

Almost everybody else is from the same party.

I say that because I truly am from a bipartisan family. When I came here some 14 years ago, we were in the minority, Mr. Speaker. And I served 2 years in the minority, and I want to tell you that I was treated very fairly by some of the Members of the majority. I will even cite Mr. ED TOWNS of New York, who took me in as a freshman new Member, gave me every opportunity to participate, recognized me. I was a full participant as a minority Member.

There were others who I will not name who did not allow me not to speak, who actually told me to be quiet, and who actually adjourned meetings, so I didn't have the opportunity to speak or participate. So I saw how bipartisanship and I saw how dictatorial rule works. And for some 12 years, the good Lord gave me the opportunity to be chairman of three subcommittees over 12 years. So I always employed the golden rule, the ED TOWNS rule, of treating everybody fairly.

I say that in context because today is January 31 and this month, the beginning of this Congress, is one of the saddest hours in the history of the Congress of the United States, at least that I am familiar with or that I have read about.

Now, we started here with the swearing in of NANCY PELOSI. I am an Italian American. I was proud of NANCY PELOSI's being the first Italian American and woman to take that position, and I think we were all very pleased for her on both sides of the aisle and congratulated her.

But then began, unfortunately, the saddest chapter in the history of Congress with the passage of six major pieces of legislation without the Congress even being organized, without the committees being organized, without one of those pieces of legislation going through the committee process.

What an incredible insult to the people of America who just finished an election. They elected us as representatives, 435. We, in turn, elected a new Speaker of the House, and the entire democratic process was obliterated. It has been the saddest month in the history of the United States Congress. Six major measures.

And the irony, I sat here in the week of celebrating and honoring Martin Luther King, one of the great civil rights leaders of our time, whose sole goal was to give rights to the minority that they had been denied. And the new majority completely obliterated in that week the rights of the minority. It was one of the saddest chapters I have seen. So all of their measures, all of them, are just floating out there. The other body hasn't taken them up. They were passed while trampling on the rights of the minority.

There are men and women fighting today, tonight, tomorrow for those rights to protect the minority. This is

not Bolivia. This is not Venezuela. This is not Cuba, where someone takes power and tramples on the rights of the minority. This is the United States of America, and every representative should have the opportunity to participate in that democratic process. Again, I am just offended.

And then the final offense today, the 31st, to pass the largest spending measure in the history of Congress in one sole bill without consultation, without participation, without the democratic process is the ultimate insult to the citizens of the United States, who expect a representative form of government, and to the Congress, to the rights of the minority.

□ 1800

This was a \$463 billion earmark. And we just got through an election in which the Republicans were chided for passing earmarks in the stealth of the night, for which the Democrats also were offenders. We paid a penalty. We lost the majority.

But you do not pass a bill of that size without the ability of even to participate in this bill, this \$463 billion earmark, the most costly in the history.

Now they think they pulled one over on everybody. But I guarantee you. I guarantee in that bill, since no one had a chance to see it or participate in it, they will find day after day embarrassing provisions that we did not have an opportunity to take out, to adjust, to correct.

So they will pay the price. When you do things in the stealth of the night, when you illegitimately conduct the process of Government, you will pay the penalty. We paid the penalty. They will pay the penalty. Marital law is not the way this Congress was intended to run.

This should be, in fact, bipartisan. Bipartisan means two working together. I am committed to that. I will continue to be committed to working that way. I come from, as I said, a bipartisan family; and we have got to work together.

So I hope today, January 31, 2007, a very sad day, ending of a sad chapter in the history, mark my words. This will go down in the history of this Congress as one of the darkest hours ever.

I thank you.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida. I appreciate so much his emotion and his passion and his perspective.

As you are living through these times, it is oftentimes difficult to get people to pay attention to what truly are historic occurrences, and I share with you that disappointment and sadness. I truly do.

Having served in a legislative body at the State level and seeing how bipartisanship can work and seeing how democracy truly is supposed to work, this has been a disappointing month. It has been a disappointing month, because most of what you can talk about in terms of getting your arms around

where the problem is is process. I talked about that at the beginning of this hour, Mr. Speaker, and I mention that the reason that process is so important is because that is what enables the minority to have participation. But not just the minority. It enables every single Member of this House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, every single Member represents approximately the same number of people. We go to great pains to make certain that districts are basically of equal size every 10 years through the census process and through redistricting; and we do that because each individual in this body, each Member of this body, represents basically the same number of people and therefore should have essentially the same say in the process and in the deliberation.

Some folks have called this month the death of deliberation, and that truly has been. That is disappointing. That is very saddening for all of us whose constituents, whose American citizen constituents who go to the polls and vote, do indeed express their will to us.

If we are unable to express their will through this process here, then they are muted, they are silenced, they are disenfranchised; and that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest is an unfair process, is a wrong process and is an undemocratic process. It doesn't have to be that way.

So I encourage my good friends on the other side of the aisle, and I know some of them are feeling pained by some of the decisions that their leadership has made over this past month, and I encourage them to continue to work for a process that will allow for the inclusion of all.

Because, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, we do not have Republican challenges or Democrat challenges, we have American challenges. The American people send us here to take care of those challenges and put forward the best solutions, and the best solutions come when all of us are involved in that process.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in a very positive way as we move forward and do what is best and what is right on behalf of the American people.

I want to thank my leadership once again for the opportunity to spend this hour on the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be here once again to continue the discussion of the 30-something Working Group. We want to thank Speaker

PELOSI for the honor to be on the House floor.

We actually had one of our newer Members, Mr. Speaker, make page 3. He is still a freshman, but he made significant advances. This is Jason Altmire, Mr. Speaker, from western Pennsylvania. His district abuts mine. His picture, name, pressing our leadership to make sure that we increase funding in the CR for veterans, to make sure that we did not accept any pay raise until the American people get their pay raise through the minimum wage. So we already have young leaders stepping up to bat contributing in their first term here.

I have got to say, Mr. Speaker, it has just been I actually think in many ways pathetic to listen to the debate here today over the continuing resolution. We all know the political situation over the past, you know, 14 years, Republican control in the Congress, and their inability in the last several years to govern at all. And they have locked out the Democrats for years and years and years.

Votes in the wee hours of the morning on the prescription drug benefit, on the energy bill, on budgets, which raided student aid money for students all across our country; and then, on top of all of that, they leave the new Democratic majority an absolute budget catastrophe for us to deal with.

Over the course of those 14 years, the Republican Congress and the Republican President borrowed more money, more money from foreign interests than all of the previous Presidents combined. So now we are going to get lectures from the Republican majority on how to run the budget process. Now we are going to get lectures from the most incompetent, ineffective Congress in the history of this institution, Mr. Speaker, the history of this institution.

This party will not be lectured about veterans' benefits, we will not be lectured to by the Republican minority about how to balance a budget, and we will not be lectured to about investments in this country.

You look at this CR and you look what we put in. We are not going to be lectured to by anybody. We made promises and accomplished more in the last few hundred hours of this Congress than that Republican majority has in the last 14 years. We implemented PAYGO so we will balance the budget.

We made some difficult decisions with the CR so we can move forward, and we are not going to be lectured to. Because we have made promises, and we have delivered.

Now just look at the first hundred hours, Mr. Speaker, just the first hundred hours. We cut student loan interest rates in half. Once fully implemented, it will save the average person taking out a loan almost \$5,000.

We raised the minimum wage. We allowed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate drug prices on behalf of the Medicare recipi-

ents. We repealed the corporate welfare to the energy companies that that majority, Republican majority put in place; and we are taking that money and investing it into alternative energy sources. We are doing things positive for the American people.

And we are going to inherit this budget, which we already have, that has borrowed more money from China, borrowed more money from Japan, borrowed money from OPEC countries, incapable of executing FEMA to address natural disasters and emergency situations in the United States. We know how to run Government.

When the Democrats passed the budget in 1993 with the Democratic President, created 20 million new jobs, we had surpluses as far as the eye can see. So we are cleaning up a mess here that we have inherited, and we are going to move forward and continue with our agenda, and we are proud.

We are going to move forward, and we have an agenda. We have moved on it. We promised it. We acted on it. And we are going to continue to move on it.

I will yield to our young, new rising star from western Pennsylvania, Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I did want to talk for just a moment about how important it is that veterans were taken care of in this continuing resolution.

I do want to commend Speaker PELOSI, Chairman OBEY, and the rest of the Democratic leadership who did a great job of putting together what was a mess that was left to us.

As Mr. RYAN talked about, we had nine out of eleven appropriations bills to fund this Government that were left in our lap, and we had to deal with that, and we had some tough decisions to make. But under the leadership of Speaker PELOSI and Chairman OBEY we did what needed to be done.

I made clear to the leadership, and they agreed, that we needed to make sure that nobody should stand in front of our veterans when it comes time to pass funding resolutions. We have people fighting for us in the field overseas right now. We have veterans coming back from Iraq and, of course, veterans of every age.

That need does not go away. That need does not stop. As the Congressional Budget Office has indicated, the cost of caring for those veterans goes up year after year; and we have an obligation and a duty as Members of Congress to make sure that the VA health care budget goes up enough to maintain the current level of services for every veteran that walks through the door. I want to commend Chairman OBEY for taking care of that under this continuing resolution.

I also wanted to just take a walk down memory lane and let's take a look at what the Republican leadership did for veterans' health care over the past several years.

I have a chart here. It might be difficult for some to read.

January, 2003, the Bush administration cut veterans' health care for 164,000 veterans; and that is just the start.

March, 2003, 2 months later, the Republican budget that passed this Congress cut \$14 billion from veterans' health care.

March, 2004, 1 year later, the Republican budget shortchanged veterans' health care by an additional \$1½ billion.

March, 2005, the following year, President Bush's budget shortchanged veterans' health care by another \$2 billion and cut veterans' benefits by \$14 billion over 5 years. That is what we were left with.

Now, in the summer of 2005, after they had been warned when they passed that budget back in 2004 and after enormous pressure from the Democrats and from people around this country and especially from veterans' organizations, the Bush administration finally did acknowledge that they shortchanged the veterans; and they added back \$2.7 billion after months of Democratic pressure to put that money back in.

But then only a few months later, in March, 2006, President Bush's budget cut veterans' funding by an additional \$6 billion over 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, that is the mess that we were left with, this continuing resolution, and that was what needed to be resolved. And I said throughout my campaign and I say every weekend when I go back and speak to these veterans' groups that we are, as a Congress, going to make a new commitment to our veterans, a commitment that has not been there for the past 12 years; and we are going to put veterans' interests first when it comes time to deal with these funding resolutions.

So what did we do? In this continuing resolution that passed this House today, the Democrats increased the VA health care budget by \$3.6 billion. Now that is in an atmosphere of having left nine spending bills completely undone, and the Republican leadership made no effort to increase that funding. But we found the will, as Democrats, and we added \$3.6 billion to the veterans' budget.

That is leadership; and for that I commend Speaker PELOSI, Chairman OBEY and the rest of the Democratic leaders who were involved in putting that together. That is what we have done here today.

So, at this point, I am going to yield to the gentleman from Ohio so he can continue to run the show.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate that. Mr. Speaker, I am going to yield the remainder of the hour to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I need to step out. I will be back, but I would like to yield the rest of the hour to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

□ 1815

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARE). Under the Speaker's announced

policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for the balance of the majority leader's hour.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. ALTMIRE, I want to tell a little story because I am really pleased that you raised this issue, and that you have been the champion of ensuring that we don't, as we move through what is an unfortunate but necessary situation with this continuing resolution, I want to tell anyone listening a little story about an exchange that you and I had the other day on the House floor.

I have the privilege of serving as a Chief Deputy Whip for the House Democratic Caucus, and you are one of my assignments. We divide the House Democratic Caucus members up into groups, and you are included among the Members that I am typically engaged in lobbying. And when I approached you about whether you were going to be supportive of the continuing resolution that we voted on today, your immediate response, which was the right one, was, well, not if we are cutting money for veterans. And I was really proud that you did that and that you were absolutely not going to move forward on your support for the continuing resolution unless you were able to get the information that you needed to ensure that, in fact, not only were we not cutting funding for veterans but, we in fact, increased funding for veterans. And so the notation in your hometown paper was apt and appropriate, and I commend you for your advocacy because that is what this is all about.

The new direction that the American people demanded, that they chose on November 7 included selecting people like you to send to Washington to make sure that when there was no one standing up, we certainly were all standing up united as a minority; but that there were not enough people in this body standing up for veterans. On the contrary, as you just outlined through the charts in a chronological way, the Republicans and the Republican administration were doing the opposite, were actually making it more difficult for veterans to get the services that they need and that they were entitled to and that they deserved through their patriotism and devotion to this country. So I commend you on that.

We were in a situation in adopting the continuing resolution today that was the result of the mess, as you said, that the Republicans handed us. I mean, how irresponsible to just not complete nine of the 11 appropriations bills. I sit on the House Appropriations Committee now. I am just at the beginning of that process, but it is mind boggling to me, how, really, I mean, the Constitution says the only thing we have to do, the only thing Congress has to do is pass the budget. And they didn't do it. They didn't do it because it is hard. It is difficult. You have to make tough decisions. And you know,

right up in front of an election, where they were struggling as it was, they didn't want to make those difficult decisions. And we have a lot of our Members, some in tough districts that are going to have to go home and have to answer some difficult questions, because obviously, you know, we didn't like everything that we had to do. But if we didn't go forward and try to get to the 2008 budgetary process and make sure we could do right by the people in this country, then we would have been in an even worse mess.

So kudos to you for standing up for veterans and for adding another voice on their behalf where there wasn't one before.

And if the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) wanted to jump in I would be happy to yield to him.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Well, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for yielding.

One of the things I realized when I came down here in January was that you get a lot of analogies, and some of them work, some of them don't. But listening to our colleagues criticize the budget, the continuing resolution we just passed here, you kind of think of the old "bull in the china shop" analogy.

This is kind of like the bull walking into the china shop spending a good half an hour breaking everything in the china shop; the owner finally having the good sense to kick him out, and then him showing up about 2 days later and asking why everything hasn't been fixed yet. I mean, that is essentially, what has happened here is that there has been so much damage, Mr. Speaker, done to this budget by virtue of nine of the 11, nine of the 11 appropriations bills not being completed by the end of business.

And an important thing to note is that, you know, Congress was back here in the holiday season in November and December trying to finish those budget bills. And I am just learning, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, about the budget process, but from what I know, November, December is pretty late to be even working on those budget bills. Those budget bills were supposed to be done over the summer and fall. And so even giving themselves an extra 4 or 5 months to complete those bills, they still weren't done on time.

And so when the Democrats finally were put back in charge of this place by virtue of the millions of Americans who stood up across this country to start putting common sense middle class values first, the people who put Mr. ALTMIRE and myself here in Congress, when they finally, we finally sort of reentered the china shop and realized that everything had been broken, we realized it was going to take a little while to clean everything up. And what we did today, this continuing resolution which keeps this government running for the next several months, is an important first step because there are some critical programs, veterans

benefits at the top of that list, Mr. ALTMIRE, that are funded here.

What else are we talking about? We are talking about Pell grants. Even after coming before this body and, with remarkable bipartisan support, decreasing the rate of student loans for millions of students across this country, we came back in this budget, we increased the maximum Pell grant by \$260, to over \$4,000, \$4,300 for the average student.

We put in new money or in schools that are failing to meet the Head Start standards. Mr. ALTMIRE, you know that both of us heard so much about that from our school districts over the course of the campaign and over the course of the last month. Now, 6,700 schools across this country that are failing to meet those No Child Left Behind standards are going to get new funding from this government in order to keep on operating.

We increased community health center funding by \$207 million. Community health centers in this very broken health care system are sometimes the place of last resort, often the place of only resort for so many uninsured families. We are now going to make sure that they get the funding that they deserve.

So in so many ways we started to clean up the mess that that bull made for the last 12 years. We are starting to put the china back together. We are starting to buy a little bit of new stuff to put on the shelves. And it is going to take a little while. It is going to take a little while.

But it is important to remember that the work we did here today, I think, is just a beginning on that front, Mr. ALTMIRE. And I join Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN in commending you for standing up for the veterans in your district, because when you speak for those veterans, it is not just in your district, it is for all the veterans in my district and, as an extension, it is for all the future veterans, because as you know, we are so lucky to have an all volunteer military.

But if they think that by going into the service they will return home and find a country and a Nation that does not honor their service, well, then we are going to have a lot harder time than we are already having finding people to fight the future battles and wars that this country may engage in.

I would yield. I see Mr. MEEK has joined us. But I would yield to Mr. ALTMIRE and thank him again for his advocacy over the past several weeks.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And I did want to follow up on what the gentlelady from Florida had talked about earlier, what was left to us, and the reason that it was left to us. This was a politically, cowardly maneuver, calculated to gamble on the outcome of the elections. They left nine spending bills unfinished, hoping that they would then win and come back for a lame duck session where they could ram through further spending increases and increase the

Federal budget deficit even more, as they have done every year for the past 6 years. Instead, the results of the election were not to their liking.

The Democrats are retaking control of Congress at that point, and they made a calculated decision. Instead of finishing the work that their constituents sent them here to do, they, instead, dropped the ball and left all nine spending bills until the new year and the new Congress, and countless programs languishing, twisting in the wind while the new change in Congress came.

And again, under the leadership of the new Democrats who have taken control of Congress, we were able to pass, within a month, nine appropriation bills that they couldn't pass over the course of an entire year.

So I can't say enough about the work that this House has done and that this Congress has done in putting together a package that was very, very difficult to do, and it is just a great accomplishment.

Mr. MEEK has joined us. I would ask, does the gentleman wish to comment on this?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am listening. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. ALTMIRE, let me just jump in while the gentleman from Florida is listening, because one of the things I think it is important to point out is when we talk in the language of government, it is difficult for regular folks to understand what we are saying. So we are talking about the CR, the continuing resolution, the terminology that we deal with on a daily basis. But that is not what sort of every day folks understand.

And the continuing resolution, it is important to point out, is the budget, the Federal budget that keeps the lights on. And people will recall a number of years ago when the Republican Congress decided that, in retaliation for who knows what, because they couldn't get the Clinton administration to agree to what they wanted, because they thought that brinksmanship was the most appropriate strategy, they shut the government down. People were furloughed. Government programs that were vitally important to different constituencies around the country came to a halt.

What we have done is, and Chairman OBEY has been the champion of this. What we have done is, not only have we made sure that that doesn't happen, because brinksmanship and engaging in irresponsible actions like that make no sense, we have made some difficult decisions. But we haven't made irrational decisions that would be harmful to people.

For example, we could have passed a continuing resolution that simply adopted the 2006 spending levels, the same spending levels that we had in 2006 and just moved forward. But that would have resulted, as you pointed out for veterans, in some cuts. And in

our discussion on the floor the other day, you pointed out that unless there were increases, essentially, because of inflation, because of the adjustments in cost of living that are necessary, and because there are simply more people, more service men and women who are in need, we would not have had the money we needed to meet the needs of veterans.

But beyond that, let me just talk about what, because our good friends on the other side of the aisle are, of course, being critical that we didn't just pass a straight continuing resolution. Let's talk about what that would have done. Essentially, that would have jeopardized our national security. If we did that, if we simply passed the same level budget that we adopted in 2006, that would have resulted in thousands of layoffs, cuts for health care workers, cuts for members of the Armed Forces, cuts for veterans.

For example, the Food Safety and Inspection Service would face a month of furloughs. Can you imagine a month of furloughs in the Food Safety and Inspection Service? That means that we could end up with rotting meat in supermarkets and people potentially buying them. Or let's not use language that is too strong. Questionable meat. I mean, if we don't make sure that we have our food inspected, then we are going to jeopardize people's health. That would have also resulted in the closure of 6,000 meat processing plants that could not have been inspected.

The Federal Judiciary would have had to fire 2,500 workers. The Small Business Administration, and Mr. MEEK, this is incredibly important to our area because how often we face natural disasters through hurricanes. But the Small Business Administration's disaster loan assistance program, which provides back up for FEMA's individual assistance program, that would have been run dry by the end of February.

Now, given how many people are still suffering from the aftermath of Katrina and Rita and Wilma and the other hurricanes and the other natural disasters that have hit around this country, I just cannot imagine what the consequences would have been. Actually, I can imagine what the consequences would have been for millions of Americans.

So we struck a balance here. We were being fiscally responsible, but at the same time, not hanging Americans out to dry without regard for their well-being. And that is what the Democratic Caucus's approach always is. You have to think about the fact that all of the decisions that we make here, Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. MURPHY and Mr. MEEK, affect real people.

I have often thought over the time I have served in the Congress and in the State Legislature in Florida, in Florida, and I am not sure how far your State capital is in Connecticut from your home, Mr. MURPHY, but Tallahassee is 450 miles from where I live. And

I served in the State Legislature for 12 years. Mr. MEEK, I think, served in the State Legislature for 10, between the House and the Senate. It is so easy, I mean, we are obviously even further away from our homes, I certainly am. But you are pretty far from your homes, too, making decisions in Washington. And it could be argued that it would be so easy to make decisions in a vacuum here. The people we affect, whose decisions that we make, who we affect, they can't come in this Chamber. They are not in the room with us. The folks in the gallery are that are watching, but it would be so easy to just forget that every decision, every vote, every time we put our card in that slot and our name lights up on the board "yea" or "nay," the decision we make affects a human being.

□ 1830

But you become desensitized to it. There is a danger that you could become desensitized to it. Certainly the Republican side of the aisle became desensitized to it. For years and years, they didn't think about the results, they didn't think about the consequences. Well, that is the balance the Democrats strike. Pragmatism with a healthy dose of thoughtfulness and compassion. That is what it is all about.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Would the gentlewoman yield for a moment? And I think she is exactly right, and I think that that disconnect that you talk about, that certainly was in existence here for a very long time was one of the reasons why we now have a Democratic majority. The people last summer were fueling up their cars at \$3.50 a gallons. We are finding that all of a sudden, they were having to pay \$50 co-pays rather than \$25 co-pays. And they looked at a Congress which seemed pretty incredulous to their concerns, that seemed to watch without listening. And you are right, people get hurt by the decisions they make down here. And I will give you an example.

In my district I have a senior housing complex in Torrington, major place where a lot of seniors live in one of the biggest cities in my district, and we have had some security problems there, some people coming in off the streets and had a couple violent incidents. Well, most of the facility and the staff there are financed through Federal grants. Well, because this Congress, over the last 12 years, slashed Federal housing funds to the bone, they have had to make major layoffs at that housing complex.

In fact, it finally came down to a very difficult but unfortunately necessary decision that that housing facility made to lay off their security guards. That is going to put hundreds of senior citizens at risk in this senior housing complex. And they come to their local elected officials, their State-elected officials and ask, what can you do to help? And everybody points back to where the problem came

from. It was years of neglect down here in Washington of housing programs, just as there were years of neglect years to health care programs, years of neglect to defense and certain national security programs.

And in order to reestablish that commitment to the seniors of Torrington, to those veterans in Pennsylvania, it is going to take a little while.

But if you are back in your communities, if you are talking to people, regular middle-class, working folks people, you will hear those stories on how the votes we take here affect people back in Connecticut, back in Florida, back in Pennsylvania. And for some reason, whether it was the power that went to people's head, whether it was the pomp and circumstance that surrounds being a Member of Congress, for some reason, over the last 12 years, and in particular, I think, Mr. ALTMIRE, over the past 4, 5, or 6 years, there was a wall that was put up around Washington, D.C., and folks that were controlling the committees here and the budget here just were not listening to people back in State of Connecticut, State of Pennsylvania, Florida, and throughout this country, because if they did, they would know we have to put more money in housing.

If they listened to those veterans that you and I talk to every day at people's doors, they would know that men and women who came back from Iraq, came back from Vietnam, World War II veterans are struggling. And what we are now doing here in starting to clean up that mess is also to start listening again. And I believe Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ is very correct on that notion.

I yield to Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I thank you so very much. You know, I don't put a lot of value in folks coming down to the floor sharing inaccurate information. And it is very unfortunate, because one thing that I can say here of the 30-something Working Group, we actually meet off the floor and we make sure, Mr. Speaker, that information that we are sharing is factual, that it is factual and that if someone wants to challenge us on that particular fact, they can go to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, they can go to the Library of Congress, what have you. It is there. Or they can go to a piece of legislation.

To come down and make statements that could mislead Members of Congress or could mislead the American public, I think that it is very unfortunate and it is something that should be frowned upon. But I guess the only good reason why I can come up with the reason why some Members on the minority side will come to the floor and make some inaccurate statements of the essence of the continuing resolution today, I go back to what I have been talking about for the last 2 weeks and that is the bipartisanship that has been taking place here on this floor.

If I was a part of the Republican leadership, I would be concerned, too. I

would wonder how would the American people think, I mean, what would they think, Democrat or Republican, on how Democrats can be in control of the House and then, at the same time, have this bipartisanship taking place with Democrats in control. Let me just clarify what I am saying.

Time after time, Republicans are voting with Democrats on good measures. Today, this continuing resolution was a good piece of legislation. It wasn't a partisan vote. It shouldn't have been a partisan vote. Two hundred twenty-nine Democrats voted for the continuing resolution; 57 Republicans voted for the continuing resolution. We should all be on the floor happy that we can come together on a piece of legislation that is so important to the country. What is the alternative? The government shutting down? We don't want that.

I will yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I have a question. Does the gentleman know off the top of his head, with the major legislation that we passed in the 100 hours and what we have done subsequent to that, including the continuing resolution, approximately how many Republicans we have seen cross the aisle and join us in a bipartisan manner?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I don't have my notes right here. If you have it handy, go ahead and answer the question.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Unless the gentleman from Pennsylvania knows, I do know that we got an average of 62 Republicans to vote with the Democrats on the Six-in-'06 agenda on making sure that the Federal Government can negotiate for lower prices for the Medicare part D prescription drug plan; making sure that we fully implement the 9/11 Commission Report; making sure that we repeal the subsidies to the oil industry; making sure that we do the job that the people sent us here to do and that they spoke so strongly about through their vote on November 7. An average of 62 Republicans voted with us on each of those items.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And then today 57 more, as the gentleman said. I didn't mean to put the gentleman on the spot, but I wanted to just reemphasize the point that he was making that this is not a partisan majority ramming it down the throat of the Republicans. This is working in a bipartisan spirit, something that has not been seen in this Congress for more than 12 years. And here we are, the end of our first month in office, we passed another major piece of legislation joined by 57 Members on the other side. And the gentleman is right that this is something that we should be applauding. And this is new to Congress. This is not something that has happened recently.

So I would hate for people on the other side during the debate to characterize this as a partisan bill and a partisan effort. It is not. We again, with an average of 62 Republicans, 57 again

today, have done this in a bipartisan way, crafting it so that all sides can support it, because we all agree that we need to do things that are to the betterment of the American people and to the benefit of the American people.

I would yield again to the gentleman from Florida to continue, but I did want to just reemphasize that point.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It is no problem at all. Clarification is very, very important in this process. And the Republican leadership seems to continue to have a problem with the bipartisan spirit that is in the Chamber now, because in the last Congress that wasn't the case; in the Congress before that, that wasn't the case. There were partisan votes every day. I mean, it was almost like, how can we send a bill to the floor to make the Democrats vote against the bill versus for the bill? And one of the things that the American people want is for us to work together. We are all Americans. We salute one flag. We walk into this Chamber, we all carry one voting card. And I think that is important.

But to the point, to show the difference between us and others that may come to the floor sharing this information off the cuff, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ is 110 percent right and accurate as it relates to the percentage, but she named off a piece of legislation that Republicans and Democrats voted for: 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act, 68 Republicans voted for it, 231 Democrats voted for it, which was 299 total for us to pass it. The Fair Minimum Wage, 82 Republicans voted for it, 233 Democrats voted for it, and brought the vote to 315. We looked at the issue of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act; 37 Republicans, 216 Democrats brought that vote to 253, which was in the affirmative. The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiating Act, 24 Republicans, 231 Democrats, 255, to make it an affirmative vote. And the College Student Relief Act, 124 Republicans, 232 Democrats, that brought that vote to 356.

These are major, major, major issues that are facing the country, issues that have been clogged up in the Republican Congress, 109th, 108th, 107th, 105th Congress. And now the American people said they wanted to move in a new direction and we are moving in that direction. And, unfortunately, there are some Members of Congress on the Republican side of the aisle that have a problem with that.

I told you that I am all excited, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ can tell you, Mr. RYAN can tell you: Lead us the opportunity to lead and we will lead.

Mr. RYAN how, many times: If you give us the opportunity to be in the leadership of the House of Representatives you will be served? West Coast.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Put me in, Coach.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Put me in, Coach. The Heartland of America, East Coast, Republican, Democrat, Independent, Green Party, thinking about

voting, now voting. You do it, we will make it happen, and it is happening.

So you have some that come to the floor and talk about, well, you know, this is not happening and I voted against it because I didn't get 2 hours to speak independently on the floor against it, and that is the reason why I voted against it.

I just want to lay it out because I want to make sure that the Members know and the American people know that it is just Washington rhetoric. We are here making it happen. We are happening.

I yield to my good friend.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio, I appreciate my good from Miami, Florida yielding to me.

The funny part watching the debate today was that the other side, because they had the opportunity for so long to pass so many of these pieces of legislation and to get them through the Senate and get them signed by the President and they didn't take advantage of it, that they have very little credibility in dealing with the issue of the fact that we are actually doing this stuff.

And so I agree with my friend Mr. MEEK; it has been exciting. This is great. This is good stuff. You guys are reading the increases and the different programs. And, as Mr. OBEY said, this is a thinking man's document.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You know, just the way you are going back and forth on the Republican's response to the process, you know, it is just really, gosh, I can't say what comes to mind. It is galling. It really is galling that they do have nerve to talk about process.

Because just in my 2 years of experience, and certainly two wrongs don't make a wrong, but there is no second wrong here. I mean, in my experience in the last 2 years, and Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK, you have had more experience and more lengthy experience than I and Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. MURPHY have had, but I recall votes being held open for 40 minutes to several hours to twist enough arms to get the votes. We, of course, haven't had to do that because not only do we get all of our Members to vote for our legislation, but we get a good chunk if not, and in one case, a majority of theirs.

I remember being shut out, completely shut out on every major question over the last 2 years, no amendments allowed, no commentary except in a token way. And now they are whining about process?

You know, the small point I wanted to make, and Mr. ALTMIRE, you are a dad, you have young kids; I am a mom, I have young kids; Mr. MEEK has young kids, and some day Mr. MURPHY and Mr. RYAN, I am sure you will have young kids too.

But you know, when your kids whine at you and complain about something that you know is just their immaturity, their wishing something could be the case, but when they get a little

older they will realize that they were wrong? That is what this is.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What is it? You are saying, what is it? Just tell us.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It is nerve is what it is. It is just pure unadulterated nerve. The American people see through this. They don't have any substance to talk about. They can only whine about process.

□ 1845

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The interesting part here is the CR that we passed today was to clean up their mess that they left. They only passed one out of 13 appropriations bills.

So you can only imagine, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden they leave all of this mess for us to deal with and we try to deal with their mess and they want input. Well, you had your chance. You had 14 years and all kinds of months last year to pass this stuff, and you didn't do it.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I think they should have their say. I really do. Going forward, when we hear legislation and get into the regular order, we have markups in committee hearings and legislation that Members file, we will do that. But we are still cleaning up their mess.

The Six in '06 agenda is an agenda of the major issues that the American people voted for us to come here and do that we offered as amendments.

We offered the minimum wage, we offered fully implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and through all of the other procedural attempts we made within the confines of their limiting us, we offered repealing the subsidies to the oil industry.

We offered legislation and amendments that would have the student loan interest rate and make higher education access more affordable. And they said no. They said no, no, no, over and over and over again.

Sorry, now it is our turn. It is time to implement the agenda that the American people asked us to. It is time to clean up their mess.

Mr. RYAN, going forward, I am all for what Speaker PELOSI has said that we will do, which is give them the most bipartisan House of Representatives that history has ever seen. But the mess has to be cleaned up before we can do that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You and Mr. RYAN are members of the powerful Appropriations Committee; and, today, watching Mr. OBEY, the chairman, and seeing what he was able to do in moving this continuing resolution, which is the appropriations act which funds the government, to see that happen and to understand the history of it. Because when the Republicans took over in 1995 or 1994, went into power in 1995, they didn't have to deal with a continuing resolution because Mr. OBEY and the Appropriations Committee passed all of their bills on time. They didn't leave unfinished business for the Republican Congress.

And, guess what, they also had a surplus as far as the eye could see. So whatever idea we wanted to implement, we had the money to do it because we had managers in this House of Representatives under Democratic leadership to make sure that the country was in the black and in good standing and did not have bad credit and did not owe foreign nations \$1.05 trillion.

Then the Republican leadership comes in here and they hand things out, special projects, bridges to nowhere, all of these big items, and then come to the floor and grab it. That's fine.

The reason I am happy today is today is the beginning of getting the Appropriations Committee and this House in order and getting us on track under regular order. And I will guarantee as sure as my name is Kendrick Meek that the 2008 appropriations act will pass on time. There will be hearings. We will look at every project and make sure that everything is in order, because American taxpayer dollars are going towards those projects.

Very few appropriations committees met. They hardly met. Why do you want to ask questions and have hearings? As I said, the Foreign Affairs Committee only had one hearing on Iraq. They have had five thus far in this Congress, and counting.

So I feel very confident about the fact that we are talking about our vision and the leadership; B, we are pointing out the difference between some of the Members on the minority side that want to continue to carry out the old way and the Members on the minority side that want to move in a new direction. I am glad that they are there.

My last point, we have five Members in the majority here on a Wednesday afternoon when we are going to recess for the week that has the will and the desire. We have the will and desire to continue to let the American people and the Members know that we want to lead and we want to lead this country in a new direction and we want to work in a bipartisan way.

We could be home. We could be somewhere else. My kids are back in the cloakroom right now. I could be having dinner with them. But this is important. I want them to know, and when historians look at what was happening during a time when we had two wars going on, we have a President wanting to escalate with troops and the American people saying we don't want it, we have the country in a deficit, and then we have Members here crying about a project was cut out of the bill and I am upset about it.

I am glad, ladies and gentlemen, that we are here on this floor, and I am glad that we are representing on behalf of the American people. We are not the Democratic National Committee. We are Members of Congress. And it should not be the Republican National Committee, it should be Members of Congress. That is what makes this House

work, and that is the reason why it worked today on the continuing resolution.

I am very happy that we did pass this continuing resolution. I am so glad that 57 Republicans joined Democrats in passing this continuing resolution, because it is showing that we are actually moving in a new direction, not just Democrats are moving in a new direction, but the U.S. House of Representatives is.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, let me thank you, Mr. MEEK, on behalf of my constituents and the people throughout this country for the vigilance that you and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. RYAN showed for the last 2 years, and in your case longer than that. There were a lot of things you could be doing late at night when Mr. ALTMIRE and I might have caught you on TV into the wee hours. But you were out here spreading the message that it was time for working class, regular folks throughout this country to have their day here again. There had been enough time for the special interests and lobbyists and everyone else to have their day in Congress. It was time for regular people to have their day in the people's House.

I want to add something. We use this term "Republican leadership," and I think that is important. Because one of the things that you have figured out over the last couple of weeks is that there is a difference between the Republican leadership and a lot of the rest of the folks in the Republican Party.

Maybe I should be careful to not give too much credit to the other side. But it seems like on every measure the Republican leadership trots out and says, the Republicans are going to be against raising the minimum wage, and they turn around to see who is following. And, guess what, they vote for it.

The Republican leadership says, we are going to be against cutting the student loan interest rates. They run out here and turn around to see who is following them, and there are even more of their colleagues voting with the Democrats.

They say, this process is broken, we are going to vote against this continuing resolution, and they turn around, and there are 50-some-odd of their Members supporting it.

Why? Because, on average, we had 60-some-odd votes for every piece of the 100 hours agenda from the Republican side and 50-plus votes for the continuing resolution.

Why do you have so many Republican votes? Because there are Republicans, just as there are Democrats, who are in touch with their constituents. When they go home for weekends, they hear about the struggles that middle-class families are going through to pay for health care and education.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman would yield, I would like to interject on that point.

Because the funny thing, ironically funny, about what you are talking

about, where we have an average of 62 Republicans supporting the Six in '06 agenda and 57 supporting the continuing resolutions appropriations bill today, the last 2 years, our experience, Mr. RYAN's, Mr. MEEK's and my experience, is watching the Republican leadership wrench our colleagues's arms behind their back; and, in many cases, new Members replaced those Members. Those Members caved. Those Members either didn't vote their conscience.

We used to talk about, in the 30-something hour, about how it seemed they checked their consciences and their beliefs and their constituents' beliefs at the door. They would come here and allow themselves to be influenced by their leadership and vote differently in some cases than they publicly said they would vote.

I think that actually happened with your predecessor, Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. That's right. I think what happened here for the last 12 years, the agenda on the House floor was a Republican agenda. Republicans supported it, and they twisted some Republican arms to support it.

The agenda that is now before the House of Representatives is a people's agenda. That is why you see Republicans and Democrats supporting it. Because the agenda doesn't have to do with somebody on the seventh floor of the Republican National Committee or somebody on the third floor of the Democratic National Committee. The agenda has to do with the people that we meet at the diner and the senior housing center.

That is why I think for the next 2 years, I know for the next 2 years, we are going to see Republicans and Democrats coming together. Because this isn't a party agenda anymore. This is a people's agenda. That may sound corny, but it is probably the best way to articulate what is happening here.

As a new Member, it fills me with joy and pride to be part of this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Two things that we did not mention that were also part of the Six in '06 agenda were ethics reform and the PAYGO rules. Mr. ALTMIRE, I know you have been a supporter of both of those things.

We had a culture of corruption hanging over this institution and over this Capitol, and we were able to adopt some ethics rules that make sure that we can restore the American people's confidence in their government again. That is what our freshman class on the Democratic side ran on. One of the issues that they ran on was making sure that they could inspire their constituents to believe in what we are doing here again.

Mr. ALTMIRE. You are right. Those are the two things that we did the very first couple of days, right after we swore in that new class of freshmen and Democrats took control of Congress. We did away with the gifts and travel and the golf outings and the

meals that had been so pervasive in Congress over the past several years.

More importantly to what we are talking about tonight, we reinstated the PAYGO budget scoring system. And for those Members who talk to their constituents at home, it is what they do in their home kitchens at the end of month. It is what we do when we have to balance our own budgets. You have to have money on one side of the ledger to pay for what goes out on the other side. It is a very simple concept.

Unfortunately, this Congress right after this President took office decided to let that expire. That was required in Congresses past. But, unfortunately, this administration had other ideas; and so they ran up mountains of debt because they were no longer required to have money on the other side of the ledger when they wanted to continue their free-spending ways.

The result was when President Bush first took office he inherited 4 consecutive years of budget surpluses that were forecast to continue as far as the eye could see. In fact, the 10-year budget projection was \$5.3 trillion, trillion, with a "T," in surplus over the 10-year period from 2001 to 2010.

Well, what has happened since then? They allowed pay-as-you-go to expire. They have run up the deficit, \$3.5 trillion of debt over the past 6 years. The President next week is going to submit to us his budget for fiscal year 2008. It is going to be his seventh consecutive out-of-balance budget. Those deficits continue as far as the eye can see.

What we did in the first week when Democrats took control of Congress, we said, enough is enough. This must stop. We instituted the PAYGO scoring system, which is what turned the record deficits of the 1980s into the record surpluses that we had in the 1990s.

Now that led us to have to make some very difficult decisions in the continuing resolution that we passed today, but we have done it. We have done the hard work. We have talked about the increases that were included in the bill and the funding for veterans and for Pell Grants and for the new expanded health centers that are going to serve 1.2 million patients around the country.

But I do want to make clear to everybody that this measure also includes more than 60 different program cuts to help pay for that, to help balance that situation.

□ 1900

So those 60 programs were reduced below fiscal year 2006 funding proposals, and that provided the \$10 billion in savings that we needed to offset those increases that we made in veterans health care and the other programs that we talked about.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I find it very interesting as the debate progressed today to hear all the conservatives who have been saying government's too big and then they blew the budget completely out of balance, borrowed money

from China and they are here complaining about all this government is bad stuff, well, you are cutting this program and that program. That is why I think they have lost a lot of credibility with the American people, Mr. Speaker, is because there is no consistency with their argument.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Consistency.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. No consistency. What they said last year, they did not do this year. What they did last year, they do not want us to do. There is no consistency to their argument at all. Consistency is the word for today, the lack thereof on the Republican side.

As we close, because I know we just have a few minutes left, and I want to yield back to my friend from Florida, I think it is very interesting what we are seeing happening already. We talked a lot in the last couple of years about oversight and that when the Democrats were in charge, Mr. Speaker, we were going to provide oversight.

Now, we start seeing things open up in Iraq, with all these contracts, from all these big corporations who were getting all these big government contracts, all of the sudden you are starting to see come out of these committee hearings exactly what has been going on. Now you are starting to see maybe the administration was strong arming some scientists to spin global climate change data. You are starting to see this all percolate up.

I think one of the other things we said we are going to do is execute our constitutional obligation to provide oversight, and we are seeing that, and we are seeing the results of that with the global warming, with the war in Iraq, things happening, that didn't happen in Katrina, all starting to rise up.

I want to thank the gentleman from the Pittsburgh area and the gentleman from Connecticut, my two favorite people from Florida. I want to thank you and I yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for her closing remarks.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I think your comments are a good segue to where we should close which is that the Congress has now finally reasserted our constitutional role to be a check, a check and a balance over the other branches of government, particularly over the executive branch in which that authority and oversight was completely ceded over the last 12 years.

I sit on the House Judiciary Committee. We had an oversight committee today on the presidential signing statement where the President, this President in particular more than any other President combined, has issued signing statements, his opinion and his interpretation of legislation which is really the judicial branch's responsibility, that he would just choose not to implement or implement in the way that he wanted to, a particular section of law, wholly inappropriate.

Congress is back in our appropriate role, and I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania to talk about our Web site, but first to the gentleman from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I just want to warn the gentleman from Pennsylvania that you need to say both the e-mail address and the Web site or you will be scolded by some of the more veteran Members of the 30 Something Group. So I want to give you that piece of advice as you close.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I appreciate the gentleman from Connecticut alerting me to that.

For the Members who would like to tell the constituents how they can learn something more about the 30 Something Working Group, I would encourage them to e-mail us at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov or they can visit the Web site at www.speaker.gov/30something.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, the 30 Something Working Group appreciates the hour granted to us by Speaker NANCY PELOSI.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. STENY H. HOYER AND HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH FEBRUARY 5, 2007.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HARE) laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 31, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STENY H. HOYER and the Honorable CHRIS VAN HOLLEN to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign enrolled bills and joint resolutions through February 5, 2007.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, there is a question that often comes to my mind. I wonder to how many Americans this comes to their mind.

We are a great superpower, the undisputed economic and military superpower of this world. Have you ever asked yourself why? What is so special about us that we have this privileged position in the world?

We no longer have the most oil in the world or gold or silver or diamonds. We no longer have the best work ethic in the world. We no longer have the most respect for technical education. We no longer have the most respect for the nuclear family. Nearly half of our children are born out of wedlock. What makes us so special?

I have asked myself that question a lot of times, and I think there are two

reasons. There may be others, but I have noted for myself two reasons I think. One of those is the enormous respect that this country, that this government, has for our civil liberties. There is no other Constitution, there is no other government, that has this great respect for civil liberties.

The Constitution written in 1787 was hardly dry before our Founding Fathers wondered if it was clear that most of the rights, most of the power, should belong to the people, and so they wrote what we call the Bill of Rights, those first 10 amendments which delineated very clearly that most of the rights belonged to the people.

Civil liberties are always a casualty of war. Abraham Lincoln, my favorite President, violated our civil liberties in the civil war. In World War II, we interned the Japanese Americans. I served here with Norm Mineta, former Secretary of Transportation. Japanese Americans. He told me, "ROSCOE, as a little boy, I remember holding my parents' hands when they ushered us into that concentration camp in Idaho."

Those wars were ended and we got back the habeas corpus that was denied during the civil war, and the Japanese Americans were released from those internment camps.

We are now engaged in a great war, a war like no other that we have ever fought. I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that in our zeal to catch terrorists that we may threaten the civil liberties that I think are largely responsible for making us this great, free Nation.

I think these civil liberties have established a climate and milieu in which creativity and entrepreneurship can flourish, and I think we put at risk who we are in our superior position in the world if we put at risk these civil liberties. We need to be very careful, and actions like the PATRIOT Act, warrantless wiretaps, detention without either charging or giving counsel to the accused, we must be very careful, Mr. Speaker, that we do not put at risk those things that have made us such a great Nation. But this is a subject for another day.

A second reason, which is the subject for today that I believe that we are such a great, free Nation, undisputed superpower in the world, I believe that our Founding Fathers understood that God sat with them at the table when they wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I have here in the front of the little Constitution that I carry a statement from Alexander Hamilton one year before they wrote the Declaration of Independence, and I think that it kind of epitomizes the belief that most of our Founding Fathers had.

The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature by the hands of the divinity itself and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.