move just a little bit about the civility issue in Congress.

I found a couple of quotes, one of which was from Winston Churchill who said, ''Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in the world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.''

None other than our first President, President George Washington, when he began, he wrote, ''Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior,'' and it is fun to thumb through this because some of them are telling us not to spit on the floor and make sure we go out clothed and all those things that I think we do do that all right. But the very first one that he has is, Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present. He also said, ''Think before you speak, pronounce not imperfectly, nor bring out your words too hastily, but orderly, distinctly.'' Those are wise, wise words, I think, from our very first President. I am sure that if he is in Mt. Vernon listening to us right now, or not us, but some of the debate that we have on the floor of the House, then he is not too proud at the level of disrespect that we sometimes show our colleagues.

So I want the thank you for joining with me in this effort. I want to say to all the other Members on both sides that we want this to be an ongoing practice, where we will pick a good topic that we can debate civilly and other such exercises, and we are going to grow this committee, the two of us, so we can return this body to the great esteem, the great integrity, the great respect and the great historical honor that I believe it is due. So I thank Mr. CLEAVER.

Mr. CLEAVER. I thank the gentlewoman. I actually have read George Washington's book on civility. RUSS CARNAHAN, my colleague from Missouri who is from St. Louis, gave me that book shortly after we arrived because I was talking all the time with many of the freshman Members about the issue, and so he very kindly gave me that book.

I think neither of us are likely to change our opinions on the tax cuts, and I think that people who watch, particularly Members of Congress, hopefully realize that talk does not have to be toxic, and in many instances, that is what has happened on this floor. The more convinced we are that our position is sound and moral and ethical and right, the less hostility we need to speak of it.

To give you an example, Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Junior, both believed so deeply in what they were doing and the moral world coming to their side that they were so civil that they were willing to be beaten and to even go to jail. They did not respond in kind to the things that were done, and so on this floor, if we believe deeply in what we are saying, that is even more reason to be civil.

When I was elected to this body, and my father and my sisters and my wife and our 4 children and nieces and nephews all came to Washington, I was very excited over the fact that I was elected to this body. Only 18,000 people in the history of this republic have been able to sit in this Chamber and debate, and we are the only office in the United States that must be elected. You can ascend to the presidency without being elected; you can ascend to the vice presidency; you can ascend to the Senate, to governors, to lieutenant governor, to the to the U.S. Senate and so forth. We have to be elected here.

□ 2145

If a vacancy occurs, nobody can appoint anyone. We have to be elected. That means that this is a special body. There is nothing like it.

And so I assumed when I came here I would join the likes of James G. Blaine and Cordell Hull, who came to this floor and demonstrated a wizardry of words. Once upon a time, the level of debate and oration in Congress was the envy of the world. We had the example of the silver-tongued spellbinders like Daniel Webster and John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. And the amazing thing that many Members of this body may not know is that Henry Clay was in the United States Senate, but became so enamored with the debate in the House, that he did something that people would never even think about doing today. He left the United States Senate to become a Member of the House of Representatives, to stand in that well to debate the great topics facing the Nation.

That is one of the things I thought about when I came to this body. Henry Clay was known as the great compromiser, not as the great bomb thrower, but the great compromiser. He is remembered in history because he knew how to work with people on all sides, a compromiser. And somehow we have to come to the conclusion if we want to be remembered, maybe, just maybe we can be remembered better for our ability to work with one another.

We had a situation when I first came here with 25 jobs being lost in Kansas City, and some people told me that I needed to go to war. We were going to lose it anyway, so I needed to go to war with a Republican, FRANK WOLF. It didn't sound right to me. So I did something that was completely stupid. I called FRANK WOLF on the phone, went to his office, we met, we talked about the issue, and he said, Cleaver, you're right.

Twenty-five jobs were saved because I refused to go to war with someone just because he was a member of the other party. And I am convinced that much more could be accomplished here if we worked together.

I have heard this story more than once. Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson are about to launch their Presidential races. Barry Goldwater calls the White House and made a request that would be laughed at today. He asked that he be allowed to ride around the country with LBJ on Air Force 1 and they would stop at various cities and debate the issues. That is the kind of leadership that we need now in this Congress.

I believe a part of the reason that the tone in this Chamber has plummeted so low is because the volume is too loud, literally. Too frequently Members fail to extend the courtesy of attentive and respectful listening to other Members when they speak on the floor. Too frequently volume is so loud in this Chamber with disrespectful and discourteous conversations that Members end up shouting to be heard, and that only contributes to the incivility here in the House.

Let me conclude by saying that as we were thinking about this debate, I looked at everything I could look at, and one of the things that surfaced was that civility derives from the Latin word civitas, which means city, especially in the sense of civic community. Civitas is the same word from which civilization comes, the age-old assumption behind civility is that life in the city has to be civilizing. People could not live in a city without civility. And I believe that we cannot and should not dare to walk into the people's House without a strong and irreversible commitment to civility.

I would like to thank the gentlewoman from West Virginia for this opportunity. I hope that next month we will have other Members of this body joining us for a discussion on something that we feel very passionate about, and will probably not convince the other side, but I think the public will benefit by the debate.

Mrs. CAPITO. I agree with the gentleman, and I have to say additionally that I am a mother of three, and I think sometimes that the lessons that we teach our children, when we come here, we have forgotten. We teach our children not to interrupt; we teach our children to show respect to their classmates and their parents; we teach our children to not say bad words; and we teach our children to listen or be quiet when other people are talking. I have even been in this Chamber when I have heard hissing at another Member when they are speaking.

So I pledge to you my cooperation, and I enjoy your eloquent words.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOMELAND SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to speak on two

different areas. I hope we get to both in this hour. This is a Special Order that has been organized for some of the Democratic freshmen, the new Members of Congress, and I rise first to say that I am very pleased to participate in this and to have helped organize it.

This is the third of our Special Orders, and we have done this because we do believe as new Members we come from a very diverse group. Many of us served at the local and State level. We come from very different backgrounds. Some of us are lawyers, some in academics, and some are ranchers. We are really very active members in our community, but we bring with us this experience at the local and State level, yet a fresh perspective on some of the major debates of the day.

We certainly bring with us a commitment to making sure that our homeland is as safe and secure as each and every American expects it to be, and that is certainly our first and foremost commitment. I and my colleagues really wanted to speak this evening both about the security of our homeland and also about our commitment to those men and women who have served this Nation in the armed services. Particularly as a Nation at war, we have tremendous respect for those who are actively serving, but want to remember as well that as they come home and that others who came before them also have a right to expect we will meet our commitments and our promises to them.

So what we are going to do first, we are going to try to split this hour, if we can, between the two different topics. So I will ask my colleague, John Salazar, a freshman, a veteran from the great State of Colorado, to speak. He has really been an outspoken leader amongst the freshmen on the issue of veterans.

So I will just close by saying that I am the daughter of a veteran. My father served in the Korean War. And I can tell you that my very first memory as a child was my father returning home when I was 5 years old. He came to school, I was in kindergarten, and he came to the public school to pick me up, and my brother, who was a year ahead of me in school, to greet us after not having seen him for 2 years. This man in uniform arrived at school, and I can tell you honestly that I did not recognize him.

So I also speak as a family member of a veteran. And I hope that we do have the opportunity this evening to talk about the sacrifice not only of our men and women in service but of their families as well. Because certainly the families are also committing themselves and sacrificing as well. And we do know, and I know we will talk about this, that the process of healing and of reinvigorating both the family and the veteran when they are back home is something that we all want to be committed to.

So I would like to now turn over the conversation, and I hope we can have a bit of dialogue, because I am joined my two of my colleagues, JOHN SALAZAR, as I said, who is going to talk about a number of issues; and then RUSS CARNAHAN from Missouri is also going to join us. We may be joined by others as we go through the evening, but the three of us, I hope, will able to have this conversation about our commitment and our belief in our promise to veterans of this country.

Mr. SALAZAR.

Mr. SALAZAR. I thank the gentlewoman and thank you for your commitment to our veterans in this great country.

Mr. Speaker, this country owes no greater debt of gratitude than it does to its veterans and military service personnel. Throughout the history of this great Nation, men and women have heard the call to service and have done so to defend freedom and democracy. I would like to take this time to personally express my gratitude to our veterans and our military men and women serving right now in places near and far around the globe.

When these brave men and women sign up for service in the military, our government makes certain promises to them, promises that are all too often forgotten or neglected later on. They are promised lifelong health care within the VA system, they are promised educational benefits, and they are promised that their spouses will be taken care of if they are killed in action or die from a service-connected cause. Mr. Speaker, I do not think that we are holding up our end of the bargain.

Let me just address a few of the failures that we have seen this year. Let me talk shortly about the budget shortfall.

This Congress, over the past year and a half, has been witness to monumental failures at the VA. First, we watched the VA come up short in its 2005 budget. We were told that the administration had not anticipated the number of claims from returning soldiers. A $1.5 billion budget shortfall is simply unacceptable.

I was happy when we passed emergency supplemental funding for our veterans which was not impaired. We cannot forget that part of the continuing cost of the war on terrorism is providing for our veterans. With that in mind, I offered an amendment to the Iraq war supplemental we passed earlier this year. In this bill, setting out billions of dollars for the ongoing cost of the war on terrorism, I asked for a mere $630 million to ensure that the VA did not fall short on its budget again this year. This amendment was ruled out of order during debate on the bill.

What is out of order, Mr. Speaker, is the short-sighted nature of the decision made by the majority and the administration. That $630 million seems like a small price to pay for mental health services, prosthetic research, and administrative support for those men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially when the VA is still seeing more returning servicemembers than they anticipated.

Let me talk briefly about the second failure, that of theft. On May 3, a laptop containing the personal information of 26.5 million veterans and 2.2 million active duty service personnel was stolen from the home of a VA employee. This sheds light on a severe problem within the VA. It took 19 days from the date of the theft for VA to notify Congress and the public.

I introduced H.R. 5588. This would allow for fraud alerts, credit freezes, credit monitoring, new notification requirements for VA, and it would require the VA to establish a new IT security protocol. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee marked up, just this last week, H.R. 5835, the Veterans Identity and Credit Security Act of 2006. It helps protect veterans by offering an assortment of credit protection tools, credit freezes, fraud alerts, monitoring, and it centralizes the VA IT security with a new Under Secretary position and new notification requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I would yield to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania to talk a little bit about the budget shortfalls within the VA system.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Well, I thank you, Mr. SALAZAR, for laying out some of the issues before us. As you know, I serve on the Budget Committee, and so we have had this debate about the Veterans Administration, veterans health care in particular.

And it is so easy for people to stand up for veterans. We all do this. On Veterans Day we go and visit with our veterans. I know for you it is probably true, for me as well, I will be stopped sometimes on the street by a veteran who will tell me about his service and who will feel strongly and deeply committed.

One little aside, if I may. I actually brought three veterans together who had not ever received their medals. One actually was receiving the medal for a deceased brother who had never gotten it. It was a really wonderful moment. They brought their families. One brought three generations with them.

What was interesting is they all started talking to each other, and I asked if they knew each other, and they said, no. Two of them had actually served in World War II and one had served in Vietnam. So they didn't even know each other, yet there was a comradery and an understanding and a commitment and a caring they had for each other that was so clearly expressed. It was a wonderful moment to acknowledge their service to this country.

□ 2200

But those are the good moments, I think, when you interact with veterans. But there are the other ones where they say, What is going on with the veterans health care I get? I am

standing in line for my prescription medicine. I have to pay more. Are there shortages? Why does the Veterans Administration not have the resources that it should when we have the President standing up both with active servicemen and with veterans and they voice respect. We have got to turn that respect and commitment into the hard dollars that say we are going to meet these problems for the Veterans Administration.

We have a Veterans Administration hospital in Philadelphia that does a fine, fine job. But I can tell you, and I give some credit to Congress on this, that we did already increase the level of funding for the Veterans Administration from what the President had proposed. So already we said that is not adequate. We will not accept that budget. And we spoke up for veterans. But nonetheless, there are not cuts this year, but there are cuts in later years for the Veterans Administration. So that is certainly not meeting the commitment that even if we do not cut it this year, we are cutting it in future years. That means that the Veterans Administration, veterans hospitals, will not be able to know that they are going to be able to be there for veterans when we have now veterans coming back, of course, who are now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So we are going to see some real shortfalls, and you may speak to this as well, but we are seeing a proposal by the President again this year to add fees for veterans when they come for health care, that they should have to pay. We have had to fight this enrollment fee once a year. They have to pay that. They have to pay additional fees when they see a see a physician. And we know that many of our veterans have come back with serious injuries, with certainly mental health problems, which I know you will want to talk about a little bit later as well. But in serving on the Budget Committee, we have been able to make some of these changes. We have to give some of the hard dollars, but I think really the issue here is that they are such big numbers but if we are talking about a number here of $8.6 billion below the funding that we saw previously, those are real dollars in the care and attention that our veterans deserve. And they will see the effects unless we fight back and demand that we are going to meet this commitment to veterans.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman.

If the gentlewoman will continue to yield, today I would also like to address the issue of backlogs, and I would like to mention another troubling fact that we are facing with the VA backlogs. We have patients that are seeking medical attention and they are on waiting lists, and these waiting lists can take as long as 180 days to get through. Can't we do better than 180 days?

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you a story about a friend of mine, classmate of mine in high school, who served in the military at the same time as I did. He called me when I was a State representative Colorado and mentioned that he couldn't get in to see a VA doctor and that he was having massive chest pains. And it was shortly after that that we were finally able to get him into the VA hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And we were lucky because what the doctors told him was that if he had not gotten the immediate medical attention, he would have died within 5 days. They performed heart bypass surgery, five bypasses, the next day.

So it scares me that nearly 25 percent of the cases that are waiting have been pending over 180 days. I think this means that almost 100,000 veterans in this country have been waiting to find out how they can access the system. And I do not think that that even begins to account for the hundreds of thousands of vets waiting just to get in to see a doctor. Mr. Speaker, I think this is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, not to interrupt, but if I may reclaim my time, I want to talk about the number of veterans. My staff did a little bit of work here to just say that there are six States that have over 1 million veterans in their State alone. And in Pennsylvania, we have the fourth highest number of veterans in our State. We have over 1 million veterans in Pennsylvania alone. And I can look up Colorado. I am sure the gentleman will be interested. There are 427,000 veterans in Colorado.

I should check Missouri too because we have Mr. CARNAHAN with us. And we were talking about over 500,000 veterans.

So these are actual people living in our States asking for asking for health care, as you say, on waiting lists, going to the pharmacy, being asked to pay for more prescription drugs, being asked to pay an enrollment fee to get their health care, and not assured that they are going to get the kind of health care that you are saying is really lifesaving.

Mr. SALAZAR. I thank the gentlewoman, and that is correct. In my district alone, I have 75,000 veterans that we service.

When the VA actually made the original budget, they had figured that they would treat one out of every five veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan for mental disabilities. It now turns out that they are treating one out of every three.

So with that I would like the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania to talk a little bit about the mental health and the posttraumatic stress disorder that veterans have when they come back from such terrible wars.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is one area where I think we, in the broader sense, certainly the military itself, the different branches, have recognized better than they have ever before that there is actually very serious stress-related illnesses and recognize that and try to make some services available. I think that in the years past, we basically said you come back from war and just go home and get a job and go back to your family and you will be fine. And, in fact, our young men and women, and they are young and women, we are talking about 19, 20-year-olds, 21-year-olds, some who have had some life experiences before but they are being put in a very difficult position, being asked to make very tough choices. They perform admirably. They perform wonderfully. We are proud of each and every one of them.

But many of them use such strength to do that while they are in harm's way and then come back and say now, how do I think about what I have done for the last 18 months, the last couple of years, how do I integrate that with the life I have now? So they are coming back in larger numbers. Some of the statistics of mental health experts indicate that between 17 and 26 percent of our troops returning from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan may experience symptoms of post traumatic stress syndrome, and what that means is that they deserve and need counseling; that counseling should be made available through the Veterans Administration. And when we see cutbacks, it is just unacceptable to think that we might actually leave a veteran with that kind of serious disorder really on their own.

And that is really what we are experiencing. And I know that we, as Democrats, have brought up amendments to try to address that to make sure that there are counseling services available, more active services available, mental health services. These are, as we know, illnesses that we really need to make sure, particularly in a post-deployment situation, that they receive screening and diagnosis and that no one goes without the care that they actively deserve.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk a little bit about our GI Bill of Rights for the 21st century.

The promise that was made to our servicemen and women with respect to education, I think, should be kept. As it stands now, Reserve and National Guard soldiers are not eligible for the same educational benefits as active-duty personnel. This disparity of access is simply unacceptable. Currently, close to 50 percent of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are National Guardsmen and Reservists.

House Democrats are introducing the new GI Bill of Rights for the 20th Century to honor the bravery of our troops and the tremendous sacrifices that their families have made. The National Guard and Reserves have made extraordinary contributions, making up about 50 percent of the troops in Iraq.

The new GI Bill of Rights honors that contribution with provisions that protect their income, to help more than 40 percent of those call up who have suffered pay cuts to serve our country. We

have had stories of families that are struggling because they are not making the same amount of money since the spouse left and he is off fighting a war and taking a pay cut. Stories of soldiers losing their homes and families out on the street. I think this is totally unacceptable.

It also expands military health care to provide full access to TRICARE, the military health care program, to all members of the Guard and Reserve and their families for a low fee.

Finally, the package improves recruitment and retention incentives and bonuses for the reserves so that they are more equitable relative to those of the active-duty components.

□ 2210

Not only is this just and fair, I think it is necessary, given the recruiting and retention problems facing the Reserve and National Guard these days.

While I am proud to say that House Democrats have taken the lead on this issue, we will not be able to realize this reform without the support of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I look forward to working with all Members of this House, as well as our Nation's military and service organizations.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN) to talk a little bit about the VA employees.

Mr. CARNAHAN. It is good to join you tonight, my fellow Members from the freshman class of 2004.

This obviously is something that when I go back home to Missouri, whether I am at a Veterans' Day function or a 4th of July function and I talk to our veterans that have served so well and so ably, this touches their hearts. They are so proud of their service and what they have done to make our country what it is today.

But there is a certain element of surprise when they talk about the disappointment that the government is not doing everything it should to take care of our current veterans, but also to take care of this new generation of veterans that we are producing in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

We have a VA hospital back home in St. Louis. Like many of our colleagues, we hear continued concerns about the access and the service. I have seen a statistic that more than 60,000 veterans today are waiting more than 6 months for an appointment at a VA hospital.

Part of what we have proposed as Democrats in this House is to increase funding by $1 billion to the VA to help address those issues, the resource issues and the priority issues, and also to require the VA to pay veterans $500 a month when their disability claims have been left pending for over 6 months. They should not have to suffer because the government does not have the resources or has not made it a priority to take care of them.

Our employees at the VA work in this environment of decreasing budgets, crippling administration policies and overall neglect. The administration has, frankly, misplaced priorities, and we see that on the ground when we talk to folks back home every day. I am sure you have seen that, the gentleman from Colorado and the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, when you talk to your veterans and veterans organizations back home.

I believe it is our job as Members of this body, and it is not just the Democrats' job, it is the job of everybody in this House that represents people back home. This should be, if anything, a unifying issue and a unifying cause in this Congress, taking care of those who have served our country and made it what it is today.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. I think the gentleman makes a really both good point too, that in fact one of our responsibilities, and I just heard the debate earlier on how to be civil in our disagreements, and there is strong disagreement between the two members who were speaking, but they were certainly civil.

But this is one where I think again the rhetoric about our support for veterans is fairly universal, and I think that is a good thing. But we have to build on that to find a way to meet this commitment and to be realistic about what this commitment means. The commitment means that we not only make a commitment for this year, but we do a budget for 5 years and we make a commitment for 5 years, and we say to the veterans hospitals that you are going to have the resources. We say to veterans that you won't have to wait 6 months and you won't have to pay a 40 percent increase in your fees that you are paying.

It gets complicated. We have all probably had calls in our offices about different levels of disability and what you get paid or what you don't and how you get your care through the Veterans Administration. It is complicated, and maybe that is appropriate.

But certainly from our point of view, I think you are right, this has to be a commitment that we make as Democrats and Republicans, because certainly when our men and women go to war, they are not going as Republicans or Democrats, they are going as Americans, and our commitment has to be to veterans, all of whom are Americans, all of whom deserve not just our respect, but the hard core services that we have told them they will get and they should be able to get.

I very much agree with you that we have to find those dollars and we have to find them in a responsible way. All of us up here are for a balanced budget, but this is not about spending money we don't have. It is about our priorities and making sure we put those dollars in priorities as we articulated them.

Mr. CARNAHAN. There is a new set of challenges out there, not just taking care of our current veterans, but this new generation of veterans that are coming back with unique challenges.

You mentioned posttraumatic stress issues that we have seen really cropping up from many who have served. But the other thing we witnessed firsthand in a delegation that traveled to Iraq last year, the doctors there in the military hospitals told us many more soldiers are being saved from battle injuries, dramatically more are being saved. Although we are having fewer lost lives, we are having more lost limbs, and although technology has improved in terms of prosthetic devices, there will be a whole new generation of these veterans coming out of service that will need those kind of specialized services, and we cannot let them down.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I would like to just tell you a little story of someone who was my hero, and that was my father. He was a World War II staff sergeant who served during the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

When he was 82 years old, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. As the disease progressed, he slowly started to forget things. But about the age of 84, one morning we were sitting around my mother's kitchen table there and we heard my father fumbling back in his bedroom, and he came out shortly after that and in his hand he had his World War II staff sergeant uniform. He told us, ''I want to be buried in this uniform.''

We are taught not to argue with Alzheimer's patients, so we said, ''Sure dad, no problem.'' But as the disease progressed even more and more, he started forgetting more things. But every now and then he would bring up the fact, ''Please, I want to be buried in my uniform.''

Anyway, at the age of 86 he suffered a massive heart attack. My mother called me and I rushed over to the house, and I remember that when I picked him up from the floor to put him on the gurney to take him to the hospital, with the very last ounce of strength that he had in his body he reached up around my neck and he told me that he loved me, and the very last word that my father ever said to me was ''uniform.''

We buried my father in his uniform. But to many veterans, the only thing that they have to hold on to is this great country, because they served with such pride and passion. So it is our duty as Members of Congress now to keep our promise to those veterans.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I commend my colleagues for their work and dedication to preserving the benefits of our Nation's veterans. We must never forget the sacrifice that they have made in the defense of freedom.

On a personal note, I would like to express my most heartfelt gratitude to Congressman LANE EVANS, our distinguished ranking member on the Veterans Committee. Lane is a Marine who fought hard for veterans, and he has been a true inspiration and mentor to me in my first term here in Congress. I know that I will miss him, as many of us will, and I wish him the best of luck in retirement.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and you are more than welcome to stay with us if you are willing to as we switch gears.

Let me first of all let me thank you for sharing your personal story. I think that it is important for us to think about what compels us to do what we do. Sometimes sharing a personal story, we don't always remember to do it. So I thank you for your willingness to do that. I hope that all of us are fortunate enough to have parents that inspire us. You were fortunate certainly in that.

We did want to take the discussion about that and talk about another area that we are deeply concerned about, and certainly has been very much a topic of concern for all of us here in Congress and I think for all Americans, and again certainly as I go around my district, I am well aware of the fact that we are in changed world.

Since 9/11/2001 and the terrorist attacks on our Nation, we recognize, if we didn't before, but certainly for most Americans we recognize that we are under a threat from terrorism in this world and that we have a responsibility, and here we speak again about responsibility, but we have a responsibility not just to talk about the fear maybe or the reality of that fear, but to actually talk about what can we do about it. How can we do more to make sure that our homeland is safe and what do we mean by that.

It is taking the very real challenges and the tragedy of 9/11, and I will say also the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, and whether in fact we were as prepared as we needed to be. Did we respond as comprehensively as we should have. I think most of us believe we did not, that there was more that should have been done.

□ 2220

But we need to take these tragedies and we need to say, to examine very, very clearly, and make a clear cut assessment about whether, in fact, we are doing all that we can to make sure that we are more secure.

That means being sensible. I think that is what I would really like to talk about this evening, is not just spending the dollars, because we have spent quite a bit of Federal taxpayer dollars on homeland security initiatives.

We have to make sure that as a Federal Government we can work with the local, and State officials to make sure that we are secure where we are vulnerable. That means making the right kind of assessments, sharing what works across jurisdictional lines, and demanding that kind of assessment and a plan for readiness. I come from an area, I representative southeastern Pennsylvania, part of the City of Philadelphia, part of the suburbs, so my region is home to a major seaport, a major airport, a major rail station. We are multi county and tri-state. We are talking about literally not just a million and a half people who live in Philadelphia, but the millions of people who come in and out of the city to work every day, roads and highways.

We are talking about volunteer fire companies in some of the suburban part of my district, and a major urban city fire company. We are talking about police that work in a rail station, we are talking about police who work in the city, we are talking about suburban police officers, we have State police.

These are numerous jurisdictions, all of who have had to try and figure out what is the best way for them to be prepared in the case of some kind of tragedy, such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. And I want to be, I guess I want to say positively, is that we have taken this seriously and we have done much more than we might have.

But where the failure is is the lack of leadership from the Federal Government to help make sure that we have the right kind of assessments done in each of our vulnerable areas. I mentioned our ports, I mentioned our rail stations, I mention our airports, and that we are providing the guidance and instructions and the assistant at the local levels, and the dollars and resource that they need to make sure that they are prepared, so we are not duplicating where we do not have to, we are being smart where we have to.

I will give one example, then I would just ask my colleagues to take an area that they might be interested in. I would like to have a little bit more of a conversation. But one of the areas that I have been particularly concerned about is one called interoperability. It is one of those terms I am not sure I even knew about a few years ago.

But the fact is, that it is one that we use much more. This is how we get, how we communicate, how our emergency personnel will be able to communicate in a disaster.

And the fact is that in the analysis after 9/11, one of the things that we knew is that we did not have a way for all of our emergency personnel to talk to each other, to communicate. We do not, in fact, know how many firefighters or police officers might have been saved if we could have actually communicated in the Towers, the World Trade Center.

We know that even here in Washington, we heard stories afterward, that the Capitol Police could not talk to the city police, because they do not have a way to communicate. So I have been working locally with the regional subway system, because the fact is, that our city police cannot talk to the rail police underground.

Now, that is very upsetting to hear about. If we had to call SEPTA police, that is our Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority police, as capable as they may be, if they need to call in for back-up, this is not a scenario that we cannot imagine, because unfortunately we have seen it happen in London, we have seen it happen in Madrid, we have seen most recently a rail tragedy in Bombay, India.

So we know this can happen. But we do not have an ability right now for them to be able to talk to each other. And I think that is unacceptable. I think that the Federal Government should have said, here are the best ways to do it. We have looked at it. We have examined it. This is the way it has been done elsewhere. Those are options that you have. This is a spectrum we will dedicate to emergency responders and be able to have them talk to each other, and here are the dollars to make it happen.

In fact, their application was denied. You know, I do not understand that. I do not understand how the Federal Government can say it is not a priority, that our fifth largest city's transit system does not meet this requirement. It is not acceptable.

And we can give example after example of these situations. We had big issues with the port security and whether we actually inspect all of cargo. We do not. Are we doing the assessment on foreign ports? We can use the example of ports. We can use the example of even in the airports where we spend serious dollars, not all of our cargo is inspected.

And yet, we still go round and round whether enough is being done, where are the regulations, where are the help we need from the Federal level. We have issues around identity cards. The Port of Wilmington, not far from me, did a demonstration project. And we still just, after Congress was pushing the administration, finally got them to decide what that national security card would look like for people, for workers going into our ports.

So I am, I mean, I can probably take up the next 20 minutes all by myself. But I will not do that. But as a new Member, we can bring our commitment to securing this country. But we also bring maybe a little bit of impatience and outrage because we are new at this. I come in and I say, wait a minute, it is 5 years since 9/11. We just got a report from the 9/11 Commission. There were far too much Cs, Ds and Fs on that report of what has not yet been done.

So we can be critical. This is less about being critical than figuring out a way to make it happen and to get it done. Because my constituents, your constituents are counting on us to demand that accountability from our administration, to demand that effectiveness from these dollars, and to make sure that we can say back to them, this is the plan we have for assessing our risk, this is the plan that we have for meeting the demands to meet that and reduce that risk, and here is what we are going to do to make sure that we have the resources, the trained personnel and the equipment and the know how to make sure that we are as safe as we possibly can be in this country.

It is just not acceptable to do any less than that. So with that bit of introduction, if I may, if my colleagues want to join me. There may be some local issues that you have as well. But I think each and every one of us can point to ways in which our own communities need to be more secure, how we can learn from each other and how we have to recognize the shared risk that we have for some of the greatest vulnerabilities that we have in this country.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I would really just echo some of the comments that you made about interoperability. When I have met with our police and firefighters, our emergency personnel, our front line responders back home, I mean they tell me that loud and clear. I mean, they are not only being given greater responsibility and greater burdens and greater costs to do all of those things we are asking them to do, but they are getting insufficient help to do it.

If there is anybody that I have ever seen as committed to their jobs, with passion and belief in what they are doing, it is those public servants. They are some of the best. But so they tell us that loud and clear.

The 9/11 Commission identified interoperability of communications as critical, critical to effectively respond to a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. And yet in response to what we hear locally, what the 9/11 Commission has done, the administration did not request any funds or grants to enhance interoperability.

Again, I think a very big disconnect from what the vital need is on the ground in our communities. And certainly, if you look at, I want to mention port security, as the Port of St. Louis is the second largest inland port in our country. I have followed that closely.

But there has been underfunding in the port security program. It has been eliminated. And it has just been put in with a pool of other security measures, along with rail, mass transit and other infrastructure. So it is competing with other separate programs instead of having its own stand-alone designated funding.

□ 2230

And cargo security did not receive any increase, and the entity that is charged with performing security checks did so in only 13 percent of the 10,000 companies that it is charged with checking. And, again, with regard to our ports, the President's budget has delayed by 25 years the overall development of the Coast Guard cutters and aircraft that we are using to patrol our ports and coastlines. So, again, I think there is a very big disconnect between the clear needs we see on the ground, the discussion we hear in Washington among Members from both sides of the need to take care of our homeland security, and the budget priorities that we have seen the administration present.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. If the gentleman would yield, I think you have raised a really good point here. I am on the Budget Committee, and when I saw that in fact we saw port security cut and this was just after the scandal about whether in fact we would allow our ports to be managed by a foreign company, which I think raised some benefit of that discussion in that it raised real awareness I think for many Americans where we think about our airports of course because of 9/11, and there is work still to be done there. But we found that, and in fact we do know better how we can do port security, but I also have some of the numbers that show that in fact only 6 percent of containers entering U.S. ports are screened.

Now, you have some debate about whether to do 100 percent or not, and there are many of us who think we have to do some kind of screening of every bit of cargo. But 6 percent, what is that about?

Well, when I visited the port in Philadelphia, one of the things that people said to me, and it is interesting that the more we have assurance that the port of origin does the kind of screening that they need to do, that we have a relationship with that port and that nation, the better off we are, that we can be secure before cargo leaves the port of origin before it even comes here. First of all, it will speed things up because I hear from my business people that the longer cargo sits in the port, every day they lose money. They pay for that cargo the minute it leaves the foreign port, that costs them money.

So we have to be more efficient about this, but we have to get it right as well. And, again, here is where some technology can help, here is where, as I understand it, that we have only 20 people in the Coast Guard who are assessing security at 135 foreign ports. Well, that can't be adequate. That can't do what we know we need, which is to make sure that the screening as the cargo gets loaded in foreign ports before it even gets here is making us more secure.

So, again, we have learned certain things in the last 5 years. That is the good thing. But we have to put that knowledge to work to make sure that we can move commerce through our ports and also be secure. We have to be anticipating the real risks. We can't just be looking backwards.

Mr. SALAZAR. In the transportation committee, we have asked for an $18 million supplemental to construct an above-ground tunnel for the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, Colorado. These are the folks that actually do the first responder training in many instances. You have seen the bombings of the subways in Europe, and you look at how vulnerable we are here in this country. And being able to construct that tunnel, we can train our first responders in such a way that we don't have to interrupt our subway services.

But I would like to talk a little bit also about something that is very near and dear to my heart when it comes to national security. I think that one of the most critical issues in national security is to make sure that this country never becomes dependent on another country to produce our food, as we have become dependent on other countries to produce our oil. So it really bothers me when, for example, in the ag committee we who are there to represent agriculture begin cutting programs that actually keep farmers and ranchers on the land, and farmers and ranchers who produce the greatest food supply in the world. And so I think that is critical. We must make sure that farmers and ranchers stay on the land and we have an adequate food supply.

You saw what happened when, during the first Gulf War when Saddam Hussein's troops had to give up because they didn't have enough food to eat. Let that never happen to our troops.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. I appreciate the comments, and it is a perspective that wasn't on my list of things mentioned. So I appreciate that. I think that is an important aspect, that we are self-sufficient, that we are able to take care of ourselves, certainly in an emergency that we are prepared.

And I think that you also raise a really good point about the training that we need for our first responders. Mr. CARNAHAN I think mentioned that we all go and visit our fire companies and police. And I will say here again, the good news is that they recognize the need for more training and equipment. They have said to us, and they sometimes proudly say this is the additional training. I have a group in part of my district that has joined together to talk to each other, to do emergency management training, because they realize particularly in the suburban part of my district, probably have it more so in some of the rural parts of our country where you really aren't going to be able to manage it all alone, so you need to be able to work with other fire companies, with the counties even to be able to call them in, to be able to know what to do in that.

And we just had some very serious flooding in this country and certainly in my area just outside of my district, but I went to visit anyway. And one of the things they said to me was they were very proud of the fact that, because of the planning they had done, they were better prepared than they had ever been before. And that was a really important thing. They said they had never before set aside a command center, that they knew exactly who was supposed to staff that command center. They knew who to call, who would bring the food. They had the volunteer services that could be helpful. But they also knew who and what kind of equipment in adjoining areas that could really help them get right on top of things right away. And they know

that that eased the urgency of the situation for many of the people who lived in that area.

And yet, again, we need to make sure that the Federal Government, this is what the Department of Homeland Security was set up to do, was to make sure that we don't have everyone just reinventing the wheel. That just shouldn't be the way it is. It is not the most efficient use of money. We should be making sure that there are countywide plans, that there are statewide plans, that there is a sense that maybe not everyone needs to have every piece of equipment. How do you actually join together? Do you do that across regional lines? Who do you call and how do you make that work?

But we have seen in fact a cut in some of these security grants. And how can that be, when in fact we can all say that we are not finished with this task of making sure that we are as secure as we need to be in this country.

So I open it up to some of the comments you may have in some of your own experiences in your own districts.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I would like to follow up on the issue of the screening of containers. You know, as we said, there is just a small fraction of this gigantic volume of containers coming into our ports. And they are not only coming into our ports, but then they are being loaded on trucks or barges and then they are scattering throughout our country. So it is critical we get on top of that.

We had an opportunity in this House to vote on an amendment that would have required 100 percent of the containers coming in this country to be scanned before they came into our country and were distributed. And shockingly, to me, we were not able to pass that. You know, the Democrats in the minority here, we are in favor of that; it was defeated by the majority here.

But the granddaddy of being out of touch with our port security was when the President proposed turning certain of our port operations over to a foreign entity. Again, just a whopper of being out of touch, particularly given where we are in this country today. And I think we saw the public rise up, we saw this Congress eventually rise up to say, you know, no. You know, that is not good for us right now. We can't do that and we shouldn't.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. And just on the port, I was very much a part of the argument in that regard, too. And I think again it brought some greater attention to the fact of port security and both what has been done positively and what more we need to do. But to think that after 5 years we have still only appropriated 16 percent of what the Coast Guard has told us they need to enhance port security over the next 10 years. I mean, this is something they are telling us, their expertise, this is what we need to do. And the President actually proposed eliminating $173 million in port security grants.

I argued that and presented an amendment to the Budget Committee to restore some of those grants. One of the things that happens, I was going to call it a trick, I suppose that may not be the nicest thing to call it, is if you put all these grant programs together and cut it, you can say I didn't really cut that particular program; I just put these three or four grant programs together and reduced the overall amount and someone else can decide later what we are going to cut. That is still a cut.

□ 2240

We have to understand that there are very serious issues before us. Again, I think we are talking about being fiscally responsible here—we have a priority and what we actually want the dollars to do, the right things that we really need to do.

I do want to mention the earlier remarks because there was something I also learned from the visits in my district, and that is, that this is an identity card. We have talked a lot about that in different circumstances, but one in which we all agree on, Republicans and Democrats, is that we will have a worker ID card. We actually understand we were not sure what should go into that, the information that should go into it, who should produce it, how it can work. We have literally then tens of hundreds of thousands of workers coming in and out of our ports every day across this country, and yet, the idea that we are going to scan all this cargo but then anyone can just come in and out of the ports, driving a truck, is something I think certainly not something any of us find acceptable.

So, in fact, it has taken 4 years and Congress has had to push this administration really, really hard. There has been pressure from Congress to get the administration finally just really recently to approve and decide what that card would look like.

Now, I think that should have been years ago. I am grateful it just was done, but I think it speaks to our responsibility as Members of Congress to keep asking the tough questions, demanding that accountability, demanding that high performance and demanding that high level of government provide the leadership to our local communities, to our ports, to our airports, to our rail, and not just to walk away and take too long.

One of the things we do not want to have happen is for us to say let us keep waiting, let us keep waiting, and then have some tragedy happen we were not prepared for, fully knowing that we could have been prepared if we had taken quicker action.

Mr. SALAZAR. Can I ask a question here. This identity card that you are talking about, is this a biometric type of ID system, and will every American have to carry that?

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. No. These are just for workers. These are for people who are employed by the ports or employed by a company that is actually coming in and out of the ports. These are for the workers.

The problem is they do not go through the screening as much then. These ID cards get very sophisticated. They have a lot of information on them, but the idea here is that anyone who is working in a port, and as I understand, there are workers who actually go from port to port or go from different destinations, so some of this is also, again, to keep the commerce flowing. The idea here is not to make things more difficult, to be able to actually move things more efficiently, more quickly, but to do so with a sense of security because we have the technology to do that.

So this is basically a little more information, but it is like showing any kind of driver's license, or it is a special ID that says, yes, you have been screened, you have gone through the background checks to allow you to work in a sensitive area. This is something that is important to our ports and our airports as well, and that the workers who work there every day actually have an ID card that can be scanned quickly and that they can actually be able to flow back and forth very easily but that we can be secure it is someone who we know will not engage in any kind of criminal behavior, let alone terrorist behavior.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I wanted to say also, I think it is so critical that we listen to our first responders. I think the administration and some in this Congress have really, I think, turned a deaf ear to many of these concerns. If they listened to those first responders, I think we would see very different actions coming out of the White House and coming out of this Congress.

Also, listen to the bipartisan experts. Some of the best experts in our country came together in a bipartisan way to make these recommendations on the 9/11 Commission that have yet to be fully implemented. It is really unconscionable to me.

So Democrats have committed, from our leadership all the way down, when the new Congress comes in January, to make that one of our top priorities in January, in our new Congress, to fully implement those recommendations in the 9/11 Commission report. I think it is just critical to our country and to really get these sound recommendations through this Congress, supporting those front-line responders that have told us what they need and what works in their communities.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Maybe that is a good way to sort of wind up the conversation we are having, but first let me say, I think we are all saying thanks just out of tremendous respect for the great work that has been done by our police and our firefighters and our emergency personnel, and they are on the front lines, and they are getting additional training. They are working very hard to make this happen.

As I said, I have been impressed locally at some of the work that has been done in their planning, but the 9/11 Commission just simply, I think, as Democrats, we have said our first priorities would be to address some of the shortcomings, and that includes interoperability for all of our first responders, fire and police personnel.

Second, it would be to coordinate local, State and Federal emergency response planning, that we would make sure that the administration provide local and State governments with the tools and the guidance to better secure our communities and make sure communities are secure and that we ensure that the administration makes strategic and risk-based decisions about how our homeland security dollars are spent so that we are smart, we use common sense and that we use these dollars in the most effective, wisest way possible.

In that way, we can stand up here and I hope we can months from now, a year from now, be able to say, you know, we got these things done because it was not just a broad rhetorical commitment, it was putting our dollars, putting our expertise to work for the American people to make sure that our homeland is as secure as we all deserve.

With that, I want to thank the gentlemen who joined me this evening for your willingness to do the freshman Special Order, and I look forward to being able to do it again, possibly in September, but thank you and thank you for your commitment to both the veterans of this country and also to the homeland security needs of this Nation.

RECENT EVENTS IN ISRAEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for half the time remaining until midnight.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege to address you, and in doing so, Mr. Speaker, the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

I come to the floor tonight to address the subject matter that has had the world sitting on the edge of its seat and somewhat transfixed for the last about 13 days, those days that the military actions began in Israel. I take us back and lay some of the groundwork on that and perhaps lay some of the framework of the history that has brought us to this point and as fellows travelers in the world.

Israel was established as a Nation in 1948. The many thousands and thousands of refugees from the Second World War, those that survived the Holocaust, the Shoah, from the Nazi attack and the Nazi hatred, the Nazi anti-Semitism, the Nazi bigotry and the deep, seems to be abiding, anti-Semitism that I do not understand that some in the Western European culture, in fact, that anti-Semitism that seems to be growing from those roots yet today, not just the Muslims that have migrated into Western Europe, but also the native Western Europeans do not stand up and defend Israel in the fashion that I believe they should because we have a lot in common with Israel.

They are a free country. They are a democratic country, and aside from Iraq, they are still the only place in that hemisphere, let me say the only place in the Middle East, where an Arab can go to get a fair trial is in Israel.

Israel is a Nation established in 1948, approval by the United Nations, but a Nation that was carved out in a fight for freedom. It was a glorious fight, and it was one that was brought from the theme never again, never, never again will they allow an annihilation, a genocide to take their people.

That is why we stand with them today, Mr. Speaker. We stand with the Israelis because they stand for freedom, and because they elect their leaders and they come together in the Knesset, and they have a prime minister and they choose their national destiny.

But they have enemies that surround them, enemies all around them, and that was proven in 1967, the 6 Days War, and this has helped frame, for me, the history of Israel and their defiant, brave, courageous leadership that has kept them sovereign and kept them free.

□ 2250

But that happened to be the year I graduated from high school, and that was the year, as things happened, that was burned into my memory.

And not that long after that, in 1973, the second war, second great war that Israel had after their independence, where once again they prevailed over their enemies and they established their boundaries and justly earned territory. It was the effort of their enemies around them, the Arab nations that surrounded them, to drive the Israelis into the sea, to annihilate Israel, and to wipe Israel from the face of the Earth.

In fact, they still deny the reality of the existence of a sovereign and free country called Israel. It doesn't show up on the maps in many of the Arab nations. They will not acknowledge that since 1948, that would be 58 years, they still don't acknowledge that Israel is a sovereign nation.

In fact, if you look at the United Nations, resolution after resolution, Mr. Speaker, comes to the United Nations, and that Third World-class enemy debate society lines up invariably with resolutions against Israel. They aren't rooted in justice, Mr. Speaker. They are rooted in bigotry and hatred and anti-Semitism.

There is something the Arabs cannot explain to me when I ask them the question, Why do your people hate Israel so much? It is rooted deeper in history than I have been able to unravel, but I know it exists today.

I had a high school student in my office not that long ago from Oman, and I asked him if he believed Israel had a right to exist; and his answer was, no, I don't believe they do. I said, what would you do with the Israelis? And he said, rather flippantly, send them to Oregon. I said, well, if that doesn't work, to send them to Oregon, what would your next alternative be? He said, I don't care what happens. They have no reason to be there; they have no right to exist as a nation.

It is one little piece of real estate on the entire Earth. Isn't there one place in all that continent, in all of the Middle East, in all of Africa where they can live in peace and safety without their enemies seeking to annihilate them? Such has not been the case, Mr. Speaker. Yet the Israelis have bent over backwards and have tried time after time after time, with peace accord after peace accord, to try to find a way to come to peace with their neighbors.

I think sometimes they try so hard that they do some things that don't appear to be something that is predictable and predictably positive. For example, the efforts of land for peace, as we watched this unfold and we saw Israel give up a piece of real estate here and a small piece of real estate there, but also looked to see where they needed to defend themselves.

And one of those places would be the Golan Heights. The Golan Heights sits up above the Jordan River Valley, up near Lebanon. I have been up there in the Golan Heights. They were occupied by Syria. The Syrians put gun emplacements up there. The Jordan River Valley is flat and fertile and beautiful, and the Syrians would sit up on those heights and they would take target practice against the Israeli farmers that were out in the field.

It is something to sit in those gun emplacements now and look down over that valley and see what the Syrians were looking at as they were picking off Israeli farmers who were trying to feed the people in their country. It is something to meet a widow whose husband was killed there as he went out into the field to try to get the farmers off the field and get them to safety as the Syrians, just for no reason, seemed to open up fire occasionally and begin to shoot at Israelis that were farming in the fields.

It is something to see what it is like for a nation that is surrounded by enemies, and sometimes strategically have a disadvantage because of elevation, because of certain tactical situations that they have, and to see a nation try so hard to come to peace with their neighbors.

It is something to watch the Israelis pull out of the Gaza Strip and cede that piece of ground to the Palestinians. What is also something to watch is when there is a free election in Palestine, the area I guess that is referred