

to be doing, its work would stand for itself. That is the kind of thing that we Americans understand.

I think that it is, aside from the fact that he was injecting himself into the political life of this country which he has absolutely no business doing, he really insulted the American people. And he insulted us.

I want to say that my recommendation would be on the United Nations, they are going to come to us and say they need a lot of money to renovate that old building up there. My recommendation is that they take the United Nations to the Sudan. They build a building in the Sudan, and they move the entire United Nations to Africa.

Then I would like to see how many of those people who are currently serving in the United Nations would like to move there and use their expertise to help Africa get out of the poverty that it suffers. I do not think you are going to see many of those people want to go there. They come here and they like to live the life that they live in the United States, but they do not want to respect what we do in the United States and how we have gotten to where we have gotten.

I want to thank Congressman WAMP for bringing this Special Order here tonight. I think you are right. We need to talk about this. What is going on in the Middle East right now is because of the failure of the United Nations, not the failure of the United States, not the failure of the Bush administration, not the failure of President Bush. It is the failure of the United Nations to keep peace in this world.

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to keep the pressure on them to reform the way they do things, and if they do not, I think we need to get out.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for all she contributes here in the House of Representatives. Let me say in closing, this is not now a far-out wild kind of a position that we are taking.

You know, I am a very reasonable person, with friends all around the world. The last 12 years I have, through the National Prayer Breakfast and other ways, engaged friends all around the world. I am very much for us being engaged in the world, investing in the world. This is not a close-minded kind of a position. This is not a paranoid position. This is looking at the facts, really analyzing the bottom line of the United Nations. It is not meeting its mission. It has become ineffective, inefficient. It has lost credibility. The very people that are criticizing our country are enjoying the multimillion-dollar townhomes they live in in Manhattan. They enjoy the fruits of our free enterprise system, but they do not recognize the human rights and the responsibility.

The original charge of the United Nations was to ensure international peace and security. So I would just say if we want to be guaranteed international

peace and security and sleep comfortably at night, we better not put our faith and trust in the United Nations. Put it in the men and women in the uniform of the Armed Forces of the United States of America and our allies who are willing to stand against tyranny and terror and destruction. That is the last best hope for freedom, not the United Nations.

□ 1815

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House here on this Thursday evening. As you know, the 30-something Working Group comes to the floor daily to not only share with Members of the House, but also with the American people, issues that are facing our Nation and things and ideas that we have on this side of the aisle that can assist us in moving this country to a new direction.

Here in the House, as you know, we have been sharing, not only with the Members, but also with the American people a plan for a new direction for America, and a new direction that will be helping a number of Americans in their everyday lives, making sure that we have affordable health care, as it relates to fixing the issue on prescription drugs and as it relates to costs, also dealing with issues such as the minimum wage, making sure that American workers are able to receive an increase, just like we have received an increase here in the House of Representatives over a period of a number of years, year after year. We will talk about that a little further.

As you know, we have a plan here in the House, where we have been not only calling for a vote, but asking the Republicans to join us here and increase the minimum wage.

We want to increase it to \$7.25 an hour. It is now \$5.15. There are millions of Americans that are still, since 1977, not able to see an increase in minimum wage.

Also cracking down on price gouging, we have talked about that, we have tried to pass legislation on that. The Republican majority has blocked us from being able to do that.

The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, the majority actually wins here in this House. Right now, that is the Republican majority, and it is important that folks understand that that is the case, and that we have the will and the desire to lead in that area and making sure that American people are able to receive an increase in the minimum wage.

Another issue, in putting America in a new direction, is making sure that we cut costs as it relates to student loans, cut interest rates in half and make

sure that it is affordable for families. So many families are going to be sending their children off to college this fall. Some will not, because they can't afford it.

Student loans have gone up. Student aid has gone down. It is important that we look at that as it relates to building the next generation of leaders and making sure that we have an educated America, to make sure that parents and grandparents are able to see their children or grandchildren do better than what we have done academically, because of affordability, and also access.

Also making sure, ensuring that retirees can retire in dignity, protecting Social Security, making sure that it is not privatized, making sure that it is here for future generations is our goal. We want to make sure we are able to do that and being able to place America in a new direction.

Also, something that the Republican majority has failed to do is pay as we go, making sure that whatever we invest in that we show how we are going to pay for it. I think it is very, very important.

Mr. RYAN and I here this evening will point out a number of these issues that are not being addressed. But we have already made a commitment to the American people in housedemocrats.gov, in our commitment of putting America in a new direction, making sure that we meet the needs of everyday working Americans.

So with that, Mr. RYAN, if I can, I would be more than happy to yield to you, sir. It is once again a pleasure to be on the floor with you, to be able to hold a flag with the 30-something Working Group, to make sure that we share with the American people things that we are working on, will try to work on and will, if given the opportunity to, do so.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentleman. I always enjoy our afternoon sessions here much better than the late night sessions that we normally have.

But you made a point earlier that I think we need to expound upon, that is, the issue of debt and balancing the budget. You mentioned PAYGO.

One of the fundamental issues we need to get our hands around, as the country blesses us with the majority in the fall, is that we have got to figure out what we are going to do with this tremendous debt that we have.

We have, as a country, borrowed more, and you have a great poster up there, we have borrowed more from foreign interests in the last 5 years than every President prior to George W. Bush has in the last 224 or 225 years. That's a lot of money that we owe Japan, China, OPEC countries.

We don't have the money to be giving the tax cuts that we have, war spending, military spending. We don't have that money so we go out and borrow it. It is very important that we will do as a Congress, and the first few days that we are here as a Democratic majority,

is reimplement the PAYGO rules that were in place. Pay-as-you-go.

That basically means that as we pass a budget that we will not spend any money that we have to go and borrow. You either find the money from another program, or you go and raise the money somewhere else. But you don't just spend money on a program and have to go to China in order to ask them to loan you money in order to fund it. That is a fundamental difference that the Democratic Party adheres to as opposed to our friends on the other side.

With all due respect, their rhetoric is right on, balanced budgets, rein in government, smaller government. The rhetoric is all there is. If you look at the actions over the past 5 years, when you are borrowing so much money from China and Japan, you have got to pay interest on it just like your car or your home.

So this chart highlights for us the difference between the Democratic priorities and making sure you have money that you can spend, or not spend, as opposed to going out and borrowing it. This is the chart that highlights all of this.

The big red bar on the left is what we just pay on interest, on the debt, just interest. This isn't paying down the principal at all. This is just for interest, 230 or \$235 billion will be spent in 2007 just paying down the interest on the money that we have borrowed.

It pales in comparison to the President's budget for 2007 in education, homeland security, and veterans. So we need to ask ourselves, what do we believe in as a country? Do we believe this is the right way to go? Do we believe that this is how we want to administer government, or do we believe we need to put back in the PAYGO rules, put them in place, make sure that this Congress, regardless of who is in charge, or who is in the White House, cannot go out and spend money that we don't have?

Now, what is frustrating for those of us in the 30-something Working Group is that we are going to spend a good part of the next decade trying to repair some of the major structural damage that this administration and this Republican Congress have caused. That is the botto line. It is not trying to embellish what the problem is, but this is it.

When President Clinton was in, and the Democrats passed our budget in 1993, without one Republican vote, that balanced budget led to surpluses and created over 20 million jobs.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I have a chart just like your chart. We have two of them.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. See, last night, you tried to one-up me with the chart, and now tonight you are copying my charts.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, you know, Mr. RYAN, I think the point needs to be made in such a way and I think the point needs to be made, and

I asked for another chart to be made, so that you can have a chart and I can have a chart. We can talk about what is happening here.

In all seriousness, I think it is important that when you look at the interest, you can almost, as it relates to the blue, invest in education three times what we are paying on the debt.

When you look at homeland security, you got folks as well up here on the other side of the aisle talking about we have got to protect America. You have another chart. I wish you could pull that other chart out, because folks need to understand what we are talking about, because that is what we do here in the 30-something Working Group. We have third-party validators. That is the chart right there. I don't have one of those.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will get you one. Mr. MEEK of Florida. But you look at that, and then when you look at veterans, and this second chart is so that we can take it. We can leave that chart on the floor. Because when we start talking about a Republican majority making history in all the wrong ways, this chart needs to go with us throughout this Capitol.

Do you know what we need to do? We need to put this chart and that chart, just like this one, outside of our office. That is what we are going to do. All next week, this chart and your chart that looks just like it, we will get an easel and put it outside of our office.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Then when we come down here, we will just take the chart from our office and carry it down here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Bingo. Veterans, I have a lot of veterans in my district. I am going to tell you right now, Mr. RYAN, they are hurting. They are hurting because they are having to wait several weeks to see the ophthalmologist or podiatrist or whatever the case may be, because there is a back-up at the veterans administration. In rural America, which I don't represent, I represent a very urban area, Dade and Broward counties, two of the most populated counties in Florida, that veterans clinic is only open two and three times a month.

Veterans have to wait to go in and get what we told them we would give them, because they put their life on the line, some of their friends laid their lives down for us to salute one flag here today. But better yet, the Republican majority is still going out, putting it on a credit card, putting this country in debt that we have never seen before.

But even better, yesterday, they talk about, well, we have done this in homeland security. I think you have the facts there, but because this chart was so revealing, I want to make sure, and we will make sure that we have this out next week, which I think will be our last week in session before we break for August, have this out so Members can see it. We definitely want the American people to know what is going on.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What this really illustrates is our plan, as we have it here before I get into the homeland security, our plan is, as we begin to rein in the spending from the Republican Congress, cut out the corporate welfare, with the Medicare part D, all the major subsidies that are going to all the big pharmaceuticals and health care industries, what we want to do is we begin to move towards balancing the budget, reducing this payment here in the red, and then we have money to invest in lowering college tuition costs, making sure health care is affordable for all of our citizens, making sure we raise the minimum wage. All of these things are going to fit into our long-term economic plan that the Democratic Party has.

We just need to control the levers of government here to make sure that happens. This is exactly how we are going to go about it.

One of the other things that we will invest in, my good friend, and I think it is important to make this point, just in the first few days when we get in, think about it, raise the minimum wage and reduce the loans, the interest on the college loans, by half.

So for the parent loans and the student loans, in the first day or two that we are here, we will cut the interest rates on those loans in half. You will save thousands of dollars over the life of your loan, about \$5,000 for the average loan. We will raise the minimum wage, and that is for a single mom who works for minimum wage, who lives in poverty right now. That is unacceptable in the United States of America.

Another thing that we will invest in that this administration and the Republican-led Congress have failed to address is the issue of border security. These are facts that we are going to show you here. When you compare, because I think again the rhetoric on the other side is right where it needs to be, but the reality is something drastically different. If you look at here, Clinton, and these are all comparing President Clinton and what he was doing under his term, two terms, and what happened under President Bush and trying to compare, the average number of new Border Patrol agents added, per year, under the Clinton administration, the average was 642 Border Patrol agents per year.

Under the Bush administration, 411 per year. It is one thing to say you are for protecting this country from illegal immigration, and it is another thing to do it. Under President Clinton, we were able to do it under his leadership.

Fines for immigration enforcement, through the INS, in 1999, under President Clinton, 417; 2004, three. Three. Completed immigration fraud cases, 1995, under President Clinton, 6,455; in 2003, 1,389, 78 percent fewer. Democrats understand how to administer government and what needs to be done. Under the leadership of President Clinton, we were able to achieve success.

I wish we could keep going in the right direction.

minimum wage. We could sit here and make moral arguments all night long because it is, it is the morally right thing to do; but at the same time it is good for the economy and it is good for people all over the country, and I think the more we recognize that, the better off we are going to be.

I want to make one more point. When you talk about this 7 million people who make minimum wage and the underclass and the people all over our country who are living in poverty, and the minimum wage would keep you in poverty if you work 40 hours a week and you are a working mom, we only have 300 million people in this country. We are competing with billions of people around the world, 1.3 billion in China, 1 billion people in India. We only have 300 million.

So we have got to go to great lengths to make sure that all 300 million that are physically and mentally and emotionally capable so they can be on the field playing for us.

This is what an increase in the minimum wage does. That is what cutting interest rates on student loans in half, that is what that does. That is when you look at the Democratic Party's Innovation Agenda, creating incentives for venture capital and research and all of these things that we are doing, broadband access for all Americans in the next 5 years, when you look at what we want to do with alternative energy sources, my God, we cannot just reject science outright.

Let us turn it up. You know, let us get America focused on an alternative energy plan, and we can do that and that is doable; but we need the leadership here in Congress and the resources. Instead of going to the top 1 percent to give them a tax cut, we should be focusing on what is the next generation of alternative energy going to be.

Let us implement the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission. Let us secure our ports. We can do all these things; and at the same time as we are doing this, we have to talk about what Mr. TANNER came down here a couple of weeks ago to talk about with us, DENNIS CARDOZA from California, his piece of legislation, that says we are going to audit, we are going to audit the Federal Government, and we are going to make sure that there is no fat, no waste, no abuse, no misspent funds, no misappropriated funds, no misallocated funds, and frankly, like in Iraq, there are funds missing, \$9 billion. Nobody knows where it is.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. In Iraq missing? We are missing money here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I know.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There are agencies, Mr. Speaker, in the millions, oh, we do not know what happened to \$24 million. They just write it off like it is nothing. I mean, you do not even have to go as far as Iraq. Right here in Washington, D.C., because the rubber-stamp Congress will not call these individuals in. People are in committee

talking about, I do not know where it went; it came to us.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You know what Mr. TANNER's bill says, it is our bill, it says that if you are the Secretary of the Department and you cannot pass these audits, then after a couple of years, you have got to come back before the United States Senate and you have got to get confirmed again because you are not doing your job.

We are trying to run a government that is based, it looks like it is 1950, but society has moved forward. Society has decentralized, and the Republican Congress, they are like dinosaurs that just do not recognize the changes that have come in the world and have not done the due diligence necessary to reform government.

I mean, you can say, well, here is the Democrats making this up again. We do not have to make anything up. Look how FEMA worked with Katrina. Look at how after the military portion of the war in Iraq, look at how we have done after that, not only losing money but not achieving the objective, not really having an objective, to having a big problem there, too.

□ 1845

As Newt Gingrich said last week on Meet the Press, with all that is going on around the world, our bureaucracies do not have the capabilities of handling all these situations. State Department, Pentagon, Department of Defense, all of these. Come on. We need to reform this government and we don't have time to wait.

Because if there is going to be a terrorist attack in the United States of America, it is not going to be like Katrina where we have 5 days where we could watch it on the Weather Channel and know it is coming. This government needs reformed and it needs reformed immediately and that means getting to the bottom of things. That means getting all the facts necessary. That means calling hearings.

What that also means, Mr. MEEK, is that some people are going to get embarrassed. Maybe people just need to come before Congress and say, "Mr. MEEK, under this system, no one could do this job." Maybe that is the case. I will give you the benefit of the doubt. You appointed equestrian attorneys and all this other stuff to key positions. Yes, there has been a lot of cronyism here, let's not make any mistake about it. And it cost lives and money during Katrina, bottom line. But at the same time, maybe there are good people, hardworking Americans, that want to serve their government that are trapped in a bureaucracy that was designed in the 1930s or 1940s or 1950s and has stayed there and they can't work within this bureaucracy.

Have the decency and the guts to try to reform it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Somebody needs to be embarrassed? Somebody needs to be fired.

Embarrassed? Oh, please. They are just following the lead of the Repub-

lican majority. If I was an agency department head or secretary or someone confirmed by the Senate, I mean, when I look at my chart here, when I look at \$1.05 trillion in borrowing from foreign nations, dethroning 42 Presidents, 224 years of history where they only borrowed \$1.01 trillion, how in the world could I rein in a department head where I have endorsed this, in the trillions of dollars, \$1.05 trillion in 4 years alone. It is almost like me calling my children into the room and to say: You're doing the wrong thing. You're eating at 11 o'clock at night. You're going to get heavy. You're going to get sick.

They say: Well, Dad, look at you. You have eight gallons of ice cream sitting right in front of you. How can you talk to me about not eating at 11 o'clock at night and eating too much sugar?

How in the world can the Republican Congress go to these department heads who can't find \$24 million that are missing in their agency and they have borrowed, here in this Congress, \$1.05 trillion, record breaking, from foreign nations.

I am not going to even spend time taking the stuff off because I wish I had time to deal with it but I don't. The bottom line is these are the countries that own a part of the American apple pie because of the mismanagement of the Republican majority. That is the bottom line. You see the countries. I don't need to call them out. They are buying our debt. If you came to me and said, my good friend, can I borrow \$50 from you? I consider us good friends, but if I loaned you \$50, our relationship is now changed. Even if you pay me back, which I think you will, within 5 or 6 days, our relationship has changed because you have asked to borrow some of the money that I work hard for, that I can spend on issues dealing with my family.

These countries have bought our debt. The relationship has changed, thanks to the Republican majority and the White House. \$1.01 trillion, 224 years, Mr. Speaker, of the country's history, 4 years under the Bush administration and the rubber-stamp Congress. You dethrone 224 years of history, of borrowing from foreign nations. We borrow a record number and these are the nations: Japan, China, the U.K., the Caribbean, Taiwan, OPEC nations. Who are the OPEC nations? Let's just go down the list because there are so many but they own \$67.8 billion of our debt: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Nigeria, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE. I can go on. Ecuador. I can go on and on and on. Meanwhile, folks come to the floor and get all swollen and saying, we need to watch these foreigners and what they're doing and how they're doing it.

The bottom line is the foreigners have bought our debt, thanks to you. It is upsetting. It is upsetting to the point that we have veterans that are out there allowing us to salute one

flag, laid their life down, watched their friends die, and we are sitting here giving tax cuts to billionaires and misappropriating dollars and not providing the oversight. So how in the world a Member of Congress can sit up here, especially on the majority side and talk about reining someone in because they have misappropriated dollars and they don't know where they are. This rubber-stamp Republican majority has given the White House everything they want. And what do we have to show for it?

Let's look at the Middle East. Let's look at something as far as the eye can see that folks start talking about an exit strategy. How in the world can you even come up with a strategy when you have done it alone and have given the White House everything they wanted? The Congress, well-documented, misled. You got the White House saying, well, you know, we were misled, too. The President has said, well, as it relates to trying to take the training wheels off the Iraqi government, saying that they have to provide their own security, that's for a future President to deal with. He has already punted and said, That's for a future President to deal with.

Congress, of course, rubber-stamp Republican Congress, yes, sir, Benny Hill salute, yes, sir. Whatever you want. So shall it be written, so shall it be done, Mr. President.

That is not the case in a democracy. Bill Clinton did not celebrate that relationship. Even Bush I did not celebrate that relationship. It goes to show you when democracy breaks down and governance breaks down and you have this rubber-stamp, rally-rally-rally Congress, that we're going to support you no matter how bad your policies are, we're going to rubber-stamp everything that you do, how in the world can they rein someone in and have oversight and say, oh, so you don't know where \$24 million that we've given you of the taxpayers' dollars are and how they were spent? Or wasted? You can't answer that? You're fired.

The bottom line is we are going to subpoena you and the rest of the folks that work in that agency until we find out where the \$24 million has gone. The real issue is this. The American people, Democrat, Republican, Independent, someone that is not voting now and is now taking interest in what is happening up here in Washington, D.C. has to have a problem of what's going on.

I am just going to say that the facts are what they are. Some nights I come to the floor, I say, it's not even fair. It's just too much stuff. It's too much to talk about. It's too much to even shed light on. We come to the floor and we share the same information many times because it is so historical. It is historical in a way to where that never, never before in the history of this country has it ever been this way.

I know it took me 10 minutes to answer your question that you put out there, but I had to put it out there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate you cutting your answer short.

I agree with you wholeheartedly. If we don't recognize and understand from A to Z what needs to be done in reforming the Government to make sure that we can respond to the needs of our constituents, we are in the service industry down here. We administer programs and we regulate commerce and we take care of foreign policy and we build a military, raise a military, raise an army. We have that obligation. I commend you for your passion and your support and your ideas which do not go unnoticed. But it is so important for us to recognize when we get down here, the few decisions that we will make immediately will have an immediate impact on the lives of every American. By auditing the Government and by going back to make sure that we can figure out how Government needs to look and run and be administered and executed in the 21st century based on an economy that is based on knowledge and information and science, not necessarily industry and huge steel companies and huge auto companies and big bureaucracies were needed to combat and administer and lift people up. I think to a certain extent we need to maintain those principles, but at the same time Government needs to change.

There are so many programs that have really been frustrating, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen funding reined in on, the programs that will ultimately lead to economic development: the manufacturing extension program, the Small Business Administration 7(a) loan program. These are the kind of things that local economic development folks can use. We need to focus on how we export goods out of this country. We have been playing a lot of defense and I think the resentment that you feel in places like Ohio and Indiana and Pennsylvania and the old industrial Midwest is not that there is change, but the country has the wherewithal to pass free trade agreements and begin to compete in a global economy; but at the same time, we haven't done anything at home to make sure that we have adequate skilled workers that will be able to be employed or create wealth in this new society and which we can export and create wealth with business incubators, with job retraining.

Why is it so difficult for us to get some of these workers from the auto industry or the steel industry or wherever it may be into the health care industry? We have a nursing shortage on one hand. We have job reductions in many other industries. What is the problem? We need 3 million health care workers in the next decade or so. We need a million new nurses in the next decade or so. Government needs to be nimble enough and flexible enough where we could make sure that we address these issues. Not because we want to do it for the sake of the Government but because we want to do it because it

is going to be good for the overall economy. It is going to be good. The more nurses, the more doctors, the healthier we are going to be. The more general sense we have about wellness and community health clinics and putting clinics in our schools and wellness programs and intramural programs and after-school programs, these ultimately lead to healthier, more educated, more productive citizens which means increased value, more wealth creation and ultimately a strong America so that we can deal with all of these complex problems in the world, not from a position of weakness.

I think what you showed with your map, with all the different countries and the debt that is owed and the net interest that we are paying on the debt, we are now in a position of weakness. We need help with North Korea and we go to our bank, China, and ask them for help. You can't negotiate from a position of weakness. That is what we are doing right now. So we don't get any help with North Korea. We need help with Iran and some of these other countries. Everyone who is loaning us money says, go take a hike. And we hear the utter disrespect that Vladimir Putin showed, not our President but our country, because our President is representing all of us, all 300 million, when he goes to the G-8 summit. And to have Vladimir Putin basically say, no thanks, we don't want the kind of democracy that you're trying to push in Iraq, that is disrespecting the United States of America. When you look at how people are viewing us around the world, it becomes very, very difficult to try to promote the kind of values that we all believe in and try to maintain our strength here at home.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. In closing, we really have to look at what is happening right now. I know we are doing all that we can do. We have filed legislation. We were able to stop the privatization of Social Security by having over 500 town hall meetings throughout the country. The President burned all kinds of Federal jet fuel flying around the country trying to convince people that they need to privatize their Social Security. That was very, very unfortunate. Taxpayers' money was spent. Still the plan was abandoned.

We also pushed very hard to make sure that we pay as we go here on the floor. We are still fighting on that as it relates to our Federal spending. You talk about the tax and spend and whatever the case may be. I can tell you that Republicans can't look in the mirror here in the House, the majority can't look in the mirror and say that they are the example of fiscal responsibility because I think the history of this country will show and this 109th Congress, and even the Congress before that, that there has been more spending now than any other time in the history of this country, especially when you look at what happened during the Lyndon Johnson years versus the Bush

years. Because right now you are seeing with the rubber-stamp Congress and President Bush that the Lyndon Johnson administration and the Congress at that time has been dethroned as it relates to spending.

□ 1900

So I think it is very important that we look at that. I think it is also important to look at our plan, America going in a new direction, going into a new direction, making sure that they have representation here in this House. And this is for every American, not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just Independent, not just individuals that have decided to participate in the political process, making sure that we help working families every day and the individuals that are retired and our veterans and all of the folks that we should be fighting for in a very fierce way.

I think it is important that if you folks really want to look at making sure these oil companies no longer price gouge Americans, making sure that we have affordable health care and prescription drug care, making sure that working families are able to make a livable wage, that is something that we are working very hard on.

We are going to start with the minimum wage, moving that to \$7.25 from \$5.15, making sure that the Congress doesn't give themselves another raise. And the Democratic leader and the Democratic whip and myself and a number of members of our caucus have said, no increase for Members of Congress until the American people get an increase.

And also, what Mr. RYAN talked about a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, cutting the student loan interest rate in half so that it can be affordable for folks to go to college to be able to make a stronger workforce for us. Also, as it relates to tax breaks for those that are paying for college.

I already hit the issue on preventing the administration and those here in Congress from privatizing Social Security. And I think it is also important for us to note that all of this is on our Web site with our energy plan, our real security plan as it relates to protecting America, and our plan on investing in the Midwest versus in the Middle East, of E85 and other alternative fuels.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will give the Web site. In closing, I would just like to say that when you look at the history of the country, being an American really is an adventure. We have seen, from the inception of this country, that there have been tremendous challenges. But tremendous leaders and heroes abound in the country, all over, in the public sector, in the private sector, in education, in science, in medicine. We have seen and produced some of the greatest individuals in the history of the world, and being an American is an adventure.

The most frustrating part, I believe, in the last several years, and we have

said this before on this floor, is that after 9/11, with all of the political capital that the President had, with the whole country watching him, the best, greatest most demanding challenge he could come up with was for the American people to go out and go shopping. You know, that, I think, illustrates the kind of leadership we do not need in all of these changing times.

And so our leadership that we provide from Article I, section 1 of the United States Constitution, which creates this House of Representatives, I am excited about the possibilities, come January, that we will have, when we are running this government, at least from the House side and hopefully from the Senate side too.

But like you said, we want to use all of the talents, all the creativity, all of the ability and intellect that this country can muster to make sure we are pushing it forward. As you said, with alternative energies and investments in education and getting creative with how we are going to create wealth in the 21st century, through business incubators and some of these small business programs that we have that can go and help and retool small businesses that don't have the wherewithal to pay \$1 million for consultants to come in.

We have a public program that allows businesses to retool themselves for 80 or \$90,000. And I have had people in my office who have experienced this program. It led to tremendous job growth here in the United States.

So there are things that we can do. And I think it is an exciting time for all of us. And I very much look forward to us doing this in January. www.housedemocrats.gov/30something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it was a pleasure being on the floor with you this evening. As you know, we want to thank the Democratic leader for allowing us to have this time.

We also would say that it was a pleasure addressing the House

PERMISSION FOR COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY TO HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT, JULY 21, 2006, TO FILE REPORT ON H.R. 2965, FEDERAL PRISON INDUSTRIES COMPETITION IN CONTRACTING ACT OF 2005

Mr. KING of Iowa (during Special Order of Mr. MEEK of Florida). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be permitted to file a committee report to accompany the bill, H.R. 2965, no later than midnight on July 21, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed

with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2864. An act to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

VACATING 5-MINUTE SPECIAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute Special Order for the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is vacated.

There was no objection.

HONORING OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here on the House floor tonight to report to my colleagues and those who may be watching what I learned over the last long weekend. I was privileged to go with Chairman PETE HOEKSTRA of the House Intelligence Committee to Iraq. It was my first trip to Iraq. It was a very eye-opening experience, Mr. Speaker and Members, one that I won't soon forget.

Before I get started talking about that trip and some of the lessons that I learned while we were there, I would like to start with a quote. And I will come back to this later. The quote is: "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. It is their war, and you are here to help them win it, not win it for them." I am going to come back to that quote later, Mr. Speaker, because I think it says so much about some of the things that we learned while we were in Iraq. Most importantly, I will come back and tell you who it was that originally said that.

The first thing I want to say tonight, though, is an enormous thank you and congratulations to the brave Americans who serve the United States in uniform.

When you get off the plane in Baghdad, you realize what they have to put up with, particularly during the summer. When the door opens on that plane, it is like opening the door of an oven. And there to greet you are bright young Americans, and they are in full uniform, helmets, heavy flak jackets. And I don't know what the temperature was, but it was the hottest I have ever experienced in my life. And those are the conditions under which our brave Americans do their business every day. And it is not just that they do it for 8 hours a day with long lunches and coffee breaks. The folks over there are working 12 hours a day and, in many cases, 7 days a week. And I don't think there is anything that we could say here in this Congress which would ever adequately express the