I also pledge to work tirelessly to enact a natural disaster insurance program that provides for all-perils insurance coverage. There is no reasonable way to distinguish the wind damage from the water damage from a major hurricane. The worst destruction almost always results from the combination of the two. The division of wind and flood coverage guarantees that legal disputes will consume millions and millions of dollars for engineering reports and legal fees instead of going to pay damage claims.

I cannot support plans to provide federal reinsurance for the current system that allows insurance companies to shift their liabilities to taxpayers and property owners. Any effort to provide a federal reinsurance backstop for insurance losses must insist on elimination of the exclusions and gaps in property coverage. Homeowners need to be able to purchase insurance and know that disaster damage will be covered.

Finally, I will continue to urge the leadership and my colleagues in Congress to undertake detailed hearings and investigations of insurance industry practices. Please know that the actions of your company have helped make the case that Congress and the federal government must move to regulate and investigate your industry in order to protect consumers and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

GENE TAYLOR,
Member of Congress.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind Members to direct remarks in debate to the Chair, not to others in the second person.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HULSHOF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MACK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MACK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ALLEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

□ 1715

THE ISSUES AFFECTING AMERICA

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, and I would like to thank Leader PELOSI and STENY HOYER, JIM CLYBURN and also JOHN LARSON, our Vice Chair, the leaders of our caucus, for the opportunity to come down here and speak to other Members of this body about the issues of the day.

Day in and day out, as we continue to have debates here on the floor of the House of Representatives, one of the main topics here and back in our districts is the issue of the war in Iraq, the issue of the standing, on the stature of the United States of America and the opinion of those around the world of us, and the need for us to build coalitions across the globe in order to fight this global war on terror.

We have major differences. We have had major differences, and we continue to have major differences in this body, in the body that is created by Article I, section 1 of the United States Constitution, as to how we should administer and execute this war on terror.

The Bush administration has tried to implement their philosophy with the war in Iraq, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, that their actions have created more terrorists in the world, it has made the bull's eye on the United States bigger, and it has completely almost eliminated the goodwill that was given to this country from around the globe after 9/11.

Many Members of this Chamber can remember the editorials and foreign newspapers where some were saying that today we are all Americans after 9/11. Today we are all Americans. That political capital that we had, that goodwill that we had, was squandered by a very divisive policy, a policy that was based on misinformation, was misleading.

As the days and the weeks and the months go by, we continue to see time and time and time again how this administration misled the Congress and misled the American people. And if we had a huge intelligence failure on 9/11, it only makes sense to be very, very careful before believing the intelligence that is then being presented to you for the war in Iraq.

This issue is the defining issue. The President can continue to try, Mr. Speaker, to somehow change the topic, somehow try to change the debate to something that may be more favorable. But when you look at what is happening with our foreign policy and with our domestic policy, you will see that the American people are moving in a direction away from the President of the United States. They no longer, as Mort Zuckerman said, they no longer give the President the benefit of the doubt. And when the President loses the benefit of the doubt, the President loses the kind of authority and persuasive nature, basic nature of the office.

So let's talk about what is going on here. This war in Iraq has made us less safe. It has given us more terrorists in the world. It has increased the polarization. And if you look just on the front page where we have the President being called a devil, which I don't necessarily agree with, being called a devil at the United Nations, now, we can all at least say that that kind of rhetoric, although it is not helpful, signals the kind of discontent that there is out there in the world for the United States of America.

When you are fighting a global war on terror, Mr. Speaker, you need friends. You need people who are going to help you. You need assistance from all quarters, whether you are a Democrat or whether you are a Republican, whether you are a Member of the United States Congress or you are a member of a parliament in Europe or South America. You need help. We can't fight this global war on terror by ourselves, so we need to engage the international community. We need to engage the international community.

I want to share with the American people some of what is going on. We are going to start with what is going on with the money.

We can see here what the war in Iraq is currently costing the American taxpayers, $8.4 billion per month. It is costing the American people, this war on terror, $1.9 billion per week, $275 million per day, $11.5 million per hour. This is to fund what is going on in Iraq.

And this has basically put us in the middle of a civil war. Only about 7 percent of the fighters in Iraq are al Qaeda types. The rest are Sunni and Shia, and they are fighting with each other, with the American soldiers right in the middle of the mix.

We found out 2 weeks ago that Secretary Rumsfeld said that he would fire the next person who asked for a post-war plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can agree and disagree on a lot of things here, but when you have the Secretary of Defense say to some of his underlings that the next person that asks me about a post-war plan will be fired, that goes right to the heart of the leadership of the Pentagon, the leadership of the Defense Department.

How do you go into a war with no post-war plan? This was a mistake to begin with. And then at the end of the day you start hearing about all the ties between al Qaeda and Iraq that didn't end up to be true. Then you find out the Secretary of Defense didn't want anybody to submit any kind of post-war plan at all to him, or the next one that did would be fired. It goes to the

question of what kind of leadership are we getting here.

And when you have this cowboy diplomacy that we have had for years in the United States of America, you know, the ''Axis of Evil'' comments, and ''we are going to smoke them out,'' and ''bring it on,'' and ''mission accomplished,'' and you have major magazines saying it is the end of cowboy diplomacy, well, when you look at the comments of some of the foreign leaders, calling the President of the United States a devil, it doesn't seem like they think this is the end of cowboy diplomacy.

So we have all got to move forward on this issue, Mr. Speaker, and we have got to somehow figure out together how we are going to do this.

One of the things that the Democrats want to do when we take over the House in January is to start having some hearings, to start providing some oversight.

If we could get that quote from Mr. Gingrich. Mr. Gingrich, the former Speaker, the man who led the Republican revolution in 1994, said in the Wall Street Journal column he wrote a couple of weeks ago that the only way to begin to fix this is to have an honest assessment of what is going right and what is going wrong in the intelligence, NSA, the war in Iraq.

But if we don't have an honest assessment, if we don't have honest hearings, and we get briefed every now and again from the Secretary of Defense and it is not helpful. It doesn't make any sense. And we continue to go down this road, to stay the course.

Here is what Speaker Gingrich is saying to us on staying the course. This is from the Wall Street Journal, September 7: ''Just consider the following: Osama bin Laden is still at large. Afghanistan is still insecure. Iraq is still violent. North Korea and Iran are still building nuclear weapons and missiles. Terrorist recruiting is still occurring in the U.S., Canada, Great Britain and across the planet.''

This is Newt Gingrich saying that this has been a real failure in leadership on the war on terrorism.

Then you come back to homeland security. You come back to what are we doing here at home with the ports, with the immigration issue, with what the Democrats want to do compared to what the Republicans want to do.

If you look at what we were able to accomplish under President Clinton compared to what has gone on with President Bush, this is just border security numbers, Mr. Speaker, the average number of new Border Patrol agents added per year. In the Clinton administration, 642. New border agents per year under the Bush administration, 411. Under the Clinton administration, we actually increased the number of Border Patrol agents much more so, by 230-some a year more than the Republicans have under the Bush administration.

Immigration, INS fines for immigration enforcement. In 1999, 417 under President Clinton. Only three in 2004 under President Bush. The Clinton administration was much more aggressive on the Border Patrol issue.

There were 78 percent fewer completed immigration fraud cases by the Bush administration. Look, in 1995, 6,455, and 1,389 in 2003 under the Bush administration.

If you look at what we followed as the immigration debate here in Congress has raged, you will see that if Democratic amendments, the amendments that we tried to get on over the last 5 years, would have succeeded, there would be 6,600 more Border Patrol agents, 14,000 more detention beds, and 2,700 more immigration enforcement agents along our borders than now exist.

It is clear that the Democratic Party doesn't only provide the rhetoric, but we provide the solutions necessary to try to solve some of these problems. Day in and day out, as we continue to have this debate, we can talk about it, or we can put our money where our mouth is and fund these Border Patrol agents. We can make sure that more than 6 percent of the cargo that comes in and out of the United States is checked for weapons of mass destruction, and for illegal immigrants, for that matter.

We have to do this, and we have to be willing to put the resources necessary into the programs. That means that there are going to be some difficult decisions, because over the last few years we have seen the budget in the United States of America go bust, billions and billions and billions of dollars wasted, billions given to the pharmaceutical industry, billions given to the oil industry, to corporate welfare.

If we don't begin to change that, if we don't begin to put in some basic structural changes to the way the budget process works by putting in PAYGO rules, by making sure you can't spend money that you don't go get somewhere else so you don't have to borrow it. And that is what is happening right now.

I must commend, Mr. Speaker, Senator VOINOVICH from Ohio, who is talking about waking up the Congress to say we have got to balance our budgets. We have to, because we have two options. We can ask the top 1 percent of the people in this country, the top 1 percent wage earners, people who make more than $1 million a year, we can either ask them to contribute their fair share, and they have benefited greatly over the last couple of years, and use some of that to help us reduce our budget deficits. We either ask them to help, or we borrow the money from China and Japan. Those are really our two options.

Over the past few years we have been borrowing the money from China, we have been borrowing the money from Japan, and it puts us at a tremendous weakness when we have to go to China and ask them for help with North Korea, when we have to go to China and ask them for help in Iraq, when we have to go to China and ask them for help with Russia.

All of a sudden we are going to the bank that is lending us money and asking them to help us with our diplomacy. I don't care if you are a liberal or a conservative, the United States has always prided itself on making sure we balanced our budgets.

In 1993 in this Chamber, controlled by the Democrats, without one Republican vote, we balanced the budget. 20 million new jobs. Economic expansion that benefited everyone. Welfare roles decreased and declined.

□ 1730

Then we look at what this President and this Congress has done. In the last 4 or 5 years, this President and a Republican-controlled Congress has borrowed more money from foreign interests than any other President before him. So 224 years, Mr. Speaker, all of the Presidents added up did not borrow as much as President Bush has borrowed.

So we have a solution, Mr. Speaker, that is not a Democratic solution or a Republican solution. It seems to be based on reality, and, Mr. Speaker, this is the advice that Mr. Gingrich has given on the broken system in Washington. He said in the Washington Post in July, ''The correct answer,'' Gingrich said, ''is for the American people to just start firing people.''

And I think that is about the sentiment in the United States right now is that the American people are ready for new leadership. When you think about what Mr. Gingrich is saying, and you read his Wall Street Journal articles, and you read his books, and you think about what he is saying, in 1994, when the Republican Congress came in and the Republican revolution, and you think about what was said and how many times, and it was masterful campaigning, about we need to run the government like a business, we need to balance the budget, we need to make government more efficient, there is too much waste, there is too much fraud, there is too much abuse, and if we just squeeze the government, we are going to be able to get the kind of resources that we need to fund the programs that we need and give tax cuts and some relief to the American people; and if you look now, in 2006, as to what the Republican majority has done with that opportunity that the American people gave them, it is really a shame because we have huge budget deficits. We are borrowing money from foreign interests. The government is fat and bloated and bureaucratic, and we lose $9 billion in Iraq, and nobody really knows or seems to care as to where it goes.

You have all this pay to play going on. You have a K Street Project going on, started by the Republican Party, that basically says if you are a lobbyist and you want us to help you, if you want the Republican Party to help you, you need to hire my ex-chief of staff to

run your lobby organization, and then you will have access.

When you look at the money, the public money that is being spent on corporate welfare, $12-, $13-, $14-, $15 billion to the energy companies, that is not a real record to be proud of.

When you talk about running the government like a business, and you look at the waste and you look at the bloatedness and you look at the government's inability to address two, at least, of the major responsibilities that we all could agree on here, and that is national defense and emergency response.

The national defense side, look at the war in Iraq. This great Republican revolution gives the power and the responsibility to Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and then does not take that responsibility away, then does not demand that they get fired, but they promote him. Wolfowitz is now at the World Bank, and Rumsfeld, no one will dare disappoint him, Mr. Speaker. This is the architect of one of the great catastrophes in the history of the United States of America. No one's been fired.

I run into business people, hard-core conservative Republican business people in my district, and they say, if I was running the business, Rumsfeld would have been fired 2 years ago.

This is not a partisan issue, but you have to provide oversight. It is not about putting your party before the country, and that is what is happening now, and no one will admit it, this stay the course, bury your head in the sand and somehow forget about the reality that is happening on the ground.

When you see time and time again, time and time again, generals that leave and retire and then all of the sudden have a lot to say about what is going on on the ground, and they have a lot of opinions about what is happening in the administration because no one was being listened to, first it was not enough troops, then how it had to change on the ground and the lack of responsiveness. That is not running government like a business. That is not responding to the market in the case of Iraq. That is ignoring the facts on the ground to benefit yourself politically. That is putting the Republican Party ahead of the Republic, and it does not work that way.

Sometimes you make mistakes and you get egg on your face. It does not mean you go get a new banner printed or a new slogan printed. It means you admit it, and you go forward.

Let us have hearings. I am fortunate enough, Mr. Speaker, to sit on the Armed Services Committee. The brainpower on that committee, the kind of experience of Members on that committee, is tremendous, and it has been one of the nonpartisan committees for the most part. Why not go before this committee? Let us let all these people who have traveled the world, who have been involved in the war in 1990, people like Mr. MURTHA who are on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, sit down with these people. Let us figure this out, and someone may get some egg on their face, and someone may have to be fired, but if the team's not performing, you may have to cut a few people. You may have to move some positions. You do not promote them.

And you look and see what these generals are saying. ''Rumsfeld and his team turned what should have been a deliberate victory into a prolonged challenge,'' John Batiste in the National Journal, chief military aide to Paul Wolfowitz, brigade commander in Bosnia.

Anthony Zinni: ''We're paying the price for the lack of credible planning or the lack of a plan. Ten years worth of planning were thrown away.''

How can you have lack of planning in a major war? Again, we are not talking about a Rotary Club building a river walk. We are not talking about a Kiwanis group in our local community putting flowers in a courthouse square. We are talking about going to war. We are talking about the most deliberate act that a government can make, that we are going to put our soldiers in harm's way. There are probably going to be innocent lives that are going to be killed, and we are going to kill other people, and now we have these generals saying we did not have a plan. That is the height of irresponsible leadership.

You look at what General Charles Swannack, Jr., said: ''I do not believe Secretary Rumsfeld is the right person to fight that war based on his absolute failures in managing the war against Saddam in Iraq.'' That was in the New York Times in April.

This is not the Democratic Caucus saying this. This is not me.

Look at what another general said: ''If I was President, I would have relieved him 3 years ago.'' This is someone who has got the Bronze Star medal with Combat V, Silver Star medal with gold star, Legion of Merit. These are well-respected people in the military establishment saying we need to get rid of Rumsfeld, which I think would be a great gesture to the international community to say we have made a lot of mistakes. Maybe we can be a bit humble and say that and ask for help and say that we need to make this a global effort.

If you have this kind of irresponsible behavior, this lack of self-awareness to say that we have made some mistakes and we want to go about fixing them I think disrespects the process here, and quite frankly, it disrespects the American people. To try to pitch this al Qaeda-Saddam Hussein pie, when we find out that Saddam did not want to help al Qaeda at all, when you see that, and then yet you continue to ignore the facts on the ground, Mr. Speaker, it only puts us in a deeper hole and makes things more difficult.

So the war side has not been executed like a business because we have not changed, we have not streamlined. And you look at the wasted money on contracts and the amount of money some of these big donors have made, the war profiteering, again, a slap in the face to the American people.

Then domestically when you look at Katrina and a lot of the emergency response problems that we had, we find out again that this government really was not run like a business, that this emergency response system was not streamlined because we had Wal-Mart and we had some of these other businesses, they were getting water and supplies in and out. Their response was much better, much more efficient, much more effective than the Federal Government's.

But it is the Federal Government's responsibility to make sure that we can address these national and natural disasters that happen in the United States of America. That is our responsibility. That is our constitutional obligation. So it is very important that we figure out how to streamline that. Where are the hearings? Where is the oversight? Where is the accountability? There is not any.

And then when you talk about the bloatedness of government, I want to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and the other Members of this body about one of the great proposals that we have here and that the Democrats will offer in January when we take over this Chamber.

Those are two bills, one by Representative TANNER from Tennessee and one by Representative CARDOZA from California. These bills say that we are going to run an audit, a real audit, of the Federal Government, and we are going to squeeze this government. We are going to make it fit an information-, knowledge-based economy, and we are not going to sit back and just allow the bureaucracy to grow and grow and grow and keep feeding the beast and just say if we write a bigger check, somehow the problem will go away. You cannot fix it without providing some auditing and then the reform necessary.

The programs that do not work, we get rid of. The programs that work, we fund them, and we fund them by squeezing the waste and the bureaucracy out of some of these other programs, and making sure that every dollar that we get from the taxpayer is spent well and accounted for.

What I like most about these two bills is that we are going to hold the Secretaries of the departments accountable, and so if there is an audit, and recommendations are made, then the Secretary, the CEO of that department, will be held accountable. If they do not meet the requirements of that audit, that Secretary will have to go back to the Senate to get confirmed again.

That is accountability. That is saying no matter who you are, whether you are Secretary Rumsfeld or you are Secretary of Health and Human Services, if the GAO audits you, a real audit, and we make sure that we know

that the facts are right, and you do not meet the requirements of that audit, then you will have to go back for a reconfirmation.

That is how you get change in these huge bureaucracies, and that is what the Democrats are going to do, because if we do not reform this government, if we do not get it ready and able to move us into an information-, knowledge-based economy, we are going to continue to fall behind because we do not have the resources. We cannot keep going back to the taxpayer, asking them for more money and more money and more money, because they do not have it.

Now, if you look at what is going on, why they do not have it and the squeeze that the average people are going through now, look at this.

□ 1745

The minimum wage is now at its lowest level in 50 years adjusted for inflation. Real household income has declined nearly $1,300 under the Bush administration. So you are making $1,300 less. The cost of family health insurance has skyrocketed 71 percent since Bush took office. And if you look, the cost of tuition and fees at a 4-year public university has exploded by 57 percent. These are facts. These are not made up.

So hourly wages are down 2 percent, consumer confidence is down, gas prices are up 20 percent, and mortgage debt is up 97 percent since the year 2000.

We can't keep going back to these people and asking them for more and more money. And the unfunded mandates that are coming from this Congress down to the States and the local tax burden is being increased for mental health levies, for library levies, for community development projects, and these cities and many of them, and one of them is one I represent, Youngstown, another one Akron in Ohio, these cities don't have the resources. And if we are going to compete as a country, you have got to look at it like this: right now it is much different. Cities like Youngstown, cities like Akron, northeast Ohio, Cleveland, we are not longer competing with each other, and we are no longer competing with New York and Chicago. We are all now competing in a global economy.

And as we compete in this global economy, as regions and as a country, we have got to recognize that we only have 300 million people in the United States of America. And when you compare that to the 1.3 billion people in China and the billion people in India, you will see that we have got to be at the top of our game because we only have 300 million people. And when we have many of those people living in poverty, and Cleveland is now rated the poorest city in the entire country. I see Mrs. TUBBS JONES is here who represents that area. With the poverty rates in Youngstown and all of these cities where 80 percent of the kids who go to some of these schools qualify for a free and reduced lunch. And their nutrition levels go down in the summertime when the school lunch programs and those kind of things that are offered, breakfast programs, aren't available in the summer. So how are we going to be ready, Mrs. TUBBS JONES, to compete in a global economy when we are not making the proper investments here at home?

I yield to my friend from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I absolutely agree with you, my colleague. And I want to thank you for your leadership on this issue, and I thought I would give you a moment to take a break.

The real reality is that in Cleveland we have suffered so greatly since 2001. Since 2001, in the city of Cleveland alone we have lost 60,000 jobs, and those 60,000 jobs were high-paying jobs. These were jobs of steel workers; these were jobs of people in the auto manufacturing area. And when you start talking about unemployment, the discussion always is that these folks have gone back to work. They have gone back to work, but what kind of money are they making? They are making $5, $6, $7, $8 an hour instead of the $20 that they were making. So they move from being part of the middle class to part of the working poor, where they are working every day, they are getting paid wages, and they are still very poor.

Let me give you an example. President Bush talks about economic change that has occurred since he has been in this administration. But the reality is that economic change has not hit those of us who go to work every day.

Let's take a look at this chart here. If you look, the minimum wage has not increased any in 9 years, but whole milk, the cost of whole milk has increased 24 percent. How many families end up having to purchase gallons of milk, gallons of milk to take care of their babies and their kids and their high school students? Let's look at bread. Bread costs have increased 25 percent. Minimum wage still at zero.

Let's look at a 4-year public college education, increased 77 percent, and minimum wage is still at the same. Let's look at health insurance, increased almost 100 percent, 97 percent; and minimum wage is still a zero increase. And then let's take a look at regular gasoline, increased 136 percent.

Now, right now, the gas is going down, and we don't want people to be fooled that gas is going down in reality, because this election is about to come up, and they don't want to be accused of having high gas prices very close to the election. But don't be fooled. Minimum wage still has not gone up, bread has not gone down, milk has not gone down, college education has not gone down, health insurance has not gone down. In fact, there are people who are in bankruptcy as a result of not being able to afford health insurance. And as a result of the cost of their health insurance, they are in bankruptcy losing their house because they have to pay the cost of health insurance.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentlewoman will yield, because I think this fits. If we are going to be competitive as a Nation, we need to have healthy citizens. All of them, not just some of them. The days of us just being able to compete globally by having everyone in the steel mill and just a few percentage healthy and working in the office are over, and we know that, in northeast Ohio. And so if we don't have these kids and our citizens healthy and educated, and provided some opportunity, it is going to be hard for us to compete. So that is a key component of us being a great country.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Absolutely. And it is a security crisis for us to have people who are going to work that are unhealthy. How many of you have ever gone to work and get to work and somebody has the flu, or they have something, and you get to work and you have the flu and people start coughing on one another and the whole office needs to go home because that one person couldn't go somewhere and get taken care of? It is a terrible situation for us to be in currently.

I have got one more chart, and then I am going to leave it to the 30-something Group. I am 30-something-plus, but I am going to leave it to the 30-somethings when I get done.

Let's look at another increase, congressional salary increase versus minimum wage increase. I am a Member of Congress. I voted for a congressional salary increase. But I have always voted and screamed and hollered for a minimum wage increase, and I can't seem to get it to happen.

In 1998, the congressional salary increase was $3,100; minimum wage, a big fat zero. In 2000, the congressional salary increase was $4,600; minimum wage increase, zero. 2001, $3,800; minimum wage increase, zero. 2002, $4,900; minimum wage increase, zero. And the chart goes on. And as recent as this year, 2006, the congressional wage increase was $3,100. And you know what? Minimum wage was zero.

Now, there are some of my colleagues who won't vote for a congressional salary increase. And you know why they won't vote for it? Because they think their constituents will say, why should you get an increase? But they won't vote for a congressional increase and they won't vote to increase the minimum wage. It is unfair; it is outrageous. And if we are going to be a competitive country, working people, people at the bottom of the rung, the working poor who go to work every day, who work hard to take care of their families ought to get paid.

I am so glad to join the 30-something Group here. My colleague, KENDRICK MEEK, I want you to know how proud I am of you, of the work that you are doing in your area and on the national scene.

These two young men have shown strong leadership. When the Democrats take control of the House, we are going to be in great shape. We have got a farm team operating right here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I yield to my colleague, Mr. KENDRICK MEEK, the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I thank you, Mr. RYAN.

I can tell you, Mrs. TUBBS JONES, when I pulled in here close to the Chamber, I was off campus, and I saw your car there and I knew everything was going to be well represented here on the floor. And I am glad that you brought issue and put life in the lungs of what is actually happening here. When you talk about minimum wage, I can tell you right now, as it relates to the middle-class squeeze on families, especially as it relates to lower incomes and higher costs, these are rising health care costs up here. And here are the falling incomes of those individuals as they continue to make less and less and they are having to spend more and more.

And I think it is also important, Mrs. TUBBS JONES, to point out the fact that we want to take this country in a new direction. That is what we are talking about.

You want to talk about salary increases, Mr. Speaker. For Members of Congress, we are saying here on the Democratic side of the aisle we are not going to vote for another pay increase for Members of Congress until the American people get an increase.

And we do know, Mrs. TUBBS JONES, that we had some legislation on the floor because we were hammering away at the Republicans on this side, majority, okay, on the other side of the aisle about an increase for American workers. What did they do? The Potomac two-step, put together all kind of stuff that was unpassable in the Senate, and then brought it to the floor knowing full well that it wasn't a well-intentioned minimum wage increase. We want to take it to $7.25 an hour. They know full well, and I am saying ''they'' because that is what Newt Gingrich is calling the Republican majority. That is not me, Mr. Speaker. That is what Mr. Gingrich said when he said ''they.''

It is important for us to say that we are willing to stand up on behalf of the American people, all American people, Republican, Democrat, Independent, those who are not voting yet, Mrs. TUBBS JONES, and to make sure that they receive an increase. And what happens with salaried workers, let's just say there are people in our districts that are not individuals that are making the minimum wage, they are making a little more than the minimum wage. And if they make $8, $10 an hour, when the minimum wage goes up, then there is going to be a renegotiation of their salary. And these CEOs, I mean, I am not disliking CEOs. Mr. RYAN and I always say that profits are good, we think it is a good word, it is not a bad word. But when you have CEOs that are making more than 500 employees in a company and you are having individuals who are not able to cover their health care costs, Mr. Speaker, I think that is something we bring into balance.

And this Democratic caucus, when in the majority, if allowed to be in the majority by the American people, have already said one of the first business actions that we would take is increasing the minimum wage, amongst other things.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. And the beautiful thing about it is, and maybe I misstated when I said that we haven't voted for a minimum wage increase, we haven't voted for a stand-alone minimum wage increase.

You know how they did that? What they did is, Okay, working folk, we are going to take care of you. We will say we will give you a minimum wage increase, but it will be included in a package where we give the top 1 percent, a few families, $1 trillion in tax cuts. Outrageous. It doesn't make any sense.

And know when the Democratic leadership takes over, we are going to take care of the working people, and they won't have to worry about anything else. They want to couch us as being tax-and-spend Democrats and not concerned about security, but we are going to take care of the working people, and they will know that we will be there for them.

Gentlemen, thank you very much. On that, I am going to see you later.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so very much, Mrs. TUBBS JONES. And I can tell you, it is always good, Mr. RYAN, having a member of the Ways and Means Committee here to be able to share some higher thoughts on legislation here that we are talking about.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, I think it is very, very important that we shed light on what has actually happened here in this Chamber and what has not happened. There are a lot of pieces of legislation that are coming to the floor as we close out this 109th Congress, as we start right before the elections, before we go on what we call a lame duck session after the elections. Members of Congress, many are on jets and driving, or planes, trains, or what have you, going back to their districts. We decided to be here, the 30-something Working Group. We have another hour after the Republican hour to come back here to be able to share the information not only with the Members but also with the American people and make sure that they know that we are here on their behalf as Americans first.

I think the facts are overwhelming here, but I just want to make sure, because whenever you identify a problem, you have to have a solution coming shortly thereafter or right before. So I am going to take the opportunity in addressing the Members and talking about the solution, and then identifying the obvious problem. Not a problem that we have identified within the Democratic caucus, but the U.S. Department of the Treasury has identified, the Inspector General, the Department of Homeland Security has identified, and that the Government Office on Accountability have also identified as major issues that are facing our country that we haven't faced in the history of the Republic.

□ 1800

I am saying since we have been a country, we haven't been in the posture that we are in right now, and I think it is important that we present those facts.

We are saying on this side of the aisle we want to take America in a new direction. That new direction consists of six points. It goes beyond, but mainly six points. First, the protection of Social Security is so very, very important. I am from Florida, and Social Security is a major issue in Florida and throughout this country. As we look at disability benefits for American workers when they are injured on the job, to be able to have Social Security which they paid into, they can receive their full benefits. When you have retirees, one thing they can count on, and they probably can't count on a pension from a company that they have been working for or at for some 25 or 30 years, but they can count on Social Security because it is backed by the U.S. Government.

And also survivor benefits. As we look at survivor benefits for folks that were working, and if they pass on, their children have an opportunity to educate themselves. There are some Members of Congress here who are presently serving who have taken advantage of survivor benefits that have made our country stronger in preparing these bright, young minds to be able to lead our country in the future.

I am really sad to report that it continues to be under attack by the Republican majority and the Bush administration. I am concerned about that. But we have made a commitment for 2006, taking America in a new direction, that we will protect Social Security, as we have protected it from attempts by the Republican majority and the President, who burned all kind of jet fuel to try to ram a privatization plan down the throats of the American people. I think it is important that Members go on HouseDemocrats.gov and get our plan as it relates to securing Social Security.

Looking at affordable health care, I think it is important that we look not only at prescription drugs, but also make sure that there is a major focus on health care. And there are health care professionals, I had a major health care insurance company come into my office just this week and say something has to happen.

From the small business to the Fords and the GMs of the world, health care is crippling this country. We have a war in Iraq, but we have a war here as relates to health care in the United

States. We are dedicated to making sure that we have affordable health care for children and seniors, and making sure that we use our buying power to secure lower prices for our seniors as it relates to part B.

We talk about energy independence, investing in the Midwest versus the Middle East. We are talking about E85 and alternative fuels and using coal. We are the Saudi Arabia here in the United States in regards to coal. We have enough coal to supply the whole world as it relates to energy, and we can use it for our own benefits to secure America, and that is homeland security in making us stronger.

We have already put out our innovation agenda, Mr. Speaker, and also energizing America, making us energy independent. Members can also view that on HouseDemocrats.gov. That is making sure that the next generation is ready to take over. And for this generation, broadband for all Americans, making sure that all Americans have access to the superhighway, and making sure that they have broadband opportunities.

Making sure that we reverse the tax increase that the Republican majority has put as it relates to student loan opportunities. There is legislation filed in this 109th Congress that would reverse that and cut it in half; and make sure that we give tax credits to students, and also parents who are trying to educate their children. That is something that is very, very important. The Republican majority has brought a great increase in the cost of college. We have said that we are dedicated, and we have the will and desire to make that happen. That is part of our six-point plan.

We have talked about the minimum wage. That is so very, very important. We have Members on the majority side that want to belittle that idea. But when you haven't increased the minimum wage since 1997, and say it is okay for you to give Members of Congress pay increases as far as the eye can see since 1997, $3,100, $4,600, $3,800, $4,900, and on and on and on, continued pay increases for Members of Congress.

And don't get me wrong, it is difficult for Members who have decided to serve their country and have a home in their district and try to have some sort of a place to live here in Washington, D.C. Yes, I am not knocking cost-of-living increases for Members of Congress, but I must say that I am very, very concerned with the fact that those individuals that punch in and punch out every day, 15-minute break in the morning and afternoon, 30 minutes for lunch, we put them at an unfair disadvantage when we allow ourselves to receive pay increases.

The Republican majority has done that. We have said on this side not another pay increase for the Members of Congress until the American people get a pay increase. That is something that we are standing very close to and making sure that we deal with it.

When we talk about homeland security, homeland security, there is a lot of discussion about homeland security. We have said that we are going to implement not any ideas that someone in some office here in Congress just says, oh, I think that is a great idea, we will do it if we get in the majority. No. Well-thought-out, well-fleshed-out ideas as relates to homeland security that the 9/11 Commission has called for, and making sure that we implement the 10 unimplemented recommendations by the bipartisan Commission that went through this Congress and that the President spoke to, the National Security Director testified in front of, former and present Members of Congress, members from our intelligence organizations spoke before it, 9/11 families spoke before, and survivors of 9/11. They all took an opportunity to testify in front of this committee, and there are a number of issues that are unfinished business as it relates to that.

Some of the higher points, and I won't go over all of the 10 points right now, but one simple one, air cargo. What is going on with that? I mean, we are running around at the airport giving up hand sanitizer, shaving cream; taking off your jacket, belts and shoes before you get on the plane. Meanwhile, cargo goes in the bottom of the plane, no problem whatsoever.

It took the Brits to disclose a liquid explosive attempt on a plane that was headed to the United States of America before the Department of Homeland Security started saying maybe we ought to deal with that because that was one of the 9/11 recommendations.

We are saying that we don't want to be reactionary. We want to be proactive. We want to implement the full recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, and that is something that we are dedicated to doing if we have an opportunity to do it.

Some may say, Congressman, why aren't you doing it? We are not doing it because we don't have the chairmanship of the committees or the ability to bring a bill here to the floor after going through the Rules Committee, to bring these pieces of legislation and ideas to the floor.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, and I will to go beyond the six points here to say that we have the will and desire to work in a bipartisan way. I feel personally that there are some Members on the Republican side that understand the importance of implementing the full recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

I don't want to go off on a philosophy that nothing major is happening in the United States so we must be doing something right. I would be on the side of recommendations by a bipartisan commission led by a Republican former governor who continues to give low marks to this legislative branch because we have not carried out the things that we needed to carry out.

Mr. RYAN, before I yield back to you, I want to mention as the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Oversight and Management, there was a company that was awarded the SBInet contract that put surveillance cameras along the border. Something that I am not proud of is the fact that there are two other similar programs prior to this program that has been renamed for the third time that spent $426 million of the taxpayers' money. Towers were built in some areas, cameras did not work in other areas, it was not monitored the way it was supposed to be monitored, yet we awarded a $2.5 billion contract to a company.

We have the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security who is going to be coming before our subcommittee after the election in November, I must add, and he will report that the Department of Homeland Security doesn't have the capacity to be able to take on such contract, or monitor the contract, in a way to make sure that we don't have cost overruns and making sure that taxpayer dollars are not spent inappropriately.

The 9/11 Commission, one of the 10 points was that we add 2,000 border protection officers yearly. The President sent his budget to this Congress and only asked for 215 border officers. You want to talk about Article I, section 1 oversight, making sure that we ask the tough questions? We are not doing it. The Republican majority doesn't want to do it. We are saying that we have the will and the desire to do. So let's make that we do it, and we are up front and straight with the American people.

Mr. RYAN, as we start to look at not only the new direction we want to take American in, as the Democratic Caucus and as a Congress, we want to make sure that we identify where we are falling short.

Mr. Speaker, all of this is very achievable if individuals were just to legislate and have oversight and work in a bipartisan way. Legislation is brought to the floor in the closing days of this 109th Congress to split the Congress as it relates to philosophy.

There was a bill up last week that talked about building a double-link chain fence along 200 miles or so of the border with no funding. That is like me saying, Mr. RYAN, I would like to build a monument out on the Washington Mall to celebrate the great victories that this country has had, whether they be educationally or whatever the case may be, over the history of our country, but I am not going to appropriate any money for it. But we are going to take it to the floor, and we will pass it anyway. Just on that, on the basis of the fact that there is no funding, it is like an empty suit. It is like a suit hanging up in the closet and no one in it.

It is important that we come straight with the American people. If we are serious about protecting our borders, let's do it for real. Let's not pass a bill without appropriations. Let's not bring a bill to the floor talking about giving authorization to local law enforcement

agencies to interrogate undocumented individuals in our country without any funding, because what the Federal Government is going to do is hand that responsibility to local sheriffs and city police officers and send the recommendation for the 250 Border Patrol officers to the House when they know we need 2,000. Let's stop handing it down to local governments and saying it is your responsibility. Let's man up, woman up and leader up and do what we have to do on behalf of the American people. We are saying if we are in the majority, we will do it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. As I stated earlier, if Democratic amendments over the course of the past few years, the last 5 years, would have been adopted, there would be 6,600 more Border Patrol agents. There would be 1,400 more detention beds, and 2,700 more immigration enforcement agents along our borders to help us solve some of these problems.

It is a lot like when you invite me out to dinner and you offer to buy me dinner, and then you don't bring your wallet, you know what I mean, and then I end up paying for the dinner. It is just the same thing. You say you are going to provide the Border Patrol agents, and then there is no money there. You invite me to dinner, and then there is no money there. It is pretty much the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, as we wrap up here, this is the 30-something Working Group. We are taking e-mails. You can visit us at www.HouseDemocrats.gov/30something. All of the charts that you see here, Mr. Speaker, are accessible on that Web page.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

HONORING SERVICEMEMBERS IN GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

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

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, as I rise tonight to begin this hour, I rise with a very heavy heart, but with the most renewed sense of pride and patriotism I have ever had as I honor the life of Sergeant David Thomas Weir.

Sergeant David Weir died 8 days ago on the streets of Baghdad in service to our country. He is from Cleveland, TN, where last night over 2,000 people showed up at the Bradley Central High School football arena to honor a great American hero.

□ 1815

I spoke with Sergeant Weir's mother and father 2 days ago, Lynn and Jackie Weir, and it is just extraordinary to me that there are families in this country that love freedom so much, love our country so much that even in the most grief and sadness they could ever imagine or experience, a hundred percent believe in the mission, the service, the sacrifice of their own son to defend liberty for our Nation.

Lynn Weir told me that if he would have tried, and he didn't, to keep his son from going, he could not have kept his son from going. He said David Weir, from the time he was a little boy, wanted to serve his country in uniform. He was a member of the 101st Airborne. This was his career. This was his way of life. He leaves a wife behind, Alison; a little 18-month-old son, Gavin, who does not understand what has happened. But everyone else knows very clearly what has happened. A great American patriot died doing what he wanted to do, which was to stand in harm's way on behalf of our civilian population, as the Greatest Generation did, as other generations have been called to, at a time when there is a very real and imminent threat to our way of life called the Islamic jihadists.

And Sergeant Weir goes to heaven, leaves this Earth, as others have, in the most sacrificial way, answering the scriptural call that says ''No greater love hath any man than to lay down his life for his friends.''

And I say to Jackie and to Lynn and to Alison and to Gavin, your father; your husband; Chris, his brother; your son gave his life for everyone in our country. We will never forget him. We will always remember him. We hail his life, a sacrificial life of service to others, putting everyone else above himself, believing in his mission and his comrades.

His father said he talked to him the day before and he was so excited about getting out in the streets of Baghdad because he didn't want to be sitting behind a desk, because that was not what he was trained to do. That was not what he volunteered to do. That was not what he was prepared to do. He did what he went there to do, and it cost him his life. And while his parents grieve, our State and our Nation stand united, I believe, in their full appreciation of his life and his sacrifice and his extraordinary courage and bravery.

On Monday, this coming Monday, I am honored to be with the family in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with full military honors as we lay him to rest in the national cemetery.

Thank you, Sergeant Weir, for loving our country so much that you were willing to die for it.

Another friend from my district, Lieutenant Colonel Brett Hale, is there serving in Iraq today. He is the commander of the Dragon Slayers. He too is a patriot. His family is back home praying for him every day, a wife and children.

He sent me an e-mail 10 days ago. I want to read part of it in my tribute and our honor on the House floor tonight of these great American patriots who volunteered to serve our country and make their life secondary to ours.

He wrote me and said: ''If we could only get the truth communicated to the public, they would know we have made great strides here in Iraq. Weekly we are transferring responsibility for the security in many provinces,'' and another one was transferred yesterday, ''and cities back to the Iraqi military. While certain people want to say it is a 'civil war,' I want to tell you firsthand it is more about Islamic jihadists crossing over the borders. They continue to attempt to disrupt a young emerging democracy. The insurgents are capitalizing on the inexperience of this government and directly causing the sectarian violence and so-called fueling the fire. They get more and more strength and resolve when they hear the discourse in our country. They know it is only a matter of time before we give up because we perceive the war in Iraq is too difficult.

''We all know anything worthwhile is not easy. Freedom is not free. The Iraqis are trying to make it work. If we retreat, the terrorists win. They win now and they win in the future when they have a safe haven to plan, train, and operate and attack us again.

''It is our choice. We are either going to support our efforts to win the global war on terror, or we are going to support those that want to retreat inside our borders and wait for the next attack. We found out on 9/11 if we retreat, they attack.

''Finally, why did we go to Iraq? Ask yourself why did we fight Germany in World War II? Japan attacked us, not Germany. The same principle applies. We couldn't take the chance then and we can't now. Those that say otherwise are sympathizing with the enemy.''

That is from Lieutenant Colonel Brett Hale to me on the ground in Iraq. What a patriot. As he says, the word is not getting out in this country in a fair way of the progress that we are making. As General Casey said, ''If we leave, they will follow us home.'' These threats are real.

Mr. Speaker, I have been down here 4 weeks in a row as I have been in Washington to try to go through the severity of these real threats around the world and the fact that the jihadists are spreading like wildfire through Europe. Read the book ''While Europe Slept.'' Read the book ''Londonstan.'' You will know that through the mosques there is a radicalization under way. Even the Pope can't speak of it because it is not politically correct to say that fanaticism in religion is not good for the world. It ought to be obvious. Regardless of what the religion is or how many there are or what is politically correct, fanaticism does lead to holy wars and the crusades. And we don't want that. We want the mullahs and the ayatollahs to condemn suicide bombings. We want peace and security for the world. We want our allies to have a backbone and stand up and acknowledge the threat. We want our