

an opportunity. And it is important to note with the difficulties of the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan that Pakistan's soldiers have lost their lives, and it was the Pakistan Government that gave to England the tip on the individual that broke the British terrorist act with the fluids.

So it is important, Madam Speaker, as I close, that we work with those who want to work with us. Let's stop the false promises. Let's fight the war on terror. Let's bring our troops home.

□ 2000

RESTORING ACCOUNTABILITY AND FISCAL DISCIPLINE

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

Mr. ROSS. Madam Speaker, this evening I rise on behalf of the 37 member strong, fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. There are 37 of us that have come to Washington to try to give this Congress a good dose of common sense, especially as it relates to restoring accountability and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

As you can see here, today the United States' national debt is \$8,518,180,439,082 and some change. If you divide that number by every man, woman, and child in America, our share, each of us, of the national debt is \$28,504. And, Mr. Speaker, where I come from, not many of us would be able to find that kind of money to pay back our share of the national debt. And I contend, Mr. Speaker, that the American people, it is wrong to ask them to pay for this out-of-control reckless spending that we have seen from this President and this Republican Congress.

As a small child growing up, I always heard it was the Democrats that spent the money and that it was the Republicans that were fiscally responsible. Then I came to Congress and I learned the truth. It was from 1998 to 2001, under a President named Bill Clinton, that this country saw its first balanced budget and had surpluses. It was the first time in 40 years that a Democrat or a Republican had done that. And this President, this Republican Congress, I might add that this is the first time in over 50 years the Republicans have controlled the White House, House, and Senate, and what have they done? They have given us the largest debt ever, ever, in our Nation's history, \$8,518,180,439,082 and some change. Again, for every man, woman, and child in America, for each of us, our share of the national debt is \$28,504.

Why do I raise this issue? Because it is time the American people know the truth. I raise it out of concern for the future of my country, our country. I raise it out of concern for my children, your children, your grandchildren be-

cause it is they who will be left to foot the bill for this out-of-control spending and lack of fiscal discipline that we are seeing from this Republican-led Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am sick and tired of all the partisan bickering we hear and see in our Nation's capital. I don't care if it is a Democrat idea or a Republican idea. All I care about is, is it a common-sense idea? Does it make sense for the people who sent us here to be their voice, to be their representative at our Nation's capital, in these halls of Congress, on the floor of the United States House of Representatives?

So tonight I am here tonight to only hold the Republican leadership accountable for the largest debt ever in our Nation's history but to also offer up common-sense solutions that I am asking Republicans to join me in supporting for the sake of our country, for the future of our country. Common-sense solutions that can put us back on a path toward a balanced budget and can restore this country to the shape and to the economy that we enjoyed in the late 1990s.

The debt is important. Why? Because the total national debt, numbers do not lie, facts do not lie, the total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion, and you see where it is today, \$8,518,180,439,082. But by 2010 the total national debt will have increased to at least \$10.88 trillion. That is a doubling. That is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years.

Let me put it another way. This President and this Republican Congress have borrowed more money from foreign central banks and foreign lenders in the past 5½ years than the previous 42 Presidents combined. Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget. And what the Blue Dog Coalition has coined as the debt tax, d-e-b-t, cannot be repealed. That is one tax that will not go away until this Congress gets its fiscal House in order and restores some bipartisan common sense here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. The current national debt as you see, \$8.5 trillion. Each individual's share, \$28,504.

Why do deficits matter? They matter because deficits reduce economic growth, and we have seen that. A lot of people have lost their jobs in the past 5 years, and some will say that we are now seeing people being put back to work. But ask yourself, for those of you who lost a job in the past 5 years and have been fortunate enough to find new work, most of you, at least the people I talk to in south Arkansas tell me that the job that they have taken pays 5, 10, 15, \$20,000 less per year than the job they lost, and the job they lost oftentimes included health insurance and their new job does not.

Why do deficits matter? They burden our children and grandchildren with these liabilities. It is our kids and grandkids that are going to be stuck paying this debt tax, d-e-b-t.

Why do deficits matter? Because they increase our reliance on foreign lenders. Foreign lenders now own 40 percent of our debt. The United States is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders. You want to talk about national security. Mr. Speaker, this is a national security issue. The United States of America is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders. Foreign lenders currently hold a total of about \$2 trillion of our public debt. That is right. Over \$2 trillion of that number right there has been borrowed from foreign lenders. Billions more have been borrowed from the Social Security trust fund.

When I came to Congress in 2001, the first bill I filed as a Member of Congress was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund. This Republican Congress refused to give me a hearing or a vote on that bill, and now we know why. They have raided the Social Security trust fund to pay for tax cuts for folks earning over \$400,000 a year. Shameful. Shameful. Shameful.

Compare this: Foreign holdings in 1993 were \$623 billion. Today, over \$2 trillion of our Nation's debt, money we have borrowed, from foreign central banks and foreign investors and foreign lenders. And who are they? Here is the top ten list. These are the countries that the United States of America have gone to and borrowed money from in order to fund tax cuts in this country for people earning over \$400,000 a year. It may make for good politics, but, Mr. Speaker, I contend it makes for horrible, irresponsible fiscal policy.

Japan, the United States of America has borrowed \$640.1 billion from Japan. China, Communist China, we have borrowed \$321.4 billion from Communist China. The United Kingdom, \$179.5 billion. OPEC, imagine that, and we wonder why gasoline is so expensive. Our Nation, the United States of America, has borrowed from OPEC countries \$98 billion. Korea, \$72.4 billion. Taiwan, \$68.9 billion. The Caribbean banking centers, \$61.7 billion. Hong Kong, \$46.6 billion. Germany, \$46.5 billion.

And are you ready for this? Rounding out the top ten countries that the United States of America has borrowed money from to fund tax cuts in this country for folks earning over \$400,000 a year: Mexico. The United States of America has borrowed \$40.1 billion from Mexico.

Our Nation today is borrowing about a billion dollars a day. That is a far cry from the time period 1998 through 2001 when our Nation experienced a surplus. Today, policies and the budgets passed by this Republican Congress and this Republican President have given us the largest debt ever in our Nation's history and one of the largest deficits ever in our Nation's history. Again, this President and this Congress have borrowed more money from foreign lenders in the last 5½ years than the previous 42 Presidents combined. It is our

children who will be left to repay these enormous loans to these foreign countries.

On July 19, 2006, the administration released its mid-session review of the budget. After further examination, let us take a closer look at what this report actually tells us. And let me just add, Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments or questions or concerns, I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. That is BlueDog@mail.house.gov. Again, we are 37-members strong. We are fiscally conservative Democrats that are trying to bring a good dose of common sense to the floor of the United States House of Representatives. You can e-mail, Mr. Speaker, at BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

Let us look at the real numbers, the facts. Originally, the administration predicted that the deficit for fiscal year 2006 would be \$318 billion. So back in July, July 19 to be specific, the President had a press conference to announce good news, that the administration's updated estimate of the deficit for 2006 would only be \$296 billion, not \$318 billion, as originally projected. That is the fourth largest deficit ever, ever, in our Nation's history. The largest was in 2004, \$413 billion. The second largest was in 2003, \$378 billion. The third largest was in 2005, \$318 billion; and the fourth largest is projected to be in 2006, the President's own estimate, \$296 billion.

And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, these revised estimates do not account for the extent of our budget problems because they included in this calculation the annual surpluses of Social Security. When the Social Security surplus is excluded, as it should be, the politicians in Washington should keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund. Not counting Social Security, the real deficit for 2006 is not \$296 billion but rather \$473 billion.

Mr. Speaker, when this administration took office in 2001, it had an advantage no administration in recent times had enjoyed, a 10-year projected surplus of \$5.6 trillion. The administration has replaced that surplus with re-occurring deficits and record debt. When the cost of items omitted from the mid-session review are included, the deterioration in the budget between 2002 and 2011 is about \$8.5 trillion.

□ 2015

You can see in 2000 the surplus and you can see how the deficits started and you can see where we are headed. Although these numbers are more positive than the administration's February forecast, they unfortunately do not represent any significant improvements in the long-term budget picture. Even the administration's 5-year forecast, which omits the cost of certain planned policies, never shows a deficit smaller than \$123 billion.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at this chart here. The administration's estimated

future deficits fail to include the full cost of items on its agenda. And once likely costs are included, the deficit is never better than \$229 billion for the foreseeable future. Look at the realistic deficits. Look at the realistic estimate that shows bleak deficit outlook all the way up to 2015, 2016. In fact, the true state of the budget is worse than the administration's forecast depicts because it omits certain costs, as I mentioned. When realistic adjustments are made for real items, annual items never improve to better than \$229 billion for any year over the next decade. And by 2016, the deficit grows to \$444 billion. The administration's new estimates for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan reflect a total of \$110 billion for 2007, \$60 billion more than the President's February budget. The budget says one thing, reality is another.

And let me say, as long as we have men and women in uniform in harm's way, I am going to support them. My brother-in-law is in the United States Air Force, spent Christmas on a tanker refueling fighter jets over Afghanistan. My first cousin is in the United States Army. His wife gave birth to their first child during his service in Iraq. This war in Iraq has impacted just about every family in America in one way or another. I went there in August of 2004 when we had some 3,000 National Guard troops from Arkansas. I visited with young men in uniform that I had taught in Sunday school and that I had duck hunted with, and I can promise you that as long as we have the men and women in uniform in harm's way, I am going to support them.

This is where I disagree with this President. This President is spending \$8 billion of your tax money every month in Iraq. But if you ask him to be accountable for your tax money, he will tell you you are unpatriotic. That is where I disagree with this President. I think any President, Democrat or Republican, should be held accountable for how they spend our tax money, and I believe it is time for this President to give us a plan, a plan that can allow us to put the Iraqi people back to work, a plan that will allow us to hire enough Iraqis to be able to take control of their police and military force so that the day may come when we can bring our men and women in uniform home.

Beyond 2008, the administration provides no further funding for the war in Iraq or Afghanistan. The President's budget says that, beyond 2008, there will be no war in Iraq or Afghanistan. I think we know the truth, and I think we know different. Based on a model presented by CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, costs for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan could run as much as \$371 billion over the next 10 years, from 2007 to 2016. And this calculation is likely conservative. The report also estimates that the President's plan to partially privatize Social Security will worsen the unified deficit by \$721 billion over the next 10 years.

And the report does not include the cost of addressing Medicare physician payments. And I can promise you this: if we don't fix Medicare, if we don't fix Medicare, a number of providers will no longer accept Medicare, and it will be the patients, the patients, who suffer. We deserve to do better than that by our seniors. We deserve to do better than that by those who count on us in their retirement years for health care. A long-term fix to the Medicare problem could cost from \$127 billion to \$275 billion over the next 10 years in the absence of other policy changes, and that is not even included in the budget or in these deficit projections.

So the budget is meaningless. These projections are meaningless. This budget and these projections indicate that the war will be over in Iraq and Afghanistan by 2008, that there are no problems with the long-term future of Medicare, that there are no problems with Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned it before, but it is worth repeating. It is worth repeating that since President Bush took office, the amount of foreign-held Treasury debt has more than doubled, increasing from \$1 trillion to \$2.1 trillion, meaning that this administration has already accrued more foreign debt than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

Unlike deficits in earlier years, current deficits have been primarily financed by foreign investors. With the rise in foreign debt equaling three-fourths, the increase in publicly held debts since the start of the current administration, this rise of foreign held debt is troubling because it makes our economy beholden to foreign creditors and represents another financial burden passed on to future generations.

You can see, from 2001 until now, how the amount of foreign-held debt has more than doubled under this administration and this Republican-controlled Congress. Again, our government, the United States of America, has borrowed more money from foreign investors in the past 5½ years than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

Unlike deficits in earlier years, current deficits have been primarily financed by foreign investors, as I mentioned earlier. The rise in foreign debt is troubling because it makes our economy beholden to foreign creditors and represents another financial burden passed on to future generations, specifically our children and our grandchildren.

As I mentioned earlier, it is a national security issue; it is a threat to our national security when we are borrowing money from places like China and OPEC to operate and run the day-to-day operations of the United States of America. Foreign-held debt is fundamentally different from domestically held debt since the interest payments on foreign-held debt flow outside the United States and reduce Americans'

standard of living. The cost of servicing foreign-held debt is high. Local, State, and Federal Government interest payments to foreign investors totaled \$114 billion in 2005, an amount that will grow rapidly if the Treasury continues to sell debt to foreign investors at the current rate.

Why does all this matter? I think this best sums it up right here. Like interest payments on a family's credit card, every dollar spent on interest on the national debt is a dollar that doesn't educate a child, build a road, or keep the Nation secure. Because of recent record deficits, the government's annual interest payment is the fastest growing category of Federal spending over the next 5 years and has posted double-digit percentage growth for the past 2 years, interest payments towards spending on most national priorities, such as homeland security, education, veterans health care, yes, veterans health care. Isn't it time that our Nation keep its promises to our veterans?

By 2011, annual interest payments under the administration's proposed budget will grow to \$302 billion, a 38 percent increase from the current level. You can look here and see what is going on. Interest payments on the debt dwarf other priorities. In the red, you will see in the red that is the amount of money that we are spending of your tax money, I should say this Republican Congress is spending of your tax money, simply to pay interest on the national debt. In the light blue you can see the amount of your tax money going to educate your children and grandchildren.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ROSS. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I couldn't help but listen to the gentleman's very effective presentation of the plight of America today. And I thank you for yielding, because what caught my attention was the gentleman's very, very important analysis of homeland security and veterans.

We are within 24 hours of honoring the victims of 9/11, and the tragedy is that we have in New York those first responders that survived and yet cannot get the health care that is owed to them because of the lack of sensitivity and responsibility of this Congress to provide resources for those victims, first responder victims who cleaned up or worked in the World Trade aftermath and cannot get the health care that they need. And it is a shame that veterans now of the Iraq war will be coming home injured and don't have the resources because of this enormous debt to provide for keeping veterans hospitals open and providing the 18,000-plus that are injured the resources that they need.

And my final point is that, as you noted, homeland security as it is suffering, isn't it interesting that we went on a series of hearings throughout Au-

gust and the constant refrain was the necessity of border security and securing America. But yet this debt, which has interest payments that cause us to really not finance the Republican majority these vital programs, specifically Homeland Security and veterans. So we don't have the money for border security, we don't have the money for more Border Patrol agents, we don't have the money for more equipment because of this enormous debt.

So when we hear these voices raised about 9/11 and securing America, it really is with dual voices, voices of talk but no reality. Because with this enormous debt that Democrats really working together have over and over again tried to get the Republicans to stop these enormous tax cuts and recognize our priorities, we are now suffering with this enormous debt, and homeland security is suffering and our veterans are suffering.

So I thank the gentleman for providing us with this insightful discussion, and I hope that we will get our priorities straight. And I hope we will move in a new direction, because, frankly, we are not going to meet the promise of America in terms of our obligations with this enormous mounting debt and the interest payments taking away from the very people who need it, securing our Nation, and our veterans who have put their lives on the line for this country.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her comments. And you are right, it is about priorities. And you can see where the priorities lie with this Republican Congress and this administration.

Again, in the red, in the red you will see the amount of your tax money that is going to pay interest on the national debt. In the light blue you will see the amount of money going to educate our children. In the light green you will see the amount of money going to homeland security. That is right, there is a lot of talk these days about homeland security. That is the new buzz word. But look at the reality. In the green, that is the amount of your tax money going to homeland security. One out of every five packages in the belly of a plane on commercial flights today that are defined as freight, that is right, a lot of freight moves around this country on the belly of commercial airplanes, one in five packages today go unchecked. We feel safer. We feel safer because I take off my boots and take off my belt and go through a metal detector, and proud to do it. And I see all the suitcases and mine going through the x-ray machine. But the American people I don't believe realize that one in five packages on the belly of a commercial airplane is freight that goes totally unchecked. And the terrorists know this.

□ 2030

What is more important, protecting the American people or giving another tax cut to people earning over \$400,000 a year?

Ninety-four percent of the containers that enter America by way of ports go totally unchecked. Is America really any more safe today than it was before 9/11?

Again, in the green, the amount of your tax money that is going for homeland security. Finally, in the dark blue, the amount of your tax money going to keep America's promises to our veterans. Again, in the red, the amount of money going to pay interest on the national debts.

I raise this issue because the debt and the deficit should matter to the American people. It should matter to all of us because our Nation is spending over \$5 billion every 24 hours simply paying interest on the national debt.

I have got folks who have been waiting over 25 years for Interstate 49 in Arkansas. Give me just 4 days' interest. Give me just 4 days' interest on the national debt and I can build I-49. I have folks that have been waiting on I-69, which was first announced in Indiana 5 years before I was born. I am 45. I have got folks that have been waiting 50 years for Interstate 69. Give me 3 days' interest on the national debt and I can build I-69 across south Arkansas.

I got a call today from Fred Denton in McGehee, Arkansas. They have a really nice port there on the Mississippi River. They are losing industrial prospects and economic opportunities and jobs, like biodiesel plants, because they do not have rail. They need \$10 million to get rail to that port. Give me just a few hours' interest on the national debt and we can get rail to Yellow Bend Port on the Mississippi River.

These are America's priorities: Improving our infrastructure, educating our kids, honoring our veterans, protecting our homeland, honoring our troops by giving them the equipment and supplies they need to do their job as safely as possible, investing in our Nation's infrastructure, which creates jobs and economic opportunities.

Those are America's priorities, but your tax money is not going toward them. Your tax money is simply going to pay interest. For the most part, it is going to pay interest on the national debt, and that is why I believe it is important that we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

The administration claims that its deficits are manageable, but mainstream economists agree that large persistent deficits undermine the long-term strength of the economy. Government borrowing raises interest rates. And the cost of capital crowds out private investment and diminishes sustained economic growth.

Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan last year warned that if these large budget deficits are not addressed, at some point, in his words "at some point these deficits will cause the economy to stagnate or worsen." That is from former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.

Now, I have set the stage this evening for the problem at hand, but I

told you I was also going to offer up, on behalf of the 37 Member strong fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, some common sense solutions. We are not here just to criticize the Republicans for the way they have managed and controlled this Congress under this President for the past 5½ years.

We have talked about the facts and we have showed the numbers. And numbers don't lie. But I also promised this evening we would talk about a number of common sense solutions that we encourage and have asked Republicans to join us, as conservative Democrats, in embracing and in passing in this Congress for the sake of our country, for the sake of the American people.

We have a 10-point plan in the Blue Dog Coalition. Ten points to budget reform, common sense budget reform, that can get these record deficits under control and restore us to the days of balanced budgets. We will go through those 10 points, but at this time I would like to introduce one of the founders of the Blue Dog Coalition, a real role model for me in my 5½ years here, and that is Mr. TANNER, the gentleman from Tennessee, who has developed a plan which includes legislation, which includes bills that we all got together and we wrote and I am cosponsoring. They are endorsed by the Blue Dog Coalition. They are common sense proposals that will restore accountability to our government.

So I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee, a founder of the Blue Dog Coalition, Mr. TANNER, to discuss House Resolution 841, a common sense piece of legislation to restore accountability to this Congress and to these United States of America and our government.

Mr. TANNER. Thank you very much, Mr. ROSS. I assume the number you referred to are from the IG reports and the requirement that we have a hearing on them.

Mr. ROSS. That is right. I didn't get into the details. I was saving it for you.

Mr. TANNER. I want to talk about the government of the United States from a business standpoint, because the Congress of the United States is failing the constituents, the shareholders of our country. Every day, to whoever is watching C-SPAN, every day the Congress is failing in its primary responsibility as a third branch of government, as the legislative branch, to oversee the executive branch. And then you have the judicial branch that interprets the laws that are passed here, but Congress has completely abdicated its oversight responsibility under the Constitution of the United States of America as one of three separate but equal branches.

And so I come to this not as a Democrat or a Republican but as a businessperson. My family has been in business in Tennessee for over 100 years, and I know a little bit about accountability, about audits, about responsibility for money that is en-

trusted to one from another. Now, the Congress of the United States takes money away from all of us, Members of Congress included, in the form of taxation, an involuntary removal of money from our pockets through the form of taxation to the government. The government, as it relates to the Congress here in the Capitol, is supposed to oversee the money it appropriates to any administration. That is our primary responsibility, other than national security, of course. But if we remove that, we are supposed to look out for the taxpayers.

This is the people's House. We are the primary representatives of the people in the national government here in the U.S. House of Representatives. The only branch of the Federal Government, the only office I know of that one cannot be appointed to. When someone who serves here dies or resigns, no one is appointed. It is a special election. And very seldom are there 435 Members here, because somebody has died or resigned for some reason, to seek another office or do something else, but there is no appointment here.

So this is the only office I know of in the whole constellation of offices, State and Federal, where no one can be appointed. Everyone who sits in this House is elected by his or her peers, his or her constituents. So it is a special responsibility that we have, and this responsibility is not being discharged.

Now, the reason I say that is because the last year we have from the GAO of the auditors determinations as to whether or not the executive branch of the government, all the Federal agencies, are able to produce an acceptable audit, in other words to tell us as representatives of the people, we who took money away from people involuntarily in the form of taxes, whether we appropriated it to this or any other administration, what did you do with it? I think that is one of the most basic responsibilities we have to our citizens and to our constituents.

This GAO report for the fiscal year 2004, the last one we basically have, we have one later, 2005, but it is still incomplete, asks the Department of Agriculture if they could produce an audit? No. Department of Defense? Could they produce an acceptable audit? No. Department of Education? No. Department of Health and Human Services? No. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD? No. Department of the Interior, which are all the national parks, can they produce an audit? Can they tell us what happened to the money we appropriated? The answer was no. The Department of Justice. The Department of Justice. The answer: No. Department of State. No. Department of Transportation. No. Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. ROSS talked about the veterans. The answer to, can you tell us what happened to the money that was appropriated to your department, was no. AID, Agency for International Development. No.

NASA. No. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in charge of nuclear stuff in this country. The answer to, can you tell us what happened to the money, was no. Office of Personnel Management, in the White House. No. Can't tell us. Small Business Administration. No.

In short, 16 of 23 Federal agencies could not produce an acceptable audit. What has Congress done about it? Virtually nothing. This is an abdication of one of the primary responsibilities of every Member of this House. Not Democrat, not Republican, but every Member who holds his hand up and says I promise to support the Constitution and all the rest.

The people of this country, the shareholders of America, ought to demand at the very least that we can tell them what happened to the money that we took from them, and this government can't do it.

The problem is, we have a friendly administration, a compliant Congress. Nobody wants to embarrass anybody else. I understand that. But what we have created here is a situation where this government is violating every business principle I know. There is not a private business in this country where one can go to the comptroller and say, here is a \$5,000 expenditure, can you tell me what this is for, and get the response, I don't know; or I can't answer that question.

Nobody would tolerate that. Nobody would put up with it. Yet that is what our shareholders, the American citizens, are witnessing every day, day after day, here in Congress. There are no hearings. There is no oversight. It is horror stories coming out of whether it be no-bid contracts for Iraq, whether it be no-bid contracts for Katrina. Money is leaving this place through a fire hose and nobody is asking the administration what happened to it. And if they asked them, they couldn't tell them. That is where we are tonight.

□ 2045

It is intolerable as a business person. And again, we have a responsibility as Members of Congress. I don't care whether you are Republican or Democrat, we have a responsibility as Members of Congress to answer to our constituents, our shareholders, the citizens of this country, this is what we did with your money. We appropriated to whatever Department one wishes to choose, and we held them accountable for it. What did you do with the money?

Well, we don't have that. We have a situation where there is no oversight, for an obvious reason: we have one-party government here. What we want to do and what I want to do is simply for lack of a better term audit the books. Before we ask the American people for one more red dime, we ought to find out what is happening to the money we are already taking away from them, and that is what the Blue Dog Coalition is all about. That is

what we want to do. We want to call people in and say you got this and this appropriation, what happened to the money? It is that simple. And if you can't tell us, you don't get it next year.

Mr. ROSS. Did you say there were 16?

Mr. TANNER. According to the GAO in fiscal year ending 2004, 16 of 23 Federal agencies, and 19 of 24 in fiscal year ending 2005, according to the GAO, couldn't produce a clean audit. I wish I had made this up, but I didn't. It would be easier to stomach. But nothing is asking.

So we filed a bill that says when the inspector general of any Department identifies either, one, an unacceptable audit, in other words they can't tell you what they did with the money; or, two, they identify in government talk a high-risk program, what that really means is a program that was enacted that doesn't work. Our bill says when either one of those two events occurs, Congress must hold a public hearing on that within 60 days so that the American people will have some means to find out just exactly what is going on in this town, because right now there are no hearings. There is no oversight. There is no subpoena power. There are no subpoenas being issued to call people in and say, give us your books and tell us what you did with the money. That is not happening here.

It is understandable. It is politics and I understand that, but the American people deserve better than that. They deserve better than that, not just from the Democrats but from the Republicans as well. They ought to be demanding. Even though it is a Republican administration, it doesn't matter. We are a separate but equal branch of government charged with this responsibility. We ought to hold the executive branch accountable.

The citizens of this country, the shareholders in this deal, they are getting shortchanged every single day because it is not happening. If it was happening, you would not have these reports. It got worse in 2005 from 2004. That is because nobody is asking them what did you do with the money. If they asked the administration, they couldn't tell them. That is an intolerable situation from a business standpoint, not just from politics, but from a business standpoint.

I congratulate and appreciate you doing this hour tonight because this is something that the consequences, and I will be quiet because Mr. CARDOZA has just joined us, but the consequences of this continuing borrowing of money from people who are not a U.S. interest are creating a financial vulnerability which is nothing short of a national security matter.

It is not hard to imagine. China, Communist Red China, has acquired over \$300 billion worth of our paper. It is not a stretch of anybody's imagination to understand that they may be interested in something Iran is doing that is not in our best interest, that they may make a move in Taiwan. I

made the tongue-in-cheek statement here one night that it is getting to the point that if China attacks Taiwan, we have to go to China and borrow the money to defend Taiwan.

That is a national security matter that is real. It is not a scare tactic. This is real, as it relates to the vulnerability that is created by us financing our government with foreign investment. That is number one.

Number two, as you said earlier, Mike, we are transferring our tax base to interest. There is no country that has ever been successful with no infrastructure investment by the government and no human capital investment, human capital being education and health care. No country in the history of the world has been strong and free with an unhealthy, uneducated population. The more we transfer the tax base to interest and away from investment in infrastructure and the human capital of our citizens, our shareholders, the more we are creating a vulnerability in this country which is a national security matter.

Mr. ROSS. I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee, one of the founders of the Blue Dog Coalition, for being here this evening on the floor and outlining House Resolution 841, a commonsense proposal to restore accountability to our government. We are 37 members strong. We are Democrats, fiscally conservative Democrats, who want to restore some commonsense and fiscal responsibility to our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments or concerns or questions for us, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. That is BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

At this time, I yield to our co-chair for communications within the Blue Dog Coalition, a good friend of mine and a leader of our group, Mr. Dennis Cardoza from California.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Mr. Ross yielding me this time. I want to start this evening by thanking Mr. TANNER.

In the 4 years I have been in Congress, he has been one of the true leaders of the Blue Dogs. I think of him as the conscience of the Congress these days with regard to the issues of fiscal responsibility and accountability and making sure that our government does the right thing.

Mr. ROSS. I want to thank you. I have traveled to your district. I know how much your constituents respect you on this matter and others, but it is really so important for the American people to understand the magnitude of the challenge that we are facing with regard to the national debt, and your leadership each and every week here on the floor means so much not just to me and the Blue Dogs but to the entire country.

I want to talk about my recent work with my colleagues on a task force on waste, fraud and abuse. My distinguished colleagues, Mr. WAXMAN from

California, Mr. TIERNEY from Massachusetts, and Mr. TANNER who you just heard, serve as Members of what we call the Truth Squad, which is charged with holding the Bush administration accountable for the mishandling of taxpayer dollars. That is something that this Republican Congress has simply failed to do.

The Blue Dogs are committed to ensuring that this government account for its stewardship of taxpayer dollars. You heard Mr. TANNER: currently, 19 of 24 Federal agencies can't pass a simple, clean audit. That is happening under a Republican watch.

This administration touts itself as being a businesslike administration, yet no business in America would tolerate the fiscal irresponsibility that is being conducted by this administration. It is really little wonder that with their lack of oversight of this Congress and lack of oversight in the administration, that we continue to see abuse and waste on this scale.

The Blue Dogs believe that all Federal agencies should be required to pass a clean audit. The American public deserves nothing less.

I introduced a bill this year, along with Mr. TANNER's piece of legislation, that says that any Cabinet Secretary who can't pass an audit for 2 years in a row can't run his agency, basically, couldn't run a business if he was running a pharmacy in Prescott or Hope, Arkansas, Mr. ROSS. If you ran that and couldn't pass an audit, couldn't pay your bills, your wife, Holly, would say come back and run this business right.

The reality is that we need to recall this administration and this Congress and tell them to run the business right. They are simply not doing it.

As co-chair of the Truth Squad, I am working with my colleagues to bring attention to the most egregious waste of taxpayers' dollars, the places where we are absolutely wasting taxpayers' dollars and putting that money down the drain. In fact, we have unveiled a new award called the Golden Drain Award. All told, the Truth Squad has identified with the help of our staff over \$150 billion of American taxpayer dollars that have gone down the golden drain of waste, fraud and abuse.

Mr. WAXMAN's Democratic side of the committee has documented all of these facts and has put out a report to this end. We created this award because it is essential that we bring attention to these outrageous instances of waste, fraud and abuse, otherwise they will never stop.

Sadly, there is seemingly an endless list of nominees for this award under this Congress and this administration. We will unveil one or two or three on Thursday.

Mr. ROSS, since we have been here talking, we have talked about the waste in Iraq. You and I went together to your home district and went to the Hope airport to see the FEMA trailers, nearly half a billion dollars of FEMA

trailers, that never got delivered to the people that needed them, but the taxpayers sure paid for them.

We see how we have wasted money on homeland security and the borders and the airports, and they are still not secure. The ports certainly are not secure enough. The list goes on and on. The administration's track record for no-bid contracts, for waste in contracting, for lack of oversight in contracting is truly appalling; and we talked in a press conference 2 weeks ago, the Truth Squad did, about these egregious behaviors.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. It is time for accountability. It is time to audit the books. The Blue Dogs that serve in Congress are fully committed to this. The Democratic Caucus is fully committed to this. It is time that the entire Congress be committed to this.

Mr. ROSS, I will close tonight's activities with one last thought, and that is that we owe the taxpayers more than we are giving them with the jobs we are supposed to do. We should be accounting for their money every single day we are here.

Mr. ROSS, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA), co-chair for communications for the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, for his leadership within the Blue Dog Coalition and for his efforts through legislation to restore accountability to our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, no business in our country could succeed financially if it failed to fully report back to its shareholders on how it is spending its money. However, that is exactly, as we have learned tonight from Mr. CARDOZA and Mr. TANNER, how our Federal Government is operating. The administration is not telling its shareholders, the American taxpayers, how it spends the money coming into Washington.

In 2004, \$25 billion of Federal Government spending went absolutely unaccounted for according to the Treasury Department. The Bush administration was unable to determine where the money had gone, how it was spent, or what the American people got for their tax money. Even worse, the Republican-controlled Congress failed to hold the executive branch accountable for this omission. And through these common sense pieces of legislation, we plan to hold every Federal agency accountable for how it spends America's tax money.

The next year, the GAO reported that 18 of the 24 Federal agencies have such bad financial systems that they don't even know the true cost of running some of their programs. Yet Republican leaders in Congress did not force these agencies to fully account for how the money was being spent before doling out billions more of your tax money to the same programs.

Clearly, Congress has failed to ask serious questions about the Bush administration's fiscal irresponsibility and record-high deficits 4 years in a row that have now pushed the Federal debt to well over \$8.5 trillion.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to hold this administration and this Congress accountable for its reckless behavior. I believe Congress must act now to renew its constitutional responsibility to serve as a check and balance for overspending, waste, fraud and financial abuse within the executive branch.

Again, Mr. Speaker, tonight in the past hour this number here increased by a little over \$41 million. Our national debt is \$8,518,180,439,082. The national debt in America is \$8,518,180,439,082. And that number, Mr. Speaker, during the hour that we have been here talking about restoring fiscal discipline and commonsense to our Nation's government, has increased by over \$41 million.

It is time for this Congress to restore accountability to our Federal Government. This is not about beating up Republicans. I don't care if Democrats or Republicans are in control; I am going to hold them accountable. I am going to hold them accountable for how they spend American taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, tonight we stand before you not only talking about the problem but offering up common sense solutions that demand accountability within our government. The time has come to restore commonsense and fiscal discipline and accountability to the government of the United States of America.

□ 2100

THE ATTACKS ON SEPTEMBER 11

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the privilege and the honor to be recognized on the floor of the United States Congress, and the opportunity to address you, Mr. Speaker, and the people that are listening in around the country.

You know, as I listen to the message that has been delivered here by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I think we share a sentiment in balancing a budget one day. We don't always share exactly the same sentiment on how to get there, but I am looking for black ink, and I intend to be in this Congress to approve a black ink budget.

I want to say that to my colleague from Arkansas one of the ways I would do that is tighten down this spending. In fact even on a discretionary budget, Mr. Speaker, if we just spent 95 percent of the money we spent this year we would have had a balanced budget. That is one way we can get there. We need to present a balanced budget and go from there.

But I want to support the gentleman in his philosophy, and I am not for raising taxes, I am for doing it by restricting our spending, because we need

to keep this growth run going. We are something like 17 consecutive quarters of growth. I am confident they have averaged over 3 percent. There have been only been about two quarters, and I can only think of one where our revenue was less than a 3 percent growth. This is an astonishing success for our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I come here tonight, though, to talk about September 11, the fifth year anniversary to commemorate this day that passed us yesterday, and to renew our resolution to defend our people in this country and to promote freedom and to defeat our enemies.

One of the things that happened, though, in reference to the debate that took place in just the previous hour, was our Pentagon was hit, we had a plane that was heroically taken to the ground in Pennsylvania, and we had the planes that went into the Twin Towers and shut off our financial centers in the United States.

It was a direct assault on free enterprise capitalism. It was a direct assault on our financial markets, and it did shut down our markets for a short period of time. It also required us to spend billions of dollars in security in this country.

So, our spending went up, our revenue went down, the economy was starting to drop down into a recession mode, and the President stepped up and took a leadership role. Some of that leadership role was to mobilize troops and send them to Afghanistan. Some of that leadership role was to deal with the impending financial crisis.

By doing so, we addressed the tax cuts to stimulate this economy. Who would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that those tax cuts that were implemented the following year, and the second round that we did here in 2003, would have put us on this run for this unprecedented economic growth?

We have a strong economy, we have recovered from the attack on our financial center, we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars just in our national security, our domestic security, as well as additionally our additional costs in taking that fight to the enemy, taking the tip of the spirit of the Middle East and elsewhere. It has cost a lot of money to move forward in this global war against these terrorists.

Yet, the economy in the United States is strong. Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a strong economy, an economy that I believe, if it hadn't been for the attacks on the United States, if we hadn't had to spend the money militarily, if we hadn't had to spend the money for our domestic security, create this expensive airport security that we have, I believe our budget would have balanced. In fact, the economy has grown so well that we actually have our revenue stream has gone up by \$274 billion more than was anticipated and estimated.

That is the kind of rebound that this economy has done. That is the way to