

Medicare to be able to bring down the cost that accrues to us.

And just now with the release of the Iraq Study Group report, and Mr. ISRAEL and I share as cochairs of our Democratic group, as cochairs on national security, that we have been examining these issues. He is absolutely right. We must take better care of our military. The American people are expecting our expenditures to go there. And one of the great, I think, recommendations of this study group that is headed by Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Baker that was just presented to the President yesterday is the realization, number one, we have to make some changes in this Iraqi situation because of the terrible drain that it is doing to our military. If we don't correct that, surely the security of our country goes down.

The other area that we talked about with regard to fiscal responsibility is the matter of halving the interest rate that our students pay on their student loans. That is money that goes back into the economy and a savings to our middle-class families.

Now the other area that we are going to move on in our first 100 hours is to begin to deal forthrightly with our problem of energy, our problem of energy dependence on the Middle East, that most volatile region. We are making great strides. One of our first efforts is to increase the incentives to go into renewable energy.

I just came back with a group of other Congressmen who are members of the Agriculture Committee. We went to Brazil. The reason we went to Brazil and South America, is because we realize here in this country we don't have all of the answers. But I will tell you one thing, they are doing something very special down in South America. We need to hurry up and do it here.

For example, in Brazil, 85 percent of their new automobiles that they are putting out in the market this year are flex fuels so that they will be able to use ethanol as well as regular gasoline.

I asked the Minister of Industry in Argentina and Brazil this one question about their trade relations with the Middle Eastern countries and what percentage of their energy they were getting from abroad: Argentina and Brazil, absolutely none. They are almost at the point of being energy independent because they had the foresight to move on this area.

I am so pleased with our leadership on the Democratic side to say among our first efforts will be to increase at a rapid rate our preparedness, our infrastructure, so that we can develop ethanol in this country from the primary two sources that we have, granular corn and soybeans, as well as celulosic.

Mr. ISRAEL. If the gentleman would yield, this is such a critical point. This is a national security area. And I know that the gentleman understands that so well.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Department of Defense spent \$10.6 billion on

basic energy costs. That is what it costs the military to fuel itself. Of that, the Air Force spent \$4.7 billion, about half on one thing: fuel for its airplanes. With this \$8 trillion debt, we have to fund the defense budget. How do we do it? The gentlemen know well, we borrow the money from China.

So here is what we are doing: We are borrowing money from China to fund defense budgets to buy oil from the Persian Gulf to fuel our Air Force to protect us from China and the Persian Gulf. This is not just an energy policy, it is a national security vulnerability. We will balance our budgets, have fiscal responsibility and pursue energy independence so that we are safer and we are much better off in terms of our budgets.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Absolutely. Again, energy and becoming independent is a reachable goal. It is a doable goal, and we can reach that conclusion within a matter of a few years with the kind of leadership we are putting forward.

I am proud to say we will be putting research grants into that to spur our country to move very rapidly and develop that infrastructure.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman raised an excellent point, and I am writing a plan to put America on a path towards energy independence, something Brazil will achieve this year. And the reason this is all so important, and it relates to the debt and the deficit, is as a Nation we are spending half a billion dollars a day paying interest on the debt we have already got.

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America's priorities, including investing in alternative and renewable fuels and bioenergies and clean coal technology and synthetic fuels, will never happen. So it is time to get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

Mr. Speaker, we will be back on the floor next Tuesday night or at some Tuesday night in the future, whenever we see fit to come back as a Congress, to talk more about the Blue Dogs 12-point plan for meaningful budget reform, to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

And until we see you again, Mr. Speaker, I will leave you with this thought: everyone in America's share of the national debt: \$28,867. The debt tax, d-e-b-t. It is time, Mr. Speaker, we get our Nation's fiscal house in order and pay down this debt and have a balanced budget in this country once more.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1751. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect judges, prosecutors, witnesses, victims, and their family members, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 4075. An act to amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to provide for better understanding and protection of marine mammals, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4588. An act to reauthorize grants for and require applied water supply research regarding the water resources research and technology institutes established under the Water Resources Research Act of 1984.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to, with an amendment, a concurrent resolution of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 430. Concurrent resolution recognizing the accomplishments of the American Council of Young Political Leaders for providing 40 years of international exchange programs, increasing international dialogue, and enhancing global understanding, and commemorating its 40th anniversary.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2322. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to make the provision of technical services for medical imaging examinations and radiation therapy treatments safer, more accurate, and less costly.

S. 2653. An act to direct the Federal Communications Commission to make efforts to reduce telephone rates for Armed Forces personnel deployed overseas.

S. 2735. An act to amend the National Dam Safety Program Act to reauthorize the national dam safety program, and for other purposes.

S. 3821. An act to authorize certain athletes to be admitted temporarily into the United States to compete or perform in an athletic league, competition, or performance.

S. 4092. An act to clarify certain land use in Jefferson County, Colorado.

The message also announced that the Senate agrees to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 3938) "An Act to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank of the United States."

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 2370.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

COMMEMORATING THE SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES OF THE HON. HENRY HYDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 45 minutes.

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, we meet here today to commemorate the service to the United States of our colleague HENRY HYDE of Illinois. HENRY