,405 and some change. Just in the hour that we have spent here on the floor in this special order discussing the Nation's debt and the deficit, the debt has gone up approximately \$41,666,000. So the new number is \$8,378,185,072,405 and some change. Just in the hour we have been here, we have seen the national debt go up that much, \$41,666,000, approximately.

So, until our government gets its fiscal house in order, as Members of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, we are going to continue to come this to this floor every Tuesday night and talk about restoring some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. We will be talking more about the Blue Dog 12 point plan for curing our Nation's addiction to deficit spending and will be talking about our plan, our vision for a better America, a vision that includes a balanced budget and so many other provisions that just make good old-fashioned sense.

THE FALL OF GREAT NATIONS

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

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, in 2003, I was privileged to hear British Prime Minister Tony Blair speak in this Chamber, and one comment he made that particularly caught my attention was this: He said, "As Britain knows, all predominant power seems for a time invincible, but in fact it is transient."

What he was referring to, I believe, was that all great nations, when things are going well, assume that they are going to go on forever. But history shows us with example after example that this is really fallacious reasoning. So we might examine three such instances.

First of all, going clear back to Rome, which ruled nearly the entire civilized world 2,000 years ago, Rome appeared to be invincible, but eventually it fell. The reasons given generally by historians are these: There was a general decline in morality; there was an increasing corruption and instability in leadership; an increasing public addiction to every more violent public spectacles; an increase in crime and prostitution; and a population that

became more self-absorbed, apathetic and unwilling to sacrifice for the common good.

Secondly, we might look at Great Britain itself. Certainly Great Britain has not fallen from preeminence, but it certainly is not the power it once was during the 1600s up through much of the 1800s, when it really dominated the entire world.

□ 2140

That empire slowly crumbled, and the reasons given again by historians were these: It lost the national resolve to maintain its territory, values that led to its ascendancy were eroded, and spiritual underpinnings shifted dramatically.

Thirdly, we might just take a look quickly at a more recent superpower, Russia, which was one of two great superpowers as recently as 20 years ago. In a matter of months Russia disintegrated before our very eyes, and I think I along with many other people were amazed at how quickly this happened. Alexander Solzhenitzyn reflected on this fall when he observed this. He said, "Over a half century ago when I was still a child, I recall a number of older people offering the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia," and he quotes. "Men have forgotten God. That is why all of this has happened." Marx and Lenin had dismantled Russia's religious heritage and values, and Russia's foundation was broken and it collapsed like a house of cards with nothing to sustain it.

There are some common themes in all of these historic national collapses. First of all, the citizens became less willing to sacrifice for others and for their country; citizens became more self-absorbed, had a greater desire for the state to provide instead of providing for themselves; a weakening of commonly held values, and a decline of spiritual commitment.

You may say, well, what does all of this have to do with the United States, and why are you talking about this this evening? We obviously have the most powerful military, the strongest economy, the most stable government of any nation in the world today.

It is very easy to think that we are invincible and that this may last forever. But as Tony Blair stated so clearly, as Britain knows, all predominant power for a time seems invincible, but in fact it is truly transient.

This statement of Prime Minister Blair's rang a bell with me as I sat and listened to him, because over 36 years of coaching and working with young people I witnessed some trends that were concerning to me. The young men that I worked with were more talented physically and more gifted each year, yet they showed more signs of stress, more personal struggles, less moral clarity as time passed.

This chart illustrates some of the difficulty that we are currently experiencing with some of our young people

that shows the juvenile court delinquency caseload. It starts in 1960 with really not very many cases, and it more than quadrupled by 1995 and 2000, and that trend has continued upward even today.

Several factors I think have contributed to these changes. First of all, the family structure has certainly eroded in our country. In 1960, when I first started coaching, the out-of-wedlock birth rate was 5 percent. Today it is 34 percent; in parts of our country, the out-of-wedlock birth rate is 60 and 70 percent. So we have at least one-third of our young people entering the world with two strikes against them. It does not mean they cannot live a successful life, but it is certainly going to be much more difficult.

In 1960, the great majority of children lived with both parents. Today, nearly 40 percent of our young people grow up without both biological parents. Again, this makes life more difficult. Less than one quarter of families with children under 6 have a parent staying home with them full time. Of course, that again is a tremendous shift from the way it was 40, 50 years ago. One-third of all school-aged kids come home to an empty house for at least part of the week, and the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are the largest at-risk time for children in our culture at the present time; it is those 3 hours after school, before parents begin to come home.

Twenty-four million children in our culture live without their real father. Fatherless children are two to three times more likely to be abused, have emotional and behavioral problems, abuse drugs, alcohol, or to commit a crime. There is a greeting card company that contacted the inmates in a prison just before Mother's Day, and on a whim they decided that they would provide Mother's Day cards for any inmate that wanted to send a card to his mother. The reception was very good. Almost 100 percent of the inmates accepted cards, sent it to their mother. So they decided that they would try the same thing on Father's Day, and yet they had almost zero response. Practically no inmate would write a card to his father. I would assume the reason is that so many of the people there were people who had been abandoned by their fathers, did not have fathers, and as a result you could see a tremendous dichotomy between those who were still attached in some way to a mother as compared to those who were attached to their father.

The foundation in our culture, the family, is certainly under assault. It does not mean that we do not have good families, we have many good families; but there has been some sign of erosion, some things that are certainly very concerning. Of course, the family unit is the basic element of our social structure. When that begins to fall apart, then things begin to get very difficult indeed.

Also, we might mention that in addition to some of the difficulties that we

are experiencing in our families, the environment in which our young people currently exist has certainly changed as well. One thing I am going to talk about here for the next 3 or 4 minutes is underage drinking, alcohol abuse, because this has become a huge problem in our culture. The National Academy of Science study showed that alcohol kills six and a half times more young people than all other drugs combined. So it kind of flies under the radar screen, where we think about cocaine, we think about heroin, we think about methamphetamine, we think about marijuana, and yet six and a half times more young people are killed by alcohol than all of these other substances combined. It costs the U.S. \$53 billion annually, alcohol abuse, underage drinking. There are roughly 3 million teenage alcoholics, which is by far the largest number of those who are addicted to some kind of substance. The average first drink in our country today is at 12.8 years of age, and that age is declining.

One of the problems we have with underage drinking is that so often young people binge drink. On average, they will consume twice as much alcohol per occasion of drinking than an adult will. Of course, this leads to some very difficult situations. Twenty percent of eighth graders drink regularly. Children who drink before age 15 are five times more likely to become an alcoholic than those who wait until they are 21 years of age to start drinking. Youth are 96 times more likely to see an ad promoting alcohol than to see an ad discouraging underage drinking. So, obviously, in the advertising world, you can see where the emphasis is. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars to fight drug production in Afghanistan, Colombia, and around the world, and a fraction of that money spent on curbing underage drinking might be more cost effective in our own country.

The National Advertising and Education Campaign has been effective in combating teen tobacco use, and the same thing is needed to combat underage drinking and yet we seem to ignore the problem.

Another substance abuse epidemic that is sweeping the Nation and has really gotten most of our attention is the methamphetamine epidemic. In my State of Nebraska, the problem has become tremendously pernicious and has been somewhat overwhelming. I would like to illustrate this by showing a few charts at this time.

This was the incidence of methamphetamine labs in 1990. California and Texas were the only two States that reported more than 20 meth labs out in the countryside; of course, that changed rather rapidly. We see here in 2004, all but maybe seven or eight States in the Northeast were reporting large numbers of meth labs, and of course in many cases they are reporting as many as 300 or 400 or 500 meth labs that we know about in a given year. So methamphetamine has swept

from the west coast and the Southwest all across the country, and the prediction is that certainly those Northeastern States will also be hit very hard by methamphetamine within a relatively short period of time.

Many people have seen the following pictures, but I think it shows rather graphically what methamphetamine does. This was a young lady who was arrested in November of 1979, and was arrested each succeeding year for the next 10 years for methamphetamine. She was picked up by authorities, and each year they took her picture, a mug shot. You can see the first 5 years that she certainly deteriorates somewhat, and then in May of 1986 there is a more dramatic change; in January of 1988, a significant change, and this is where some people begin to believe that she started to inject methamphetamine, and then you see further deterioration in the bottom right picture was taken in January of 1989, 10 years later, after the first picture.

□ 2150

This was taken in the morgue when she had eventually succumbed to her addiction, and so the interesting thing is that she did survive for 10 years. Many people on meth do not do this, but you can see that the aging process was tremendous and it probably took the toll that normally a person would age 50 years in that 10-year period of time, and she did it in 10 with the assistance of methamphetamine.

A report released by Voices For Children found that meth is one of the reasons for a 38 percent increase in child abuse and neglect in the State of Nebraska. This is true all across the country. As we see meth increase, we see child abuse, child neglect goes up, and we see many cases of serious injury and death on the part of young people simply because their parents no longer are able to care for them or care about them. The meth addiction has taken over and occupies all of their time, their attention and their devotion, and children suffer greatly.

According to a recent report to the legislature by the University of Nebraska at Omaha, an estimated 22,396 Nebraskans are methamphetamine dependent or abusers. This is in a relatively sparsely populated State with 1.7 million people. So it constitutes the population of a pretty good-sized town in the State of Nebraska.

A study done by the University of Arkansas found that methamphetamine users cost their employers about \$47,500 annually due to increased absenteeism and loss of productivity. If you took \$47,500 costs, and that is fairly conservative, times 22,000 individuals addicted, you have got over \$1 billion in costs in the State of Nebraska. Of course, I am extrapolating those figures from Arkansas, but I believe that they are probably fairly accurate.

Judge John Icenogle, a drug court judge in Buffalo County, Nebraska, testified at a hearing here in Washington

before the Education and Workforce Committee, and I would like to read you a little bit of what he said: "In April of 2005, approximately 6,000 children were living in out-of-home foster care placements within the State of Nebraska. More than half of the parents from whom children are removed have problems due to use of methamphetamine."

So we have 6,000 people in foster care living in out-of-home placements. Roughly 3,000 of those kids are there because their parents are addicted to methamphetamine.

During a recent 2-week period in Lancaster County in Nebraska, the county attorney filed juvenile petitions on behalf of nine newborns because of methamphetamine use by the mothers. This is the interesting part: additional birthing expenses for a meth mother include as much as \$1,500 to \$25,000 per day for the care of her child. Some children require nearly a quarter of a million dollars of care to ensure the child attains the age of 1. This is simply because of reduced birthrate, damage that methamphetamine causes; and this does not say anything about the horrible suffering that these children go through.

The developmentally delayed children can require up to three-quarters of a million dollars in special care during the child's first 18 years of life. So to get one of these meth babies from birth to age 18 in some cases will cost \$700,000, \$750,000, not in all cases.

Congress has taken some steps to address meth production by making it more difficult for meth cooks to be able to obtain pseudoephedrine, which is one of the primary ingredients, the only ingredient which you absolutely have to have. That regulation has been helpful, along with some laws from various States.

One thing that I think we did in that bill, which I think is very important for us in Congress to realize, is that at the present time, somewhere in the vicinity of 70 to 80 percent of the methamphetamine coming into the United States today is not made in meth labs. Those are kind of on the way down. Meth is coming, in most cases, from Mexico from superlabs; and in order to have a superlab, you have to purchase huge amounts of precursor chemicals, and chief among these are the pseudoephedrine. There are only six or seven places in the world that manufacture large quantities of pseudoephedrine, and so in the bill that we did, we said we want the five leading exporters of pseudoephedrine and the five leading importing countries of pseudoephedrine to report, to give their invoices to the United States, to report to us, and that way we would be able to track where the pseudoephedrine is going and where those superlabs are.

We think much of it will be in Mexico; and if they do not comply, we are entitled to remove up to 50 percent of their foreign aid, which is a significant

penalty, which should get cooperation. This is part of the bill that I think will really help us get a handle on the crystal meth that is currently coming in from those superlabs.

It is critical that we have a balanced approach to this problem of methamphetamine. There is not just one thing you have to do. You have to start out first with education, and probably start with young people in third, fourth, fifth grade and their parents, and of course, photos like I have just shown are very graphic. Sometimes they are rather disturbing, but it shows people exactly what methamphetamine does. We think education is critical because for every one dollar you spend on education and prevention, you are usually going to get anywhere from \$10 to \$15 from the back end in reduced crime and not having to lock people up and reduced assaults, foster care and so on. So this is important.

The second thing that you have to do is you have to have interdiction. You have to have people on the ground who are attacking the meth problem on a daily basis, and in many parts of the country, drug task forces are critical. This is why the Byrne grants that Congress provides, which fund these drug task forces, is critical. Last year, we were zeroed out in the President's budget on Byrne grants, and we restored as much as we could, about two-thirds of what we probably needed. This year again we are zeroed out, and again we will have to fight to get that funding back; but this is critical to have the Federal money to be able to attack the meth problem in terms of law enforcement.

Then, lastly, the third leg of the stool is the issue of treatment. Right now, we have a lot of people who do not manufacture methamphetamine, people who have not committed crimes on methamphetamine; but these are simply people who are addicted to meth. The question is what are you going to do with them. So often what we are doing is we are sending them to prison for 12 months or 18 months. They get no treatment. Their family usually falls apart, and as a result, they come out as bad off or worse off than when they went in. On the other hand, if you put them in a drug court, they get tested twice a week. So you know that they are clean. You know that they are off the drug. They get treatment. They get to go to group therapy. They can usually hold down a job and pay taxes. They can usually hold their family together. So this is critical, and it is the most cost-effective, efficient way to treat the problem. Again, we need to have substantial amounts of money for those drug courts.

So, anyway, we feel that the meth issue is becoming huge, and it is really impacting our culture.

The United States is also one of the most violent nations in the world for young people. We have the highest youth homicide and assault rates in the developed world, and suicide is cur-

rently the third leading cause of death for young people. The violence has certainly escalated.

Pornography has also exploded. There are currently 260 million Internet porn sites cataloged as recently as 2003. Let me repeat that number: 260 million Internet porn sites. Our Internet is simply inundated with this type of activity. Nine out of 10 children between the ages of 9 and 16 have viewed porn on the Internet, mostly unintentional. This was according to a study done by the London School of Economics.

Many of us are dismayed by the way the FCC is regulating obscenity on our Nation's airwaves. We do not feel they are doing enough, and a poll in 2004 found that 82 percent of adult Americans surveyed say that the Federal laws against Internet obscenity should be vigorously enforced, and most people do not believe they are being enforced to the degree that they should be.

Video games, something also impacting our young people. More than 90 percent of American children play video games every day, and one-half of the top sellers contain extreme violence. Some teach stalking and killing of victims, similar to military training and video games; and pornography is sometimes a reward for hitting a target in one of the video games.

The young man who was a school shooter in Kentucky had never fired a gun before the day that he went to the school and started picking off his classmates, but he had been trained and trained on video games, shooting life-like people, and he became remarkably accurate.

□ 2200

So we think that some things should be done in this regard as well. Much music, some television, and many movies are very graphic, and that content would have been impossible to present for public consumption 30 years ago. I have some grandchildren, ages 6 through 13, and I know many people in Congress are concerned about grandchildren, children, and the effects that some of the things we have just mentioned are having on those young people.

Lastly, let me just mention that the value system in our country has certainly shifted. We mentioned that the family has been eroded to some degree, the environment is more threatening, and the value system that we have held dear for so many years seems to be changing to some degree also.

Many folks may have read a book by Steven Covey called "The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People." Covey points out in his book that over the first 150 years of our Nation's history success was defined primarily in terms of character traits. And so a successful person was honest, a successful person was hard working, faithful, loyal, and compassionate. And that was what success was all about. Then he noticed

that over the last 50, 60 years that the definition of success has changed remarkably. He said, success now is viewed as acquiring material possessions, acquiring power, and prestige. And so success is no longer a link to character traits, rather it is linked to those things which are powerful, impressive, and have to do with monetary advantage.

So the value system, obviously, has shifted significantly over the last 50, 60 years. We have seen certainly a discouraging lack of integrity, sometimes in government, sometimes in athletics, sometimes in the business world. We have seen extreme political partisanship. Ofttimes on this floor you hear one side attacking the other. I think that has eroded public confidence to some degree in the political sector.

Presently, Mr. Speaker, the predominant world view is something called post-modernism. Post-modernism is certainly very alive and well in our culture, especially on our college campuses. What post-modernism says, essentially, is this: It says that there are no such things as moral absolutes. There is nothing absolutely right or nothing that is absolutely wrong. Everything is relative. In the case of theft, maybe even murder, maybe even incest, adultery, or treason, it depends on the circumstance. So as a result, we have a whole generation of folks growing up with the idea that there really is nothing that is truly wrong and that everything can be explained away depending upon the circumstance.

In view of all that I have been discussing, this is an extremely difficult time for our children. We are asking them to weave their way through a mine field littered with alcohol, drug abuse in some cases, harmful video games, and sometimes music, television, and movies that are not very healthy. And we are asking them to weave their way through with less parental guidance and an ever shifting value system. So we have to be aware of what is happening to the next generation. We need to pay close attention. There is no culture that is more than one generation away from dissolution.

I am not one who is a doom and gloom individual. Much of what I have talked about this evening is certainly not very cheery or terribly optimistic. But I think unless we begin to look at things in a realistic way we will not be able to do much to correct the problem, maybe before it is too late.

A Frenchman by the name of de Tocqueville made an astute observation early in our Nation's history. He said this about America. He said, "America is great because America is good." And he was referring to the large number of churches and civic clubs and youth groups and individuals who reach out to help those who are less fortunate. To some degree, that is still very true of our country. We are a generous people. We are really basically at heart, I think, a very good peo-

ple. So he was referring to the inherent decency of the American people. He was referring to the strong moral and spiritual underpinning of the Nation, and he was referring to the basic American ethic, which is essentially do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Of course, de Tocqueville wrote 200 years ago. So the question is, are his observations true today? Some are. However, as we have pointed out, there are some disturbing signs of change. But what can be done about this? We don't want to leave the subject, Mr. Speaker, without at least talking about some possible solutions.

One thing that I have been very interested in through the last 10 or 15 years and during my time here in Congress has been the issue of mentoring. Mentoring, of course, is providing an adult in the life of a young person who cares, number one. And it is amazing how many young people really don't have an adult in their life that they can absolutely count on; that they can depend on; someone who cares about them unconditionally.

So a mentor is someone who does that. It is not a preacher, not a teacher, not a parent, and not a grandparent. It is not somebody who has an obligation. It is somebody who simply cares enough to show up. And that is very powerful in the life of a young person.

Secondly, a mentor is someone who affirms, who says, I believe in you. Again, there are so many young people today who don't hear a positive message. They do not hear a kind word; that somebody believes that they can be successful; that they can do what they need to do; that they see some strength.

Then the third thing a mentor does is provide a vision of what is possible. Again, so often young people are really limited by their experience. Maybe they have never seen a parent who has completed high school. Maybe they have never seen anyone in their immediate family who has accomplished anything or maybe even has held down a steady job. So their idea of growing up is to drop out of school at age 16 and get a job in a fast food place and maybe buy an old car, and the rest of the future is maybe not very promising. So providing a vision, again, is something that certainly a mentor can do.

Mentoring programs have been proven to reduce dropout rates, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence, they increase attendance, graduation, grades, and even peer relationships. So it is one of the best things we have going. And in view of the fact so many young people do not have tremendous parental support, mentoring is one thing that we can provide.

A few years ago, the President proposed \$150 million annually for mentoring programs, and Congress has come through pretty well, I think. We provided \$184 million over the last 5 years, and this really has reached hundreds of thousands of young people who

are now being mentored who would not otherwise have had a chance to have a mentor in their life.

Currently, the National Mentoring Partnership estimates that there are roughly 18 million young people in our country today who badly need a mentor, and yet we are only mentoring somewhere between 2 and 3 million of those 18 million. So there is a lot of work to be done. But if we could begin to fill that gap and get somewhere close to providing an adequate mentor in the lives of those 18 million young people, it would make a huge difference in this country and make a huge difference in the future of this country.

Sometimes legislation can help, and there have been a number of bills introduced. I have introduced H.R. 1422, the Student Athlete Protection Act, to close a Nevada gambling loophole. Some people say that is really not that relevant, but it is interesting in that the State of Nevada is the only State that legalizes betting, gambling on amateur sports. It seems that this is something that we ought to think about a little bit. Currently, thousands of people go to Nevada during the NCAA basketball tournament, also during the football bowl games, because they can bet on game after game after game.

Having been a coach, and the reason this is important, so often you had to win twice. You had to win on the scoreboard and you also were expected to beat the point spread. And that puts a lot of pressure on young people. It certainly puts pressure on coaches. But we are older and we are expected to be able to perform. But I think that that influence has not been healthy on the world of sports and certainly has been difficult for young people.

The Software Accuracy and Fraud Evaluation Rating Act, or SAFE Rating Act, sponsored by JOE BACA and myself, is one that would require the Federal Trade Commission to study the voluntary rating system for video games to determine if its practices are unfair or deceptive.

□ 2210

This is important because right now in the video game industry, you cannot really tell much about the content by looking at the rating. It is not quite like movies and some other rating schemes we have. So the bill holds the video game industry accountable for their products and ensures that parents have accurate information in making purchasing decisions for their children.

I think there are an awful lot of parents who have kids playing video games every day who have no idea what is going on in those games. They simply are not aware of the content.

We certainly could use a fundamental shift in some of the court decisions regarding the first amendment. Legislation passed by Congress will not help if it is overturned by the courts on a regular basis. The court has ruled in some cases to protect pornography. In 1996

Congress passed the Communications Decency Act, which made it illegal to send indecent material to children via the Internet. But in June of 1997, the Supreme Court overturned portions of the law stating "indecent material is protected by the first amendment." Of course that ruling, that decision, set the tone for many other decisions.

In 1996, the Child Pornography Prevention Act outlawed child pornography. In April 2002 the Supreme Court declared the act unconstitutional. Again a precedent was set.

In October 1998, the Children Online Protection Act was signed into law to prohibit the communication of harmful material of children on publicly accessible Web sites. The Supreme Court's refusal to rule on the 1998 law prevent the law from being enacted.

There are many, many cases like this. What we see is sometimes under the guise of free speech, and certainly everyone in Congress believes in the principle of the first amendment. However, we find that some people's rights are being trampled because 80 to 90 percent of rapists and pedophiles use pornography on a regular basis, often before or sometimes during the commission of their crimes. Therefore, we think that it is time that we rethink some of these rulings.

Some people say pornography is harmless. However, what we read and see and think about certainly affects behavior. If this was not the case, I am sure that people would not spend billions of dollars on advertising because advertising does change behavior. There is no question to that effect.

The court has often ruled against school prayer, and I certainly would not advocate that a teacher or superintendent or principle or somebody in the school should be allowed to proselytize or say a prayer in class that would be offensive; but in 1962 the Supreme Court ruled the following prayer unconstitutional: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence on thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country."

So it would appear that many court rulings regarding separation of church and State have ranged far afield from the intent of the framers of the Constitution. Benjamin Franklin said, "We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in the political building no better than builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves will become a reproach and a byword down to future ages."

He continues, "I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business." On Franklin's

insistence and urging, the House of Representatives and the Senate open every day with prayer.

I am not suggesting that the same thing needs to happen in our schools, but it does appear that the intent of the framers of the Constitution was maybe a little different than what we have seen played out in the courts.

George Washington said, "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a Nation that disregards the internal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

We have seen that the warnings of Franklin and Washington to some degree have come full circle. As we have moved further and further away from our spiritual underpinnings, we begin to see some of the fruits of that wandering. So despite the fact that the Constitution does not contain a separation of church and State clause, in 1992 the Supreme Court decision declared an invocation and a benediction at a graduation ceremony unconstitutional. The court held a minute of silence in a school was unconstitutional. So if you started the school day with a minute of silence in which students may pray silently, they may think about their history test, that minute of silence was held to be unconstitutional. That seems a little bit strange.

The court ruled a student-led prayer at a football game was unconstitutional. And of course many of us know the words "under God" was struck from the Pledge of Allegiance by the Ninth Circuit Court. The Supreme Court restored the phrase, but it threw the case out on a technicality. I am sure that challenge will resurface sometime soon.

So we have seen many examples of different rulings that have certainly affected our culture. A partial-birth abortion ban was recently struck down by the courts. And many in this body who favor abortion voted for this ban. More than 70 percent of the public now oppose partial-birth abortion. I am not going to go further into the abortion issue, but it seems rather strange that something that is disapproved of by so many people in the United States would be struck down.

The Constitution is increasingly interpreted as a living document. So the Constitution is often not interpreted as it was written, but rather as justices believe it should be or maybe how it should have been written. Legal decisions increasingly come down based not upon what the law states, but rather based upon the personal ideology of the jurist.

The Constitution is not based upon absolute principles, but rather the shifting sands of relativism. The philosophical bent of the Supreme Court Justices and district court justices determines the course of the Nation.

And so it will be interesting to see now that we have had some change on the court, and I do not mean to say that the court over a number of years has been totally errant, there are many

great decisions they have made, but I am saying that the general drift of the court has been one which has led us down a path that is certainly quite a distance from where we started out in the founding of our Nation.

So the makeup of the courts and the will of Congress will greatly influence whether we continue to drift further from our spiritual heritage or draw close to those values upon which our Nation was founded, the willingness of Congress to focus upon the pernicious influences impacting our children. And sometimes I am concerned because I see people who are here in Congress who fought the fight over the Internet battles and pornography and some of these things, and have simply started to back off because they realize that they have passed laws and they have passed laws and because of various court rulings they have not gotten anywhere and so they have almost quit trying. That is unfortunate.

And also the willingness of the American people to demand that those profiteering at the expense of our culture and our young people be reined in will largely shape the future of our Nation.

Terrorism is an ever-present threat. The economy is of great concern. However, terrorism and economic distress will not prevail as long as our national character is silent. So we are engaged in a cultural and a spiritual struggle of huge proportion, and I can only hope that the principles upon which this Nation was founded remain preeminent. As Congress addresses important issues such as national defense, the economy and health care, it is critical that we not lose sight of the fact that our Nation's survival is directly linked to the character of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address the House this evening.

□ 2220

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for half the time remaining before midnight, approximately 50 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor once again to address the House of Representatives, and we would like to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this time. Democratic leader NANCY PELOSI, Mr. STENY HOYER, and also our chair and vice chair of our caucus.

I think it is important for us to come to the floor once again in this 30-something Working Group to talk about the issues that are facing America and how the Republican majority is falling short of its responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to fulfill not only the hopes, but aspirations of Americans as we come to Washington, D.C. to represent them in a way that we should, need it be education, health care, what have you.