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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. BALDWIN).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 28, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY BALDWIN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Rabbi Paul Silton, Temple Israel, Albany, New York, offered the following prayer:

May the author of liberty and equality, who created all human beings in His image, bless all of you who have been chosen by the citizens of this great bastion of democracy to represent them.

May He grant all of you the privilege of discovering His will and doing it wholeheartedly. May He touch your lives with the spirit of wisdom and insight. May He grant all of you the ability to make wise decisions and the satisfaction of doing a multitude of good deeds. May He strengthen you to walk in paths of honesty, to courageously meet every challenge, and to overcome all obstacles.

May you be blessed with long and peaceful lives, lives free from shame and reproach, lives filled with many years of physical vitality, so that you may see all your heart's desires for goodness fulfilled and the work of your hands established.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PASCRELL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING DR. RABBI PAUL SILTON

(Mr. MCNULTY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCNULTY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome my very dear friend, Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton, and to thank him for offering the opening prayer this morning for the United States House of Representatives.

Rabbi Silton has served the community of New York's Capital Region for over 30 years as Rabbi of Temple Israel, the largest conservative synagogue in northeastern New York. He began his career at Temple Israel as the education director where he was responsible for fostering growth at every education level, including the addition of an adult education program.

Rabbi Silton has made enormous contributions not just to Temple Israel, but to the entire community. He founded the Holocaust Survivors and Friends in Pursuit of Justice. He also hosted a 3-day National Holocaust Conference for 1,500 participants at Temple Israel.

He has also organized a multitude of services for the community Kristallnacht and the Holocaust Memorial commemorations.

Through the efforts of Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton, Temple Israel has received numerous awards from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, in addition to education awards for programming, high school education, and the Framework for Excellent Synagogue School Program Award.

I am proud to welcome my very dear friend, Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton this morning, and to thank him on behalf of the entire United States House of Representatives.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will recognize up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT RAISING TAXES

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Speaker, rather than pulling out the tired old talking points of ''tax and spend,'' I wish my colleagues and my good friends on the other side of the aisle would actually read the Democratic budget resolution. Really, it makes for pretty good reading.

If they did, they would see that nowhere in the budget do we call for any increase in taxes; nowhere.

In fact, if the Republicans read our budget, they would see that it actually directs the Ways and Means Committee, of which I am a member, to come up with immediate relief for middle-income families who would otherwise be subject to the alternative minimum tax. Unless we reform that tax, 19 million families will have to pay higher taxes in 2007.

The President played games with this tax, coming up with only a 1-year fix.

Printed on recycled paper.

You hear it in your own districts. Democrats are committed to coming up with a permanent solution.

Our budget allows the Ways and Means Committee to extend other middle-income tax relief, including the child tax credit and marriage penalty relief, while remaining true to the PAYGO principle.

Madam Speaker, this is a good budget that provides tax relief to middle-income families, and at the same time, finds balance within the next 5 years. I suggest we take a look at it.

DEMOCRAT BUDGET

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, in all my years of public service, I have never had a constituent tell me that they are taxed too little. Whether it is income taxes, property taxes, estate taxes, capital gains taxes, car taxes or some other tax, Americans give plenty of money to the government.

But for House Democrats, it seems that is not enough. How else do you explain a budget resolution that proposes the largest tax increase in American history by letting all of the tax cuts expire?

Their budget plan will deliver a hard blow to working families in our vibrant economy. By bringing back the marriage penalty, 23 million taxpayers will see their tax bill go up. By cutting the child tax credit in half, 31 million taxpayers will pay an average of $850 more a year.

In all, House Democrats are asking hardworking Americans to fork over an extra $400 billion over 5 years.

Madam Speaker, the other side will try to sell this budget, but don't be fooled, this is tax-and-spend politics at its worst, and it should be rejected.

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 80th birthday of an American hero, the late César Chávez.

For 7 years, I have fought for a national holiday to honor César Chávez, a man who not only carried the torch for justice and freedom, but was the hope of thousands of impoverished people. César Chávez believed in ''la causa,'' the cause; and he believed in ''la huelga,'' the struggle.

As we approach his birthday, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 76, a resolution that educates our youth about his heroic life, celebrates his accomplishments and honors him with a national holiday.

The battle for social justice is far from over. But in the words of César Chávez, ''si se puede.''

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BROWN

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, what can brown do for you? You may be familiar with this phrase because it is the new UPS advertising slogan. During the past 100 years, UPS has done much for American workers and the American economy.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, UPS employs more than 427,000 people and is the world's largest package delivery company. It is incredible to know that this global behemoth began in Seattle, Washington, as a messenger service by a 19-year-old teenager who borrowed $100.

Throughout 2007, UPS is celebrating its milestone 100th birthday by hosting employee events around the world. The celebration in more than 55 U.S. cities will revolve around the arrival of a mobile centennial exhibit. I was pleased South Carolina's Second Congressional District had the opportunity to participate in UPS's success when the birthday celebration came to the Midlands, and Rich McArdle was introduced as the new district manager.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 76, which would establish a national holiday in honor of César Chávez.

César Chávez dedicated his life to teaching others that persistence, hard work, faith, and willingness to sacrifice oneself breaks down barriers. He committed himself to achieving justice and equality for all farm workers, and paved the way for momentous social change.

In 1962, César Chávez formed what is known as the United Farm Workers. His efforts initiated one of the greatest social movements of our time. He dedicated himself to fighting for safe working conditions, reasonable wages, decent housing and the outlawing of child labor for farm workers everywhere.

Mr. Chávez embraced nonviolent tactics to help focus national attention on the problems that existed for farm workers. Mr. Chávez was said to have given his last ounce of strength defending the farm workers before he died in his sleep on April 23, 1993.

César Chávez is honored throughout America for his tireless work to help those who could not help themselves.

In my hometown of Houston and my district every year we celebrate the life and times of César Chávez by holding a Hispanic heritage parade and day of celebration. A national holiday in honor of César Chávez would serve as an inspiration to those who seek to create a better world in the legacy of one who served to remind us that together all things are possible; in Spanish, ''si se puede.''

2008 DEMOCRATIC BUDGET

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, this week, the Democrats will bring to the floor their budget, fiscal year 2008, that they passed out of committee. This budget promises to do two things: Raise taxes and increase spending.

My Republican colleagues and I will put forth a substitute that uses common sense to balance the budget in 5 years. It lowers spending, reforms unsustainable entitlement programs, and encourages economic growth without raising taxes.

Madam Speaker, as a result of the Republican supported tax policies passed in 2001 through 2005, every taxpayer who paid income taxes this year will get tax relief. My Republican colleagues and I believe government should limit taxing and spending and ease the burden on the economy. Let the country grow. The difference between the two budgets are plain and simple: The Democrats trust government, the Republicans trust people.

I urge my colleagues to support the fiscally responsible Republican substitute when it is brought to the floor later this week.

HONORING FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOHN BRADEMAS

(Mr. DONNELLY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of my distinguished predecessors in representing the district I am now privileged to serve in Congress and to celebrate his recent 80th birthday.

Dr. John Brademas served the then-Third District of Indiana in the House of Representatives for 22 years, from 1959 until 1981. While in Congress, Dr. Brademas played a leading role in writing most of Federal legislation enacted concerning schools, colleges and universities, services for the elderly and the disabled, libraries, museums, the arts and humanities.

During his last 4 years on Capitol Hill, John Brademas served as House majority whip under Speaker Tip O'Neill. Our distinguished former colleague was a dedicated and highly effective legislator and shaper of national policy. He has also been president of the Nation's largest private university, New York University.

Madam Speaker, many Members of both this Chamber and the Senate on both sides of the aisle served with Dr. Brademas. I believe they will share my sentiments in expressing our admiration for his outstanding public service and join me in wishing him well.

□ 1015

SAY ''YES'' TO THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET RESOLUTION

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, when it comes to the new Democrat Congress, it is the 1970s all over again. Think about it. We have hostages in Iran, Congress is making plans to withdraw from another unpopular war, and the Democrats return to the floor of Congress with plans to tax and spend once again. Higher taxes for working families, small businesses and family farms to finance billions of dollars in new spending with absolutely no reform of entitlements, the real threat to our children and grandchildren.

The GOP budget alternative will balance the budget by the year 2012 without tax increases, without raiding Social Security and with truly historic entitlement reform.

I say, Madam Speaker, say ''no'' to bell bottoms, disco and the tax-and-spend politics of the 1970s. Say ''yes'' to the Republican budget resolution.

DEMOCRATIC BUDGET GETS RAVE REVIEWS FROM BROAD VARIETY OF OUTSIDE GROUPS

(Mr. SIRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIRES. Madam Speaker, the Democratic budget is receiving rave reviews from a broad variety of outside groups. Here are just some of the examples of what Democrats are hearing.

The American Legion praised our budget because it includes $3.3 billion more for veterans than the President's budget, making it the largest veterans increase in 77 years. In the letter, the American Legion writes: ''As a Nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families.''

The American Academy of Pediatrics writes: ''This budget includes a significant commitment to infants, children, adolescents and young adults through its funding of SCHIP and Medicaid.''

And the watchdog group OMB Watch writes: ''We applaud its commitment to restoring fiscal responsibility by seeking to eliminate the Federal budget deficits by 2012, adopting the pay-as-you-go principle requiring that any new tax cuts and mandatory spending be paid for.''

Madam Speaker, the Democratic budget shows that we can fiscally be responsible while also meeting the critical needs of the American people. This budget deserves strong support.

DEMOCRAT TAXES—ONCE AGAIN!

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to warn all Americans of the looming taxation tidal wave that is coming under this new Democrat majority.

Democrats have unveiled their tax-and-spend budget proposal which will bring upon the American people the largest tax increase in our Nation's history.

Rather than allow Americans to make choices about how best to spend their own money, it is clear that Democrats feel they and Washington bureaucrats better understand what is good for American families.

Our Democrat colleagues repeatedly claim that the Republican tax cuts only benefit the wealthy. Well, Madam Speaker, the lowest-income Americans are about to find out just how untrue that tired rhetoric is.

The tax hikes will hit all Americans in every tax bracket, the middle class, low-income families and small businesses.

But there is an alternative. House Republicans have vowed to not just extend but make permanent the pro-growth low-tax policies that have brought recovery to our economy.

Madam Speaker, we can move away from this tired trend of big and bigger government. We can return money back to the rightful owner, the American taxpayer; and we should start right now.

DEMOCRATIC BUDGET PROTECTS MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES FROM A TAX INCREASE

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, when I ran for Congress, I ran for the rest of us, the bottom 99 percent of us who as a social worker I knew were not getting a fair shake under this administration and its followers. I knew they had created the greatest deficits in American history and that it was the middle class who had been harmed.

I stand here with great pride to ask my colleagues in the House to pass this Democratic budget which actually finally represents the middle class.

What does this budget do? Unlike the President's own budget proposal, the Democrats' House budget protects middle-class families from a tax increase. Our resolution protects 19 million families against the alternative minimum tax this year and creates a reserve fund accommodating a permanent fix. The reserve fund also will accommodate other middle-class tax cuts, including extending the child tax credit, marriage penalty relief, the extension of the 10 percent individual tax credit and the elimination of most estate taxes.

Compare these middle-class tax cuts to the $500 billion tax increase the President proposed in his budget over the next 10 years.

Madam Speaker, this Democratic House is committed to balancing the budget in the next 5 years without raising taxes, and that is what we are going to do here.

FREEWAY HOMICIDES AND AN ILLEGAL

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, as Maria Ortiz and her daughter Vanessa were driving down the Eastex Freeway in Kingwood, Texas, on Sunday afternoon, they were probably talking about the upcoming birth of Vanessa's baby boy Nathaniel.

Ignacio Gomez-Gutierrez was blasting down that same freeway in his pick-up truck. He came up behind Maria and Vanessa and slammed his truck into the back of their car, smashing the trunk into the front seat, killing them both, Maria, Vanessa and also Nathaniel.

Gomez-Gutierrez was three times the legal limit drunk. Witnesses who were following him driving stated that he was so drunk he could barely hold his head up.

After this coward killed the Ortizes, he fled from his pick-up and ran, but he was finally captured and held for the police by a bystander.

Gomez-Gutierrez had already been convicted three times for drunk driving, and he was an illegal from Mexico. But he had been never been deported after any of his convictions. If he had, Maria, Vanessa, and the baby would still be here.

How many more Americans and legal immigrants need to be killed before the Feds start deporting these criminal illegals?

And that's just the way it is.

HONORING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the life of César Chávez, to commemorate his life, to ask for a national holiday. He would have been 80 years old this Saturday, and I guess the most personal thing I can say is how he affected my life and the lives of countless people. He gave voice to the powerless in this country. He gave voice to the issues of the environment, human rights, labor rights, education and turned a whole generation and a whole community to look forward to opportunity and to stand up and protect the very fundamental rights that each one of us as an American holds true.

César Chávez is not just an icon. César Chávez is a living legacy of what this country's unfinished business is, the unfinished business of giving worth to each human being in this country.

I would end with a quote by César Chávez: ''We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children.''

That is the greatest opportunity we have.

DEMOCRAT LEADERSHIP PUSHING MICHIGAN IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Madam Speaker, my home State of Michigan is currently experiencing really hard economic times. We have the highest unemployment in the Nation. We have the lowest personal income growth in the Nation, dropping home values, tightening family budgets.

Government overspending, combined with declining revenue from the soft job market, has forced my State into a fiscal crisis, and our Democrat Governor thinks that the way to solve the problem is by raising taxes and increasing government spending.

Here in Washington, we also have a spending problem and a deficit that is too large. So what do the Democrats offer? The largest tax increase in American history, almost $400 billion, and massive new government spending.

The Democrats are also pushing arbitrary and draconian fuel economy standards that could decimate our domestic auto industry and cost even more Michigan jobs.

Madam Speaker, the people of Michigan just cannot take it anymore. They do not need bigger government. They need bigger paychecks, and I ask the Democrat leaders to take pity on the citizens of Michigan. Please just give Michigan a break.

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ NATIONAL HOLIDAY

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning in strong support of H. Res. 76, a resolution to create a national holiday in honor of a great human being, César Chávez.

Madam Speaker, already nine States celebrate his life. The legacy that he left on the history of this Nation must be recognized. He made a difference not only for Latinos, not only for migrant workers, but for the poor and the working poor, and he also built a coalition of conscience across racial and economic boundaries.

I am reminded today of the political support César provided to me during my first campaign for the California legislature. He truly helped me win my very first election, and for that I am deeply grateful.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting the movement for a national holiday in honor of this great civil and human rights leader and such an important historical figure of our Nation.

Feliz cumpleanos, César.

Si se puede.

CELEBRATING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to recognize and celebrate the 80th birthday of César E. Chávez.

César Chávez was born in Yuma, Arizona, and grew up in migrant labor camps, into the poverty of the migrant worker's life. He became an historical figure who embodied humility and extraordinary strength during his peaceful struggle towards social justice.

He was an individual who represented the ones who had less and had no representation whatsoever. He dedicated his entire life to tirelessly championing the rights of the farm laborers; and along with him was Dolores Huerta, also founder of the United Farm Workers union, fighting for better wages and conditions for those individuals that pick our fruit and feed our Nation.

César Chávez has been an extraordinary icon in my home State of Texas. In San Antonio, we honor his legacy during the annual César Chávez march to recognize those individuals that labor picking up our food.

Additionally, we cannot travel anywhere in the United States without seeing a town or street named after this amazing individual. We in San Antonio, Texas, have César Chávez Boulevard as well as others throughout the country.

I hope that his legacy will continue to remain, and I rise today to encourage my colleagues, urging the President and the Congress to establish a national holiday for César Chávez and encourage them to support H. Res. 76.

HAWAIIAN HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. BALDWIN). Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution 269, proceedings will now resume on the bill (H.R. 835), to reauthorize the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing assistance for Native Hawaiians.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed on Tuesday, March 27, 2007, 10 minutes of debate remained on the bill.

The gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) each have 5 minutes remaining.

Who yields time?

□ 1030

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. We are virtually at the end of our remarks, so it would probably be useful, Madam Speaker, to reiterate from last evening's proceedings.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. I thank the gentleman from Hawaii.

Madam Speaker, I do claim the time in opposition. However, I do think the arguments relative to the bill were made last night.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I will just recapitulate for a couple of moments, then perhaps we can move to the conclusion.

I indicated last night, and I think it was agreed to by Mr. BACHUS of Alabama and others, by way of material that has been entered into the RECORD, like Mr. RENZI of Arizona, that this should not be a partisan fight. In fact, ''fight'' probably is the wrong word, but, I mean, even a disagreement here.

The reason that this bill passed overwhelmingly last week, with significant support from the Republican side of the aisle, was that it was supported in committee by Republicans and Democrats. The bill is here before the Congress as a result of a request by Hawaii's Republican Governor, and the former Chair of the Hawaii Republican Party, who is now the head of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

We have always had legislation in this area based on the underlying law, which was passed in 1921, by the Congress, setting aside certain lands for Hawaiians. The issue before us is about refinancing of home mortgages. This is not about whether the original law, under which the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands was established, it is constitutional.

On the contrary, that issue has been raised, and it perhaps should be raised in another context; namely, if someone wants to change the underlying law. But we should not punish my constituents or anybody's constituents for the fact that they appear before us in the form of a bill trying to carry forward on the admonitions required of them, in this instance, by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to get their mortgages refinanced.

Let me say, just as recently as February 9 of this year, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against a group of individuals who came before the court, saying that funding for programs that benefit Hawaiians, in this instance, of this bill, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, constitutes an unconstitutional discrimination against non-Hawaiians.

The Federal appeals court ruled that was not the case. In fact, they returned it to the U.S. District Court to see if the plaintiffs were eligible ''in any

other capacity.'' That is to say, other than whether it was constitutional.

So we have, as recently as the last 30 days, appeals court admonitions that the constitutionality of having programs for Hawaiians is, in fact, constitutional.

If someone wants to argue that, please let's argue it on the basis of a bill that addresses that itself, rather than the bill which is before us, which has to do with the refinancing of mortgages. Please don't punish people that are trying to own their own homes, to keep their own homes, because of some ideological difference that we might have.

Mr. RENZI. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 835, the Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007.

This bill is a reauthorization of Title 8 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act—commonly known as NAHASDA.

H.R. 835 reauthorizes the program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development that provides low-income Native Hawaiian families the opportunity for homeownership on their Hawaiian home lands.

Back in 1996, Congress passed NAHASDA—which reorganized the system of housing assistance provided to tribes through HUD.

The Indian Housing Block Grant program was created to provide funds directly to tribes for housing services as determined by the tribes themselves.

In 2000, NAHASDA was amended to include Title 8 so that Native Hawaiians could receive block grant funding as well through a separate grant program—the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant program.

This program funds housing programs on Hawaiian Home Lands—through the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, a Federal agency established by Congress in 1921 to administer trust land in Hawaii.

Title 8 funding has allowed the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to target housing assistance to families at or below 80 percent of median income.

This funding is used for such assistance as infrastructure development, downpayment assistance, self-help home repair programs, and financial literacy programs.

Additionally, Habitat for Humanity has also received funding through this program.

Title 8 of NAHASDA was originally authorized for 5 years, through 2005, and has not been formally reauthorized since, although appropriations acts have continued to provide de facto 1-year reauthorizations for the program.

This bill would reauthorize the program through fiscal year 2012.

In addition to reauthorization, the bill makes two changes to existing law.

First, it makes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands eligible for loan guarantees authorized under Title 6 of NAHASDA. Giving the Department Title 6 access would allow the Department to help more low-income families become homeowners without a large increase in Federal appropriations by partnering with the private market.

Second, this legislation allows Native Hawaiians the use of HUD's Section 184(a) guaranteed loans for refinancing in addition to construction. Adding the refinance authority reduces the cost of homeownership for low-income families and can also reduce risk by lowering monthly mortgage payments.

Congress must continue to embrace initiatives such as the one we are considering today that encourage Americans to own a home.

Last week, this bill failed to receive the two-thirds majority necessary to pass under the suspension calendar, although the majority of members voted to approve the bill.

I believe that the bill's failure to pass was the result of misconceptions about this bill that I would like to address.

This is not a bill about Native Hawaiian sovereignty.

The subject of Native Hawaiian sovereignty is a separate issue altogether and is not addressed in this legislation.

This bill simply reauthorizes and makes some small improvements to an existing program. It does not confer any special rights to the Native Hawaiians—nor does the bill suggest that Native Hawaiians should be given a status equal to that of Native Americans.

It simply reauthorizes a program created by Congress in the year 2000, just 7 years ago.

At that time, Congress chose to establish a housing program to benefit poor Native Hawaiians living on their home lands—200,000 acres scattered throughout the islands of Hawaii.

In the 7 years since the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant program has been in place, it has enabled thousands of Hawaiians to live in decent, safe, and sanitary housing and helped thousands to achieve the dream of homeownership.

This program is a model for Federal-State cooperation and also an example for how Federal resources can support the efforts of the private market in providing the capital necessary for homeownership.

Yesterday, Hawaiians celebrated Prince Kuhio Day, a State holiday recognizing the contributions of a great leader who was a leading member of the Republican Party in Hawaii and a delegate to the House of Representatives for nearly 20 years.

I ask my colleagues that we honor the memory of Representative Kuhio, and that we continue to support the Native Hawaiians living on the Home Lands.

I would like to recognize Mr. ABERCROMBIE for introducing this legislation.

Also, I thank Chairman FRANK and Ranking Member BACHUS of the Financial Services Committee for working to bring this bill to the floor, which was approved by the Financial Services Committee by voice vote.

I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation to reauthorize a program to help Native Hawaiians living in poverty.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support the final passage of H.R. 835, the Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007.

Opponents of this bill believe this program may be unconstitutional based upon a mistaken interpretation of Rice v. Cayetano. But Rice v. Cayetano was a voting rights case. The question put to the Court was whether limiting the right to vote for trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to Native Hawaiians violated the 15th amendment. The court in Rice specifically declined to rule on the status of Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian programs created by Congress.

Moreover, this bill and these programs have never been a partisan issue in the past. This reauthorization and improvements were requested by Hawaii's Republican administration and Governor Linda Lingle. The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is chaired by the former head of Hawaii's State Republican Party. This bill was introduced last year by Congressman Bob Ney and was reported out of the Financial Services Committee by voice vote and without amendment. Last Congress's Republican chairman of the Financial Services Committee, Mike Oxley, cosponsored this bill.

I mention these pieces of background information to illustrate the wide support for the program and the fact that it has been both Democratic and Republican. Last week, when this bill was up for consideration in the House under a suspension of the rules, the GOP leadership issued a statement just hours before the vote, calling the bill ''unconstitutional'' and charged that it would ''confer on Native Hawaiian an arrangement like that between the federal government and American Indian tribes.'' Despite these charges, the bill was able to garner 34 Republican votes.

The status of Native Hawaiians needs to be debated and should be debated in the House. However, this is the wrong venue for that. I have another bill pending in the House of Representatives that would establish a process for the Federal recognition of Native Hawaiians. I hope to have this legislation considered by the House Natural Resources Committee and will gladly debate these issues at that time.

This measure is about helping low-income Native Hawaiians own their own home. The programs reauthorized by H.R. 835 simply provide funds for infrastructure, helps Native Hawaiians obtain mortgages and allows for refinancing to lower the cost of homeownership. This bill is about assisting Native Hawaiians to reach the American dream of owning their own home.

I believe this bill can, and should, pass with overwhelming bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to vote for final passage of this bill and support efforts to get more low-income people into their own homes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 269, the bill is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

□ 1045

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 99, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 275 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution as follows:

H. RES. 275

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012. The first reading of the concurrent resolution shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the concurrent resolution shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the concurrent resolution are waived. General debate shall not exceed four hours, with three hours confined to the congressional budget equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Budget and one hour on the subject of economic goals and policies equally divided and controlled by Representative Maloney of New York and Representative Saxton of New Jersey or their designees. After general debate the concurrent resolution shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The concurrent resolution shall be considered as read. No amendment shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, and shall not be subject to amendment. All points of order against the amendments printed in the report are waived except that the adoption of an amendment in the nature of a substitute shall constitute the conclusion of consideration of the concurrent resolution for amendment. After the conclusion of consideration of the concurrent resolution for amendment, the Committee shall rise and report the concurrent resolution to the House with such amendment as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the concurrent resolution and amendments thereto to final adoption without intervening motion except amendments offered by the chairman of the Committee on the Budget pursuant to section 305(a)(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to achieve mathematical consistency. The concurrent resolution shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question of its adoption.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of House Concurrent Resolution 99 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the concurrent resolution to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

(Ms. SUTTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 275.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 275 provides for consideration of H. Con. Res. 99, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008 under a structured rule.

The rule provides for 4 hours of general debate, three to be controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on the Budget and one to be controlled by Representative MALONEY of New York and Representative SAXTON of New Jersey.

The rule also makes in order three substitute amendments by Representative SCOTT of Virginia, Representative WOOLSEY and Representative RYAN of Wisconsin.

Madam Speaker, budgets, more than anything else this government produces, are a statement of what matters to us and what does not. They are moral documents. They tell us to what degree we care to look after the old and protect the young. They indicate our responsibilities to commitments both abroad and here at home. They give life to our greatest dreams as a Nation. They are the hope we leave for our children and become the legacy we bestow upon our people.

And they can be examples of great courage, or an absolution of Congress's responsibility to set priorities consistent with strengthening our people and our communities.

Madam Speaker, as it concerns the budget, it has been a long 6 years for this Nation. The budget has been out of balance fiscally, and it has been out of balance with the needs of the American people.

Just 6 years ago, we were looking at a projected $5.6 trillion surplus. That has collapsed into a $9 trillion deficit. For every American in this country, there is $29,000 worth of debt.

And to add insult to injury, most of the debt we have taken on in recent years will be sent to investors in foreign countries.

It goes far beyond having been drunk at the wheel. Our predecessors in the majority not only crashed the car into a ditch, they accelerated after landing there, allowing mud to cave in on top of it.

That was the fiscal situation Democrats found when we arrived here a few months ago in the majority.

Since President Bush took office in 2001, my home State of Ohio alone has lost over 200,000 manufacturing jobs; and 3 million have been lost nationwide.

Job growth overall has slowed to a significantly slower pace in recent years than under the Clinton administration, at a rate even below the level necessary to keep pace with population growth. Sadly, our families have even less purchasing power today than they did in January of 2001.

And the debt has continued to pile up, with no accountability, no fiscal responsibility, no effort to place priorities in the right places, to curb wasteful spending, to do what needs to be done to make sure that the programs consistent with the values of this Nation, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, SCHIP and Community Block Grants continue to be able to survive.

In short, the policies enacted in recent years will have devastating effects on our future competitiveness and standard of living if we continue down the same destructive road.

But it is a new day, and we have a new path to follow, one that says that it is more important to take care of our wounded veterans than it is to take care of oil companies, one that says that kids cannot grow up to thrive and give back to this great Nation if they do not have the health care when they are young, one that says that a measure of a Nation can be taken in small things like heating assistance for the elderly and nutrition programs in local schools and special assistance for those with disabilities.

Indeed, it is in the small print of the Federal budget that we find our worth as a government, which is why I am proud, both as a member of the Budget Committee, and as a Member of Congress, to support this Democratic budget.

It is the first time in a very long time that Congress has before it a budget that is fiscally responsible and in line with the needs of the American people.

□ 1100

This budget makes critical investments in education, health care, our veterans, our communities and our economy while at the same time adhering to PAYGO principles and returning our budget to balance by 2012. The reckless economic policies of the last 6 years have been immensely damaging to our economy's long-term global competitiveness and particularly to our workers.

The Democratic budget will strengthen middle-class families by providing funding for job training programs,

health care, and education, particularly in math and science. These are all essential investments in our workforce that will lay a solid foundation for a growing economy and improve our competitiveness. The Democratic budget rejects the President's draconian cuts to programs that provide health care to the poor, to our children, and our seniors. Nine million of the neediest children in this country and 242,000 in the State of Ohio lack health insurance coverage, and the funding levels in the President's budget put as many as 1 million of these children at risk to fall off the SCHIP program by 2012. In contrast, the Democratic budget provides for a $50 billion increase to SCHIP, allowing us to reach millions more children than we reach right now, making our children's health care needs a Federal Government priority.

The Democratic budget also rejects the $300 billion in Medicare and Medicaid cuts proposed by the administration. Access to health care should be a right, not a privilege, in this Nation and it does not serve any of us to roll back the clock on the health care initiatives that have served us so well up until now.

The Democratic budget is also about investing in our communities. It provides for increased funding for Community Development Block Grants, the Social Service Block Grants, and it saves Community Services Block Grants which was zeroed out in the President's budget. I have personally spoken with a number of the community officials in my own district that would have been affected by the proposed cuts in block grant programs and I will tell you that at the local level, these programs are lifelines for our neighborhoods and towns. They address needs in affordable housing, education and nutrition. They promote financial literacy and assist with child care needs and special services to children with disabilities. And in our cities, the CDBG funds help provide affordable housing and services to our most vulnerable populations. In short, we should not be trying to do away with programs that work.

The Democratic budget also makes education a priority, from early childhood to lifelong learning. To that end, our budget provides $3 billion over the current services level for education, training and social services. These increases are an investment in our future and will be vital to our global competitiveness. We have increased funding for those just beginning their education, like the 38,000 children in Head Start in Ohio, and we have taken steps to make college education more affordable through Pell Grants and a higher education reserve fund. We have included funds to train more math and science teachers.

Finally, the Democratic budget reflects a major shift in priorities by providing for a $5.4 billion increase in the Veterans Affairs budget which is an 18.1 percent increase over 2007 levels and the largest increase in history. Recently it has become clear that the needs of our brave men and women who have served our country so honorably have not been met. We have heard heartbreaking stories of wounded veterans who must wait up to 6 months for disability determinations and about VA facilities that are in disrepair. The more than 1 million veterans in Ohio and the more than 24 million nationwide deserve nothing less than our full support. Anything less is simply unacceptable.

A budget reflects the soul of a nation. It can give life to our most honorable pursuits and provide proof of the best of our intentions. It is the Rosetta Stone which those who look upon us from the present and from the future can decipher our worth and our courage.

It is with those thoughts in mind that I am proud to present this budget for consideration by the House.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this rule and to the unprecedented tax increase that the Democrat majority is bringing to the House floor today. The massive and irresponsible tax increase included in this budget would be the largest in American history, weighing in at a shocking $392.5 billion over the next 5 years. This Democrat budget, which is balanced on the backs of everyday taxpayers, will be used to finance bloated new government spending that my colleague just spoke about that will be well above the rate of inflation through 2012 while ignoring the brewing entitlement crisis. Spending, more spending, and more spending rather than worrying about the brewing entitlement crisis that faces this Nation. Around 77 million baby boomers will be retiring in the near future and will begin collecting Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare. Funding this new spending represents the greatest economic challenge of our era and is a challenge the Democrat budget has chosen to completely ignore while going on a spending spree everywhere else.

If fiscal discipline is what the Democrats promised voters this past fall, then by my count it took all of about 3 months for the Democrat candidates to abandon their campaign trail promises and show their true tax-and-spend stripes here again on the floor today.

This deeply flawed budget would increase taxes on almost 8 million taxpayers in my home State of Texas, costing each of them an average of $2,755 per year. It would collect these taxes by allowing the 2001 and 2003 tax relief provided by the Republican Congress to expire. In real terms, for every taxpayer, this means reducing the child tax credit for working families so that government can collect $27 billion more to finance the new spending that the Democrat majority chooses. It means reinstating the marriage penalty and the death tax to collect an additional $104 billion so that the majority can kick that further down the road rather than reforming and strengthening our Nation's entitlement programs. And it means completely ignoring the alternative minimum tax crisis which is projected to hit 23 million middle-class families if not dealt with quickly.

Madam Speaker, I believe the voters watching this debate on C–SPAN understand what these tax increases mean for our economy and our ability to compete globally, for, you see, I remember just a few short years ago when America was shipping thousands and thousands of jobs overseas and then the tax cuts took place and now we can't find enough workers in America. Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you, that is the way to be globally competitive, when you have plenty of jobs in America. But the voters and those people watching this debate may not realize that for a family of four with $60,000 in earnings, it would mean a tax increase of some 61 percent. It means that a single parent with two children and $30,000 in earnings would see a tax increase of 67 percent. And it means that an elderly couple with $40,000 in income would see their taxes increased by a whopping 156 percent.

Now, one would think that a tax increase of almost $400 billion impacting every American taxpayer would be enough to finance the Democrats' appetite for big government programs. But hold on. This is just the start. There's more to come. This budget also contains 12 reserve funds, or pet initiative IOUs, which set the stage for more than $115 billion in future higher spending which will have to be financed by, let me say, you guessed it, the taxpayer. Higher taxes.

For the last 4 years, responsible budgets passed by the Republican Party kept discretionary spending at or below inflation for all non-defense, non-homeland security spending. This budget plan brought forward by the Democrats brings this tradition to a screeching halt by allowing about $25 billion more in discretionary spending than requested by President Bush or even the spendthrift Senate, which asks for about $7 billion less than the House.

Thankfully, it is not too late to stop this fiscal train wreck. My friend, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, PAUL RYAN, has proposed an alternative budget that achieves balance by 2012 and ends the raid on Social Security without raising taxes. The Republican alternative maintains our strong economy, reforms and strengthens entitlement programs, and does this while keeping in place the tax relief that has contributed so much to our economy since 2001.

Without meaningful tax relief passed by recent Republican Congresses, our economy would not have seen the massive job growth—with 7.6 million new jobs or roughly 170,000 per month—and

economic growth of 3.5 percent a year that it has experienced over the last 15 quarters.

The Republican budget contains no increase in marginal rates and leaves in place the 10 percent bracket for low-income filers. It includes no reduction in child tax credit, no rollback of the marriage penalty or death tax relief, and no increase in capital gains or dividend tax rates. It provides for an extension of alternative minimum tax relief, the research and development tax credit, and the State and local sales tax deduction that is so important to people all across this country, including the 17 States that it benefits. It ends the raid on Social Security and fully funds the President's request for national defense and the war on terrorism. It also makes important budget reforms, such as a legislative line-item veto; earmark transparency; requiring PAYGO to be offset by spending reductions, not tax increases; discretionary spending caps; requiring a vote on any debt limit increase; and requiring a vote on any bill that seeks to spend or authorize more than $50 million.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to listen very carefully today about what the choices are that are on the floor of the House of Representatives and what they can support and to stand up for fiscal discipline, economic growth and responsible budgeting by opposing this rule and the underlying legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), a distinguished member of the Rules and Budget Committees.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of this rule and in support of this budget resolution. It provides our families, seniors and children with economic security, health care, and nutrition.

Madam Speaker, 5.4 million more people live in poverty today than in the year 2000. That is over 35 million total, and 12.4 million are children. One in every eight Americans is hungry. One in eight does not know whether they will be able to put food on the table. Madam Speaker, every single Member of this Congress should be ashamed of these statistics. The United States is the only wealthy industrialized nation in the world that tolerates widespread hunger amongst its people, including its children.

□ 1115

The decision to tolerate hunger in America has serious costs for us as a Nation. We constantly hear that we are a Nation committed to leaving no child behind. But children who are hungry, who live in poverty, cannot keep up. They cannot develop and thrive. They cannot learn or play with energy and enthusiasm.

Hunger stunts the physical, mental and emotional growth of millions of our children. When these children become adults, they are more likely to have low earnings and low productivity in the workforce. Their poor health means more illness that requires large health care expenditures. Their early mortality robs our economy of their labor and consumption. They are more likely to engage in crime, which results in monetary and personal cost to their victims and to the taxpayers for the cost of our criminal justice system. And, sadly, they are also more likely to be victims, resulting in similar costs.

In other areas, we see the difficulties faced by our seniors, who are dehumanized and demoralized when they have to choose between utilities and food. Many need special diets and adequate nutrition for their medications to work effectively. But, unfortunately, hundreds of thousands lack adequate food. And when we fail to end hunger among our elderly, we choose to add to their immediate and long-term health care costs, even while we hasten their deaths.

These are some of the priorities addressed in the Democratic budget resolution.

This budget resolution recognizes the burden faced by families when they are forced to choose between rent, food, heat and medicine, and provides funding for children's health care and provides funding for programs like LIHEAP, Head Start and low-income housing.

I want to thank Chairman SPRATT for holding a budget hearing on hunger and inviting Boston pediatrician Deborah Frank and South Carolina food banker Denise Holland to testify about the urgent need to address hunger in America. I only wish more of my colleagues attended that hearing.

We heard how food stamp benefits provide a first defense against hunger but are too meager to solve the problem, how food stamp benefits average just $1 per person per meal, how the minimum monthly benefit is stuck at the decades-old level of $10, and how the program is missing four in every 10 eligible people.

Madam Speaker, it is unconscionable that the programs proven to attack hunger in America are continually under attack. The Commodity Food Supplemental Program is continually zeroed out by the Bush administration. The Food Stamp Program is constantly derided, with fraud, waste and abuse cited, when, according to the GAO, it is running at the most productive levels in the history of the program.

It is unconscionable, Madam Speaker, that legal immigrants, people here legally with proper documentation, must wait 5 years for the food stamps they may need today, simply because they happen to be newcomers to our Nation. This is simply bad policy, and it needs to be fixed immediately. And it is unconscionable that children in need who receive breakfast and lunches during the school year are denied food during the summer months simply because school isn't in session.

The next farm bill needs to invest the additional Federal resources to improve these Federal anti-hunger programs. It should improve the food stamp benefit, open eligibility to vulnerable and underserved groups, and adequately fund and fully utilize USDA resources to support emergency food assistance and other commodity assistance programs that serve the needy.

This budget resolution, by providing a $20 billion reserve fund for the farm bill and by rejecting the President's arbitrary eligibility cuts to food stamps and the elimination of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, not only makes a strong statement on the need to combat hunger in America, it actually takes concrete steps to do so.

This resolution deserves support for the economic and food security it provides all our people, but, and let me stress, it is only a beginning. Ending hunger is not and should not be a partisan issue. The moral and economic costs affect every community in America. There is not a single community in America that is hunger-free.

So I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together here in the Congress and in our communities to create the sustained and comprehensive investment necessary to end hunger and to make us a stronger Nation. One step in this path is to pass the budget resolution before us.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from San Dimas, California (Mr. DREIER).

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, as I listened to my colleague on the other side of the aisle, the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), speak about the need to expand spending in a wide range of areas, I could not help but think about why it is that I chose to run for Congress and why I know my Republican colleagues stepped up to the plate to run for Congress. We want a defense capability that is second to none, but we also, Madam Speaker, want to do everything that we possibly can to reduce the size and scope of government, encouraging individual initiative and responsibility.

One of the things that troubles me as I listen to the arguments propounded by so many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that they talk about a need that is there. We all want to make sure that we address the very important societal needs that are there. We want to put into place entitlement reform in the area of both Medicare and Medicaid. Why? Not only so we can save taxpayer dollars but so that we can ensure that the Medicare and Medicaid programs are more effective and provide needed assistance to those who are out there who truly are in need.

The problem that I have is, as they talk about all of these programs, it undermines, it undermines initiative and responsibility. What we want to do with our budget, Madam Speaker, is everything within our power, as Mr. SESSIONS said so well, to make sure that we keep taxes low.

One of the things that I find to be very troubling is that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle hate most, hate most the taxes that have actually created a surge in revenues to the Federal Treasury.

We all know that the budget that they are going to be bringing forward puts into place the largest tax increase in American history. We always held up the 1993 Clinton tax increase, that not one Republican voted for, as the largest increase in history; and I am proud that when we won our majority in 1994 we brought about major changes that, in fact, repealed large parts of that 1993 tax increase. But, Madam Speaker, that 1993 tax increase, which has been held up as the model, as the largest tax increase in American history, pales in comparison to this $392.5 billion tax increase that they are advocating in this budget.

Madam Speaker, when I say that they hate most the tax cuts that have created the greatest surge in revenue, I am referring, of course, to capital gains. I have been one who has long advocated a zero capital gains tax rate. One of the things that we found is that reducing the top rate on capital gains has not done what virtually every green eyeshade prognosticator looked at as what happened. They said there would be a loss in revenues to the Federal Treasury.

We found, of course, that there has been a surge in revenues to the Federal Treasury. Why? Because it has encouraged economic growth to the point where the deficit this year is actually $73 billion lower than it was last year. And that is as we have cut taxes, met the very important funding priorities of homeland security and national security, and we still have been able to actually reduce the Federal deficit. As a percentage of our Gross Domestic Product the deficit today, which everyone decries, Democrats and Republicans alike decry, is in fact lower as a percentage of the GDP than almost ever.

In light of that, Madam Speaker, I think it is very important for us to recognize we have a strong, vibrant, growing economy today.

I was very surprised when the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules last night, late last night when we were reporting out this rule, talked about how devastating the economy is.

Madam Speaker, I will tell you it is a devastatingly good economy. Just this morning, we got the report that there has been an increase in durable goods purchases. We have a 4.5 percent unemployment rate: 146 million Americans, more than ever in the history of our country, are working today. That is not an accident. We have gone through terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, the economic downturn; and, because of the policies that we put into place, we have the strongest, most dynamic, $13 trillion economy that we have ever seen in the history of the United States of America.

Madam Speaker, I talked to an economist last night who said to me, ''You know, I had no idea that they would move this quickly to increase spending and increase taxes.'' And that is exactly what they are doing, and that is why we need to reject this rule and clearly do everything that we can to reject the tax-and-spend budget that they have propounded and support Mr. RYAN's alternative.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, before I yield to my next speaker, I want to point out that the Democratic budget does not raise a single penny of taxes, period.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), a distinguished member of the Rules Committee.

Ms. MATSUI. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from Ohio for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support this rule and to enthusiastically support this solid and balanced budget resolution. It invests in strategic priorities for the future, while putting the Nation on the path to fiscal stability.

In approaching this debate, I would ask that Members and our constituents keep in mind that we are not starting from scratch. The previous leadership left us with a fiscal disaster that can't be repaired overnight. But this budget gets us on the right track in a responsible and strategic way.

That is governing. Governing is not easy. It requires making hard choices. But making hard choices today is better than Congress abdicating its responsibility to choose altogether. Because the alternative to making hard choices is passing debt on to tomorrow's decisionmakers, leaving our children and grandchildren, like my own Anna and Robby, with a diminished quality of life.

With PAYGO rules, the budget draws a line in the sand. If you want new mandatory spending or tax cuts, find a way to pay for it.

Shifting the burden on to the next generation is no longer an option under this budget. We are not going to eradicate the deficit as quickly as some would like, and we can't spend as much on domestic priorities as some would like. But this budget gives us the type of solid foundation that will allow us to tackle our fiscal challenges, while still investing in the most important priorities.

This budget recognizes that we need to invest in healthcare and education for our children. It recognizes that we must move to a clean energy economy by driving research and development and by promoting scientific innovation and that we must provide for our veterans, who have served honorably and deserve the best care possible. Finally, this budget recognizes that the Tax Code should be fair for hardworking families.

All of this is accomplished in a fiscally responsible manner, while ensuring the security of our Nation. That is a tremendous achievement, and I thank Chairman SPRATT for his diligence in achieving this excellent legislative product. I urge my colleagues to provide the type of broad and enthusiastic support that it deserves.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the favorite son from Pasco, Washington (Mr. HASTINGS).

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Texas for yielding.

Madam Speaker, there are two ways to balance a budget, whether it is your family budget or the Federal budget. You can either, one, reduce the amount of money being spent or, two, increase the amount of money coming in.

Madam Speaker, the Democrats have flat-out rejected option number one of spending less and declared their allegiance to option number two of raising taxes; and they have done both with a fervor that our country has never seen before.

The Democrat 5-year budget plan would spend more money each and every year and at a rate faster than the inflation rate. This means that each year the size of the Federal Government will grow bigger and more rapidly than the American economy. To pay for the record levels of spending in their budget, the Democrats plan to raise taxes on the American people more than at any other time in our country's history. That is right, raising spending to record levels and to pay for it with the largest tax increase in American history.

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This budget does not extend tax relief from the marriage tax penalty. It doesn't extend the $1,000 child tax credit that many young families use. It doesn't end the death tax. It doesn't fix the alternative minimum tax for middle-class families. It doesn't protect the lowest tax rate, and would again impose taxes on lower income Americans who right now pay no taxes, thanks to the 2001 tax relief law passed by the Republican Congress.

This tax relief should not be repealed or allowed to expire to pay for more government spending. This tax relief that was passed in 2001 and 2003 should remain permanent for the American people.

Madam Speaker, on important priorities for my State, like the extention of the State and local sales tax deduction from the Federal tax and county payments for rural schools, the Democrat budget falls short. It offers only promises, but no real action. The Republican plan, on the other hand, sets

aside real dollars to extend the State and local sales tax deduction for another year. So I encourage all Members who believe in sales tax fairness to think carefully about this when casting their vote.

On the issue of payment to rural schools in counties with Federal forests, this budget allows an extension, but it takes no real steps to make it happen. As I have said before on this issue, I am disappointed that the Democratic leadership denied the opportunity to attach an extension of this legislation to another bill, a bill that has, in fact, been signed into law.

Madam Speaker, the Republican plan I will be supporting holds the line on spending, sets priorities and allows taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money and invest it as they see fit, not how the Federal Government sees fit.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and the budget resolution offered by the Democrat majority and support the substitute offered by Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Oregon, a distinguished member of the Budget Committee (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentlewoman's courtesy.

You can hear the drumbeat from our friends on the other side of the aisle about the largest tax increase in American history. Well, the fact is we are today going to be able to talk about the largest tax increase in American history, but it is not contained in the Democratic budget. The largest tax increase in American history is $1.8 trillion that the President's budget anticipates as a result of the collection of the alternative minimum tax.

It has never been a priority of the Republicans to deal with this looming disaster. Indeed, they squandered 8 years of hard-earned Democratic surpluses, unprecedented surpluses, squandered in a heartbeat in their relentless pursuit to give tax benefits for those who need them least.

There are a few items in there that would have broad bipartisan agreement, the 10 percent bracket, tax credit for families, making some reasonable adjustment in the inheritance tax. But no, they were not interested in dealing with areas of agreement and then solving the alternative minimum tax. Each year, they have kicked the millionaire tax down the road. It has long since morphed into something that is not a millionaire's tax. It is going to be a tax under the President's proposal, and with the Republican priorities, it is going to be a tax on every two-income working family in America with children that have any sort of middle income.

They are going to be paying the alternative minimum tax. And in fact, it is going to cost them more to compute in many cases than the actual tax. They get whacked twice.

In 2001, in 2003, the Republicans refused to deal with this looming challenge and instead gave all sorts of tax breaks to all sorts of people and avoided solving this problem.

In 2004, when we had a $4 billion problem with our overseas manufacturing tax credit, that morphed into a $137 billion tax grab bag and ignored the alternative minimum tax. I put forth to the administration in our hearings in both Ways and Means and in Budget to find out where their priority was. Well, their priority is not fixing the alternative minimum tax, just a 1-year patch. They want to extend all of these tax breaks, the good and, frankly, some of the bizarre, for people like Paris Hilton.

Well, Madam Speaker, the Democratic alternative is focusing on what the real problem is. What we are doing in Ways and Means, we have made a commitment. Our number one priority is to solve the alternative minimum tax. Theirs, as is evidenced in their substitute, is going to take all of the potential headroom to make that challenge in solving the problem even more difficult by permanently extending all of those tax increases without any offset.

The Democratic alternative is responsible, it speaks to the needs of working men and women, fiscal stability, and most important, our priorities stopping the looming tax tsunami of the alternative minimum tax, which will, in fact, be the largest tax increase in American history.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, by the way, I encourage the gentleman from Oregon to read the bill. The Democrat budget does not address the alternative minimum tax, as he stated.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Is the gentleman familiar with the provisions in our bill that set up the reserve fund so that it permits the opportunity for the Ways and Means Committee to be able to move forward, hopefully on a bipartisan basis, to be able to establish that within the pay-as-you-go rule?

Mr. SESSIONS. You know, a reserve fund out there in the future does not fix a darn thing.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 3 minutes to the chairman of the Suburban Caucus from Highland Park, Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Mr. KIRK. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Madam Speaker, the budget coming before this House does more than approve the largest tax increase in American history. That is what it includes. But what this budget is notable for is what it also does not include.

The leaders of the Republican Tuesday Group and the study committees came together to outline reforms to help the government spend less. And why should we do that? Let's note that in 1961, when President Kennedy took office, the Federal Government spent just $98 billion. We didn't hit our first trillion until 1987. We broke the second trillion in 2002, and in 2010, we will go above the $3 trillion level.

The Federal debt held by the public has climbed to over $3 trillion in 2006, a 300 percent increase in the last quarter century. This year, interest payments on our debt alone will top over $200 billion.

Now, last night I offered an amendment cosponsored by Congressmen DENT, PENCE and HENSARLING. We laid out some commonsense reforms that this budget should include, like statutory discretionary spending limits, like the kind approved by President Clinton that helped us spend less; like provisions to slow the growth of entitlement spending by requiring offsets for any new benefits allowed; like enforcement tools that restricted the definition of ''emergency spending'' that would have helped us not declare a spinach farmer bailout last week as a national security emergency, which we did in the supplemental appropriations bill; like accrual accounting, to show what the taxpayers' long-term obligations are, and to clearly lay out for the American people our financial position.

And finally, periodic audits and summaries updating the accounting rules we use so the American people always have the most transparent view of what their government is doing.

Unfortunately, last night the Rules Committee rejected this amendment. We will not even be allowed to vote on these commonsense reforms. Ironic because most of these reforms were taken from the Democratic Blue Dog group that has advocated strong financial controls, but somehow backed this effort to deny this amendment from even a vote.

I urge this House to reject this rule and allow these commonsense reforms to go through. If the past is our guide, even the budget that the Congress will consider today and tomorrow will be waived shortly because when the supplemental appropriations bill comes back from Congress, it will include a provision that says the budget act is entirely waived and $125 billion, $23 billion over the President's request, will be passed, waiving the budget that we even approve tomorrow.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, before I yield, I would just like to remind the public that those on the other side of the aisle who are here today preaching about fiscal responsibility are the same people who, when they were in charge for 6 years, took a projected $5.6 trillion surplus and collapsed it into a $9 trillion deficit.

Madam Speaker, with that, I would yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget requests funding for the Iraq war through 2009. The Democratic budget accepts that timeline. It includes $145.2 billion

for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as requested by the President for fiscal year 2008. It requests $50 billion for fiscal year 2009. That is in addition to the $510 billion we have already spent on the war and another $97 billion pending in the supplemental, according to the CRS. The total, if approved, would be over $800 billion for war, while our schools, our health care and the quality of our environment are in decline. The budget should reflect the mandate Democrats were given in November, yet we are mirroring the President's plan for the war and his budget request to fund the war.

The supplemental calls for withdrawal by August 2008. Why does the budget encourage the war to continue into 2009? If we were serious about trying to stop the war, the budget should not contradict the supplemental language.

This budget does not end the war, it continues it through the end of President Bush's term. The American people want the war to end now, not in 2008, not in 2009, but the people want the war to end now.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, at this time, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HELLER).

Mr. HELLER of Nevada. Thank you, to my colleague from Texas, I appreciate the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this rule on the budget. It is unfair, and it unnecessarily limits debate on middle-class tax cuts.

Together with a colleague from Pennsylvania, we offer an amendment to ensure that the child tax credit is included in the budget. But the majority won't allow us to offer that amendment today or even have a debate about it. It is a shame that this amendment in defense of the middle-class families was not allowed. The new majority must still be convinced it is their money and not the taxpayers'.

Thirty-one million taxpayers will see their taxes increase in 2011 when the per-child tax credit is cut in half, and that is just the start. The average tax hike on 975,000 middle-class families and taxpayers in Nevada will be almost $3,000. We will likely be told that the budget assumes the cost of this tax provision will be addressed, along with seven others, through some vague ''smoke and mirrors'' policy. My western values told me what happens when you assume. Instead, the Murphy-Heller amendment guaranteed that funds would be there for families instead of wishful thinking.

Madam Speaker, to my colleagues, do the middle-class families make too much money? Is a child born after 2011 somehow less expensive than a child born in 2010? Is the child tax credit a partisan issue? Have those colleagues of mine in the majority like the Blue Dogs lost their way, or have they just been muzzled?

We are going to hear a lot from the majority today about the children, but apparently that is only when it comes to government spending, not middle-class tax cuts. Their rhetoric on tax rings hollow when Congress is muzzled on such a critical debate. Don't assume. Vote this rule down and for middle-class tax cuts for families.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Connecticut, a distinguished member of the Budget Committee (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Let's be clear. The 2008 budget resolution, the Democratic proposal leaves the tax cuts in place, it plans for their extension, and it extends the child tax credit and will do that. If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle cared a whit about the child tax credit, they would entertain lowering the eligibility threshold so that families who make less than $10,500 a year in this Nation could be eligible for the child tax credit. They refuse to do that. So take their words with a grain of salt today, my friends.

As a nation, we face great challenges, challenges in education and in health care, challenges that the Federal Government has the ability, the capacity, the resources and the moral obligation to help us meet.

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Our job is to help create real opportunity, to give people the tools that they need to succeed. The budget that we consider today reflects our Nation's values and puts us on the right path to meet our obligations.

I am proud of the work that we have done with this budget because I believe it addresses our most urgent priorities, and for the first time in 6 years we have a budget that makes an investment in children and in families. It puts children first by addressing their health care needs. It rejects the inadequate funding level proposed by the President for the SCHIP, the children's health care program. Our Nation's health care problems have become increasingly desperate. SCHIP is virtually the only success story that we have, covering nearly 1 million more children and working families today than even President Clinton anticipated when he created it.

And Republicans agree. Recently, I received a letter from my Republican Governor from the State of Connecticut saying as much.

This expands coverage to the estimated 6 million children eligible but not currently enrolled in SCHIP.

This budget focuses on education. A quality education is more closely tied to our economic prosperity than ever. It is critical to staying competitive in today's global economy. The President's budget reduces our commitment to education investment for a third year in a row. As we face record school enrollments, the academic requirements under No Child Left Behind and rising college costs, to say nothing of increased competition from China and India, the President's budget takes us in the wrong direction for this country.

Now is the time to invest more in education and not less. The funding allows for an infusion of new resources for No Child Left Behind and IDEA, where the Federal Government has a promise to keep, and it works to make higher education more affordable through a commitment to the Pell Grants.

Madam Speaker, I support this rule. I support this budget. It represents a commitment to fiscal responsibility and a greater investment in our future.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, the Rules Committee does not charge for people to come and attend our meetings, and it seems like a good number of Members probably needed to be there last night.

The gentlewoman from Connecticut would have heard that this big increase that she is talking about in SCHIP is in a reserve fund. It is not paid for. As a matter of fact, it is going to have to find an offset somewhere if they are going to get to it. So it is not reserved in the budget as necessarily to be paid for; it is in a reserve fund.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the budget expert from the Republican Party from the Fifth District of Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank my good friend and the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule. It is anti-family, it is anti-tax, it is fiscally irresponsible. And I agree with my colleague from Texas. I can hardly believe some of the things I am hearing on the House floor.

The Democrats, Madam Speaker, obviously want to have it both ways. They claim on the one hand that they have done this incredible job of balancing the Federal budget, and then they claim that they actually preserve tax relief in the budget. But if anybody would bother to read the document, the only way they achieve balance is by taking away all of the tax relief that we have enjoyed in the last several years. They would bring forth the single largest tax increase in American history.

And guess what, Madam Speaker? Twelve years ago, the last time that they were in power, guess what they did? They brought forth the single largest tax increase in American history. Certainly they at least get an A for consistency, but you have to give them an F for fiscal responsibility.

I would point out to the preceding speaker, the gentlewoman from Connecticut, and I have the honor of serving with her on the Budget Committee, had the Democrats felt so strongly about preserving the tax relief, they had ample opportunity in committee to preserve the tax relief for American families, and they chose not to do it.

This is a budget which may be worthy of a Pulitzer Prize in fiction. It is full of Orwellian-speak. It is something that is worthy of the Twilight Zone. It makes no sense. You cannot claim that you are not reducing spending, you are

preserving tax relief, and you are balancing budget all at the same time. You are taking three different sides of the argument. It does not wash.

This Democrat budget is also silent, absolutely stone cold silent on the number one fiscal issue facing our Nation, and that is out-of-control entitlement spending. If we don't reform these entitlement programs, it will lead to a doubling of taxes on the American people, our children, and our grandchildren. The single largest tax increase in history will pale in comparison if we don't act today.

And this is a budget for the next election, it is not a budget for the next generation. You can't have a fiscally responsible budget and remain silent on the number one fiscal challenge facing the Nation today. If you want to save Medicare, if you want to save Social Security, if you want to save Medicaid, you have to reform these programs; and the Democrat budget, again, is stone cold silent.

They speak of their reserve funds, but, Madam Speaker, there is no reserve and there is no funds. Again, this is fiction. This is pure, unadulterated fiction.

What isn't fiction is the largest single tax increase in American history that is going to fall upon American families. It is going to fall upon them hard. Because every time the Democrats increase the Federal budget, they are cutting some family budget. They are taking away from a family's ability to send a child to college. They are taking away from a family's ability to help a parent with long-term health care. They are taking away a family's ability to buy that first home, make a down payment on their first home. Every time you take away, every time you increase the Federal budget, you are taking away from the family budget.

So these two documents stand in stark contrast. The Democrat budget, the single largest tax increase in history. Again, this contrast could not be more stark. The single largest tax increase in American history. And I remind my colleagues on the other side to please, please think about the families that are in your district that actually pay these taxes.

You may think we are having a debate on how much our society is going to spend on health care and housing and education. That is not the debate I think we are having. I think we are having a debate about who is going to do that spending. Is it going to be government bureaucrats, or is it going to be American families?

In my State of Texas, the average Texas family is going to have to pay an additional $2,700 a year under the Democrat plan to have the single largest tax increase in American history. I asked my constituents, Madam Speaker, what is this going to mean to you? And I heard from several of them.

I heard, for example, from Diana in Mesquite, Texas. She wrote, ''Dear Congressman, I wanted to let you know that I am a single mom that does not receive any type of child support, and an increase of this amount would break me. I would be at the risk of losing my home with this type of increase. I am writing to ask your help to keep this from happening. This would be devastating to middle-income families.'' That is what Diana in Mesquite wrote.

Brian in Dallas, ''This tax increase would affect our ability to pay tuition and books for our daughter to go to college. While she's a junior this year, we are trying to save money for her education. But as the cost of education increases this year, the loss of these funds, this increase in taxes, will have a negative impact on our ability to send her to college.''

Again, this largest single tax increase in American history will have devastating impacts on American families. So the two budgets sit in stark contrast. One preserves the tax relief that has helped bring down the deficit, has given us the most tax revenues we have ever had before. We are awash in tax revenues, because people rolled up their sleeves, they went out, they worked, they saved. And that is why we have to vote down this rule.

Ms. SUTTON. Madam Speaker, before I yield, I would just like to respond.

Again, our budget resolution does not contain a single penny of tax increases, period. And I will tell you what does not wash to the distinguished gentleman who just spoke. What doesn't wash is that we are getting this lesson in fiscal responsibility from the party that took a projected $5.6 trillion surplus and collapsed it into a $9 trillion deficit.

Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the rule and the Democratic budget for fiscal year 2008. This measure provides robust funding for our most important programs, while maintaining our firm commitment to fiscal discipline.

Last year, Democrats promised to move the country in a new direction, and that is exactly what this budget does. This budget restores many programs the President proposed to cut, while achieving balance by 2012.

It meets our commitments to defense and homeland security by implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations and funding port security and first responders. It also recognizes those who have served our country with significant increases for veterans health care.

The resolution meets our domestic priorities by blocking proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, while providing funding to cover millions of children without health insurance, something particularly important to my constituents in Rhode Island.

It boosts funds for education programs such as Pell Grants and promotes investment in programs that helps us move closer to energy independence and improve our environment.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the Democratic budget so that we can meet the needs of all Americans and restore fiscal responsibility through this process.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the debate today about this budget, about the priorities of the new Democrat majority, about how they have set aside all these 11 reserve funds; and we have seen Member after Member after Member from the new Democrat majority take credit for all these things that are going to be done. And yet, in fact, what they are is reserve funds set aside to find a way to either increase taxes or to find an offset.

We think that this is an irresponsible way to run the government. We think this is an irresponsible budget. We think raising taxes $395 billion, which is included in that budget; we heard the testimony last night from the chairman of the Budget Committee and the ranking member that the assumptions that are based on the Democrat budget are that the tax cuts will go away, that tax increases will fill their place. We disagree with that. We think that hardworking American families deserve the right and the opportunity to continue their best wishes for their families, for their children's education, and take care of their family needs through the hard-earned money that they earned, to be able to keep that rather than bringing it for more spending that this new Democrat majority has in mind.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking Members to oppose the previous question so that I may amend the rule to make in order a very thoughtful amendment offered by Mr. BRADY of Texas which was rejected by the Rules Committee last night. The Democrats in the committee voted down on party line.

Mr. BRADY's amendment would amend the budget resolution to add reconciliation instructions to the Committee on Ways and Means to extend the State and local sales tax deduction through 2012.

Currently, the Democrat budget resolution does not contemplate the extension of any meaningful tax relief provided by Republicans in 2001 or 2003. In fact, the Democrat budget resolution is relying on tax increases to reach this balance. As Americans make their household budgets, they should be able to rely on a consistent and fair Tax Code. The Democrat budget resolution will undermine this goal by imposing double taxation and will help eliminate the stability in the Tax Code that Americans deserve.

So even if all the substitutes are defeated, we will still be able to consider and debate this very important amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask unanimous consent to have the text of the amendment and extraneous material printed in the RECORD just prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BECERRA). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In a document released March 28, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities stated: ''Some are claiming that the budget plan adopted last week by the House Budget Committee, which the full House is expected to vote on this week, would constitute 'the largest tax increase in history.' This claim is incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.'' That is what the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities stated.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people made it clear they are ready for a government that will be fiscally responsible. This Nation spoke loud and clear when it put a new party in power in Congress, asking for responsibility and a new direction in our fiscal priorities. Education, health care, the care of our children and our seniors and our veterans, these are issues that Americans are concerned about.

Our budget restores common sense to our national spending and sanity to our national priorities. It restores the President's attempt to cut children's health care programs and Community Block Grants, and it puts forth the single largest increase in veterans spending in our Nation's history, and not a moment too soon.

It funds math and science programs for our kids, and programs like Head Start and Pell Grants that provide access to education that so many of our children need. And this budget concerns itself with the need to create jobs and build a bright economic future. It restores funding for job training programs.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to be accountable to American taxpayers once again. It is time for Congress to be accountable to our children's future once again. I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. SESSIONS is as follows:

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308–311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as ''a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge.'' To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that ''the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition'' in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R–Illinois) said: ''The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.''

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say ''the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adoptinlg the resolution . . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.'' But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's ''American Congressional Dictionary'': ''If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business.''

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled ''Amending Special Rules'' states: ''a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.'' (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the revious question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for detiate thereon.''

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 275

OFFERED BY REP. SESSIONS OF TEXAS

At the end of the resolution, add the following:

SEC. 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of this resolution, the amendment printed in section 4 shall be in order as though printed as the last amendment in the report of the Committee on Rules if offered by Representative Brady of Texas or a designee. That amendment shall be debatable for 30 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent.

SEC. 4. The amendment referred to in section 3 is as follows:

Reduce the amounts on page 3, lines 10 through 12, and page 4, lines 1 through 3, by the following amounts:

Fiscal year 2008: $300,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $1,800,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,100,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,400,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $3,800,000,000.

Amend page 4, lines 7 through 12 to read as follows:

Fiscal year 2008: $300,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $1,800,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,100,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,400,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $3,800,000,000.

Insert at the end of Title VI (page 61, line 10), the following section:

SEC. 602. RECONCILIATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TAX FAIRNESS.

(a) IN THE HOUSE.—The House Committee on Ways and Means shall report a reconciliation bill not later than May 8, 2008, that consists of changes in laws within its jurisdiction sufficient to reduce revenues by not more than $10,400,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

(b) PURPOSE.—The reconciliation legislation reported pursuant to subsection (a) shall make the changes in the Internal Revenue Code such that the deduction of State and Local Sales Taxes shall not decrease during the fiscal years covered by this resolution.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 274 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 274

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1538) to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour and 20 minutes, with one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed

Services and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 1538 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. CASTOR asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 274 provides for consideration of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour and 20 minutes of general debate with 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The rule waives all points of orders against consideration of the bill except clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI. The rule provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment and shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended.

The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in the Rules Committee report accompanying the resolution; in this case, eight Democratic amendments and four Republican amendments. The amendments may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against the amendment except for clauses 9 and 10 of rule XXI are waived.

The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Finally, the rule permits the Chair, during consideration of H.R. 1538, to postpone further consideration to a time designated by the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and this new Congress demand, through this rule and this legislation, that the executive branch move beyond the rhetoric of ''support our troops'' to concrete actions that sustain our brave men and women in uniform and their families by providing the quality health care they deserve when they return from the battlefield.

Supporting our troops does not mean that you simply salute as you send them off to war, ask them to serve in sacrifice for our great country, but it also means that they are supported when they come home, their families are respected, and our wounded warriors receive superior health care for their physical injuries and mental scars.

This might sound familiar from the Washington Post: ''The conflict in Iraq has hatched a town of desperation and dysfunction, clinging to the pilings of Walter Reed. The wounded are socked away for months and years in random buildings and barracks in and around the military post. Mostly what the soldiers do together is wait: for appointments, evaluation, signatures and lost paperwork to be found. 'It's like,' one military wife said, 'if Iraq don't kill you, Walter Reed will.' While a part of Walter Reed has a full bar, there is not one counselor or psychologist assigned there to assist soldiers and families in crisis—an idea proposed by Walter Reed social workers but rejected by the military command that runs the post.''

To the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, I say what a shame that the American people had to have their eyes opened by two dedicated Washington Post reporters as to the treatment of our veterans, the incompetence and the profound disrespect. These reporters spent hundreds of hours documenting the intimate struggles of the wounded warriors who live at Walter Reed. Their stories triggered others from across the country, like in my hometown paper, the Tampa Tribune.

The Tampa Tribune last week told the story of soldier John Barnes who was injured by a mortar in Iraq just last year. Barnes was fortunate, he had a mother who was a dedicated nurse who stood by him during his days at Walter Reed.

Barnes, now 23, was frequently left unattended, his mother, Valerie Wallace said, even though he had a severe brain injury. He fell repeatedly. Orderlies failed to arrive on time to wheel him to appointments. Medicines were given in the wrong doses; paperwork was lost or never filed.

'' 'I don't think anybody planned this war far out,' said Wallace, an energetic woman who looks younger than her 45 years. 'If you are going to invade a country and you are expecting to be there for years, you've got to know there are going to be thousands of casualties,' she said. 'How are you going to take care of them? Where are you going to put them?'

''Wallace is a registered nurse who has worked for more than a decade at Tampa General Hospital. She wasn't intimidated by the staff at Walter Reed, and she knew what questions to ask. Still, the layers of bureaucracy were overwhelming. The need to remain constantly vigilant was exhausting. Trust quickly evaporated.

'' 'Nobody tells you anything,' Wallace said. 'Nobody prepares you for anything. You're very much on your own in a world you don't know or understand, and you are so overcome with grief and worry that you can't think straight anyway.' ''

Well, these and other stories emboldened military families across the country and all Americans to stand up and demand better treatment for our troops and families who have sacrificed so much.

As Speaker PELOSI reminds us often, the support provided to our troops by the Bush administration has not matched their sacrifice, and, Mr. Speaker, we will rectify that today.

I wish, back in late 2003, when an Army specialist from Tampa named Corey Magee contacted my office, because I was a county commissioner before I was elected to Congress. His family contacted me and said Corey has been shot in the fire fight in Fallujah after an IED blew up his tank. He was shot in the neck and paralyzed and eventually flown to Walter Reed. In some God-given circumstance, I happened to be traveling to Washington that weekend and was able to assemble a care package from his family to deliver to Corey. But they couldn't find out what his situation was. We called and called. We enlisted the help of a United States Senator at the time who was on the Veterans' Committee. We

still couldn't get through the bureaucracy.

I had to travel with the Senator's staff to Walter Reed Hospital, and track down the doctor to find out what brave Corey Magee's prognosis was. He was a brave young guy, and really in his condition couldn't ask for help on his own. And do you know, after that he thanked us profusely for contacting his family and filling them in. He said, ''I am sure we won't have to call you again. They are going to take good care of me.''

He returned to Tampa, and I was surprised a few weeks later to get a phone call from this brave Army specialist because he was having trouble getting his physical therapy appointments at the Veterans Hospital.

□ 1215

So this bill, though it is a step in the right direction today, comes a bit too late. I wish this bill and I wish the attention had been focused earlier and the respect paid to these families by the Bush administration.

As I visited the Bay Pines VA Medical Center in St. Petersburg just a few weeks ago, you see there are a few brave soldiers there who are very symbolic of soldiers across the country that are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

One of the soldiers was in his early 20s, had served in Iraq, come back, trying to get his life together, but it was too much. The mental scars were too much. The post-traumatic stress set in. His young marriage faltered. He lost his job, meaning he eventually lost his home, and ended up as an alcoholic, a homeless alcoholic in his early 20s because of post-traumatic stress disorder.

What he explained to me was what he needed when he came out of the service was a helping hand. He needed someone proactively to say, are you all right, son, rather than to give him a checklist to check off to make sure he was okay.

These are tough guys. They are not going to own up oftentimes to the fact that they cannot sleep at night and they want to drink their sorrows and memories away.

Fortunately, I think the American people can be very heartened today to know that this is a bipartisan effort. Under the leadership of our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, I am very fortunate to serve on the Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Chairman IKE SKELTON, and I salute him and the ranking member for moving this legislation quickly. We salute the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Chairman BOB FILNER but, mostly, the leadership of the American people who have cried out for change.

Through this rule and this bill, we are going to improve the health care and mental health for our wounded warriors. We are going to tackle the bureaucracy on their behalf. We are going to establish a toll-free hotline so that families and soldiers and anyone who cares about them can report deficiencies in our system. We are going to require expedited action.

Thanks to the leadership of subcommittee Chair VIC SNYDER, now Members of Congress that have desired information about the soldiers returning to their districts are going to be notified. Members of Congress oftentimes can be the best advocates for these returning soldiers, and now it will be a requirement in the law.

We are going to provide medical advocates to these soldiers. We are going to improve support services to families; and, rather than mismanage resources, we are going to turn the White House's privatization initiative around and require accountability.

Coming from Tampa, the home of the Haley VA Center and one of the four polytrauma centers in the country, I am especially heartened by the provisions in this bill that improve veterans health care by providing more physician residents in those polytrauma centers. ABC's News anchor, Bob Woodruff, brought this to life in his hour-long expose a few weeks ago. He visited the Haley Polytrauma Center in Tampa. These are where the most critically injured soldiers are sent for their health care, the brain injuries, the spinal cord injuries.

What Dr. Robert Scott, the medical director at that medical facility, told me a few weeks ago is, even though the polytrauma center is directly across the street from the University of South Florida College of Medicine, they cannot get the physician residents in training. The Feds are not providing enough. We need these doctors in training to learn and train about these critical war injuries and the physical therapy that our soldiers need.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge this new Congress to chart a new direction today and to erase the moral stain on our Nation's conscience.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding me the customary 30 minutes; and, Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform routinely risk their lives to protect ours. Along with their families, they make many sacrifices in service to America. There is no question that they deserve the very best care that our Nation can provide.

The situation at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center was unacceptable to all Americans, and I am encouraged that immediate steps have been taken to address the problems there. But it is just as important to take action to prevent similar problems from happening at any of our military health facilities.

Under Republican leadership, Mr. Speaker, recent Congresses have increased spending per veteran, expanded the concurrent receipt, written budgets that nearly doubled funding for veterans health care, and enhanced benefits for those returning from the war on terror.

Now, Congress is taking another step forward, and a proper step forward, in improving services for both our active military and our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, the underlying bill before us today makes commonsense improvements to ensure that our military men and women have access to the care that they have earned and to help maintain excellence throughout our military health system.

For example, this legislation creates a new toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies at military health care facilities, calls for a study to identify infrastructure needs, and authorizes funding to support wounded warriors and their families. It assigns a medical case manager and a patient advocate to each servicemember receiving outpatient care and makes sure that these professionals are properly trained.

The process currently used to determine if a soldier can return to active duty is improved so that wounded servicemembers are afforded an opportunity to have input into the decision on whether they should retire from the service. Provisions are included to provide those separating or retiring from service with a seamless transition into the VA system, and the number of doctors at VA hospital facilities is increased.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to talk about military and VA health care systems without mentioning the unique challenges faced by veterans in rural areas. My district in central Washington has one of the highest concentrations of rural veterans in the Northwest. Although I am working with the VA to get a new outpatient clinic up and running in the northern part of my district, access to health care remains an issue of concern for me and my constituents who all too often are forced to drive hours and sometimes wait months to even get the most basic care.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am particularly disappointed that an amendment offered by Mr. PEARCE of New Mexico was rejected last night in the Rules Committee and will not be allowed to be considered on the floor today. We are missing an opportunity to make a good bill even better by improving care for our rural veterans. The Pearce amendment is based on a bill that I have cosponsored that would enable the VA to partner with existing hospitals and local communities on a case-by-case basis so that veterans in many rural areas can be cared for closer to home. This to me, Mr. Speaker, is a commonsense approach to get top-notch care to veterans without delay. I am at a loss to understand why anyone would oppose this improvement to caring for our veterans.

Similarly, Mr. MORAN of Kansas had an amendment that I also support; and,

unfortunately, it, too, was rejected by Democrats on the Rules Committee.

Our support for improving veterans health care should not be a partisan issue. I am pleased that both Democrats and Republicans on the Armed Services Committee have made the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, a priority and that the committee approved it by unanimous vote.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. ARCURI), a member of the Rules Committee.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Rules Committee for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the rule and the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

Improvements in medical technology over the years allow for more servicemen and -women to survive injuries sustained in battle. During World War II, for every soldier that was killed, two were wounded. Now, this ratio is up to 16 to 1. These incredible medical developments allow many more men and women to return home to their families, but their injuries tend to be much more serious and, in many cases, require additional care for the rest of their lives.

Last month, I had the opportunity to visit with wounded soldiers recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center. I met several young men wounded in Iraq, one a constituent of mine from upstate New York. As I stood next to the mother of one of the soldiers, I saw a look of sadness on her face, and at that point it struck me, what if one of my two teenage children were lying in that bed? I know that I would want the absolute best treatment and care for my children, and our brave troops deserve nothing less.

Sadly, the administration's mismanagement of the war in Iraq has extended to the home front as well. The selfless men and women who volunteered to defend their country have been callously neglected and were not only sent into battle without adequate resources, they also returned home to inadequate resources. When they asked for help, no one answered.

We make a promise to our soldiers to provide for them when they return home from battle, and it is absolutely unacceptable that this promise has been broken.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act will ensure that more than 25,000 servicemembers who have sustained injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan receive the world-class treatment and care and services they have so bravely earned and deserve. This bill creates an efficient system for the transition of records from the Department of Defense to the Veterans Administration. It establishes a support system of counselors, advocates and case managers to ensure timely, comprehensive care; and it establishes a number to call to report problems in facilities so that when a soldier asks for help someone answers.

Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform deserve the absolute best care that this Nation has to offer. I urge my colleagues to renew our promise to our veterans by supporting this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER).

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the gentleman yielding; and although I do question as well this very restrictive rule, I rise to speak in very strong support of the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation is blessed, indeed blessed, that we have produced the incredible men and women who defend our freedom through their service and through their sacrifice in our military, and every one of those who serve do so voluntarily and out of a deep love of America and a commitment to the freedom that our Nation bestows. They deserve every last measure of support to ensure that when they are wounded they receive the best possible care.

And let me say this. The military medical corps has in large measure provided absolutely incredible care to those wounded in battle. The advancements in battlefield medicine and the care of our wounded warriors after they are removed from the battlefield has allowed countless of our soldiers to survive and to recover fully who in past conflicts may not have survived. In fact, the statistics that are coming out of theater are really a remarkable tribute to the doctors and to the nurses who are engaged there, and those who provide care to our soldiers deserve our thanks and our praise and our gratitude.

However, the recent discoveries at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital were disturbing and totally unacceptable. We cannot allow any more Building 18 incidents to occur, and we must do everything that we possibly can to ensure that it does not.

This legislation that we are going to be debating shortly is a huge step in the right direction. It will begin to streamline the bureaucracy of the military medical systems and lighten the caseload of case managers by providing more assistance. It will provide a hotline for those receiving substandard care to report the problems so that those situations can be dealt with quickly and that the patients receive the care that they deserve when they need it. And it will provide for a smooth transition from the Department of Defense health system to the Department of Veterans Affairs, cutting more red tape so that the focus can be on the patient and not on the paperwork.

We cannot allow those who have fought our foreign enemies in the defense of freedom to come home and fight the Federal bureaucracy to get the health care that they need.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am very proud to support this important piece of legislation that our committee produced in a bipartisan way, and I certainly want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER, who are both patriots and veterans who have served the cause of freedom, for their dedication to the care of our troops and for their work in bringing this legislation forward to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support passage of the underlying bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. Our brave men and women wounded in defense of liberty, democracy and freedom deserve no less.

□ 1230

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio and distinguished member of the Rules Committee, Ms. SUTTON.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding time for her leadership on this rule and in the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. It is an outrage that our brave men and women, who have served our Nation so honorably, have returned home, as recent press accounts have revealed, and faced problems getting the care they so rightly deserve.

As I said before, our troops must have, and we must provide, that which they need for any mission upon which they are sent. They must have and we must provide that which they need when they return home.

My home State of Ohio has 6,347 brave soldiers currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. If they are injured in any way, they must have the care they need when they return home. The roughly 60,000 veterans in my congressional district and over 1 million veterans in Ohio and all of our veterans across this Nation deserve better support and assistance than many of them have received.

The legislation before us arose out of a lack of oversight and transparency that should have been in place, but was neglected by the administration and past Congresses. This bipartisan bill ensures that our wounded soldiers and their families can feel secure in the knowledge that they will now be properly cared for and treated with the respect and dignity that they have earned and most certainly deserve. This bill will ensure that all of our veterans get the care and assistance they need and improves the overall veterans health care system to make it easier for them to access and use.

Lastly, this bill puts in place strong oversight and inspection requirements to ensure that the events of Walter

Reed and other facilities around this Nation never, ever happen again.

Let's pass this rule and pass this very important bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. MITCHELL).

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, just weeks ago an outraged Nation learned about the terrible conditions many of our wounded warriors had to endure as they recovered from battlefield injuries at Walter Reed Medical Center. We have all heard the sad stories of mold and rat droppings at Building 18.

Even worse, we have learned that these dilapidated conditions extend beyond Walter Reed to other military facilities and even veterans facilities where troops turned veterans face a long, complicated and confusing process to get the benefits and care they have earned. Conditions like these and miles of bureaucratic red tape rob our troops and veterans of what they deserve the most, dignity, respect and honor.

It is absolutely unacceptable, and I am proud that this Congress is taking action. Just last week, the House approved more than $20 million to clean up the mess at Walter Reed. We approved more than $550 million to get rid of the backlog of maintenance requests at veterans facilities. That is a good start.

Last month, I introduced the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act for 2007, which was the first legislation introduced in this House to prevent another episode like that of Walter Reed from ever happening again.

I commend the House Armed Services Committee for putting forward this legislation, which also establishes guidelines for how returning soldiers should be treated and measures of accountability. All of our troops, and all of our veterans, are entitled to quality health care and should be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. These are great first steps, but we still have a long way to go to ensure our troops and veterans are treated properly. They have my commitment that we will continue to take care of them just as they have taken care of us.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the bill that this rule makes in order is a good bill. It passed the Armed Services Committee unanimously. It is something that is needed now that we need are engaged in this war on terror. Bills like this, in my view, deserve an open rule, so that you can give the opportunity for Members on both sides of the aisle to try to improve this good product and make it better. I cited two examples for the Rules Committee to not make in order two bills that dealt specifically with our veterans in rural areas.

While I support the underlying bill, I am opposed to the rule, because I think the rule could have allowed more amendments to have been in order or, for that matter, have made this an open rule. I think that ought to be the standard when we have strong bipartisan support for legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, 4 years after the start of the war in Iraq, and less than 100 days since the swearing in of this new Congress, this Congress will act today.

I urge my colleagues to support this rule and this legislation so we can pass the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. Let's send a message, let's stand up for our brave troops in the field, not just when they are serving on the battlefield, but when they return home. Let's give the families the respect they deserve and make sure that we are providing superior health care whether it's a physical injury or a mental scar.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will now put each question on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order: ordering the previous question on House Resolution 275; adopting House Resolution 275, if ordered; adopting House Resolution 274; and passing H.R. 835.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 99, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on ordering the previous question on House Resolution 275, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 225, nays 196, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 202]

YEAS—225

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—196

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson

Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—12

Bonner
Braley (IA)
Courtney
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Miller, George
Radanovich
Sullivan

□ 1302

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California and Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. CROWLEY, and Messrs. GORDON of Tennessee, JEFFERSON, and MEEHAN changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 202, had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 202, had I been present, I would have voted ''yea.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 229, nays 197, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 203]

YEAS—229

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Bonner
Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Rogers (MI)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1312

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on adoption of House Resolution 274 on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 243, nays 179, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 204]

YEAS—243

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Platts
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—179

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Chabot
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Jindal
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Sullivan
Tancredo
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—11

Andrews
Bilbray
Bonner
Cardoza
Davis, Jo Ann
Emerson
Kanjorski
Lampson
McKeon
Millender-McDonald
Moore (KS)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1319

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HAWAIIAN HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question of the passage of the bill, H.R. 835, on which further proceedings were postponed earlier today.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 272, nays 150, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 205]

YEAS—272

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Calvert
Cannon
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Dreier
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fortenberry
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hunter
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Kingston
Knollenberg
Kucinich
LaHood
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Rahall
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weller
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NAYS—150

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Baker
Barrett (SC)

Bartlett (MD)	Gallegly	Murphy, Tim
Barton (TX)	Garrett (NJ)	Musgrave
Biggert	Gerlach	Myrick
Bilbray	Gohmert	Neugebauer
Bilirakis	Goode	Nunes
Bishop (UT)	Goodlatte	Paul
Blackburn	Granger	Pence
Blunt	Graves	Petri
Boehner	Hall (TX)	Pitts
Boozman	Hastings (WA)	Platts
Boustany	Hayes	Poe
Brady (TX)	Heller	Price (GA)
Brown (SC)	Hensarling	Putnam
Brown-Waite, Ginny	Herger	Radanovich
Buchanan	Hoekstra	Ramstad
Burgess	Hulshof	Regula
Burton (IN)	Inglis (SC)	Rehberg
Buyer	Issa	Rogers (AL)
Camp (MI)	Jindal	Rogers (KY)
Campbell (CA)	Johnson, Sam	Rogers (MI)
Cantor	Jordan	Rohrabacher
Carter	Keller	Ros-Lehtinen
Castle	King (IA)	Roskam
Chabot	Kirk	Royce
Coble	Kline (MN)	Ryan (WI)
Conaway	Kuhl (NY)	Sali
Crenshaw	Lamborn	Schmidt
Cubin	Latham	Sensenbrenner
Culberson	Lewis (CA)	Sessions
Davis, David	Lewis (KY)	Shuster
Deal (GA)	Linder	Smith (NE)
Dent	Lungren, Daniel E.	Smith (TX)
Diaz-Balart, L.	Mack	Souder
Diaz-Balart, M.	Manzullo	Stearns
Doolittle	Marchant	Terry
Drake	McCarthy (CA)	Tiahrt
Duncan	McCaul (TX)	Tiberi
Ehlers	McCotter	Turner
English (PA)	McCrery	Upton
Everett	McHenry	Walberg
Feeney	McHugh	Walden (OR)
Ferguson	McMorris Rodgers	Walsh (NY)
Flake	Mica	Wamp
Forbes	Miller (FL)	Weldon (FL)
Fossella	Miller (MI)	Westmoreland
Foxx	Miller, Gary	Whitfield
Franks (AZ)	Moran (KS)	Wicker
Frelinghuysen		Wilson (SC)
		Wolf

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Bachus

NOT VOTING—10

Bonner	Kanjorski	Millender-McDonald
Davis, Jo Ann	Klein (FL)	Thornberry
Emanuel	Lampson	
Fallin	McKeon	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The Speaker pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1328

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1538.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 274 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1538.

□ 1329

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1538) to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes, with Mr. BECERRA in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 1 hour and 20 minutes, with 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services, and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 30 minutes, and the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) each will control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

□ 1330

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to bring forward for consideration this bill, H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill is the House Armed Services Committee's first step to address the challenges and the obstacles that wounded and injured servicemembers face during their recovery at Walter Reed Medical Center, and at all military medical facilities around the world.

Mr. Chairman, I am glad this bill is a product of a strong bipartisan effort to support our troops. While recognizing the ranking member of the committee, DUNCAN HUNTER, and the House Veterans Affairs Chairman, BOB FILNER, and STEVE BUYER, the ranking member, for their support and contributions to this bill, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the substantial contributions of the Military Personnel Subcommittee chairman, VIC SNYDER, and JOHN MCHUGH, the ranking member, for their considerable help during the development of this bill in committee.

Their knowledge and insights and understanding of the complex medical and disability systems that our servicemembers and their families are undergoing help to ensure that the bill before us today will have an immediate and positive impact on the lives of the wounded servicemembers as well as their families.

Mr. Chairman, the committee moved expeditiously to make changes that can be adopted fairly quickly after hearing what our wounded soldiers and their families are continuing to face at Walter Reed Hospital. However, these soldiers were not alone. The committee has heard of similar challenges that other soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines that are experiencing the same type of treatment across the country.

Sadly, what happened at Walter Reed was more than just a leadership failure in the Army. It is symptomatic of the enormous and complex factors that affect military medicine.

Yet while those in military medicine provide outstanding quality health care to wounded and injured soldiers, other factors brought to bear on this system also contribute to the state of affairs at Walter Reed Hospital as well as other medical facilities throughout our Nation.

Over the past several years, military medicine has been forced to convert thousands of military medical positions to civilian positions. One could ask how this could have an impact on our wounded forces, and the answer is clear and simple; fewer uniformed medical providers means fewer providers left at military hospitals back home treating injured and treating the wounded servicemembers. It also means that those in uniform who do remain will continue to face a high and sustained operational tempo, greater deployments and more time away from home. And yet the Navy, for example, has proposed for fiscal year 2008 to cut an additional 900 medical providers, including, Mr. Chairman, 100 doctors that provide needed health care to servicemembers as well as their families. That is why the committee chose to move quickly on this bill that will provide quick and immediate help to our troops.

It is clear that continued and persistent problems that were highlighted at Walter Reed Hospital require closer inspection and may demand a significant and comprehensive overhaul of the entire process.

As the Armed Services Committee continues to work on the fiscal year 2008 Defense Authorization bill, we will continue our efforts to examine greater comprehensive reforms to ensure that our forces receive the high quality care that our Nation has an obligation to provide for those wonderful young people in uniform.

However, H.R. 1538 is vitally needed now to provide immediate support for our wounded warriors.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to add my voice to the eloquent voice of the chairman, Mr. SKELTON. I want to thank him, and thank also Dr. SNYDER and JOHN MCHUGH, the chairman and ranking member of Personnel, for their hard work on this bill. And for all the other Members who worked on this, I know Mr. FILNER and Mr. BUYER were also architects of this bill. But especially our chairman, who has a heart

for the military and perhaps is the most adept custodian of the history of military personnel matters in the Armed Services Committee; a guy with a great eye and ear for history and for the sense of tradition that kind of brings us together on the Armed Services Committee to find common ground on important issues to the folks that wear the uniform. This is one of those issues, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, young people right now are serving this country in far away places like Ramadi and Fallujah and Mosul and Kabul, and many other places around the world where the war against terror brings them face to face with danger every day. Some of those, the great members of the U.S. military, give their last full measure of devotion. Some of them are wounded and come back through Landstuhl and then to Bethesda and Walter Reed.

And, Mr. Chairman, I am reminded of Ronald Reagan's speech in 1981, when he stood on the west steps of the Capitol and he gestured out to the west and he said, There's the Washington Monument, dedicated to the Father of our Country, and beyond that, the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated to the man who saved the Union. But beyond those monuments are thousands of monuments with crosses and Stars of David, dedicated to Americans who gave that full measure of devotion to the same degree that the Founding Fathers did, and that's Arlington Cemetery.

And he mentioned that under one of those markers lies a man named Martin Trepto, who was killed in World War I. He had gone to fight with the Rainbow Division in France, and after a few months or a few weeks in country, he was killed. When his friends found his body, they found that he kept a diary, and he had written these words, and I am paraphrasing: I must fight this war as if the success or failure of America depends on me alone.

I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, in going out to the warfighting theaters, that standard is the same standard that is carried by the young men and women of America's Armed Forces. And because of that, it is all the more compelling that we do everything possible to make sure that they have good care when they come home, and when they are wounded and when their families similarly are wounded by their wounds; and to make sure that we have a government which is friendly to them.

A lot of this problem at Walter Reed and Bethesda and the rest of our medical care apparatus is this; we need to have a system that is friendly, friendly to that 22-year-old marine wife who drives a couple hundred miles, maybe leaves the kids with the mother-in-law while she goes with her husband to undertake therapy at one of our hospitals. To be able to get in and get out without having to get bogged down in a mass of bureaucracy. It is toward those ends that we dedicated this bill.

And again, I think the chairman has done a great job, as have Mr. MCHUGH and Mr. SNYDER. And let me tell you a couple of the highlights here.

I like the idea that you have got a limitation on 17 cases per case manager. That means that each case manager is going to have a lot of time to spend with each case, with each individual. And you also have the family advocate who will help with housing and transportation and all those things. That is almost as important as the case manager, because that helps a family to be with their loved one while they are undertaking their treatment.

I also like this handoff between the VA and DoD. We now have a physical meeting where you don't have the bureaucracy finally telling us after 3, 4 or 5 months that the records have been lost, that they have been misplaced or that there are some missing. And lastly, when we do the evaluation, to have experts who will assist the servicemember in making sure that his or her file is complete when they go for disability. That means if you've got that frag wound in your left leg, you make sure that you've got a record of that in that disability packet when you go before the board.

Now, there are lots of other good language in this bill and good provisions in this bill that will accrue to the benefit of the servicemember and their family, but I think those are especially important.

Lastly, I think the hotline is important, Mr. Chairman, where people can call in and let the system know that it's messed up and that it's not serving them well. And I know that the wonderful men and women who serve our U.S. military will respond to that and will make things right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me speak for a couple of minutes about this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I think our country was shocked at the revelation as to what the conditions were at that certain part of Walter Reed Hospital, and I am pleased that we, on a very bipartisan basis, have addressed this through the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, it was Presidents' Day weekend when The Washington Post story broke with the appalling and embarrassing story about the conditions under which our soldiers were living within the military health care system. I think as Americans, nothing could be more shocking and embarrassing than the notion that our own soldiers were isolated within the outpatient services of the military health care systems, in conditions with rotted walls, holes in the ceiling, mold growing. And I would give Mr. SKELTON and the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee all the credit because on March 8 the Armed Services Committee held a hearing, looked at the flaws that existed in the system and have come out with this legislation, which will do a lot to make sure that people will not be alone and isolated, with more case managers, with advocates that will be there, and a 1–800 emergency hotline to make sure they won't be, again, alone and isolated.

I do think, as Mr. HUNTER indicated, probably the biggest problem that is facing returning soldiers right now is the transition from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs. In the State of Connecticut today, the waiting period is over 600 days for over 2,500 veterans in the State of Connecticut trying to get their claims processed. And in section 10 of this bill, which will require a physical transfer of the files, the medical records of people leaving the Department of Defense system into the VA system will make sure that we are going to make a dent in reducing the length of time, which literally is threatening people's mortgage payments, their credit rating, and it is inexcusable that people who have served this country are being treated this poorly.

There was an amendment offered by myself on the Armed Services Committee which will also include State Veterans Affairs departments in that handoff because we have many benefits, property tax benefits, educational programs, preferential hiring within our State, like many other States, which returning veterans should be included and informed of immediately. I want to thank the chairman for including that language in the bill and strongly urge its passage.

Mr. HUNTER. I would like to yield 4 minutes to Dr. GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

This bipartisan bill was reported unanimously by the Armed Services Committee, and I am a proud, proud cosponsor, along with my friend, distinguished chairman, Mr. SKELTON, and my good friend, ranking member, Mr. HUNTER.

Mr. Chairman, we are debating this bill today because all of us here, Democrats and Republicans, want to ensure our soldiers are receiving the high quality care for which our military is known.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, as a physician, I can tell you that access to care is critical to the health and well-being of our military, active, reserve and veteran. While it was a condition of some housing facilities at Walter Reed that led us to examine our military health care system, the fundamental problems with military medical care cannot be fixed with paint, putty and plaster.

I am relieved to know the run-down rooms have been refurbished, but I am proud that this bill starts addressing the system's fundamental problem of

overcrowding, delayed paperwork and a shortage of human capital to oversee soldiers' continuing health care and quality of life needs.

Soldiers I met on a recent visit to Walter Reed were frustrated with lost medical records, dupes to forms, paperwork that took a week to make it from one office to another. This system greatly delays our soldiers' ability to meet with their doctors and to eventually, Mr. Chairman, be discharged.

□ 1345

In fact, the average stay at Walter Reed is 350 days, and many of those days are spent as an outpatient assigned to the medical hold unit waiting for the paper trail to catch up with patient care.

This legislation starts addressing these problems by giving soldiers a louder voice in their medical care. It increases the personnel assigned to each servicemember and his or her family so that our soldiers have advocates helping them set appointments and understand the prescribed course of their care. As a physician, I know that caseload greatly affects the personal attention delivered to each patient. More staff means more time for each soldier and their individual needs.

Mr. Chairman, another problem facing our military health system is the difficulty personnel face when they are transitioning from active duty to the retired status, and I am pleased that this legislation includes a pilot program to examine this critical need. A fully electronic and integrated records system would allow the Department of Defense and the VA to share information in a timely fashion.

I would also encourage the Department of Defense to automate all in-patient health records. We know that in the private sector switching from paper files to electronic medical records cuts down on medical errors, saves time, and saves money. Our military should fully realize these benefits as well.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is important to recognize that the Wounded Warrior Act fixes a process that isn't serving the best interest of our warfighters or our military medical personnel. Our military doctors and nurses are an invaluable resource for their expertise, bravery, and dedication. We want to make sure that the system benefits these heroes as well.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act represents a significant step toward ensuring our soldiers and veterans are treated with the dignity and respect that they have earned and fully deserve, and I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting this great piece of legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I am very, very pleased that this bill will directly address the transition between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration with the actual physical hand-off that is provided and required in this.

I yield now 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

(Mr. CUMMINGS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CUMMINGS. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, today we have the opportunity to pass a bipartisan piece of legislation that will assist in correcting many of the wrongs that are rampant throughout our armed services health care system, as most recently illustrated in the reports and investigations surrounding Walter Reed.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in supporting this very vital piece of legislation that is an initial step, and I emphasize that, initial step in tearing down the bureaucratic red tape that can hold wounded service men and women in limbo for months and even years after they return home with injuries from the battlefield.

H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, ensures better access to health care, better conditions in outpatient and inpatient treatment, a better means to report substandard conditions and, finally, better oversight.

H.R. 1538 responds to concerns raised by the men and women of our armed services and does the following things that are so important: Providing them with an assigned medical care case manager and limiting their caseload in order to prevent extensive backlogs; providing medical advocates to stand with soldiers before medical evaluations boards; and I think this is so important, providing a toll-free hotline that soldiers and their families can use to report inadequacies in care; and establishing a pilot program to ensure that our servicemembers have a seamless transition from Armed Forces to the Veterans Affairs agency.

Finally, let me say this, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that our chairman, Mr. SKELTON, who has done an outstanding job, and Mr. HUNTER, our ranking member, were very significant, along with Mr. FILNER, in seeing that an amendment that I put forth was passed, and that was to give the head of Veterans Affairs two appointments to the Oversight Committee. So I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this very outstanding piece of legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) as much time as he desires. And I would just note that Mr. MCHUGH, along with Dr. SNYDER, are chief architects of this legislation; and Mr. MCHUGH is the guy I like to refer to as the guy from the 10th Mountain Division in New York, a guy with enormous dedication to the men and women who wear the uniform.

Mr. MCHUGH. I thank the gentleman both for yielding and for his very, very gracious comments, and I thank Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by giving thanks where thanks are certainly due. I want to express my particular appreciation to my chairman on the Personnel Subcommittee, a fellow I had the opportunity to work with when he was ranking member for a number of years when I had the opportunity to Chair that subcommittee, Dr. SNYDER; as well as and equally so with the chairman of the full committee, Mr. SKELTON; and, of course, my dear friend and such a great leader from the great State of California (Mr. HUNTER), for their leadership for recognizing the need to react to this, not in a bipartisan, not in a political way, but in a way that embodies the spirit of the Armed Services Committee.

One reason I am so proud and have been for now going on 15 years to serve on it and that is in the interest of those incredibly brave and unselfish men and women who don the uniform of the United States of America. We owe our thanks as well, as the gentleman from Maryland suggested, to the VA Committee, Mr. FILNER and Mr. BUYER, for their willingness to work together in addressing what we all recognize is a very, very serious problem.

This is not a perfect bill. It does not meet the entire range of challenges and problems that we know exist, the entire range and need of problems that, frankly, have been known to many of us for many, many years, particularly the disconnect between two very well-meaning systems, that of the Department of Defense, who cares for our wounded, and later, after retirement and disability ratings, the VA department, who cares for those who follow through.

Both of them tried to do the job, and they tried to do it in very distinct ways, and what we have understood now and what was demonstrated at least in part at Walter Reed is the challenges of helping those two well-meaning, independent agencies work better together.

But while it is not, Mr. Chairman, a perfect bill, it is a very, very good bill, an excellent first step, a place where we can put into effect mechanisms to better ensure the quality of service and, equally important, provide a continuum of care for the brave men and women who risk their lives in defense of our freedoms, of America's freedoms. And I think we can all agree as well we owe that to them. We owe it to their families. We owe them nothing less than the best that we can possibly provide, the absolute best; and this bill takes an important step towards effecting that kind of necessary change.

There will have to be things that follow. Once we hear from the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission and from the DOD and Military Services' reviews and analysis, we will be in an even better position to take whatever additional actions are necessary to bring it together.

But you have heard my colleagues here on the floor today speak about the important components of this bill. We have looked at the problems, we have looked at the challenges that these folks have faced, and we have tried to

respond to them. Everything from hotlines to actual human hand-offs between the two systems, more case managers, more personal face-to-face responsiveness to the problems they may encounter, this bill provides it, with more to follow.

I also want to add, Mr. Chairman, that without the hard work of the staff on both sides of the Armed Services Committee we would not have had this legislation. Our particular thanks to Mike Higgins, Debra Wada, John Chapla, and Jeanette James, amongst others, who took our concerns, who took our feedback and made them into the bill that we receive here today; and we owe them as well.

Before I yield back, on a last note, Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I didn't once again add my words of deep appreciation to those incredible military medical professionals who through their hard work, who through their dedication are solely responsible for the best quality care. We are experiencing survival rates today coming out of Afghanistan and Iraq that we have never experienced in any theater of war in the history of this Nation, in fact, in the history of mankind, and that is because of the wonderful job that they do.

This challenge has never been about them, and I want them most importantly to recognize we understand the differences of the system and, in fact, two systems that need correcting and better oversight from their valiant efforts. We all owe them our deepest appreciation.

So I am proud to be associated with this bill, a bill that will take a quantitative and qualitative step forward in providing the best possible care to our wounded and fallen warriors.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague, my friend, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I thank you; and I thank the chairman for yielding.

Chairman SKELTON and Chairman SNYDER, Ranking Member HUNTER, Ranking Member MCHUGH have shown great leadership on this bill; and I thank them for their efforts and salute them for their work. They led because they listened.

First of all, as my friend Mr. MCHUGH just said, it is important to note that the drafters of this bill listened to the good work that was being done by the many, many men and women in the military health care system, in the veterans health care system.

The system has been beleaguered lately with terrible news reports of intolerable treatment of the wounded warriors of this country. We deplore those reports. We deplore the facts that gave rise to those reports.

But we do want to commend the vast majority of people who work in each of these systems for the great work that they do and acknowledge the contribution they make to our country.

The leaders of this bill listened, and I think they have come up with a great work product that will help. They have listened to the family of the warrior who has sat for too long on a bed unattended, who has languished for too long in a bureaucracy, forgotten about, whose care and whose future situation has not been given the attention it deserves. And by requiring a medical case manager and an advocate for each one of those persons, I think we will find that fewer people will be forgotten about and more people will get top-quality care.

This bill shows that its drafters have listened to those who have experienced the gaps in care and the frustration where there has not been a continuity of care when they were in the military health care system and then moved over to the VA health care system; that the care they are receiving, the diagnosis, the treatment is not consistent of someone who has had a good quality of care for a period of time, finds that interrupted and finds that to be inappropriate. This bill will establish means by which we can merge the best qualities of both systems and address the needs of that wounded warrior.

Finally, this bill deals with the outrageous inconsistency that so many people have experienced in the disability system, where the same injury under the same circumstances is treated one way in one system and another way in the other and where it takes months or even years to find out what your final resolution is going to be. So this is a bill that shows that we can listen to those concerns and address them.

As Mr. MCHUGH says, the bill is not perfect, but the bill is sound, because it listens to the very real concerns of the wounded warriors. It addresses them in a way that puts aside politics. I am proud to support this bill, and I thank the authors for this opportunity.

Mr. HUNTER. I just want to take a second, Mr. Chairman, to thank the gentleman who just spoke as one of the finest members of our committee and to point out, too, and he went over a number of the high points in this bill, and this idea of having an independent medical officer who helps the service personnel, making sure that they have got in their files when they go before that evaluation board, making sure they have got that record of that shrapnel wound to the calf or to the side, that in cases in times past you would have service personnel who were highly frustrated because they have been wounded, they knew where the wounds were, and yet somehow the paperwork had disappeared. So having that professional to help prepare it is very, very important; and I thank the gentleman for his great service and work on putting this thing together.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of our time.

□ 1400

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) stated about the disparity between the treatment regarding the disability ratings made by the Department of Defense on the one hand, and the Veterans Administration on the other, we hope that disparity will be done away with by the legislation that we pass today.

I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on this issue, as well as the ranking member, Mr. HUNTER.

If you look back at what happened at Walter Reed, and it is on the outside of the care, not the inside care of the hospital that we are talking about, the Wounded Warriors Act certainly is a good first step.

One of the things that I want to address, I want to say thank you to Chairman MURTHA for the commitment he has made to our military as far as making sure the money is in there so that we can implement what we need to do.

As we all know, head trauma has become the focus of a lot of these veterans that are coming home. With the IEDs in Iraq, traumatic brain injury has become the signature wound of this conflict. Our soldiers receive outstanding acute medical care; but people have to understand, it used to be thought that after 6 months of treatment, someone with a head injury would be fine and they would just kind of let them go. That is not true.

Back in 1993, my son was shot in the head and he certainly sustained very traumatic head injury. It takes a long time, and we know that we can give treatment for years after. It is 13 years since my son's head treatment, and he is still receiving therapy. So this is a good first start, and I hope we continue with it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I am pleased to rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

When men and women go to war, they are willing to give their bodies and their lives to this country. When they return, if they are broken, we have the obligation to try to restore them and to care for them and their families as they go about the long process of rehabilitation.

Our soldiers deserve a lot more than phrases such as ''support the troops'' and yellow ribbons and visits from celebrities. They deserve the right medical care and a seamless transition going from a military hospital to a veterans hospital for their care.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. This is what we owe our soldiers and their families. When we talk about

supporting the troops, we honor our commitments to them, and this is a very solid bill that will do just that.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) 1 minute.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am deeply concerned about the lack of a seamless transition for our servicemembers into the VA health care system.

This bill changes that broken system by creating a pilot program within the Department of Defense requiring a more efficient movement of medical records and a better process for our separated or retiring troops.

It also provides soldiers and their families with a toll-free hotline for reporting problems. Complaints called into the hotline must be investigated and a plan to remedy them must be in place within 96 hours.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Defense and the Veterans' Administration to work together to improve their disability evaluation systems ending a lot of backlog.

Finally, this bill authorizes $50 million for wounded soldiers' support programs, ensuring that these soldiers don't fall through the cracks without any financial support. Our soldiers have fought bravely on the battlefield, and they shouldn't have to fight for the care they need and deserve. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this and other efforts to correct deficiencies in our military health care system and to ensure that the men and women of our Armed Forces get the attention and quality they deserve. This is not a partisan issue; as a matter of fact, this is a bipartisan effort, and I am glad to be a part of it as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs in the Appropriations Committee.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act is an important first step in improving the delivery of medical care and quality of life for our injured military personnel and their families. I say a first step, Mr. Chairman, because I hope it is the first of several to focus the necessary resources and enhance the facilities for overall delivery of service.

I am particularly interested in simplifying and speeding the paperwork process associated with both the initial care of these heroes and their transition to the programs administered through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our wounded warriors, their families and the dedicated health care professionals committed to serving their needs should not have to face bureaucratic stumbling blocks that prevent the timely administration of care and the processing of claims to help these heroes get back on their feet. I support provisions in this legislation that will provide more resources to address the problem, especially the medical evaluation delays. As the bill moves forward, I will say to the leadership of the full committee, I encourage the authors of this legislation to consider adding additional judge advocates to assist the medical evaluation process.

In conversations with soldiers at Walter Reed, I learned of a shortfall of properly trained full-time attorneys to assist and represent patients during the formal evaluations. This occurs during the process leading up to the board and during the board. In many instances, the backlog was so long that soldiers retained outside counsel for hearings at their own cost. Those who could not afford to do this were forced to wait. In fact, the March 12 inspector general report highlighted this problem and recommended an increase in trained attorneys.

I am grateful for the full committee leadership of the Appropriations Committee for accommodating me in my amendment in this regard. While we await the full Army Tiger Team report in May, I hope my colleagues will recognize the need and right of our wounded soldiers to proper representation.

I participated in hearings on this issue as ranking member of the MILCON VA Appropriations Subcommittee, and as a member of the Defense Subcommittee. I have visited Walter Reed Army Hospital and talked to soldiers receiving treatment there and elsewhere in our military and VA systems. While the recent problems have stained our military health care system, I have been encouraged by the bipartisan manner in which we have approached this issue. I have also been encouraged to hear very positive reviews also with regard to our VA health care system, and I know it can be improved on, but certainly we get very, very positive reviews from the constituents who actually use these facilities.

These oversight activities have been very helpful in identifying steps we can take immediately to put the focus back on caring for our wounded soldiers. I look forward to working with the chairman and others of my colleagues to advance this legislation as it moves through the process.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services.

(Mr. ORTIZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Chairman, today we begin the process of keeping our promise, our unique moral responsibility to the troops returning home to their families' arms.

Many of those warfighters are deeply wounded in body, mind and soul, and it is our responsibility to care for them, to treat their bodies and their minds.

I want to thank Chairman SKELTON for his work in marking this bill with great speed, also the ranking member, Mr. HUNTER, and the House leadership for moving this bipartisan bill so quickly.

This legislation provides more funding for caregivers at military hospitals along with training and oversight to guarantee that America's wounded troops will also receive committed quality care.

When we marked this bill in the Committee on Armed Services, I added an amendment which places a 1-year moratorium on all unannounced public-private competitions for work performed at medical facilities. It also requires a report from DOD on each competition still underway to allow Congress to understand the actual cost savings, and the effects of contracting on the quality of work and the workforce personnel before allowing the contracting to go forward.

Like many of my colleagues, I am a frequent visitor not only to Walter Reed, but to Bethesda as well. In the aftermath of the investigative series about the substandard services and housing at Walter Reed, it turns out that the mismanagement of the health care of our troops had much to do with a flawed contracting process.

This bill imposes a 1-year moratorium on future A–76 competitions at the Department of Defense for work at medical facilities. The problems we discovered with the contract at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are only the tip of the iceberg. At the moment Walter Reed should have been ramping up to care for the increased number of wounded warriors, they were single-sourcing a maintenance contract and watching some of their best talent walk out the door as they were caring for a large and growing number of patients.

In a September 2006 memo, the garrison commander admitted that he had difficulties in retaining and hiring skilled personnel.

This came about for several reasons: DOD wanted to contract out the maintenance work; the proposed firings of former workers; and, of course, BRAC.

We need to step back and review whether contracting is the right way to find cost savings and efficiencies for military medical facilities. And we must make certain that we have not sacrificed service or performance of the health care mission for our wounded fighters.

I urge my colleagues to pass this bill to reform the administrative process and restore the confidence in the integrity and efficiency of the disability evaluation system and begin a better transition of servicemembers to the Department of Veterans' Affairs programs.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) 4 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from San Diego for yielding me this time.

I rise in support of this legislation and want to highlight two key components of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act that have significant relevance to some of my own constituents who are currently recovering at Walter Reed Mologne House.

Section 101 of the bill concerns improving the medical and dental care for servicemembers assigned to hospitals in outpatient status. Under this section, medical care case managers will have the training and resources to enable them to work closely with servicemembers in managing patient care and ensuring that patients fully understand his or her status and has a realistic expectation of the process ahead.

One of my constituents has been at Walter Reed for close to 10 months now after being evacuated from Iraq. During this time, he has had challenges in knowing his status in the disability determination process. He has been told that he had anywhere from 30 to 60 days left, although Walter Reed is working hard to get him home sooner. He is eager to get back home to his family and employer. His employer is holding his job for him. It is difficult for him to plan accordingly, however, because without being fully informed of his status in the system, it makes his future uncertain.

This bill would ensure that going forward, this individual would have up-to-date information on his status so that he is no longer kept in the dark about when he can expect to go home.

Section 101 of the bill also includes the establishment of the service-member advocate who will assist the patient in ensuring quality of life issues are taken care of, assisting in resolving problems related to financial or administrative matters, and overall ensure the patient and the family members are informed of benefits and program issues.

□ 1415

Both of my constituents who are currently at Walter Reed could have benefited greatly from the servicemember advocate. They have both encountered various administrative problems that have since been resolved with the assistance of their chain of command. However, I believe these problems would have been avoided in the first place had they been in contact with an advocate mandated to assist in these types of issues.

During discussions with these two soldiers and Walter Reed officials, the pattern that I have seen is that the actual medical care these wounded warriors receive is actually quite outstanding. The problems have really occurred in the red tape and bureaucracy that surrounds the administrative requirements and disability process. It should not take 3 or 4 months to begin receiving combat-related injury rehabilitation pay, for example. Servicemembers should receive accurate information in a timely manner when they inquire about their recovery plan or about specific benefits for which they might be eligible.

It is difficult at best for care managers to provide the necessary attention to a patient when they are handling caseloads beyond their capability. This bill goes a long way towards addressing this problem by limiting the number of cases for managers to oversee.

This bill and any other actions that this Congress can do to improve this system to ensure servicemembers receive the attention they deserve merits our full support; and I, therefore, urge everyone to support this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, may I inquire as to the time remaining on each side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) has 11½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 5½ minutes remaining.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. SKELTON. Parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized to state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. SKELTON. As soon as the gentleman from California and I finish our allotted time, is it not correct that the Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman and ranking member will assume leadership on this bill?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A separate period of general debate is allocated to that committee.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The sad situation of Walter Reed hospital regarding the outpatients has alarmed all of us, whether we be in Congress or not, and this bill has some excellent provisions. It is truly a bipartisan effort. I thank Mr. HUNTER and Dr. SNYDER, our chairman of our Subcommittee on Personnel, JOHN MCHUGH from New York. All have done superb work on this bill.

It makes some improvements to the medical and dental care for members in an outpatient status.

It establishes a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities.

It requires Members of Congress to be notified of combat-wounded servicemembers who have been hospitalized.

It creates an independent medical advocate for members undergoing a medical evaluation board.

It improves the training and reduces the workload for Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers.

It standardizes the training program and curriculum for the Department of Defense Disability Evaluation System.

It enhances the training for health care professionals.

It would improve the transition for servicemembers between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It provides a $50 million fund to support programs and activities related to medical treatment and care.

It would create an Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors.

It requires an annual report of the state of military medical facilities.

It requires an evaluation and report on the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Evaluation Systems.

It requires a study of the support services available for families of recovering servicemembers.

And at the behest of Mr. ORTIZ, it places a 1-year moratorium on A–76 studies at any military medical facility.

It is clear, Mr. Chairman, that the continued and persistent problems that were highlighted at the Walter Reed Hospital require closer inspection and may demand a significant and comprehensive overhaul of the process.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield as much time as he might consume to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), who has done an excellent job on this bill.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I thank Congressman HUNTER. I appreciate your service here in Congress, and I appreciate you being the parent of a veteran who has served in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, a bipartisan bill authored by Chairman IKE SKELTON.

Our men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces deserve the best medical care we can provide. As a 31-year veteran of the South Carolina Army National Guard, with four sons currently serving in the military, I was greatly concerned when learning of the inadequate living conditions our Nation's wounded veterans have been made to endure at Walter Reed Medical Center.

My eldest son served for a year in Iraq and came under enemy fire twice. Had he been injured, I would have expected him to receive top-notch health care which should be provided to every soldier.

While Walter Reed is renowned as a world-class facility, recent management neglected to provide adequate care. We have the best military medicine in world history, saving more lives than ever before and providing for the maximum recovery for patients.

I know firsthand from Major David Rozelle of the successes at Walter Reed Army Hospital for our amputees, where dedicated staff members are so caringly effective helping our troops recover. In fact, Major Rozelle wrote an excellent book, ''Back in Action,'' the inspiring true story of the first amputee to return to active command in Iraq.

I am pleased Congress is coming together to improve the paperwork complications and ensure our military medical system remains the best there is. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill and provide America's brave, injured warriors the care they so deserve.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would yield the balance of my time to any other Members that would like to speak on the majority side, and if there are not, Mr. Chairman, give the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee the option of us simply yielding back our time or if he would like to have some of our time, giving that to him.

Mr. SKELTON. On our time, I have no more speakers, and I would judge that any further speakers would be on the time of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of the Armed Services time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. For what purpose does the gentleman from California rise?

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, as the chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I rise in strong support of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act; and I yield to myself what time I might consume.

I want to thank Congressman SKELTON and Congressman HUNTER. This is a great bill. As a Nation and as a Congress, we were faced with a test, a real challenge, whether we can respond to the conditions of our Nation and of our veterans and our active duty troops. The revelations of what happened at Walter Reed presented us that challenge, gave us that test, and I say with confidence that this Congress is meeting that test.

This is step two in meeting that test. Step one was to make sure we had sufficient resources in the budget of this Nation to meet the needs not only of our existing veterans who have more and more need, whether they are from World War II or Vietnam or the first Persian Gulf war or the great influx of veterans that we are going to have from Iraq and Afghanistan. We already have over 700,000 returning troops who are now veterans, and we are going to get hundreds of thousands more.

In the so-called continuing resolution that was passed by this Congress a few weeks ago, the Veterans Administration was the only agency that got a significant increase from last year's budget; and this Congress added $3.6 billion to veterans in that one continuing resolution.

The supplemental for war that passed this House last week, led by Speaker PELOSI, Chairman SKELTON, Chairman OBEY, and Chairman EDWARDS, we said that the supplemental for war has to also have a supplemental for the warrior—for the health care of our returning veterans. Both in the Defense Department and the VA, we put in almost $3.5 billion; and in the budget resolution that we will be considering today and voting on tomorrow, the Democrats have put in $6.6 billion above the 2007 levels. That, in 90 days, is over $13.5 billion added to last year's budget for the care of our veterans.

George Washington said it very clearly, that the morale of our active duty troops is dependent on the sense of how they are going to be treated when they come home.

The first step of infusion of money, the second step of the Wounded Warrior Assistance bill, says that we are going to meet the challenge, that we understand that the costs of caring for our veterans is part of the cost of war, and that no matter what we think about the war in Iraq, we are united in this Congress and in this Nation that every returning young man and woman gets all the care and love and respect and honor that this Nation can deliver. That is what this bill says, that we are all committed to making sure that the care of these veterans is first in our consciousness.

Both the Defense health care system and the VA system is stretched to its limits. We have underfunded it over the years. We are asking from very dedicated professionals in the VA system to do more and more with less and less resources.

The strain is evident wherever you look. The strain is evident at Walter Reed. The strain is evident when a young Marine shows up at a VA hospital in Minnesota and says, I think I have PTSD and I am having thoughts of suicide, and he was told that you are 28th on the waiting list, come back in a few weeks or a few months, and he went home and he committed suicide. The strain on our system is shown by events like that, and we are committed to making sure that they do not continue.

So we have to live up to our responsibilities, both for the returning Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans and to those who have served our Nation going back to World War II.

In many instances, the problems are exacerbated because of jurisdictional and procedure roadblocks between the Defense and the Veterans Administration. So we have to remove those roadblocks; and, as chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I have worked closely with other members of our committee who will speak today, with Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER of the Committee on Armed Services, to make sure we are working off the same page.

This legislation takes important steps in making the servicemember's transition from the Department of Defense to the VA a seamless transition. We have been using that word for a long time, but we still have great cracks in that system. It is not seamless, but this bill would mandate the Department of Defense to provide disabled servicemembers who are being separated or returned from the Armed Forces with a written transition plan, a road map pointing the way to programs and benefits offered to them as veterans.

It would institute a formal process for transmitting reports and other information to the Veterans Administration from the active duty situation.

It would require both the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration to establish a joint separation and evaluation physical.

□ 1430

Physicals now are done by two different agencies and with two different standards and with two different bureaucracies. It is sometimes a hellish situation for returning active duty troops. We have to have a fully interoperable medical information system so that two agencies can speak to one another, so that the veteran coming home will have on his record in the VA all the things that occurred to him when he was on active duty in the military.

If we are going to make the handoff in the continuum of care successful, if we are going to make sure there is a seamless transition, if we want to make sure that we don't fumble information that puts at risk the returning servicemembers, we have to take these steps. These steps have are not newly invented. They were first expressed in earlier reports, the President's Task Force, for example, to Improve Health care for our Nation's Veterans, talked about this transition. I hope we are providing both departments with the resources and the tools they need to get that transition right.

Mr. Chairman, our concern is for the health of our fighting men and women when they come home that they get that health care taken care of, both in the Defense Department hospitals and in the VA system. Let's work seamlessly. I urge support for H.R. 1538.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

I rise in favor of this bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. For over 15 years, whether it was on the House Armed Services Committee or chairman of the personnel responsible for the military health delivery system or now at the VA, issues on seamless transition have been around. It appears that we can only measure success incrementally. For that, it is also unfortunate, because we deal with bureaucracies with both of these very large Departments and their subagencies.

Mr. SKELTON had some challenges in front of him because his leadership rushed him to get this bill to the floor. He also then convinced Chairman FILNER to waive the jurisdiction of the VA Committee so that this bill could get here.

I want to thank Chairman FILNER for complementing the amendment that I had offered in the Armed Services Committee, and I also want to thank Chairman SKELTON. I want to thank Duncan Hunter. I want to thank Dr. VIC SNYDER and JOHN MCHUGH for working with me on the amendment that was offered at the Armed Services Committee that profoundly enhances the seamless transition.

In its original form, the bill required a year-long pilot position on transition. Pilot programs can be useful in exploring new ground. But when it comes to seamless transition, and especially during a war, this is not new ground, and we need to proceed.

Back in 1982, is when Congress directed VA and DOD to work collaboratively together on health care. That was 25 years ago. I believe this collaboration is still being stymied by bureaucrats protecting their respective rice bowls. My amendment replaced the pilot project with system changes. It required a written transition plan for wounded servicemembers.

The bill would require an interoperable electronic exchange of critical medical information between the Departments and the use of the electronic DD Form 214, which DOD would provide to the VA. That allows VA real-time access to veterans' medical history.

There are countless examples of veterans seeking care at a VA facility, only to discover that their paper and military health records are not available. The lack of prior DOD health services is especially critical for badly wounded warriors returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The ability to transmit data between DOD and VA will speed the recovery of these warriors by avoiding duplication of unnecessary treatment or, more importantly, failing to provide lifesaving procedures.

Electronic exchange of critical medical information might also prevent bureaucratic intransigence on the part of VA. For example, I recently heard from a former Indiana National Guard member who was wounded in the neck and shoulder by an improvised explosive device. When he eventually filed a disability claim, the VA said the documentation in his military medical record was not sufficient to prove the injury was service connected.

Hopefully this rapid exchange of information will put an end to such bureaucratic injustices. Further, H.R. 1538, as amended, would require the use of a uniformed separation and evaluation of physical by DOD and the VA, but the VA could use more disability ratings. This cornerstone seamless transition eliminates the frustrating requirement for a servicemember to have two physicals, one at the military and one at VA.

I associate my comments with Mr. FILNER. Too often, recently discharged veterans filing VA disability claims must undergo a VA physical because their discharge physical failed to address issues affecting the veteran's claim for benefits.

Corporal Murphy, for example, in a hypothetical, gets his discharge physical from Fort Hood, Texas, on June 3. A week later he files a disability claim to the VA for his bad knee. Meanwhile, 90 days later, his physical records at the National Records Center in St. Louis arrive. During that period of time, his medical records are not available to process his claim, and our corporal has already lost 3 months. This is foolishness.

The result is not only costly but also delays the processing of a veteran's claim and possibly entry into life-changing programs, like the VA's vocational rehab program. Finally, the amended wounded warriors bill would collocate VA benefit teams at military treatment facilities and other agreed upon sites to facilitate the transition of recovering servicemembers. Why should a wounded warrior undergo a lengthy period of convalescence and be required to seek out VA benefits counselors at VA offices that are usually far away from the MTF where the veteran is living.

Instead of making Airman Mendez, for example, go to the VA, it is time to mandate the VA to be present where the airman is undergoing treatment. This will give him timely access to VA counselors and benefits that process needed benefits.

These teams would provide preseparation counseling for recovering servicemembers, and records would be transmitted electronically from DOD to VA before the date of separation or retirement, thereby reducing delays, which now bedevil the system. Access to these teams would enable most veterans to leave the treatment facility with their VA benefit in hand.

My own personal experience over the past decade validates the importance of these reforms.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent to use 10 minutes that were yielded back from the Armed Services time to be split evenly between the majority and minority.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Committee of the Whole cannot change the scheme of control for general debate.

Mr. FILNER. A point of order, Mr. Chairman, I had understood that they had yielded the time that they had left back to the Veterans' Affairs Committee for use if we needed it, and we do need it. I think Mr. BUYER needs some time, and I do also.

If I could yield to Mr. HUNTER for that.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, if we could ask unanimous consent that on Armed Services we could reclaim our time that we yielded back, we would like to yield it to the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California could ask unanimous consent to reclaim his time, but could not yield control to another manager.

Mr. HUNTER. I would ask unanimous consent to reclaim my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there an objection? Hearing none, so ordered.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. I appreciate that.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. BUYER. Was the time yielded to the Veterans' Affairs Committee 10 minutes or 20 minutes?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Ten minutes per side.

Mr. BUYER. So we have 20 minutes. So as of right now we are still operating under the Veterans Affairs Committee time, not Mr. HUNTER's time, would that be correct?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Mr. HUNTER has 3½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 2½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Indiana has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. BUYER. So to the Chair it doesn't matter, with regard to the utilization. All right. Thank you.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, we yield 3 minutes to the command sergeant major from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act of 2007.

First of all, I would like to thank the chairman from California. I would like to thank the ranking member from Indiana for his leadership and colleagues on both sides of the aisle for introducing this timely bill that responds to the needs of our soldiers. Their leadership on both sides of the aisle is a testament to the 110th Congress' commitment to caring for this Nation's active duty forces and veterans. The commitment to veterans can show no political ideology.

As a 24-year veteran of the Army National Guard of this Nation, and the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in this Congress, I know that taking care of active duty forces and our veterans is one of the most important issues facing this country and this Congress. I, as all Americans, was outraged and saddened when we read reports of substandard care and unacceptable conditions at Walter Reed. Our Armed Forces and their families sacrificed too much to receive poor active duty care and difficulties in transitioning to veterans care. H.R. 1538 will fix these problems.

It will be done in a bipartisan manner and this piece of legislation has the possibility of starting to heal some of the divisions amongst this Nation, as we all agree, on the care of our veterans as a priority. This bill will provide more staff to work with outpatient servicemembers. It will improve training for medical staff. It will

find ways to better transition from active duty to veterans care, and it will create an oversight board for wounded warriors that they will properly investigate the quality of care our veterans are receiving in a timely manner.

I urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, regardless of political ideology, to support this bill. We must give our brave servicemen and -women the care they deserve, while serving our Nation. We must continue to address the need for their ongoing care once they hang up their uniforms, that they have performed their service to this Nation with honor, pride and dignity.

Now this Congress must do its job, provide the tools, the funding and the oversight necessary to ensure quality care for every soldier that serves this Nation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, may I confirm the fact that when I yielded back a few moments ago, that I have 8 minutes remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Missouri had 8½ minutes remaining. However, one manager may not yield control of time to another manager.

Mr. SKELTON. I understand. I do ask that I be able to reclaim the time, the 8½ minutes.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection? Without objection it is so ordered. To clarify, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) now has 8½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) has 3½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is out of time, and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS).

Ms. GIFFORDS. Mr. Chairman, we have before us today an excellent piece of legislation, the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act, that I believe will help untangle problems in military health care such as the ones that we recently saw at the Walter Reed Hospital. This legislation came before us in the Armed Services Committee recently, and I am convinced that the provisions will dramatically improve the treatment for our brave, wounded servicemembers and their families by the Department of Defense health care system.

One issue of particular importance that was addressed in this bill is the mental health services and screenings that we will provide to our troops. I want to thank Members for supporting my amendment, that directly impacts mental health treatment for our men and women in uniform.

Ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are creating a brand-new generation of veterans, many have seen extreme stresses of war. According to the VA, post-traumatic stress syndrome rates are starting to appear about 20 percent. You look back during the Vietnam War era, those rates were close to 30 percent. So, I believe we are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg.

PTSD is an issue that will face thousands of American combat veterans for years into the future. This legislation will help ensure that these soldiers don't face this problem alone.

I am proud to vote with my colleagues from the Armed Services Committee to report this bill favorably to the House. I will be very pleased to vote for this outstanding piece of legislation when it appears here on the House floor. I want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER, for bringing this piece of legislation forward, and, of course, the staff of the Armed Services Committee for their dedication to this issue.

In closing, not every American signs up to put on the uniform. Not every American puts their life on the line for our principles and our values. But for those Americans that do, we owe it to be there with them when they need help.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for yielding time to me. I express my appreciation to the Chair for recognizing me.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today in support of this legislation, but I think this legislation could be significantly improved. I come today to advocate on behalf of veterans who live in rural America, as well as servicemen and -women on leave from active duty.

I failed to have the opportunity to attempt to amend this bill in the Veterans' Affairs Committee because of the waiver of its jurisdiction. I appeared yesterday before the Rules Committee seeking the opportunity to offer an amendment today on the House floor. That authorization for offering that amendment was not allowed, was denied.

□ 1445

And I am concerned that as we look at veterans and our military retirees, as we look at those actively engaged in the military today and we try to address the needs that they face, there is a large area of veterans, there is a significant veteran and military active military population that are disadvantaged. That is those who live in rural America.

I represent a district, a congressional district the size of the State of Illinois, and yet, although we have more hospitals, private community hospitals than any congressional district in the country, there is no VA Hospital. There is no military hospital. And so you can be distanced from that access to care by hours, by 3, 4, 5 and 6 hours.

Legislation that I have introduced would try diligently to address that issue, to allow access to the private sector health care providers. If you live further away from a VA Hospital or an outpatient clinic, that you can take your VA card, you can take your active military benefits and see your hometown physician.

Examples from my own constituents. A veteran in the community of Hoxie was told he couldn't see the local optometrist, despite the fact that the optometrist is down the street. But, no, he has to go to Wichita, 4 hours away, in order to have his glasses adjusted.

Another veteran, who is incapable of travel, was told that, no, the local physician can't refill his prescription. He has got to travel to the VA Hospital in order to do that.

This legislation would correct that by allowing, in those circumstances where distances are so great, that the VA can enter into contracts with the private sector to meet the needs of those veterans and that a physician, a private physician, could fill a prescription.

So, Mr. Chairman, I regret that, although this bill brings to the forefront and addresses many issues that our servicemen and women face, it fails in, at least in my belief, to address the needs that we see from rural veterans.

I was pleased that Mr. BARROW, the gentleman from Georgia, who I have joined with in past efforts to try to increase the reimbursement rate for mileage for rural veterans as they travel to a VA Hospital, his amendment was made in order. And I am pleased and will support that, would love to have the opportunity again to speak in favor of it.

But these are the kind of issues that we cannot let this Congress ignore. We are not a one-size-solution fits all. And those of us who have concerns for those who choose to live in rural America, we believe we can make this legislation better. So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time to speak in favor.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

Mr. FILNER. Mr. SKELTON and Mr. HUNTER, your committee, working with the Veterans Committee, has produced an outstanding piece of legislation; and I hope that that cooperation, I know that cooperation will continue, because we have other things to do.

The gentleman from Kansas expressed what is on the minds of many of our colleagues, and that is to make sure that our rural veterans are served, also. We will do that; and I know my ranking member, Mr. BUYER, joins me in that commitment.

As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, we have a test as a Nation. Are we going to make sure that every returning young man and woman from Iraq and Afghanistan has the best facilities, the best health care, the best treatment, the best love, the best commitment that we, as a Nation, can offer? And are we going to make sure that their predecessors, from World War II to the present, are also given that same care and commitment?

There are 200,000 homeless vets on the street tonight, mainly from the Vietnam era. We cannot allow that to continue.

We have a 600,000 claim backlog for disability payments. We cannot allow that to continue.

We have facilities that need to be repaired and rebuilt. We have needs for Agent Orange veterans and atomic veterans. We, as a Nation, must take up this challenge and must meet it.

We had significant new resources provided in the budget matters that have come before us in the last 60 days. This Wounded Warrior Assistance Act is the next step as we try to make sure that those who faced danger and life-threatening situations in Iraq do not have to face a bureaucracy which threatens to kill them off. This is a step to change that. We are going to have a seamless transition, and I thank the Chair for his commitment.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In the 1990s, Mr. SKELTON, you can remember well that we drew down the size of the military. We cut all the divisions and the wings and the squadrons; and then we had to figure out how we could maintain all those military hospitals and the medical treatment facilities, all the forts and bases. And we found out, with limited dollars, we really couldn't do all of that to the level which we wanted, so we created three centers of excellence, at Brooke and at Bethesda and at Walter Reed.

And I do not want this debate today, for anyone who is working at Walter Reed, to feel as though this Congress is not proud of the level of respect and the enduring appreciation that we have of the doctors and the nurses and the technicians that provide the health care at Walter Reed, Bethesda, Brooke or any other medical facility, from the battlefield throughout the entire process.

We are very disappointed that we had single soldiers that were wounded, convalescing, being held in an unhealthy building. But for that to then be interpreted as though bad care was being delivered at Walter Reed is not a factual basis.

It is a curious thing, though, that one of our centers of excellence ended up on the BRAC; and that is an issue, Mr. SKELTON, we are going to have to address.

I do want to also extend though a compliment to Mr. HUNTER and Mr. SKELTON, because you saw this one coming in 2004, because in the 2005 Defense bill you then created the Disability Claims Commission. It has been extended now and will not report until September of this year. So I want to thank you for seeing this one coming; and I wish that we could have gotten to those results much, much sooner.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I just want to mention that in 2005, and working with Mr. BUYER and working with Mr. SKELTON and other Members of the Armed Services Committee and Veterans' Affairs Committee, we put together this Disability Claims Commission with an eye toward trying to make the evaluations that are arrived at in DOD and the VA system consistent. In this bill that we are passing today, we are directing DOD and VA to go back and, as this commission meets and continues to work, to focus on their work product and what they are doing; and, hopefully, we can have some value added as a result of their focusing on the commission that currently is in place.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUNTER. I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BUYER. What this means, Mr. Chairman, is we still have work to do. And I didn't want to be overcritical about the pressure the leadership gave you to get this bill to the floor. I think you and I both would have liked to have done something more comprehensive. But with this Disability Claims Commission sitting out there, and they have given 2 years now of labor, we are going to have to come back at this one in earnest. And I am most hopeful that you will continue your work with the Veterans' Affairs Committee as we work in this endeavor of a seamless transition.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, if I have got a couple of minutes left, if any member of the Veterans' Affairs or the Armed Services Committee would like to use the rest of the time, I would be happy to yield to them.

Appearing that there isn't anybody, I yield back at this point, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I wish to mention Mr. BUYER and I have had this discussion about there is more work to do. We will do it. We will do our very best I know in the Armed Services Committee as well as in the Veterans' Affairs Committee; and I appreciate your mentioning the fact that this is a step, although in my opinion, it is a major step. We still have a great deal of work to do regarding the wounded warriors.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned the positive work done by DUNCAN HUNTER, by VIC SNYDER, by JOHN MCHUGH, by BOB FILNER, by STEVE BUYER, but I would be remiss if I didn't brag on and thank the wonderful staff that we have on our Armed Services Committee and also in the Veterans' Affairs Committee. They have worked long and very efficiently, and the product before us is a work of art by the members of our staff, and I certainly thank them for their tremendous professionalism.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

Throughout our history, we have asked generations of Americans to protect the freedoms we enjoy. As the newest generation of brave Americans steps forward to answer the call at great personal sacrifice, we must honor them with a renewed commitment to providing the medical care they deserve.

The brave men and women of our armed forces proudly serve this great nation by putting their lives on the line in missions that take them far away from their homes and families. We must never forget the debt owed to our soldiers when they return home from the battlefield.

This bill addresses some of the patient care problems at Walter Reed Medical Center recently brought to light in news accounts and Congressional hearings. It requires every wounded service-member to be assigned a case manager to review and supervise the soldier's medical care.

The problems experienced at Building 18 should not overshadow the otherwise exceptional care the doctors and nurses at hospitals and clinics throughout the country provide our men and women in uniform. This will requires us to provide those doctors and nurses with reinforcements to ensure none of our wounded soldiers are left behind again.

Our obligations to our wounded soldiers do not stop when they become wounded veterans. By streamlining the transition process from soldier to veteran, our local VA clinics and hospitals can ensure our veterans continue to receive exceptional medical care without bureaucratic interruption.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, takes necessary strides toward ensuring that all of our wounded soldiers receive the best possible medical care. I am proud to support this bill and will continue to stand up for our service members in the future.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1538, Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting in favor of it.

I support H.R. 1538 because I believe our men and women in uniform who have served our country deserve the best possible care when they return home. The conditions that were recently uncovered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were disturbing and unacceptable. In addition, thousands of soldiers are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and we need to further improve the conditions of the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration health care systems in order to meet this need. As the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, and as a veteran myself, I have always made the needs of our soldiers and veteran and their families high on the priority list.

H.R. 1538 is a bipartisan bill that improves the lives of our veterans in several ways. This legislation will improve the access to quality medical care for service members who are outpatients at military health care facilities, restore efficiency to the disability evaluation system, and streamline the transition of wounded service members from the Armed Forces to the Veterans Administration. By establishing a system or patient advocates and independent medical advocates, and improving the system of case managers for wounded service members, H.R. 1538 makes sure that veterans are getting the care that they need. In addition, this bill improves training and reduces caseloads for these managers so that service members and their families can get more individual attention. Finally, H.R. 1538 establishes a national toll-free hotline so that service members and families have a mechanism for

reporting problems and deficiencies in their treatment.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 1538, Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007, and improving the quality of care for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

I voted against this war 5 years ago and believe we should never have gone into Iraq.

But as a veteran, I stand by our troops and am committed to supporting all of our troops—before, during and after service.

There are 32,000 wounded soldiers from the Iraq conflict alone and they need medical attention and assistance to get back on their feet.

However, our veteran healthcare system that is in shambles. Internal reports, the media, and Congressional hearings are revealing the same kind of problems across the board—chronic under-funding, neglect, improper conduct, and lack of accountability.

There will be hundreds of thousands of veterans who will need care over the next decade as they return from Iraq, Afghanistan and other fronts in the Global War on Terror.

And our military and veterans healthcare systems are not prepared. Unless we act now, the situation will fall apart.

The recent tragedies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center underscore the urgency of the issue and the hardships faced by our military families across the country.

Mr. Chairman, I recently visited our returning veterans at Walter Reed Medical Center and as I spoke to these men and women and listened to their stories, I was almost brought to tears.

They told me of doctors who weren't giving them the attention they needed. Others shared how they had to prove to the medical staff that they were really injured.

One wounded soldier and his father in particular really struck a chord in me. This young man is from my home state of California and he told me how his father completely shut down his business, packed his things, and flew 3,000 miles across the country to make sure his son got the proper support and attention.

As if this brave soldier's sacrifice wasn't enough. Now his family has to put their lives on hold to ensure that he recuperates fully from his battle wounds.

After my visit, I took a long time to think and reflect on what I had seen. And really at the end of the day, all could think was that it just wasn't fair.

This young man is one of the lucky ones. His family could afford to make that sacrifice.

But what about the countless military families who are barely making ends meet and simply can't afford to quit their jobs?

Mr. Chairman, the bottom line is the American people shouldn't have to do these things.

We're fighting all over the world to spread democracy and peace at the expense of these young men and women and their families.

And yet what kind of example are we setting for the rest of world when we don't honor those who bear the scars of battle?

Veterans and military healthcare is one of the most neglected programs in this country.

It is immoral, it is embarrassing, and it is just plain irresponsible.

We have a duty as a government to take care of each and every soldier who has been injured in the line of duty in defense of our great Nation.

H.R. 1538 takes a step in the right direction by comprehensively examining the cracks in military healthcare and fixing them.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act reduces the caseloads of our medical case managers so service members and their families get help when they need it.

It also creates a system of patient advocates for outpatient wounded service members so that they get the right treatment.

The bill also establishes a toll-free hot line so that service members and their families have someplace to turn to when they see neglect or improper conduct.

We're also going to look at the training all of our military healthcare employees get from top to bottom. We're going to make sure the people who are treating and working with our troops and veterans have the right tools and information to give them the best service possible.

The bill also creates an Army Wounded Warrior Battalion pilot program to track active-duty soldiers in ''outpatient status'' who still require medical care.

H.R. 1538 will also look at overhauling the disability evaluation process. Average disability claims take a year and appeals are taking about two years to process. We have an enormous backlog of claims within the VA system and we need to fix the problem immediately.

Finally, we're going to help our troops better transition from military healthcare systems to veterans' healthcare systems. The transition will include an official handoff between the two systems with the electronic transfer of all medical and personnel records before the member leaves active duty so that there are no gaps in coverage or service.

The American people have already paid too high a price for this war. 3,233 soldiers have died in Iraq, including 10 men from my own district.

We need this bill to ensure that we honor the sacrifices of all our troops and their families by at the very least providing quality, timely healthcare.

That's why I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1538.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, it's unfortunate that we even have to consider this bill. Proper care of our military wounded should be the top priority of our military medical establishment. As we know now, it was not a sufficient priority for the Secretary of the Army and several senior Army officers. Those individuals may be gone, but the problems they allowed to take root and fester must be eliminated. This bill is a good first step in that direction.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act seeks to correct the training, personnel, and oversight deficiencies that the Walter Reed Medical Center scandal revealed earlier this year. I want to be clear: the overwhelming majority of the men and women who work at Walter Reed are first-rate medical professionals who care deeply about the troops in their care. However, we now know that for several years, Walter Reed—and almost certainly other DoD and VA medical facilities across the country—had been strained beyond its capacity.

Ill-advised decisions—including the outsourcing of administrative and maintenance personnel—clearly contributed to the appalling living conditions experienced by some soldiers at Walter Reed. I applaud the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON, for including a 1-year moratorium on such outsourcing pending a review of the entire practice. I have long argued that it is a myth that the private sector can invariably do a better job than the Federal government with these kinds of services. We've already seen in Iraq how corporate contracting giants like Haliburton can make hundreds of millions of dollars while providing substandard services to troops in the field. I'm grateful that my colleagues on multiple committees are looking at these issues, and I'm sure the reforms in this bill will only be the beginning of our effort to re-evaluate the use of contractors within the Federal government.

This bill also mandates a review of the status of all DoD medical facilities, which is another key step in providing the oversight needed to ensure that any other hospitals or clinics with deficient care are identified and remedial measures taken immediately. I am confident that my friend from California, Mr. FILNER, the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, is already taking the same steps. Indeed, another positive aspect of this bill is that it seeks to streamline and rationalize the transition process for veterans when they move from the DoD medical system to the VA for treatment and followup care.

This bill requires that DoD ensure the veteran's medical and related records are transferred in a timely fashion, and that veterans get pre-separation counseling so that they understand the benefits they are entitled to and how to best interact with the VA medical system. Establishing a clear-cut mechanism for ensuring that veterans transition seamlessly from one system to another will require both a congressionally mandated structure, but perhaps even more important, continuous congressional engagement. That is why I am especially pleased that this bill mandates that members of Congress be informed any time one of their wounded military constituents enters the military medical system.

Current law requires DoD to notify members of the death of military constituents. These notifications, while bearing tragic news, allow us to provide the maximum possible assistance to families who have lost a servicemember. By now ensuring that we are informed when military constituents are wounded, we will be able to work proactively with the families to ensure the needs of the wounded are met in a more timely manner, and to provide us with a roadmap for oversight actions early on.

Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Missouri, Mr. SKELTON, for the work that he and his committee colleagues have done to bring this measure before us today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill will provide long overdue assistance to our wounded veterans.

I know every Member of this body has read some of the horrific stories that have come out of veterans' facilities such as Walter Reed, which is just a few miles from where we stand. Stories such as mold in the rooms, holes in the ceiling, and insect and rodent infestation became commonplace at what should be our preeminent Army healthcare facility.

We owe our war veterans the very best care that our country can provide, but these problems at Walter Reed are not isolated incidents. They are indicative of an Administration that has failed soldiers and veterans at every level. The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act will help remedy the problems that have become known over the past few years.

This bill will take a number of steps to improve the quality of life for injured veterans. For starters, it will reduce the workload of case managers handling the medical care of vets. Currently, these case managers are overwhelmed with thousands of soldiers who have come back wounded from Iraq.

In addition to reducing their caseload, this bill will also require that case managers are properly trained to handle the supervision of the soldiers in their care. These injured soldiers need an advocate to help them navigate the paperwork and potential obstacles they face.

H.R. 1538 will also direct the Department of Defense to create a toll free hotline for soldiers to report problems with their medical care, or with the facilities in general. Had there been a hotline already, we might have learned about the Walter Reed problems long ago.

As has been proven with all the problems that we have seen in military medical facilities recently, there has been a general lack of oversight involving the military hospitals. This bill will fix that problem by creating an oversight board. This board would be composed of members of the House, Senate, as well as appointees of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. This oversight is critical to prevent these terrible conditions from reoccurring.

Mr. Chairman, throughout our Nation's history, our freedom has been preserved by members of the Armed Forces. Countless soldiers throughout our history have given their lives or their health to preserve our way of life. Ensuring that they get the very best healthcare is the very least we can provide them with. How can we possibly ask a soldier to sacrifice a limb to preserve our safety, and then put them in a dirty, moldy room when they return? This is unconscionable behavior, and passing R.R. 1538 is a good way to address some of these problems.

I strongly support the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, and I urge my colleagues to offer their support as well.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the ''Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.'' The news of the horrible living conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center raised our national consciousness regarding the need to do more—much more—for wounded and injured service members and to upgrade the administrative systems that support them. While the committee made improvements in the past, there is more that can and should be done. When our heroic young men and women willingly sacrifice life or limb on the battlefield, the nation has a moral obligation to ensure that they are treated with respect and dignity.

According to Webster's, dignity is ''the quality or condition of being esteemed, honored or worthy.'' Madam Speaker, we can never do enough to honor our wounded veterans. Studies have shown that 30 percent of troops deployed to Iraq suffer from depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). More than 1500 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have sustained devastating brain injuries from improvised explosive devices (IEDs). However when wounded troops return home the treatment they receive is more befitting a second class citizen than a hero. This is a shame and a great stain on our nation.

How these problems could be overlooked or neglected by this Administration is unfathomable. The very leaders that these brave young men and women rely upon let them down. The message that incidents like Walter Reed Medical Center sends to our troops is that we do not care enough. But that is not the message we wish to send. The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, H.R. 1538, will go a long away toward correcting this misapprehension.

On February 26, 2007, I had the opportunity to visit some of our wounded heroes at the Michael E. DeBakery VA Hospital in Houston, Texas. I promised those brave young men and women that ''those of us in Washington would do everything we could to ensure that the health and well being of our veterans was a top priority.''

Likewise, I was overwhelmed with sadness and anger after my visit to Walter Reed Hospital in May of last year. Walter Reed points to more general problems in the DOD and VA health care systems. The exposure of Walter Reed has led to the reviews of other DOD and VA health care facilities—reviews that have found that Walter Reed is not an isolated case. The Washington Post reported recently that a recent review by the Department of Veterans Affairs of 1,400 hospitals and other veterans' care facilities ''turned up more than 1,000 reports of substandard conditions—from leaky roofs and peeling paint to bug and bat infestations—as well as a smaller number of potential threats to patient safety, such as suicide risks in psychiatric wards.''

H.R. 1538 addresses the failures of an administration that was eager to go to war, yet took for granted its most valuable resource our troops. This bipartisan bill responds to the problems brought to light at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other military health care facilities by including provisions to: (1) improve the access to quality medical care for wounded service members who are outpatients at military health care facilities; (2) begin the process of restoring the integrity and efficiency of the disability evaluation system and taking other steps to cut bureaucratic red tape; and (3) improve the transition of wounded service members from the Armed Forces to the VA system.

Specifically, H.R. 1538 provides improvements to medical and dental care for members of the armed forces assigned to hospitals in an outpatient status. It establishes a toll-free hot line for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities and expedited response to reports of deficiencies.

The legislation requires congressional notification of hospitalization of combat wounded service members and creates an independent medical advocate for service members appearing before medical evaluation boards. The bill also provides for training and reduced caseloads for physical evaluation board liaison officers. It also requires the establishment of a standardized training program and curriculum for department of defense disability evaluation system.

Our wounded warriors will also benefit from improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates on particular conditions of recovering service members provided for in the bill, as they will from establishment of a medical support fund for support of members of the armed forces returning to military service or civilian life.

I am especially pleased that the bill requires the establishment of an oversight board for wounded warriors and the submission of an annual report to Congress evaluating military medical facilities and the DOD and VA disability evaluation systems. Finally, the bill imposes a moratorium on the outsourcing of mission critical health care jobs at Walter Reed Medical Center and other medical facilities.

Mr. Chairman, every morning when I arrive at my office, I am reminded of how fortunate I am. Outside of my office there is a posterboard with the names and faces of those heroes from Houston, Texas who have lost their lives wearing the uniform of our country. I think to myself how lucky I am to live in a nation where so many brave young men and women volunteer to the ultimate sacrifice so that their countrymen can enjoy the blessings of liberty. Now is the time to remind our heroes they have not been forgotten. More importantly, America has not forgotten them. As I have said in the past: ''Just as our soldiers do not leave their comrades on the battle fields, America can not leave the injured to languish on their own with no comfort and support from a grateful nation. The problems in Iraq and Afghanistan are taking us away from focusing on the care for our wounded Veterans and their family and that must stop.''

Substandard living conditions, inattentive care, and bureaucratic red tape are completely unacceptable. We must correct everything that is wrong with the current system of health care for wounded veterans and make it right. Most important, a situation like Walter Reed must never be allowed to happen again. One reason we are the greatest nation in the world is because of the brave young men and women fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan. They deserve honor, they deserve dignity, and they deserve our absolute best. Let them know you care. Let us honor our wounded warriors. Let us pass H.R. 1538.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which would be the first step in addressing poor patient care and problems experienced in navigating the military's medical bureaucracy.

In February 2007, the media uncovered the grotesque living conditions, inattentive care, and bureaucratic hassles experienced by some of the wounded soldiers staying at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. However, the situation at Walter Reed is not an isolated case, but a systemic problem that plagues the veteran health care system. A recent review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of 1,400 hospitals and other veterans' care facilities found ''more than 1,000 reports of substandard conditions—from leaky roofs and peeling paint to bug and bat infestations.'' In Connecticut, approximately 2,500 veterans are waiting for benefits. The military health care system is understaffed and drowning in a backlog of cases and unable to provide our veterans with the benefits and resources they sacrificed a great deal to earn.

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act would restore the process of integrity and efficiency

in our nation's military health care system. This bill would create a new system of case managers, advocates, and counselors for wounded service members returning from combat overseas to help them get the care they need and to help navigate the military's health care bureaucracy. The legislation would also require the establishment of a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in facilities supporting medical patients and family members. Under H.R. 1538, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the VA would conduct a joint study on the disability evaluation systems operated by both departments in order to improve the consistency between these two systems.

I applaud the leadership of Chairman SKELTON and the honorable members of the House Armed Services Committee who crafted the legislation before us today. Congress has an obligation to be a watchdog for our veterans and ensure they receive appropriate care. These men and women have sacrificed their lives for our freedoms and they deserve the best health care and resources our country can provide.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my strong support for the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act. While I am pleased that we are taking swift action on this important bill, I am woefully disappointed by the circumstances that brought us here.

It seems that the efforts to meet the medical treatment needs of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were as poorly planned and executed by this administration as the military operations.

There is no doubt that our troops are getting outstanding military care from the time that they are wounded until they leave inpatient care.

But it is the aftermath where we are failing our Nation's heroes. Things such as:

Obtaining treatment for conditions like PTSD that develop after a soldier has left the combat zone.

Coordination of medical care for soldiers who have left the military hospital but still require rehabilitation and outpatient treatment.

A smooth transition from the military to the Veterans Administration health care system.

The bill under consideration today makes critical and desperately needed improvements in our current military and veterans health care systems.

It responds to the need to better coordinate care so that our wounded warriors never fall through the cracks, by improving the training of case managers and limiting their workload to a manageable number of soldiers; by creating a new patient advocate program so that each injured service member has a government employee fighting for his or her needs; and by establishing a toll-free number where families can report deficiencies and receive quick action to resolve problems.

The bill would also address the transition of troops from military medical treatment to civilian life and the Veterans Administration health care system by beginning to reform the disability evaluation system; by appointing independent medical professionals to support wounded service members during the medical evaluation board process; and by formalizing the process of transitioning military patients and all of their medical records to the Veterans Administration.

The bill would also improve training for the medical professionals and counselors who work with service members and their families and would create new Wounded Warrior Battalions at all Army medical centers modeled on the Marine Corps's highly successful program.

The bill also includes a provision that I sponsored during consideration of the measure by the House Armed Services Committee. My amendment, as included in bill, addresses the challenges facing the Army in providing needed facilities by directing the Secretary of the Army to report back to Congress on infrastructure requirements for supporting wounded warriors at Army medical facilities and installations.

My amendment arose from what I observed at Fort Bliss, in my district of El Paso, Texas, and my visits to other military medical facilities throughout the world.

At Fort Bliss, our garrison commander, our medical facility commander, and our military hold unit commander have worked tirelessly to meet the most immediate needs of the over 250 soldiers on medical hold there, but it is clear that we need a more concentrated effort by the Army to identify and fund needed upgrades to facilities for wounded warriors.

From adequate numbers of family housing units and barracks rooms that meet accessability standards to sidewalks, our Army posts simply don't have the facilities they need to meet the needs of soldiers recovering from disabling injuries.

But the area where I have seen the greatest need is accessability to military hospitals. At Fort Bliss and Army posts around the Nation, just getting in the door is a struggle for wounded soldiers as they face Army Medical Centers where the support facilities simply aren't adequate.

At Fort Bliss soldiers seeking treatment at the hospital often find the parking lot completely full, and when they do find a parking space, it's likely in a remote spot which may or may not be served by a volunteer-staffed shuttle. And to make matters worse, more often than not, those shuttles are broken.

There is no doubt that our Nation wants to do all that we can to help those who are injured in their military service, and there are thousands of dedicated professionals working hard to give them the medical care that they deserve. But it is clear that we have to do more. We need to provide all the resources that are required, and we must remove legislative and administrative barriers that are keeping our wounded warriors from getting the best possible care. Our military forces make invaluable sacrifices in defense of our Nation, and we owe them nothing less.

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my support for the Wounded Warriors Assistance Act. As a member of the Armed Services Committee and a veteran myself, this is an issue that I find of the utmost importance.

Following the public exposure of the problems at Walter Reed Hospital, it has become clear that changes are needed in order to provide our soldiers the level of healthcare they deserve.

With a growing number of servicemembers in need of medical attention, it is imperative that there is an adequate amount of staff at our military hospitals. By enforcing a minimum ratio of caretakers to servicemembers, this legislation will ensure that every soldier gets the personal attention that they need. In addition, service members will be assigned medical care case managers that would help them and their families deal with the administrative process involved with their care. This type of personalized care and assistance will help our wounded warriors with their recovery, and make an easier transition back into the field or civilian life.

Having spent years on the House Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have seen first hand the need for improved lines of communication between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under the current system, there is no designated process by which military personnel become veterans; or for their medical and service records to move from one department to the other. This measure will streamline the transfer process by transmitting members' dismissal forms electronically to the correct agencies.

Another great concern of mine comes from the inconsistencies between the two departments' disability ratings systems. When given a different rating of disability as a member of the military than as a civilian, disparities are bound to arise in what benefits can be expected. Creating a single, standardized rating system will help ensure that both our military personnel and our veterans receive the best care that our government can provide.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their hard work on this legislation; and I strongly urge an ''aye'' vote for this important bill.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1538—the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.

At the beginning of this month, when I was in Iraq, I spoke with soldiers who had just learned that their tours had been extended.

They said to me, ''Please, can you help us get us out of here.'' These troop extensions are really having an impact on the morale of our military men and women.

To add to that, soldiers see what has been going on at Walter Reed and they wonder whether they will be able to get the care they need.

The President has sent our troops into harm's way, extended their tours to support his surge, and has allowed these unforgivable lapses in the care of our wounded warriors under his watch.

When our men and women sign up for military service, recruiters assure them that the military will take care of them. The failure at Walter Reed calls the commitment given by our military recruiters into question.

The bill before us today will go a long way in making sure that the troops get the care they need and deserve.

I would like to thank my chairman, Mr. SKELTON, and all my colleagues for their work in developing this important legislation.

I supported this legislation when it came before the Armed Services Committee on which I sit, and I am proud to support it today.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak in support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will help correct the unconscionable deficiencies exposed by the Washington Post at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. H.R. 1538 will improve the delivery of medical services to our wounded warriors who have done all that we have

asked of them. We now must honor our commitment to them to care for them when they are injured.

H.R. 1538 provides the basic services we would have expected for our wounded service personnel such as readily available case managers and advocates to assist incapacitated patients receive appropriate care, improved training of health care professionals and better monitoring of out-patients to ease the transition to the VA medical care system. The Walter Reed experience showed that we cannot rely on the current system to provide these basic services and care.

I am particularly pleased with the attention we will finally pay to the mental injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, that can be as crippling and incapacitating to our soldiers and veterans as physical injuries.

When I spoke on House Concurrent Resolution 63 opposing the President's surge, I mentioned CPT Lisa Blackman, a clinical psychologist, who cared for soldiers who suffered devastating emotional and mental harm inflicted while serving in Iraq and chronicled their troubling and heart-breaking torment in the book, Operation Homecoming.

These brave troops, who suffered severe physical as well as mental injuries, shamefully did not receive proper treatment after faithfully serving their country. H.R. 1538 properly recognizes the sacrifices our troops have made and provides the long overdue care and medical services our troops should properly expect and deserve from their government.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.

The revamped case management system, the toll-free complaint hotline, and record transfer process from the Defense Department to the Veterans Administration will provide timely and serious response to the medical needs of our veterans.

Through repeated tours of duty, our troops have been made more vulnerable to injury and serious health complications. The U.S. Veteran healthcare system desperately needs the improvements that this bill provides in order to accommodate the soldiers who will be returning from these multiple tours.

In the 35th Congressional District, I have assigned staff specifically to the task of fielding the many calls of veterans who need assistance. Out of all veteran calls that we receive in our District office, the number one reason is to help them get a live response and to navigate through the bureaucracy to obtain the medical benefits that they earned serving our country. Therefore, in Los Angeles, we have living proof that our system is broken and in need of the fixes that this legislation offers.

Congress has appropriated more than enough funds to give our veterans decent medical care when they come home.

I commend Mr. SKELTON for his leadership on these issues and support H.R. 1538. I ask my colleagues to pass this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered read.

The text of the amendment in the nature of a substitute is as follows:

H.R. 1538

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Definitions.
TITLE I—WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE
Sec. 101. Improvements to medical and dental care for members of the Armed Forces assigned to hospitals in an outpatient status.
Sec. 102. Establishment of toll-free hot line for reporting deficiencies in medical-related support facilities and expedited response to reports of deficiencies.
Sec. 103. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded service members.
Sec. 104. Independent medical advocate for members before medical evaluation boards.
Sec. 105. Training and workload for physical evaluation board liaison officers.
Sec. 106. Standardized training program and curriculum for Department of Defense disability evaluation system.
Sec. 107. Improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates on particular conditions of recovering service members.
Sec. 108. Pilot program to establish an Army Wounded Warrior Battalion at an appropriate active duty base.
Sec. 109. Criteria for removal of member from temporary disability retired list.
Sec. 110. Improved transition of members of the Armed Forces to Department of Veterans Affairs upon retirement or separation.
Sec. 111. Establishment of Medical Support Fund for support of members of the Armed Forces returning to military service or civilian life.
Sec. 112. Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors.
TITLE II—STUDIES AND REPORTS
Sec. 201. Annual report on military medical facilities.
Sec. 202. Access of recovering service members to adequate outpatient residential facilities.
Sec. 203. Evaluation and report on Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs disability evaluation systems.
Sec. 204. Study and report on support services for families of recovering service members.
Sec. 205. Report on traumatic brain injury classifications.
Sec. 206. Evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer Program.
TITLE III—GENERAL PROVISIONS
Sec. 301. Moratorium on conversion to contractor performance of Department of Defense functions at military medical facilities.
Sec. 302. Prohibition on transfer of resources from medical care.
Sec. 303. Increase in physicians at hospitals of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES.—The term ''congressional defense committees'' has the meaning given that term in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

(2) DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM.—The term ''disability evaluation system'' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(3) FAMILY MEMBER.—The term ''family member'', with respect to a recovering service member, has the meaning given that term in section 411h(b) of title 37, United States Code.

(4) RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBER.—The term ''recovering service member'' means a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or a Reserve, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, or is otherwise in medical hold or holdover status, for an injury, illness, or disease incurred or aggravated while on active duty in the Armed Forces.

TITLE I—WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE

SEC. 101. IMPROVEMENTS TO MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES ASSIGNED TO HOSPITALS IN AN OUTPATIENT STATUS.

(a) MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE OF MEMBERS ASSIGNED TO HOSPITALS IN AN OUTPATIENT STATUS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1074k the following new section:

''§ 1074l. Management of medical and dental care: members assigned to receive care in an outpatient status

''(a) MEDICAL CARE CASE MANAGERS.—(1) A member in an outpatient status at a military medical treatment facility shall be assigned a medical care case manager.

''(2)(A) The duties of the medical care case manager shall include the following with respect to the member (or the member's immediate family if the member is incapable of making judgments about personal medical care):

''(i) To assist in understanding the member's medical status.

''(ii) To assist in receiving prescribed medical care.

''(iii) To conduct a review, at least once a week, of the member's medical status.

''(B) The weekly medical status review described in subparagraph (A)(iii) shall be conducted in person with the member. If such a review is not practicable, the medical care case manager shall provide a written statement to the case manager's supervisor indicating why an in-person medical status review was not possible.

''(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), each medical care case manager shall be assigned to manage not more than 17 members in an outpatient status.

''(B) The Secretary concerned may waive for up to 120 days the requirement of subparagraph (A) if required due to unforeseen circumstances.

''(4)(A) The medical care case manager office at each facility shall be headed by a commissioned officer of appropriate rank and appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code.

''(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A), an appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code includes membership in the Army Medical Corps, Army Medical Service Corps, Army Nurse Corps, Navy Medical Corps, Navy Medical Service Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, or Air Force Medical Service.

''(5) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standard training program and curriculum for

medical care case managers. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a medical care case manager.

''(b) SERVICE MEMBER ADVOCATE.—(1) A member in an outpatient status shall be assigned a service member advocate.

''(2) The duties of the service member advocate shall include—

''(A) communicating with the member and with the member's family or other individuals designated by the member;

''(B) assisting with oversight of the member's welfare and quality of life; and

''(C) assisting the member in resolving problems involving financial, administrative, personnel, transitional, and other matters.

''(3)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), each service member advocate shall be assigned to not more than 30 members in an outpatient status.

''(B) The Secretary concerned may waive for up to 120 days the requirement of subparagraph (A) if required due to unforeseen circumstances.

''(4) The service member advocate office at each facility shall be headed by a commissioned officer of appropriate rank and appropriate military occupation specialty, designator, or specialty code in order to handle service-specific personnel and financial issues.

''(5) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standard training program and curriculum for service member advocates. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a service member advocate.

''(6) A service member advocate shall continue to perform the duties described in paragraph (2) with respect to a member until the member is returned to duty or separated or retired from the armed forces.

''(c) SEMIANNUAL SURVEYS BY SECRETARIES CONCERNED.—The Secretary concerned shall conduct a semiannual survey of members in an outpatient status at installations under the Secretary's supervision. The survey shall include, at a minimum, the members' assessment of the quality of medical care at the facility, the timeliness of medical care at the facility, the adequacy of living facilities and other quality of life programs, the adequacy of case management support, and the fairness and timeliness of the physical disability evaluation system. The survey shall be conducted in coordination with installation medical commanders and authorities, and shall be coordinated with such commanders and authorities before submission to the Secretary.

''(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'member in an outpatient status' means a member of the armed forces assigned to a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient or to a unit established for the purpose of providing command and control of members receiving medical care as outpatients.

''(2) The term 'disability evaluation system' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1074l. Management of medical and dental care: members assigned to receive care in an outpatient status.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 1074l of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 102. ESTABLISHMENT OF TOLL-FREE HOT LINE FOR REPORTING DEFICIENCIES IN MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITIES AND EXPEDITED RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF DEFICIENCIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Chapter 80 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1567. Identification and investigation of deficiencies in adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities

''(a) TOLL-FREE HOT LINE.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish and maintain a toll-free telephone number (commonly referred to as a 'hot line') at which personnel are accessible at all times to collect, maintain, and update information regarding possible deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities. The Secretary shall widely disseminate information regarding the existence and availability of the toll-free telephone number to members of the armed forces and their dependents.

''(b) INVESTIGATION AND RESPONSE PLAN.—Not later than 96 hours after a report of deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, or state of repair of a medical-related support facility is received by way of the toll-free telephone number or other source, the Secretary of Defense shall ensure that—

''(1) the deficiencies referred to in the report are investigated; and

''(2) if substantiated, a plan of action for remediation of the deficiencies is developed and implemented.

''(c) RELOCATION.—If the Secretary of Defense determines, on the basis of the investigation conducted in response to a report of deficiencies at a medical-related support facility, that conditions at the facility violate health and safety standards, the Secretary shall relocate the occupants of the facility while the violations are corrected.

''(d) MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITY DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'medical-related support facility' means any facility of the Department of Defense that provides support to any of the following:

''(1) Members of the armed forces admitted for treatment to a military medical treatment facility.

''(2) Members of the armed forces assigned to a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient.

''(3) Family members accompanying any member described in paragraph (1) or (2) as a nonmedical attendant.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1567. Identification and investigation of deficiencies in adequacy, quality, and state of repair of medical-related support facilities.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The toll-free telephone number required to be established by section 1567 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be fully operational not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 103. NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS OF HOSPITALIZATION OF COMBAT WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.—Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is further amended by inserting after section 1074l the following new section:

''§ 1074m. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded members

''(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary concerned shall provide notification of the hospitalization of any member of the armed forces evacuated from a theater of combat to the appropriate Members of Congress.

''(b) APPROPRIATE MEMBERS.—In this section, the term 'appropriate Members of Congress', with respect to the member of the armed forces about whom notification is being made, means the Senators and the Members of the House of Representatives representing the States or districts, respectively, that include the member's home of record and, if different, the residence of the next of kin, or a different location as provided by the member.

''(c) CONSENT OF MEMBER REQUIRED.—The notification under subsection (a) may be provided only with the consent of the member of the armed forces about whom notification is to be made. In the case of a member who is unable to provide consent, information and consent may be provided by next of kin.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1074m. Notification to Congress of hospitalization of combat wounded members.''.

SEC. 104. INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS BEFORE MEDICAL EVALUATION BOARDS.

(a) ASSIGNMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE.—Section 1222 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS BEFORE MEDICAL EVALUATION BOARDS.—(1) The Secretary of each military department shall ensure, in the case of any member of the armed forces being considered by a medical evaluation board under that Secretary's supervision, that the member has access to a physician or other appropriate health care professional who is independent of the medical evaluation board.

''(2) The physician or other health care professional assigned to a member shall—

''(A) serve as an advocate for the best interests of the member; and

''(B) provide the member with advice and counsel regarding the medical condition of the member and the findings and recommendations of the medical evaluation board.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 1222. Physical evaluation boards and medical evaluation boards''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 61 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1222 and inserting the following new item:

''1222. Physical evaluation boards and medical evaluation boards.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (d) of section 1222 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to medical evaluation boards convened after the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 105. TRAINING AND WORKLOAD FOR PHYSICAL EVALUATION BOARD LIAISON OFFICERS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS.—Section 1222(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''establishing—'' and all that follows through ''a requirement'' and inserting ''establishing a requirement''; and

(B) by striking ''that Secretary; and'' and all that follows through the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting ''that Secretary. A physical evaluation board liaison officer may not be assigned more than 20 members at any one time, except that the Secretary concerned may authorize the assignment of additional members, for not more than 120 days, if required due to unforeseen circumstances.'';

(2) in paragraph (2), by inserting after ''(2)'' the following new sentences: ''The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standardized training program and curriculum for physical evaluation board liaison officers. Successful completion of the training program is required before a person may assume the duties of a physical evaluation board liaison officer.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'physical evaluation board liaison officer' includes any person designated as, or assigned the duties of, an assistant to a physical evaluation board liaison officer.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The limitation on the maximum number of members of the Armed Forces who may be assigned to a physical evaluation board liaison officer shall take effect 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. The training program and curriculum for physical evaluation board liaison officers shall be implemented not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. STANDARDIZED TRAINING PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM.

(a) TRAINING PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Section 1216 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) The Secretary of Defense shall establish a standardized training program and curriculum for persons described in paragraph (2) who are involved in the disability evaluation system. The training under the program shall be provided as soon as practicable in coordination with other training associated with the responsibilities of the person.

''(2) Persons covered by paragraph (1) include—

''(A) Commanders.

''(B) Enlisted members who perform supervisory functions.

''(C) Health care professionals.

''(D) Others persons with administrative, professional, or technical responsibilities in the disability evaluation system.

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'disability evaluation system' means the Department of Defense system or process for evaluating the nature of and extent of disabilities affecting members of the armed forces (other than the Coast Guard) and comprised of medical evaluation boards, physical evaluation boards, counseling of members, and final disposition by appropriate personnel authorities, as operated by the Secretaries of the military departments, and, in the case of the Coast Guard, a similar system or process operated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The standardized training program and curriculum required by subsection (e) of section 1216 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be established not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 107. IMPROVED TRAINING FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, MEDICAL CARE CASE MANAGERS, AND SERVICE MEMBER ADVOCATES ON PARTICULAR CONDITIONS OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report setting forth recommendations for the modification of the training provided to health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates who provide care for or assistance to recovering service members. The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members, and make prompt notification to the appropriate health care professionals.

(b) ANNUAL REVIEW OF TRAINING.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter throughout the global war on terror, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the following:

(1) The progress made in providing the training recommended under subsection (a).

(2) The quality of training provided to health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates, and the number of such professionals, managers, and advocates trained.

(c) TRACKING SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall develop a system to track the number of notifications made by medical care case managers and service member advocates to health care professionals regarding early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide in recovering service members assigned to the managers and advocates.

SEC. 108. PILOT PROGRAM TO ESTABLISH AN ARMY WOUNDED WARRIOR BATTALION AT AN APPROPRIATE ACTIVE DUTY BASE.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Army shall establish a pilot program, at an appropriate active duty base with a major medical facility, based on the Wounded Warrior Regiment program of the Marine Corps. The pilot program shall be known as the Army Wounded Warrior Battalion.

(2) PURPOSE.—Under the pilot program, the Battalion shall track and assist members of the Armed Forces in an outpatient status who are still in need of medical treatment through—

(A) the course of their treatment;

(B) medical and physical evaluation boards;

(C) transition back to their parent units; and

(D) medical retirement and subsequent transition into the Department of Veterans Affairs medical system.

(3) ORGANIZATION.—The commanding officer of the Battalion shall be selected by the Army Chief of Staff and shall be a post-command, at O–5 or O–5 select, with combat experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The chain-of-command shall be filled by previously wounded junior officers and noncommissioned officers when available and appropriate.

(4) FACILITIES.—The base selected for the pilot program shall provide adequate physical infrastructure to house the Army Wounded Warrior Battalion. Any funds necessary for construction or renovation of existing facilities shall be allocated from the Department of Defense Medical Support Fund established under this Act.

(5) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of the Army shall consult with appropriate Marine Corps counterparts to ensure coordination of best practices and lessons learned.

(6) PERIOD OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be in effect for a period of one year.

(b) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the end of the one-year period for the pilot project, the Secretary of the Army shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) an evaluation of the results of the pilot project;

(2) an assessment of the Army's ability to establish Wounded Warrior Battalions at other major Army bases.

(3) recommendations regarding—

(A) the adaptability of the Wounded Warrior Battalion concept for the Army's larger wounded population; and

(B) closer coordination and sharing of resources with counterpart programs of the Marine Corps.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The pilot program required by this section shall be implemented not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 109. CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL OF MEMBER FROM TEMPORARY DISABILITY RETIRED LIST.

(a) CRITERIA.—Section 1210(e) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''of a permanent nature and stable and is'' after ''physical disability is''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to any case received for consideration by a physical evaluation board after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 110. IMPROVED TRANSITION OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS UPON RETIREMENT OR SEPARATION.

(a) TRANSITION OF MEMBERS SEPARATED OR RETIRED.—

(1) TRANSITION PROCESS.—Chapter 58 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1142 the following new section:

''§ 1142a. Process for transition of members to health care and physical disability systems of Department of Veterans Affairs

''(a) TRANSITION PLAN.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that each member of the armed forces who is being separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title receives a written transition plan that—

''(A) specifies the recommended schedule and milestones for the transition of the member from military service; and

''(B) provides for a coordinated transition of the member from the Department of Defense disability system to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(2) A member being separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title shall receive the transition plan before the separation or retirement date of the member.

''(3) The transition plan for a member under this subsection shall include information and guidance designed to assist the member in understanding and meeting the schedule and milestones for the member's transition.

''(b) FORMAL TRANSITION PROCESS.—(1) The Secretary of Defense, in cooperation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall establish a formal process for the transmittal to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of the records and other information described in paragraph (2) as part of the separation or retirement of a member of the armed forces under chapter 61 of this title.

''(2) The records and other information to be transmitted under paragraph (1) with respect to a member shall include, at a minimum, the following:

''(A) The member's address and contact information.

''(B) The member's DD–214 discharge form, which shall be transmitted electronically.

''(C) A copy of the member's service record, including medical records and any results of a Physical Evaluation Board.

''(D) Whether the member is entitled to transitional health care, a conversion health policy, or other health benefits through the Department of Defense under section 1145 of this title.

''(E) Any requests by the member for assistance in enrolling in, or completed applications for enrollment in, the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care benefits for which the member may be eligible under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(F) Any requests by the member for assistance in applying for, or completed applications for, compensation and vocational rehabilitation benefits to which the member may be entitled under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, if the member is being medically separated or is being retired under chapter 61 of this title.

''(3) The transmittal of information under paragraph (1) may be subject to the consent of the member, as required by statute.

''(4) With the consent of the member, the member's address and contact information shall also be submitted to the department or agency for veterans affairs of the State in which the member intends to reside after the separation or retirement of the member.

''(c) MEETING.—(1) The formal process required by subsection (b) for the transmittal of

records and other information with respect to a member shall include a meeting between representatives of the Secretary concerned and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which shall take place at a location designated by the Secretaries. The member shall be informed of the meeting at least 30 days in advance of the meeting, except that the member may waive the notice requirement in order to accelerate transmission of the member's records and other information to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(2) A member shall be given an opportunity to submit a written statement for consideration by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(d) TIME FOR TRANSMITTAL OF RECORDS.—The Secretary concerned shall provide for the transmittal to the Department of Veterans Affairs of records and other information with respect to a member at the earliest practicable date. In no case should the transmittal occur later than the date of the separation or retirement of the member.

''(e) ARMED FORCES.—In this section, the term 'armed forces' means the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1142 the following new item:

''1142a. Process for transition of members to health care and physical disability systems of Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(b) UNIFORM SEPARATION AND EVALUATION PHYSICAL.—Section 1145 of such title is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection:

''(d) UNIFORM SEPARATION AND EVALUATION PHYSICAL.—The joint separation and evaluation physical, as described in DD–2808 and DD–2697, shall be used by the Secretary of Defense in connection with the medical separation or retirement of all members of the armed forces, including members separated or retired under chapter 61 of this title. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall adopt the same separation and evaluation physical for use by the Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(c) INTEROPERABILITY OF MEDICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND BI-DIRECTIONAL ACCESS.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and implement a single medical information system for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of ensuring the complete interoperability and bi-directional, real-time exchange of critical medical information.

(d) CO-LOCATION OF VA BENEFIT TEAMS.—

(1) CO-LOCATION.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly determine the optimal locations for the deployment of Department of Veterans Affairs benefits team to support recovering service members assigned to military medical treatment facilities, medical-related support facilities, and community-based health care organizations.

(2) MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''medical-related support facility'' has the meaning given that term in subsection (b) of section 490 of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 201(a) of this Act.

(e) REPEAL OF SUPERSEDED CHAPTER 61 MEDICAL RECORD TRANSMITTAL REQUIREMENT.—

(1) REPEAL.—Section 1142 of such title is amended by striking subsection (c).

(2) SECTION HEADING.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 1142. Preseparation counseling''.

(3) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 58 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1142 and inserting the following new item:

''1142. Preseparation counseling.''.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATES.—Section 1142a of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsection (d) of section 1145 of such title, as added by subsection (b), shall apply with respect to members of the Armed Forces who are separated or retired from the Armed Forces on or after the first day of the eighth month beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act. The requirements of subsections (c) and (d), and the amendments made by subsection (e), shall take effect on the first day of such eighth month.

SEC. 111. ESTABLISHMENT OF MEDICAL SUPPORT FUND FOR SUPPORT OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES RETURNING TO MILITARY SERVICE OR CIVILIAN LIFE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—There is established on the books of the Treasury a fund to be known as the Department of Defense Medical Support Fund (hereinafter in this section referred to as the ''Fund''), which shall be administered by the Secretary of the Treasury.

(b) PURPOSES.—The Fund shall be used—

(1) to support programs and activities relating to the medical treatment, care, rehabilitation, recovery, and support of wounded and injured members of the Armed Forces and their return to military service or transition to civilian society; and

(2) to support programs and facilities intended to support the families of wounded and injured members of the Armed Forces.

(c) ASSETS OF FUND.—There shall be deposited into the Fund any amount appropriated to the Fund, which shall constitute the assets of the Fund.

(d) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—

(1) AUTHORITY TO TRANSFER.—The Secretary of Defense may transfer amounts in the Fund to appropriations accounts for military personnel; operation and maintenance; procurement; research, development, test, and evaluation; military construction; and the Defense Health Program. Amounts so transferred shall be merged with and available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the appropriation account to which transferred.

(2) ADDITION TO OTHER AUTHORITY.—The transfer authority provided in paragraph (1) is in addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense. Upon a determination that all or part of the amounts transferred from the Fund are not necessary for the purposes for which transferred, such amounts may be transferred back to the Fund.

(3) NOTIFICATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall, not fewer than five days before making a transfer from the Fund, notify the congressional defense committees in writing of the details of the transfer.

(e) AUTHORIZATION.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to the Medical Support Fund, from an emergency supplemental appropriation for fiscal year 2007 or 2008, $50,000,000, to remain available through September 30, 2008.

SEC. 112. OVERSIGHT BOARD FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established a board to be known as the Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors (in this section referred to as the ''Oversight Board'').

(b) COMPOSITION.—The Oversight Board shall be composed of 12 members, of whom—

(1) two shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

(2) two shall be appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

(3) two shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(4) two shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives;

(5) two shall be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(6) two shall be appointed by the Secretary of Defense.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS.—All members of the Oversight Board shall have sufficient knowledge of, or experience with, the military healthcare system, the disability evaluation system, or the experience of a recovering service member or family member of a recovering service member.

(d) APPOINTMENT.—

(1) TERM.—Each member of the Oversight Board shall be appointed for a term of three years. A member may be reappointed for one or more additional terms.

(2) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Oversight Board shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(e) DUTIES.—

(1) ADVICE AND CONSULTATION.—The Oversight Board shall provide advice and consultation to the Secretary of Defense and the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives regarding—

(A) the process for streamlining the disability evaluation systems of the military departments;

(B) the process for correcting and improving the ratios of case managers and service member advocates to recovering service members;

(C) the need to revise Department of Defense policies to improve the experience of recovering service members while under Department of Defense care;

(D) the need to revise Department of Defense policies to improve counseling, outreach, and general services provided to family members of recovering service members;

(E) the need to revise Department of Defense policies regarding the provision of quality lodging to recovering service members; and

(F) such other matters relating to the evaluation and care of recovering service members, including evaluation under disability evaluation systems, as the Board considers appropriate.

(2) VISITS TO MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITIES.—In carrying out its duties, each member of the Oversight Board shall visit not less than three military medical treatment facilities each year, and the Board shall conduct each year one meeting of all the members of the Board at a military medical treatment facility.

(f) STAFF.—The Secretary shall make available the services of at least two officials or employees of the Department of Defense to provide support and assistance to members of the Oversight Board.

(g) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Members of the Oversight Board shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of service for the Oversight Board.

(h) ANNUAL REPORTS.—The Oversight Board shall submit to the Secretary of Defense and the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives each year a report on its activities during the preceding year, including any findings and recommendations of the Oversight Board as a result of such activities.

TITLE II—STUDIES AND REPORTS

SEC. 201. ANNUAL REPORT ON MILITARY MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) REPORT REQUIREMENT.—Chapter 23 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 490. Annual report on military medical facilities

''(a) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than the date on which the President submits the budget for a fiscal year to Congress pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the adequacy, suitability, and quality of medical facilities and medical-related support facilities at each military installation within the Department of Defense.

''(b) RESPONSE TO HOT-LINE INFORMATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall include in each report information regarding—

''(1) any deficiencies in the adequacy, quality, or state of repair of medical-related support facilities raised as a result of information received during the period covered by the report through the toll-free hot line maintained pursuant to section 1567 of this title; and

''(2) the investigations conducted and plans of action prepared under such section to respond to such deficiencies.

''(c) MEDICAL-RELATED SUPPORT FACILITY.—In this section, the term 'medical-related support facility' is any facility of the Department of Defense that provides support to any of the following:

''(1) Members of the armed forces admitted for treatment to military medical treatment facilities.

''(2) Members of the armed forces assigned to military medical treatment facilities as an outpatient.

''(3) Family members accompanying any member described in paragraph (1) or (2) as a nonmedical attendant.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''490. Annual report on military medical facilities.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The first report under section 490 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall be submitted not later than the date of submission of the budget for fiscal year 2009.

SEC. 202. ACCESS OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS TO ADEQUATE OUTPATIENT RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES.

(a) REQUIRED INSPECTIONS OF FACILITIES.—All quarters of the United States and housing facilities under the jurisdiction of the Armed Forces that are occupied by recovering service members shall be inspected on a semiannual basis for the first two years after the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter by the inspectors general of the regional medical commands.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORTS.—The inspector general for each regional medical command shall—

(1) submit a report on each inspection of a facility conducted under subsection (a) to the post commander at such facility, the commanding officer of the hospital affiliated with such facility, the surgeon general of the military department that operates such hospital, the Secretary of the military department concerned, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Oversight Board for Wounded Warriors established pursuant to section 112, and the appropriate congressional committees; and

(2) post each such report on the Internet website of such regional medical command.

SEC. 203. EVALUATION AND REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEMS.

(a) EVALUATION.—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a joint evaluation of the disability evaluation systems used by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of—

(1) improving the consistency of the two disability evaluation systems; and

(2) evaluating the feasibility of, and potential options for, consolidating the two systems.

(b) RELATION TO VETERANS' DISABILITY BENEFITS COMMISSION.—In conducting the evaluation of the disability evaluation systems used by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consider the findings and recommendations of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission established pursuant to title XV of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108–136; 38 U.S.C. 1101 note).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the submission of the final report of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) the results of the evaluation; and

(2) the recommendations of the Secretaries for improving the consistency of the two disability evaluation systems and such other recommendations as the Secretaries consider appropriate.

SEC. 204. STUDY AND REPORT ON SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF RECOVERING SERVICE MEMBERS.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study of the provision of support services for families of recovering service members.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The study under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A determination of the types of support services that are currently provided by the Department of Defense to family members described in subsection (c), and the cost of providing such services.

(2) A determination of additional types of support services that would be feasible for the Department to provide to such family members, and the costs of providing such services, including the following types of services:

(A) The provision of medical care at military medical treatment facilities.

(B) The provision of job placement services offered by the Department of Defense to any family member caring for a recovering service member for more than 45 days during a one-year period.

(C) The provision of meals without charge at military medical treatment facilities.

(3) A survey of military medical treatment facilities to estimate the number of family members to whom the support services would be provided.

(4) A determination of any discrimination in employment that such family members experience, including denial of retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment by an employer on the basis of the person's absence from employment as described in subsection (c), and a determination, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, of the options available for such family members.

(c) COVERED FAMILY MEMBERS.—A family member described in this subsection is a family member of a recovering service member who is—

(1) on invitational orders while caring for the recovering service member;

(2) a non-medical attendee caring for the recovering service member; or

(3) receiving per diem payments from the Department of Defense while caring for the recovering service member.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the results of the study, with such findings and recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 205. REPORT ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY CLASSIFICATIONS.

(a) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives an interim report describing the changes undertaken within the Department of Defense to ensure that traumatic brain injury victims receive a proper medical designation concomitant with their injury as opposed to the current medical designation which assigns a generic ''organic psychiatric disorder'' classification.

(b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a final report concerning traumatic brain injury classifications and an explanation and justification of the Department's use of the international classification of disease (ICD) 9 designation, recommendations for transitioning to ICD 10 or 11, and the benefits the civilian community experiences from using ICD 10.

SEC. 206. EVALUATION OF THE POLYTRAUMA LIAISON OFFICER/NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER PROGRAM.

(a) EVALUATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct an evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program, which is the program operated by each of the military departments and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of—

(1) assisting in the seamless transition of members of the Armed Forces from the Department of Defense health care system to the Department of Veterans Affairs system; and

(2) expediting the flow of information and communication between military treatment facilities and the Veterans Affairs Polytrauma Centers.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The evaluation of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program shall include evaluating the following areas:

(1) The program's effectiveness in the following areas:

(A) Handling of military patient transfers.

(B) Ability to access military records in a timely manner.

(C) Collaboration with Polytrauma Center treatment teams.

(D) Collaboration with Veteran Service Organizations.

(E) Functioning as the Polytrauma Center's subject-matter expert on military issues.

(F) Supporting and assisting family members.

(G) Providing education, information, and referrals to members of the Armed Forces and their family members.

(H) Functioning as uniformed advocates for members of the Armed Forces and their family members.

(I) Inclusion in Polytrauma Center meetings.

(J) Completion of required administrative reporting.

(K) Ability to provide necessary administrative support to all members of the Armed Forces.

(2) Manpower requirements to effectively carry out all required functions of the Polytrauma Liaison Officer/Non-Commissioned Officer program given current and expected case loads.

(3) Expansion of the program to incorporate Navy and Marine Corps officers and senior enlisted personnel.

(c) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report containing—

(1) the results of the evaluation; and

(2) recommendations for any improvements in the program.

TITLE III—GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 301. MORATORIUM ON CONVERSION TO CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FUNCTIONS AT MILITARY MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The conduct of public-private competitions for the performance of Department of Defense functions, based on Office of Management and Budget Circular A–76, can lead to dramatic reductions in the workforce, undermining an agency's ability to perform its mission.

(2) The Army Garrison commander at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center has stated that the extended A–76 competition process contributed to the departure of highly skilled administrative and maintenance personnel, which led to the problems at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

(b) MORATORIUM.—During the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, no study or competition may be begun or announced pursuant to section 2461 of title 10, United States Code, or otherwise pursuant to

Office of Management and Budget Circular A–76 relating to the possible conversion to performance by a contractor of any Department of Defense function carried out at a military medical facility .

(c) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives a report on the public-private competitions being conducted for Department of Defense functions carried out at military medical facilities as of the date of the enactment of this Act by each military department and defense agency. Such report shall include—

(1) for each such competition—

(A) the cost of conducting the public-private competition;

(B) the number of military personnel and civilian employees of the Department of Defense affected;

(C) the estimated savings identified and the savings actually achieved;

(D) an evaluation whether the anticipated and budgeted savings can be achieved through a public-private competition; and

(E) the effect of converting the performance of the function to performance by a contractor on the quality of the performance of the function;

(2) a description of any public-private competition the Secretary would conduct if the moratorium under subsection (b) were not in effect; and

(3) an assessment of whether any method of business reform or reengineering other than a public-private competition could, if implemented in the future, achieve any anticipated or budgeted savings.

SEC. 302. PROHIBITION ON TRANSFER OF RESOURCES FROM MEDICAL CARE.

Neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Secretaries of the military departments may transfer funds or personnel from medical care functions to administrative functions within the Department of Defense in order to comply with the new administrative requirements imposed by this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

SEC. 303. INCREASE IN PHYSICIANS AT HOSPITALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase the number of resident physicians at hospitals of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. No amendment to the committee amendment is in order except those printed in House Report 110–78. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent of the amendment, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. BARROW

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Mr. BARROW:

Add at the end of the bill the following new section:

SEC. 304. VETERANS BENEFICIARY TRAVEL PROGRAM.

(a) ELIMINATION OF DEDUCTIBLE.—Subsection (c) of section 111 of title 38, United States Code, is repealed.

(b) DETERMINATION OF MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT RATE.—

(1) DETERMINATION.—Paragraph (1) of subsection (g) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(1) In determining the amount of allowances or reimbursement to be paid under this section, the Secretary shall use the mileage reimbursement rates for the use of privately owned vehicles by Government employees on official business, as prescribed by the Administrator of General Services under section 5707(b) of title 5, United States Code.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Subsection (g) of such section is further amended by striking paragraphs (3) and (4).

(c) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(i) Funds for payments made under this section shall be appropriated separately from other amounts appropriated for the Department.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this Act shall apply with respect to travel expenses incurred after the expiration of the 90-day period that begins on the date of the enactment of this Act.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARROW) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, this amendment will make good on a 50-year old promise that has been neglected in this country for 30 years now. For over 50 years, this government has promised veterans that they would be reimbursed for the full out-of-pocket costs they incur in traveling to and from medical care that they receive. For the first 20 years, this government kept that promise. Every time the civil service mileage rate went up, the veterans' reimbursement rate went up.

But for the last 30 years, that promise has not been kept. The mileage rate for veterans traveling to get their medical treatment hasn't gone up, hasn't changed one bit since 1977. The rate for vets is the same $0.11 per mile today that it was in 1977. In 1977, civil servants got $0.11 and vets got $0.11. But, today, civil servants get 48.5 cents for every mile they drive their car. But vets still get the same $0.11 they got back in 1977.

That is not all. Since then, Congress has tacked on a $6 deductible for vets that doesn't apply to civil servants. When you add it all up, you have got to travel over 50 miles to get the free medical care you have been promised before you will get one dime of reimbursement from the Federal Government. And if you have to travel as much as 500 miles, you get a lousy 48 bucks back in return.

The reason for this problem is simple. When Congress made this promise way back in the 1950s, it passed a law that authorized the VA to keep up with changes in the cost of travel, to keep up with inflation, but it didn't require the VA to do anything about it. And since 1977 nothing has been done about it.

My amendment will fix that by doing two things. First, it will eliminate the $6 deductible, round-trip deductible that applies to vets but not to civil servants; and, second, it will mandate that the mileage reimbursement rate for veterans traveling to and from medical care will go up every time the rate goes up for civil servants. There will be no more having to remember vets when they raise the reimbursement rate for civil servants, and there will be no more forgetting vets every time they are entitled to an increase in the reimbursement.

□ 1500

This legislation has the support of the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Legion, AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

This amendment is about making good on a promise we made to our veterans, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support.

On a personal level, I want to thank the chairmen of the committees of jurisdiction in this matter. I also want to thank the staffs of the committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affair and the staff of the Rules Committee.

And I want to thank Mr. MORAN for his kind remarks earlier today. He supported this measure in the last Congress, and he continues to support it today. And I appreciate his support very much.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARROW. I will be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I think this is an excellent amendment from our side. I want to thank the gentleman for offering it, and we have absolutely no objections to this amendment. We support it very strongly. Good work.

Mr. BARROW. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I will yield to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, the amendment before us is an excellent one. Those of us who live in the rural part of this country, as well pointed out by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), will certainly appreciate this. If you look at the statistics, a disproportionate number of people in uniform come from a small town in rural America, and your change in the reimbursement rate will be a great deal of help to those young men and women as well as those who retire in their traveling to and from their hometown to receive the medical care from the designated facilities. And I compliment you and certainly approve of this amendment.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise to control the 5 minutes reserved for the opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida will control the time in opposition.

There was no objection.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I support the amendment before us.

This measure would increase the reimbursement rate available through the veterans beneficiary travel program to the level currently enjoyed by Federal employees, including Members of Congress who travel. It would also eliminate the travel deductible, which imposes an additional burden on veterans.

I have been pushing this issue for quite some time now and am happy to see it reach the floor of the House of Representatives. In my district, which spans eight counties, many veterans have to travel long distances to access health care. Considering today's gas prices, one can understand the enormous expenses incurred by those in need of care. Worse yet, with many veterans living on fixed incomes, the current reimbursement rate can seriously harm their standard of living. I know I have been contacted by many veterans also telling me about the burden that the deductibility imposes on us. It astounds me that in providing this benefit our government holds veterans to a different standard than Federal employees.

I commend the gentleman for introducing this amendment, and as he knows, our two staffs have been working together to put in an individual bill.

I believe that America needs to listen up. It is time for us to fix this inequity and support passage of this important amendment.

Mr. BARROW. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARROW).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. SKELTON

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 2 offered by Mr. SKELTON:

At the end of section 1074l(a)(4)(B) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, strike ''or Air Force Medical Service.'' and insert ''Air Force Medical Service, or other corps comprised of health care professionals at the discretion of the Secretary of Defense.''.

In section 107(b), add at the end the following:

(3) The progress made in developing the tracking system under subsection (c) and the results of the system.

In section 107(c), strike ''The'' and insert ''Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the''

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is a simple one that makes technical changes in section 101 to clarify the qualification of military officers who may supervise medical care case managers and also in section 107 to require that the tracking system for reports to medical authorities regarding wounded warriors' symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or suicidal tendencies be developed not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SKELTON. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my friend on the great work he has done being the chief architect on this bill. And I have absolutely no objections to the gentleman's amendment. I think it is good and I support it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. KLINE OF MINNESOTA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. KLINE of Minnesota:

Insert the following after subsection (d) of section 111 (and redesignate subsection (e) as subsection (f)):

(e) WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that $10,000,000 for fiscal year 2007 is transferred from the Medical Support Fund to support programs, activities, and facilities associated with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment program, to be used as follows:

(1) $6,550,000 for Case Management and Patient Support.

(2) $1,200,000 for Wounded Warrior Interim Regimental Headquarters Building conversion.

(3) $1,300,000 for Case Management System Development.

(4) $95,000 for Support Equipment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, this amendment addresses the situation that we are facing on the ground overseas and at home. The United States Marine Corps is suffering a little over 30 percent of the combat casualties. My amendment makes sure that they and their program, in support of this very important bill, gets 20 percent of the money allocated in the fund established in this bill.

Mr. Chairman, on October 7, 2004, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Tim Maxwell's life changed forever. While on his third tour in Iraq, an enemy mortar attack left him with a battered body and severe brain trauma. But Colonel Maxwell is a marine, and despite the frustration of relearning how to walk and read, he has refused to give in to his wounds. In an open letter posted on his Web site, Colonel Maxwell talks about what it is like to be a wounded warrior:

''We tend not to complain about our injuries too much. Most of us know others who are worse off—a guy with a bad leg knows a guy who lost a leg, or both legs. I, with a brain that is 'cracked,' know youngsters with brain injuries who are unable to walk or talk. We all know some who died. So it is not a good thing to complain. We are tough guys. We are all going to whip it.''

Having experienced loneliness, frustration, and depression during his recovery, Tim Maxwell set out to ensure that fellow wounded marines would have a place to recover with others like them. He said: ''When you're in the hospital, your morale is okay. You are with other wounded warriors. You can chat about it. Sometimes we just look at each other in the hallway and nod. That's all. Acknowledgment. But once you are out of the hospital, it's tough. It sounds great on the day you leave. But there's irritation, frustration.''

In May, 2005, Colonel Maxwell came across a 20-year-old wounded marine sitting alone inside a Camp Lejeune barracks. The young man couldn't use his arm and was lonely and lost, having seen his buddy killed in combat and with his family living far away in Florida. Colonel Maxwell decided that ''no marine was going to be left alone like that.''

So along with Gunnery Sergeant Ken Barnes, he convinced the Marine Corps leadership that wounded marines needed their own barracks to help them heal among other wounded warriors. The Marine Corps leadership agreed, and in September 2005, Camp Lejeune opened the first barracks for wounded marines. The following month the barracks was dedicated to the man whose vision led to today's Wounded Warrior Battalion: Lieutenant Colonel Tim Maxwell.

Maxwell Hall at Camp Lejeune now houses 80 marines and provides them with the support structure necessary to heal. A similar barracks has also been established at Camp Pendleton, California, to care for west coast marines. The program has been so successful

that the concept was formalized by establishing the Wounded Warrior Battalions at Lejeune and Pendleton.

Simply put, Colonel Maxwell's vision of Wounded Warrior Battalions seeks to ensure that marines don't fall through the cracks that were so evident at Walter Reed. This amendment will help ensure this unique program succeeds and acts as a model for other services by assisting the Marine Corps transition this successful program from independent battalions on each coast into a single regiment with a headquarters located at Quantico.

The regiment's 54 staff members will help oversee the battalions at Pendleton and Lejeune, track active duty and discharged wounded marines through their recovery, and connect them with resources at the VA, other government agencies, and through private organizations. The battalions will continue to handle the day-to-day tasks of ensuring that marines are scheduled for medical appointments, that they are transported to those appointments, and that they receive counseling support to help heal their mental scars.

Earlier this week, I spoke with the newly appointed Wounded Warrior Regimental commander, Colonel Gregory Boyle. After the conversation I was even more convinced that the Wounded Warrior Regiment is the model for how to treat our wounded servicemembers. Colonel Boyle is motivated and ready to go forward. He came from infantry regimental command. Passage of this amendment will ensure he is able to do so.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring this amendment to the floor, and I very much appreciate the support of Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I wanted to thank the gentleman for yielding. And, you know, the Marine motto is ''Always Faithful,'' and once again, the gentleman, who is a great former marine, is being always faithful, not just to the men and women of his service, the Marine Corps, but those of all services who have been wounded in the war against terror. I want to thank the gentleman. I support this amendment very strongly.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. SKELTON. We discussed this issue and this proposed amendment in the committee. At that time, we said we would work with you, and I compliment you on it. I support it. I think it is an excellent amendment and I wish to move forward and vote for it.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. KENNEDY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 4 offered by Mr. KENNEDY:

At the end of section 2, add the following:

(5) MEDICAL CARE.—The term ''medical care'' includes mental health care.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer this amendment with my colleague Mr. SESTAK.

This amendment, Mr. Chairman, would amend the definition of medical care under the legislation to include mental health care. Under this definition, we measure the quality of health care in our military hospitals in order to determine that we ensure that our military personnel receive the best possible quality health care in the military that they ought to be entitled to. In doing so we ought to make sure that mental health care is part of that quality review process. And as we know full well, in the wake of this war, too many of our veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan have been suffering tremendously from wounds that may not be visible from the outside but are wounds nonetheless that are equally harmful. They are psychological wounds, Mr. Chairman. They are mental health wounds, and they are wounds, nonetheless, that need to be treated.

□ 1515

That is why we need to have the best quality mental health care that our military can offer, and that is why we want to make sure that when it comes to measuring quality health care in this legislation that mental health care is also measured as a quality indicator to ensure that our military personnel receive the best quality health care that they can receive.

On behalf of Mr. SESTAK and myself, I move this amendment.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Rhode Island, Mr. KENNEDY, for this amendment and for the fact that it is a clarifying amendment that makes all of us, as well as those within the medical community, understand that mental health is included in the term ''medical care.'' I thank you for that, and I fully support it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my friend, a former member of the committee, for his work. We support this amendment strongly.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MS. CORRINE BROWN OF FLORIDA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 5 offered by Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida:

In section 1567 of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 102 of the bill—

(1) redesignate subsections (b), (c), and (d) as subsections (c), (d), and (e), respectively; and

(2) insert after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

''(b) CONFIDENTIALITY.—(1) Individuals who seek to provide information through use of the toll-free telephone number under subsection (a) shall be notified, immediately before they provide such information, of their option to elect, at their discretion, to have their identity remain confidential.

''(2) In the case of information provided through use of the toll-free telephone number by an individual who elects to maintain the confidentiality of his or her identity, any individual who, by necessity, has had access to such information for purposes of conducting the investigation or executing the response plan required by subsection (c) may not disclose the identity of the individual who provided the information.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to bring an amendment to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. This bill establishes a toll-free hotline for reporting deficiencies in medical facilities and a new system of case managers, advocates and counselors for wounded servicemen returning from combat overseas to help them get the

care they need and help navigate the military health care system.

The bill provides no professional protections for servicemen if they or their family members call this hotline to get better treatment. This could cause those injured men and women to refrain from reporting abuses and problems, and the situation we currently have at Walter Reed could continue.

There is also the worry that anything reported will affect the serviceman's career. My amendment would simply offer confidentiality for those soldiers to get the care they are provided under this bill.

This amendment requires any hotline set up by the Secretary of Defense to ask if the caller wants confidentiality at the beginning of the phone call.

Last month, I was in the grocery store in Jacksonville, Florida. A veteran working part time told me about a friend at Walter Reed, with pictures showing the problems occurring there. I couldn't believe what he was describing to me was a military facility, and I told him, You can't believe everything you see on the Internet. The next day, the very next day, this story was in The Washington Post. The fact that an active duty soldier was treated this way is inconceivable.

Most of the information I get is from families, about the war and lack of equipment. Not from the Department of Defense, not from the soldiers, but from the family members. I do not want a call for help by a wounded serviceman or woman or their family to be used against them. I do not want those heroes to be scared to ask for help, to be scared their future career could be compromised by one phone call.

Support the Brown amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlelady, and we support the amendment on this side. I thank her for her contribution.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I compliment the gentlelady on this excellent amendment, and certainly support it.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. SESTAK. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. SESTAK:

At the end of title I, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. PLANS AND RESEARCH FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) PLANS FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.—

(1) PLAN FOR PREVENTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan to incorporate evidence-based preventive and early-intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions) into—

(i) basic and pre-deployment training for enlisted members of the Armed Forces, non-commissioned officers, and officers;

(ii) combat theater operations; and

(iii) post-deployment service.

(B) UPDATES.—The Secretary of Defense shall update the plan under subparagraph (A) periodically to incorporate, as the Secretary considers appropriate, the results of relevant research, including research conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(2) RESEARCH.—Subject to subsection (b), the Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences, to conduct such research as is necessary to develop the plan described in paragraph (1).

(b) EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH AND TRAINING.—

(1) WORKING GROUP.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, to determine the feasibility of establishing a working group tasked with researching and developing evidence-based measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychological pathologies (including substance use conditions). The working group shall include personnel with experience in a combat theater, and behavioral health personnel who have experience providing treatment to individuals with experience in a combat theater.

(2) PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a plan for a peer-reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research and develop evidence-based preventive and early intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions).

(c) REPORT.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress annually a report on the plans and studies required under this section.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SESTAK. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, as someone who wore the cloth of this Nation for 31 years, few things are as important to me as our obligation to support those who fought for our country. Our men and women in uniform serve selflessly on our behalf, and it is our foremost duty in Congress to do everything in our power to ensure that they have the care and the treatment they deserve, as they are, and they will remain, our most important recruiters in our volunteer Armed Forces of the future. So it matters how we treat them, as they will be the ones to encourage or discourage their sons and daughters, their loved ones and friends, to become or not to become part of what they once belonged to.

With that in mind, recent reports about the conditions at Walter Reed were quite sobering to who we believe we are. I am as, if I am not more, responsible as anyone. I should have known better and looked more because of my 31 years of service.

But the Armed Services Committee has now looked closely at this issue and taken a significant step forward in reporting H.R. 1538 to the House. This is a bill that will address concerns regarding the adequacy of the treatment received by our servicemembers returning home from Iraq.

While we are all familiar with the images of soldiers who have returned home maimed as a result of an IED, it is another range of medical challenges that are increasingly being seen as a signature disability of the war in Iraq, mental health disorders and the invisible psychological trauma of post-traumatic stress disorder.

According to a Pentagon study released last year, 35 percent of Iraqi war veterans received mental health care during the first year at home. Twelve percent were diagnosed with a mental health ailment.

Left untreated, the more recognizable symptoms of PTSD, including nightmares or flashbacks, can ultimately lead to other problems, including drug and alcohol abuse.

At a time when science has shown that mental health and physical health are inseparable, we cannot overlook the integral role that mental health care plays in the proper medical care of our servicemembers and veterans.

This past Sunday, I attended an event hosted by the Military Order of the Purple Heart for the VA Medical Center in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and spoke to several of those who work with and treat veterans with PTSD. They emphasized to me their concerns about the level of resources, attention, and the scope of care available to those who need mental health services.

This is an issue we cannot simply ignore because the challenges of mental illness are interwoven with the other challenges that we are confronted with in every corner of our society. And that is why I was honored that Representative KENNEDY held with me a forum in my district on mental health and substance abuse last month, where,

among other things, Congressman KENNEDY spoke of the importance of properly addressing the needs of veterans and servicemembers.

As a Nation, we will never be fully healthy, never fully productive, until we eliminate all barriers to good mental health care for all our citizens, and especially those who have put themselves in harm's way to serve our country.

This amendment requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies, what we might call psychological Kevlar.

Prevention, how nice. No, how necessary. It is what we do in the military. Successful generals win. Then they go to war.

This is what we must do to ensure that our soldiers are properly prepared, not just physically with the right Kevlar but, also, thanks to the knowledge developed through the peer-reviewed research called for in this amendment, with the proper psychological Kevlar. We must treat both physical and mental care of our troops the same.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SESTAK. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I have examined this amendment. I think it is an excellent one, and I compliment you. It is certainly acceptable on our side.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Rhode Island is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I only asked for the opportunity to speak in opposition just to claim the time in opposition. This is my amendment, so I won't be speaking in opposition to it.

Of course, I do want to speak in favor of this, because clearly this is the leading cause of disability, I believe, and will be the leading cause of disability for this war. As we have seen our soldiers come back, more and more of them are reporting mental health as the leading cause of disability; and, of course, this has been underreported in so many instances.

Why? It has been underreported because of the stigma, Mr. Chairman. Continued in this country is the fact that our society continues to stigmatize the treatment of mental illness. So even our soldiers who have every right to feel that they have been stressed by the experience of having suffered through the trauma of war, even those that have been through this experience and have every right to seek mental health treatment, even they feel stigmatized by having to need mental health treatment, and that is the reason why so many of them don't actually go and seek mental health treatment.

But in spite of the stigma, we still find that 35 percent of those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have sought treatment for mental health services. This is an enormous number, and I think it points very much to the fact that this is a very enormous challenge for our country.

Mr. Chairman, we need to deal with this problem before we even have these soldiers returning from Iraq, and that is why we are looking to have the psychological Kevlar act adopted in this legislation.

I want to identify Kristen Henderson, who is a spouse of a member of our military who came to my office and said, why is it that we are waiting until our soldiers get back from Iraq until we deal with their post-traumatic stress disorder? Why don't we start helping them become resilient, and how come we don't start preparing them for the trauma of war before they even get into the trauma of war? We do so much to put them into boot camps to train them physically for war. Why don't we do more to put them together and train them mentally for war?

This is what this amendment says. It puts the Department of Defense in the position where they have to put together a program where our military men and women are put into a curriculum where they are better prepared to deal with the conflicts and the stresses of war before they actually see the trauma of combat.

Mr. Chairman, I think that this is something that we need to do, because we need to make sure that when our soldiers come back that they don't have that sense of stigma attached to seeking mental health services. And if they understand that in order for them to be good soldiers that they need to be of sound mind and sound body and that is part of their being part of a esprit de corps, then they will be more forthcoming in seeking help when they need it. That will mean they will be better soldiers in the long run.

Mr. Chairman, just a few years ago, I had the opportunity to go down to Fort Bragg and see our Green Berets. Mr. Chairman, they have psychiatrists available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

You might ask, why do the best and brightest in the military have that? The reason they do is because the military has figured out that if they have anything else on their mind bothering them, they can't do their job the way they are best trained to do their job. I think, Mr. Chairman, if it is good enough for the Green Berets, then why isn't it good enough for the rest of our Armed Forces?

That is what this psychological Kevlar bill puts in place. It says we need to protect the mind as well as the body of our soldiers before battle, and we need to make sure that they are prepared for every eventuality when it comes to wartime.

I ask my colleagues to vote for this and destigmatize mental health and help the Department of Defense lift the veil of the stigma of mental illness and vote for the psychological Kevlar bill. For that reason, I will ask for a recorded vote on this amendment.

□ 1530

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. HOOLEY) having assumed the chair, Mr. ROSS, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1538) to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

PERMISSION TO OFFER AMENDMENTS OUT OF ORDER DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during further consideration of H.R. 1538 in the Committee of the Whole pursuant to House Resolution 274, any of the amendments printed in House Report 110–78 may be considered at any time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 274 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1538.

□ 1532

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1538) to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes, with Mr. ROSS (Acting Chairman) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110–78 by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) had been disposed of.

Pursuant to the order of the House of today, amendments may be considered in any sequence.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MS. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON OF TEXAS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 6 offered by Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas:

In section 107(a), in the first sentence, strike ''modification of the training'' and insert ''improvement of the training''.

In section 107(a), strike the second sentence and insert the following: ''The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are adequately trained and able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 6, AS MODIFIED, OFFERED BY MS. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON OF TEXAS

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that my amendment be modified with the text that I have at the desk that proposes text changes in section 107 of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will report the modification.

The Clerk read as follows:

Modification to amendment No. 6 offered by Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas:

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

In section 107(a), in the first sentence, strike ''modification of the training'' and insert ''improvement of the training''.

In section 107(a), strike the second sentence and insert the following: ''The recommendations shall include, at a minimum, specific recommendations to ensure that such health care professionals, medical care case managers, and service member advocates are adequately trained and able to detect early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal tendencies, and other mental health conditions among recovering service members and make prompt notification to the appropriate health care professionals.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment is modified.

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, this amendment proposes text changes to section 107 of the bill, the section that deals with improved training for health care professionals, medical care case managers and servicemember advocates on particular conditions of recovering servicemembers.

As of March 1 of this year, over 24,000 servicemembers have been wounded in action since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, according to the Department of Defense. The Government Accountability Office has found that servicemembers injured in combat face an array of medical and financial challenges as they begin their recovery process in the health care systems of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran Affairs. A GAO report was recently released on March 5 and entitled ''DoD and Va Health Care, Challenges Encountered By Injured Service Members During Their Recovery Process.''

According to the report, Mr. Chairman, the Department of Defense screens servicemembers for post-traumatic stress disorder, but it does not ensure that further mental health evaluations occur.

DoD health care providers review questionnaires, interview servicemembers, and use clinical judgment in determining the need for further mental health evaluation. Sadly, DoD found that only 22 percent of the service members who may have been at risk for developing post-traumatic stress syndrome were actually referred by the Defense Department health care providers for further evaluation. In addition, the Defense Department never identified the factors as health care actually used to determine which servicemembers needed the referrals.

Although our wounded warriors may obtain mental health evaluations for treatment for post-traumatic stress through the VA, and the VA may face a challenge in meeting the demand for these services, VA officials estimated that follow-ups for veterans to get treatment for this stress syndrome may be delayed up to 90 days.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I spent my professional career as a psychiatric nurse with the Veterans Administration. I can tell you that we could save time and money if we had the proper people in place to diagnose early, or at least get a referral. We miss a lot of early symptoms that later causes long-term unemployment, long-term financial stress and long-term hospitalization simply because we have not put the well-trained people in place, professional social workers, professional nurses that would diagnose and know that something needs to be done to prevent further deterioration, and that is my reason for bringing this.

My 15 years of hands-on inpatient program care were specialized in mental health. And I have my credentials to show that. And my amendment strengthens this section because I feel that more emphasis needs to be made on adequate training by health care professionals to recognize these signs, including suicidal tendencies, so that the early intervention can come, and it will shorten the recovery period.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I ask to claim the time allotted for debate of the amendment offered by Ms. JOHNSON, although I do not oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, I certainly support this and so many other amendments on this bill which are so very, very important not only to our veterans, but it serves as a model, as do so many veterans programs, of something we could be doing for other Americans.

Let me speak first to the point of what these do when we manage and coordinate patient care. We had an issue recently in the Energy and Commerce Committee which I serve on doing this, another aspect, and it was a very lively discussion. But recognize that someone who is wounded, as well as someone who has other medical illnesses, a single diagnosis is usually not something that stands loan. For example, a person with diabetes may have several other endocrine problems, problems with their kidneys, with their diet, their circulation, their limbs, their mobility, and of course there are emotions, too, all of which can be very, very complex to deal with.

When the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center did a study on coordinating the care of people with diabetes, for example, they found when they assign people to work on these cases, they reduce rehospitalization by 75 percent. Washington Hospital in Washington, Pennsylvania reduced rehospitalization of folks with heart disease by 50 percent. These are extremely important aspects. And we have to look upon these as things that not only save money, but they save lives and they save a lot of care.

Let me also point to an amendment offered by my dear friend, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, when he talked about mental illness. When we are talking about the wounds of war or the wounds of life, not all of these wounds are visible. They are not necessarily scars one can see, they are not something you can put a bandage on, but they are very real. The psychological wounds of war are such that they can break up a family, keep someone from holding a job, perhaps lead someone to try to self-medicate their problems away with drugs or alcohol, all too common problems among our veterans.

And then when they are not dealt with, we find people who become more dependent upon others, that with difficulties with their families, with their

children, perhaps become hopeless, have trouble holding a job. And all of those continued effects of wounds of war go on.

It is extremely important that we recognize in Mr. KENNEDY's amendment, as well as Ms. JOHNSON's amendment and other aspects of this whole bill that what is vitally important is we treat the whole person.

The time is long past due in this country where we look at medical symptoms and medical disease as something that shows up on an x-ray or a blood test or some other sophisticated test. Indeed, the wounds of war are not always visible, nor are they things that appear soon after the battle. Post traumatic stress disorder, other anxiety disorders can remain latent for years and suddenly reappear. I remember meeting a veteran at a VA hospital who ended up with some problems after 20 or 30 years after the Vietnam War. He had recently had a liver transplant.

Under the medications and other aspects, he suddenly began having nightmares that he never had before. He had all this psychological trauma that was never showing up before.

What is so important is that we work to train people to understand these issues, which the gentlelady's amendment talks about, that we work to deal with the mental illness issues, which Mr. KENNEDY's amendment talks about, and we work as a unit, as a whole, as a Congress, as a Nation to recognize that many times the illnesses and wounds of war are things that may not be there now, may not be visible, but are aspects we have to treat in the long run.

I call on all of my colleagues to enthusiastically support these amendments.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. I yield 1 minute to Mr. ANDREWS from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank my friend. With the authority of the chairman of the full committee, I would like to indicate the committee enthusiastically supports this well-thought-out amendment and thanks the gentlelady for offering it.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I have no further requests for speakers. I want to thank both sides for their support, and I urge adoption.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), as modified.

The amendment, as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MS. HOOLEY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in House Report 110–78.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 8 offered by Ms. HOOLEY:

At the end of title I, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. OPTION FOR MEMBERS OF RESERVE COMPONENTS TO USE MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITIES CLOSEST TO HOME FOR CERTAIN INJURIES.

The Secretary of Defense shall provide that, in the case of members of the reserve components returning from a combat theater, if a member requires treatment on an outpatient basis for injuries or wounds sustained in theater, the member may be provided treatment at the military medical treatment facility closest to the member's home rather than closest to the base from which the member was deployed.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, with four in 10 members of the military in Iraq and Afghanistan serving in the Reserve component, it is clear that our National Guard is no longer a strategic reserve, but an operational reserve. And as such, we must change the way we treat the Guard if we want to maintain recruitment and retention because it is the right and fair thing to do.

After 5 years of mobilization, both involuntary and voluntary, our National Guardsmen are still navigating the system that was intended for use by the active duty rather than our current nearly even blend of Reserve and active components.

My amendment to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warriors Act, is simple. It allows members of the National Guard and Reserve who are returning from theater with minor injuries or other outpatient care needs the option to seek treatment at the military medical treatment facility closest to the member's home rather than closest to the base from which the member was deployed.

□ 1545

When an active duty soldier with certain injuries comes back to the United States, he gets treated at the medical facility closest at his home base where his family lives. But for Oregon Guardsmen and Reservists and soldiers from about a dozen other States that have no bases, our troops must remain for weeks at the base they deployed from for follow-up care. These can be hundreds or even thousands of miles away from home and family.

In 2004, I spoke with Monica Davey of the New York Times about the problem as she covered the issues in a series of front-page news stories. She quoted one spouse as saying, ''Having him in Iraq was hard enough. When he got hurt, I said, 'Well, at least he can come home now and get better here with us.' But it is a strange thing. He came home, but he is not home at all.''

This problem is old news and no longer on the front page, but it still goes on. Here are a couple examples of what happens when these Guard troops request treatment upon demobilization:

An Oregon Guardsman who returned months ago is still on the east coast base with medical issues. He and his wife have several young children; and, as can happen with lengthy deployments, the separation has strained their relationship to the breaking point. He has seen his family only once in the last 3 months. That soldier should have the option of seeking treatment at Fort Lewis in Washington State, much closer to his home.

Another story involves an enlisted man with a wife and young children who has seen his young family stateside only three times in the last 3 months, once because the Army sent him home for convalescent leave, and the other two times over the holidays because his wife drove their children out to the east coast military treatment facility where he was awaiting care because they couldn't afford to fly.

These stories are heartbreaking; and, despite years of work on trying to get the problem fixed, little progress has been made. Since the start of the Iraq war in 2003, tens of thousands of Reservists and Guardsmen have been placed on medical hold.

As the New York Times reporter Ms. Davey aptly put it 3 years ago, ''Unlike the most gravely injured soldiers receiving around-the-clock treatment at the finest military hospitals, these are ordinary soldiers with more ordinary wounds. The loneliest and the impatient can elect to go home even if they still need medical attention, but that could be a very expensive trade-off. Military rules dictate that they lose their active duty salaries, even though they may still be too injured or ill to return to their civilian jobs.''

Today, four out of 10 soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are Guard or Reserve, and it is long past time for the DOD to adjust their policies and make improvements to the demobilization process for Guard members in States like mine that have no military treatment facilities. I ask for your support of this amendment so we can finally give soldiers from the Reserve component the flexibility to be treated for certain injuries at military medical treatment facilities nearest their homes and families just like the active component.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. Very briefly on behalf of the committee, we thank the gentlelady for offering this well-thought-out amendment and, on behalf of the chairman, indicate our strong support for the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I just want to say we support the gentlewoman's amendment and have no opposition to it here on our side.

Ms. HOOLEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

DEMAND FOR RECORDED VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I may be permitted to request a recorded vote on amendment No. 7 at this point, notwithstanding the passage of time since its adoption by voice vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Rhode Island?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote is requested. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment numbered 7 offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. ALTMIRE). It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 9 offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

At the end of title II, add the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 207. STUDY AND REPORT ON WAITING PERIODS FOR APPOINTMENTS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study on the average length of time between the desired date for which a veteran seeks to schedule an appointment for health care at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility and the date on which such appointment is completed.

(b) FOCUS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall focus on appointments scheduled and completed at Department medical facilities located in both rural and urban areas.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress containing the findings of the study under subsection (a) and recommendations for decreasing the waiting time between the desired date of an appointment and the completion of the appointment to a maximum of 15 days.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank the chairman of the committee, and I want to thank all those who contributed to this underlying legislation. I thank them for their good work on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

I myself am not a veteran. I did not serve my Nation in uniform. My grandfather did. He served during World War II. My father did. He served during Korea. My brother did. He served during the Cold War. So I have the highest respect for the men and women who serve our Nation in uniform.

Mr. Chairman, as we approach the annual debate on our budget, one thing that I think that we hold in common, although there are many differences in our parties, is that we all believe that our veterans and especially our veterans health care ought to be one of the most important priorities that we have as a Nation. And as we continue to fight this war on terror, we know we are creating more veterans with more health care needs.

During the last congressional recess, I spent a lot of time visiting with the veterans of the Fifth Congressional District in Texas that I have the honor and pleasure of representing. I heard many good comments, frankly, about VA health care and some complaints. And I suppose, Mr. Chairman, that one of the most important complaints I heard was the complaint on the waiting time in order to actually get the appointment that the veteran has requested.

Now, I know that great strides have been made in reducing these waiting times. I know that the veterans health care system is serving entire new populations that they didn't serve years ago. And this is a good thing. But I still would hope that, number one, we could understand exactly the challenges that our veterans are facing and see if there are not some commonsense solutions, as earlier the gentlelady from Texas, my colleague, said, that essentially we can save time and save money and still help our veterans.

This amendment is a very simple amendment. I hope it is a very noncontroversial amendment. It simply directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to study the average length of time between the desired date for which a veteran seeks a scheduled medical appointment and the date in which the appointment is actually completed.

Now, I know that the vast majority of appointments are completed within this 30-day window, but I don't believe this body knows if that means the bulk of them happened on day 29 or the bulk of them may happen on day six. This is important information we ought to have.

I represent a district that is urban, suburban, and rural; and this study would not just concentrate on our urban areas but our rural areas as well, where a number of our veterans go to retire.

Additionally, this amendment would ask for the Secretary's recommendations on what we might do to shorten the length of time to 15 days and provide recommendations to our body to do that. Not only veterans in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas, but if you look at the independent budget supported by numerous of our veterans service organizations, they speak to the need to see what we can do to reduce, in many cases, excess waiting times, something they flagged as a strong concern.

So I know the VA has made great strides, but there is still work that we can do to serve these people who serve us and protect freedom, the greatest commodity that we have in our land. And by supporting this amendment, Congress can make just one more small step in the direction of supporting our veterans.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I may claim the time in opposition, although I do not, in fact, oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the chairman of the committee, we thank the gentleman from Texas for offering this well-thought-out amendment. We support his efforts to try to reduce waiting time for our deserving veterans, and the majority will support the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman for his support. I know when to take ''yes'' for an answer.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 10 OFFERED BY MR. BILIRAKIS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 10 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 10 offered by Mr. BILIRAKIS:

After section 101, insert the following new section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 102. ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE-WIDE OMBUDSMAN OFFICE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish a Department of Defense-wide Ombudsman Office (in this section referred to as the ''Ombudsman Office'') within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

(b) FUNCTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The functions of the Ombudsman Office are to provide policy guidance to, and oversight of, the ombudsman offices in the military departments.

(2) POLICY GUIDANCE.—The Ombudsman Office shall develop policy guidance with respect to the following:

(A) Providing assistance to and answering questions from recovering service members and their families regarding—

(i) administrative processes, financial matters, and non-military related services available to the members and their families throughout the member's evaluation, treatment, and recovery;

(ii) transfer to the care of the Veterans Administration; and

(iii) support services available upon the member's return home.

(B) Accountability standards, including—

(i) creating and maintaining case files for individual specific questions received, and initiating inquiries and tracking responses for all such questions;

(ii) setting standards for timeliness of responses; and

(iii) setting standards for accountability to recovering service members and their families, including requirements for daily updates to the members and their families about steps being taken to alleviate problems and concerns until problems are addressed

(c) STATUS REPORTS.—The ombudsman office in each military department shall submit status reports of actions taken to address individual concerns to the Ombudsman Office, at such times as the Ombudsman Office considers appropriate.

(d) RESPONSES FROM OTHER OFFICES.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that all other offices within the Department of Defense and the military departments respond in a timely manner to resolve questions and requests from the Ombudsman Office on behalf of recovering service members and their families, including offices responsible for medical matters (including medical holdover processes), financial and accounting matters, legal matters, human resources matters, reserve component matters, installation and management matters, and physical disability matters.

(e) STAFF OF THE OFFICE.—The staff of the Ombudsman Office shall include representatives from each military department, including persons with experience in medical holdover processes and other medical matters.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Like all of my colleagues, I was greatly disturbed by the conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center which were depicted in The Washington Post. Last week, I introduced H.R. 1580, the Wounded Warriors Joint Health Care Ombudsman Act. My legislation is intended to create a single point of reference for recovering servicemembers and their families to ensure they are receiving prompt responses and information to their questions.

The amendment that I am offering today is a modified version of my legislation, and it creates a Department of Defense-wide ombudsman office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The functions of the office are to provide policy guidance and oversight to each military department. Specifically, the office would develop policy guidance with respect to providing assistance to and answering questions from recovering servicemembers and their families on a variety of important issues.

The policy guidance developed by the ombudsman office should allow recovering servicemembers to get information on administrative processes, financial assistance, the transition to care from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the support services available upon the member's return home. Very important.

The office would also establish accountability standards for the military departments. These standards would cover issues such as creating and maintaining case files for specific questions received, as well as tracking the response for all such questions. The office would also set timeliness standards for responses.

Under my amendment, the office can also require each military department to submit status reports of actions taken to address individual concerns raised by the recovering servicemembers and their families.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, everyone agrees that our military servicemembers should receive the highest quality of care and services possible. As they recover from their injuries, our wounded warriors should not have to battle bureaucracy to get the care and benefits they have earned. It is important that the ombudsman office be an advocate for servicemembers during every phase of treatment and the evaluation process as well.

I urge my colleagues to support this important amendment. I would also like to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member DUNCAN HUNTER for their assistance.

□ 1600

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. On behalf of the chairman, we thank the gentleman for his carefully crafted amendment. We think it is important that there be a department-wide ombudsman as well as in the services. The majority will support the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to join in thanking the gentleman for an excellent amendment, and thank him for his very thoughtful addition to this important bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 11 OFFERED BY MR. BUCHANAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 11 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 11 offered by Mr. BUCHANAN:

At the end of title II, add the following new section:

SEC. 207. STUDY AND REPORT ON STANDARD SOLDIER PATIENT TRACKING SYSTEM.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study on the feasibility of developing a joint soldier tracking system for recovering service members.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The study under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Review of the feasibility of allowing each recovering service member, each family member of such a member, each commander of a military installation retaining medical holdover patients, each patient navigator, and ombudsman office personnel, at all times, to be able to locate and understand exactly where a recovering service member is in the medical holdover process.

(2) A determination of whether the tracking system can be designed to ensure that—

(A) the commander of each military medical facility where recovering service members are located is able to track appointments of such members to ensure they are meeting timeliness and other standards that serve the member; and

(B) each recovering service member is able to know when his appointments and other medical evaluation board or physical evaluation board deadlines will be and that they have been scheduled in a timely and accurate manner.

(3) Any other information needed to conduct oversight of care of the member through out the medical holdover process.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the results of the study, with such findings and recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment is a simple one. It requires the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility of a soldier patient tracking system to improve the medical holdover process.

In the aftermath of the Walter Reed scandal, we heard criticism about the medical hold and holdover process, which requires injured soldiers to stay in certain facilities until evaluated and treated.

We heard the story of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant John Shannon who testified before the House National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee and he said, ''I had been given a couple of weeks' appointments and some other paperwork upon leaving ward 58, and I went to all of my appointments during that time. After these appointments, I sat in my room for another couple of weeks wondering when someone would contact me.''

The Buchanan amendment would require the Department of Defense to

identify and report to Congress ways of making the medical holdover system more responsive and effective for military personnel like Staff Sergeant Shannon.

I believe every servicemember should have complete, on-demand information with respect to his or her status as a medical holdover. No soldier should sit in their room for weeks wondering about their treatment and when their next appointment might be. The Department of Defense must closely examine ways to give servicemembers real-time information regarding the key milestones in their physical and medical evaluation process.

By requiring a report to Congress, my amendment would make certain that we are knowledgeable in considering all available options when it comes to improving the medical holdover process for troops and their families. I urge my colleagues to support the Buchanan amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I accept and I thank the gentleman from Florida for the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to support the gentleman's amendment, and thank him for his valuable contribution to this process.

Mr. BUCHANAN. I thank the chairman and the ranking member and the House Committee on Armed Services and their staff.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BUCHANAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MR. WELCH OF VERMONT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 12 printed in House Report 110–78.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 12 offered by Mr. WELCH of Vermont:

Insert at the end of section 1074l(a) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new paragraph:

''(6) The Secretary concerned shall ensure that medical care case managers have the resources necessary to ensure that they expeditiously carry out the responsibilities and duties of their position.''

Insert at the end of section 1074l(b) of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new paragraph:

''(7) The Secretary concerned shall ensure that service member advocates have the resources necessary to ensure that they expeditiously carry out the responsibilities and duties of their position.''

Insert after subsection (b) of section 1074l of title 10, United States Code, as proposed to be added by section 101 of the bill, the following new subsection (and redesignate subsections (c) and (d) of such section as subsections (d) and (e), respectively):

''(c) OUTREACH.—The Secretary of Defense shall make available to each member in an outpatient status at a military medical treatment facility, and to the family members of all such members, information on the availability of services provided by the medical care case managers and service member advocates, including information on how to contact such managers and advocates and how to use their services.''

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 274, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank the Committee on Armed Services for this bipartisan legislation that all of us here in Congress are eager to support. Mr. SKELTON has spent virtually his entire career in Congress making certain that the military is prepared and has the equipment it needs and it has the services they require when they come home; and his colleague who has worked very carefully with him, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER). I thank you for bringing this legislation to Congress.

The underlying bill does two things, as you know. It creates, one, a medical case manager. Number two, it creates a servicemember advocate. The point of those two positions is to guarantee that what happened at Walter Reed won't happen again.

My amendment is intended to strengthen and intensify the ability of those two positions to be effective on the part of the men and women who need medical services, and it does it in two ways. One, it makes it clear to the Secretary that these two positions must be empowered to do whatever is required to work through the bureaucracy and see to it that folks get the care they need.

Secondly, it requires the Secretary to advertise the availability of these services to our veterans, but also to their families. As we saw at Walter Reed, it was the families who often were the best spokesperson for the veterans and our soldiers who were in need of service. So the amendment builds on what the committee has done by empowering and advertising.

Mr. Chairman, I want to close by thanking the members of the Committee on Armed Services and their staff for working so closely with me to help write this amendment in a way that was consistent with the underlying objectives of the bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

Mr. SKELTON. Let me support this amendment of my friend and colleague, Mr. WELCH. The gentleman from Vermont has done a service in bringing this thoughtful amendment forward.

In doing so, it specifies the training and reporting requirements for medical care case managers and servicemember advocates. More importantly, it ensures they have the resources they need to get the job done. I will repeat that. That they have the resources to get the job done. I appreciate his contribution and thank him for his efforts in this regard to make this good bill even better.

Mr. HUNTER. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Yes, I yield.

Mr. HUNTER. I also want to thank the gentleman for his very thoughtful amendment.

Since this is the last amendment, I thought I would take this opportunity to thank my great friend, IKE SKELTON, for bringing our team to the floor and moving this very important legislation very effectively. I thank both gentlemen.

Mr. SKELTON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. I yield to Chairman SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. I must say, it is a thrill to be able to work with my friend, DUNCAN HUNTER, in bringing a piece of legislation like this forward in a bipartisan manner, and thank him for his cooperation as well as all on both sides of the aisle.

Again, I will mention our wonderful staff that works so well in a bipartisan manner. So Mr. HUNTER, thank you very much for your solid efforts in this regard.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Chairman, apparently I have the last word, and I think I will say what any of us would say if they were here, and that is thank you to the chairman and thank you to the ranking member. You have embodied in this legislation a principle we all know, and that is that the cost of the war has to include the cost of caring for the warrior. So I know I speak on behalf of all of us in thanking you for your excellent work.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. SESTAK

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, the unfinished business is the request for a recorded vote on amendment No. 7 offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 434, noes 0, not voting 4, as follows:

[Roll No. 206]

AYES—434

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Faleomavaega
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fortuño
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Norton
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—4

Davis, Jo Ann
Kanjorski
Lampson
Millender-McDonald

□ 1635

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. There being no further amendments, the question is on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended,was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) having assumed the chair, Mr. ALTMIRE, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1538) to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes, pursuant to House Resolution 274, he reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute reported from the Committee of the Whole?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I demand a re-vote on the Sestak-Kennedy amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is a separate vote demanded on any other amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute?

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment on which a separate vote has been demanded.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. SESTAK:

At the end of title I, add the following new. section (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

SEC. 113. PLANS AND RESEARCH FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) PLANS FOR REDUCING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.—

(1) PLAN FOR PREVENTION—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan to incorporate evidence-based preventive and early-intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance use conditions) into—

(i) basic and pre-deployment training for enlisted members of the Armed Forces, non-commissioned officers, and officers;

(ii) combat theater operations; and

(iii) post-deployment service.

(B) UPDATES.—The Secretary of Defense shall update the plan under subparagraph (A) periodically to incorporate, as the Secretary considers appropriate, the results of relevant research, including research conducted pursuant to subsection (b).

(2) RESEARCH.—Subject to subsection (b), the Secretary of Defense shall develop a plan, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences, to conduct such research as is necessary to develop the plan described in paragraph (1).

(b) EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH AND TRAINING.—

(1) WORKING GROUP.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, to determine the feasibility of establishing a working group tasked with researching and developing evidence-based measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related psychological pathologies (including substance use conditions). The working group shall include personnel with experience in a combat theater, and behavioral health personnel who have experience providing treatment to individuals with experience in a combat theater.

(2) PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a plan for a peer-reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research and develop evidence-based preventive and early intervention measures, practices, or procedures that reduce the likelihood that personnel in combat will develop post-traumatic stress disorder or other stress-related

psychopathologies (including substance use conditions).

(c) REPORT.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress annually a report on the plans and studies required under this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 426, nays 0, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 207]

YEAS—426

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McCrery
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meehan
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Paul
Payne
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tancredo
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wexler
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Bartlett (MD)
Davis, Jo Ann
Hayes
Issa
Kanjorski
Lampson
Millender-McDonald

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1654

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on adoption of the committee amendment, as amended.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 426, nays 0, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 208]

YEAS—426

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Butterfield
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castle
Castor
Chabot
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Feeney
Ferguson
Filner
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Frank (MA)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastert
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Israel
Issa
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Jindal
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Jordan
Kagen
Kaptur
Keller
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant

Markey	Pickering	Smith (NE)
Marshall	Pitts	Smith (NJ)
Matheson	Platts	Smith (TX)
Matsui	Poe	Smith (WA)
McCarthy (CA)	Pomeroy	Snyder
McCarthy (NY)	Porter	Solis
McCaul (TX)	Price (GA)	Souder
McCollum (MN)	Price (NC)	Space
McCotter	Pryce (OH)	Spratt
McCrery	Putnam	Stark
McDermott	Radanovich	Stearns
McGovern	Rahall	Stupak
McHenry	Ramstad	Sullivan
McHugh	Regula	Sutton
McIntyre	Rehberg	Tancredo
McKeon	Reichert	Tanner
McMorris Rodgers	Renzi	Tauscher
	Reyes	Taylor
McNerney	Reynolds	Terry
McNulty	Rodriguez	Thompson (CA)
Meehan	Rogers (AL)	Thompson (MS)
Meeks (NY)	Rogers (KY)	Thornberry
Melancon	Rogers (MI)	Tiahrt
Mica	Rohrabacher	Tiberi
Michaud	Ros-Lehtinen	Tierney
Miller (FL)	Roskam	Towns
Miller (MI)	Ross	Turner
Miller (NC)	Rothman	Udall (CO)
Miller, Gary	Roybal-Allard	Udall (NM)
Miller, George	Royce	Upton
Mitchell	Ruppersberger	Van Hollen
Mollohan	Rush	Velázquez
Moore (KS)	Ryan (OH)	Visclosky
Moore (WI)	Ryan (WI)	Walberg
Moran (KS)	Salazar	Walden (OR)
Moran (VA)	Sali	Walsh (NY)
Murphy (CT)	Sánchez, Linda T.	Walz (MN)
Murphy, Patrick		Wamp
Murphy, Tim	Sanchez, Loretta	Wasserman Schultz
Murtha	Sarbanes	
Musgrave	Saxton	Waters
Myrick	Schakowsky	Watson
Nadler	Schiff	Watt
Napolitano	Schmidt	Waxman
Neal (MA)	Schwartz	Weiner
Neugebauer	Scott (GA)	Welch (VT)
Nunes	Scott (VA)	Weldon (FL)
Oberstar	Sensenbrenner	Weller
Obey	Serrano	Westmoreland
Olver	Sessions	Wexler
Ortiz	Sestak	Whitfield
Pallone	Shadegg	Wicker
Pascrell	Shays	Wilson (NM)
Pastor	Shea-Porter	Wilson (OH)
Paul	Sherman	Wilson (SC)
Payne	Shimkus	Wolf
Pearce	Shuler	Woolsey
Pence	Shuster	Wu
Perlmutter	Simpson	Wynn
Peterson (MN)	Sires	Yarmuth
Peterson (PA)	Skelton	Young (AK)
Petri	Slaughter	Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—7

Davis, Jo Ann	Lampson	Millender-McDonald
Fattah	Meek (FL)	
Kanjorski		Rangel

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1711

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2007

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be authorized to make technical corrections in the engrossment of H.R. 1538, including corrections in spelling, punctuation, section numbering, and cross-referencing and the insertion of appropriate headings.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

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

S. Con. Res. 21. Concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.J. RES. 40

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that my name be withdrawn as a cosponsor of H.J. Res. 40. After further reflection, I have concerns that this legislation, which would propose an amendment to the Constitution relative to equal rights for men and women, could potentially compromise my longtime stance on pro-life issues. I hope that clarifying language can be added to this bill to offer assurances to pro-life supporters that this measure would not be used to undermine Federal laws on this important matter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 695 AND ADDED AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1222

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Mrs. EMERSON be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 695 and added as a cosponsor of H.R. 1222. I regret the error.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

OLDER AMERICANS REAUTHORIZATION TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 1002) to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to reinstate certain provisions relating to the nutrition services incentive program, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the Senate bill, as follows:

S. 1002

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Older Americans Reauthorization Technical Corrections Act''.

SEC. 2. NUTRITION SERVICES INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

Section 311 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3030a), as amended by section 309 of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006, is further amended—

(1) by striking subsection (b)(3);

(2) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

''(d)(1) Each State agency and each title VI grantee shall be entitled to use all or any part of amounts allotted under subsection (b) to obtain, subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), from the Secretary of Agriculture commodities available through any food program of the Department of Agriculture at the rates at which such commodities are valued for purposes of such program.

''(2) The Secretary of Agriculture shall determine and report to the Secretary, by such date as the Secretary may require, the amount (if any) of its allotment under subsection (b) which each State agency and title VI grantee has elected to receive in the form of commodities. Such amount shall include an amount bearing the same ratio to the costs to the Secretary of Agriculture of providing such commodities under this subsection as the value of commodities received by such State agency or title VI grantee under this subsection bears to the total value of commodities so received.

''(3) From the allotment under subsection (b) for each State agency and title VI grantee, the Secretary shall transfer funds to the Secretary of Agriculture for the costs of commodities received by such State agency or grantee, and expenses related to the procurement of the commodities on behalf of such State agency or grantee, under this subsection, and shall then pay the balance (if any) to such State agency or grantee. The amount of funds transferred for the expenses related to the procurement of the commodities shall be mutually agreed on by the Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture. The transfer of funds for the costs of the commodities and the related expenses shall occur in a timely manner after the Secretary of Agriculture submits the corresponding report described in paragraph (2), and shall be subject to the availability of appropriations. Amounts received by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to this section to make commodity purchases for a fiscal year for a State agency or title VI grantee shall remain available, only for the next fiscal year, to make commodity purchases for that State agency or grantee pursuant to this section.

''(4) Each State agency and title VI grantee shall promptly and equitably disburse amounts received under this subsection to recipients of grants and contracts. Such disbursements shall only be used by such recipients of grants or contracts to purchase domestically produced foods for their nutrition projects.

''(5) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require any State agency or title VI grantee to elect to receive cash payments under this subsection.''; and

(3) by striking subsection (f) and inserting the following:

''(f) In each fiscal year, the Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture shall jointly disseminate to State agencies, title VI grantees, area agencies on aging, and providers of nutrition services assisted under

this title, information concerning the foods available to such State agencies, title VI grantees, area agencies on aging, and providers under subsection (c).''.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by section 2 shall take effect beginning with fiscal year 2008.

(b) APPLICATION PROCESS.—Effective on the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall take such actions as will enable State agencies and title VI grantees described in section 311 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3030a) to apply during fiscal year 2007 for allotments under such section for fiscal year 2008.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, this bill makes technical corrections to the Older Americans Reauthorization Act of 2006. The bill would restore language regarding the administration of the Nutrition Services Incentive Program that existed prior to the Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2006.

Prior to the reauthorization, this nutrition program provided cash or USDA commodities to states to supplement meals for the elderly. Six states chose to receive USDA commodities through the program—Massachusetts, Kansas, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Delaware. However, while attempting to relieve administrative burdens for USDA during the last reauthorization, Congress inadvertently denied states the ability to directly purchase essential USDA commodities.

This was not the intent of Congress. The states that receive USDA commodities run tremendous programs that help provide nutritious meals to seniors. Many states reported that they were able to double the value of their appropriated funds by purchasing USDA commodities and Massachusetts reported that because of this program they were able to avoid waiting lists for meals for 17 years.

I've heard from my fellow Iowans on the importance of this program as well. Iowa has participated in this program and recognizes its benefits. We never received much money for commodities—only about $155,000—but the money goes a long way. Our Area Agencies on Aging often have a hard time meeting their budgets, but USDA commodities allowed them to serve more meals at a higher quality. Iowa fully intends to take advantage of USDA commodities again once we pass this bill.

This bill hasn't strayed from Congress' original intent either. The bill reduces the administrative burden on USDA, and streamlines the transfer of funds between the Department of Health and Human Services, to which funds are appropriated, and the Department of Agriculture, which purchases commodities for the states.

We must pass this bill today so that states wishing to take some or all of their NSIP allotment in commodities may place their order with the Department of Agriculture for FY 2008 by April 7th.

It's time to fix the mistakes that were made and allow these state to continue to serve seniors the most effective way possible.

The Senate bill was read a third time and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 275 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 99.

□ 1714

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012, with Mr. ALTMIRE in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the concurrent resolution is considered read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 4 hours, with 3 hours confined to the congressional budget, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on the Budget, and 1 hour on the subject of economic goals and policies, equally divided and controlled by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) each will control 90 minutes on the congressional budget.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina.

□ 1715

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 9 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, H. Con. Res. 99 is not the full and final solution, but it is a good solution. It moves us in the right direction towards a balanced budget. It moves us to balance in 5 years, as a matter of fact, by 2012. It posts a smaller deficit than the President's budget over 5 years. It adheres to PAYGO, and it contains no new mandatory spending that is not fully offset.

It also includes program integrity initiatives to root out waste, fraud and abuse in the Department of Health and Human Services and in the reporting of taxes in the Internal Revenue Service.

Mr. Chairman, I have listened to this resolution described both in our markup in committee and today during the debate on the rule. I think you have to bear in mind what our critics have said, in terms of where the criticism is coming from, because the party that is opposing this resolution and criticizing this resolution is the same party that took a surplus of $5.6 trillion between 2002 and 2011 and turned it into a deficit of $2.8 trillion during this same period of time.

As a consequence, we have heard a lot of talk out here today, but the truth of the matter is, with respect to taxes, their bill imposes on future generations, our children and grandchildren, an unerasable tax called a debt tax, because they will be servicing the debt of the United States for years to come.

Let me show you just a few charts to illustrate what I mean.

First of all, the chart showing the debt of the United States that has increased since 2001 when Mr. Bush took office. This is a simple chart, but it contains an enormous amount of truth.

When Mr. Bush took office in 2001, he came to office with an advantage that few American presidents have ever enjoyed, a budget in balance, in surplus by $236 billion the year before. Within 4 years, he had driven that surplus of $236 billion into a deficit of $418 billion; and, as a consequence, the debt when he took office, which was $5.7 trillion, today is $8.8 trillion, having increased $3.1 trillion over the last 6 years.

We have never seen a debt accumulation like this, certainly during any normal period of time. Except for the Depression or Second World War, we have never seen, except for those periods, any kind of accumulation of debt that approaches this. And if we continue on this path, if we continue on this path, then we will see the debt, by the time Mr. Bush leaves his presidency, at $9.6 trillion, as opposed to $5.7 trillion when he came to office.

Net interest on the national debt is today $170 billion. That is the debt tax I am talking about. This is the debt service that our children and their children will have to pay for years to come. It is a debt tax that is indelible, almost permanent, unless we can do something to turn this budget around and start reducing our debt, instead of accumulating mountainous debt year in and year out.

The budget that we bring to the floor today fully funds the President's defense request, and we husband what little is left over for some centerpiece initiatives which we strongly support as Democrats.

First of all, we created in 1997 a Children's Health Insurance Program. The authorization for it runs out this year. We would propose in our budget resolution to reauthorize the CHIP program, Children's Health Insurance, and add $50 billion to the program so we cover most of the children who are eligible for coverage in the United States.

The second point: With respect to education, we think the education of our children, of today's workforce, is critically important as never before in American history; and we think it would be shameful to cut back for education. But for 3 straight years President Bush has sent us a budget that would cut the Department of Education, this year by $1.5 billion.

If you take Function 500, which includes elementary and secondary education and student loans and workforce investment and Trade Adjustment Assistance Training, the Bush administration requests $3.6 billion next year

less than this year; and in 2012 the request is $8.6 billion below current services. That is for training our workforce. That is what this administration is willing to invest in the education of our children.

We feel differently, and strongly differently, and we provide $8 billion to $9 billion more than the President and, over 5 years, $46 billion more than the President provides for education and job training and related activities.

We also call for a long-term fix in the Alternative Minimum Tax. The President has told us twice that they can take the Alternative Minimum Tax and, within the context of the Tax Code in a revenue-neutral manner, change the Alternative Minimum Tax so that it will not extend to middle-income families for whom it was never intended. They have told us that, but they are yet to do that.

We are saying in this budget resolution to the Ways and Means Committee, given its jurisdiction over taxes, and to the administration, we need to fix the AMT.

You will hear, as you have heard earlier today, a lot of talk about this being the biggest tax increase in American history, which is absolutely absurd. The Democratic budget resolution which I am presenting right now, introducing, which we will discuss tonight, does not raise taxes, period. The budget resolution that we bring to the floor tonight in no way affects the tax cuts that were passed in 2001 and in 2003. It leaves those tax cuts in place for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

What we do assume is the same revenues that CBO projects in its current baseline. If you look at the CBO baseline and the OMB baselines, you will find they virtually converge. There is about a 1.2 percent difference between the two of them, as this chart right here will easily show you.

All this palaver about taxes and the biggest tax increase in history, this is the difference between our revenue projections, the green bar, and theirs, which is blue, 1.2 percent over a 5-year period of time.

Looking at this budget in its whole context, three outside groups which are vigilant overseers and advocates for good, sound fiscal policy, the Concord Coalition has said, ''Thus, to be clear,'' this is how they sum up their letter, ''this budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' As plain as you can put it, from a group that is truly disinterested and independent politically.

Then we have got the Brookings Institution, the Hamilton Project. ''This budget would not raise taxes.'' ''This budget would not raise taxes.''

Finally, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, they took a look at our budget and they said, ''This claim is just flat incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.''

What the House plan does do is allow the tax cuts that were passed in 2001 and 2003 to follow their course. They will expire on December 31, 2010. Not because of this budget resolution. It doesn't have a thing to do with the expiration or extension of those tax cuts. But, in 2010, those tax cuts expire of their own volition, because they were so drawn, designed, intended by those on this side of the aisle, the Republicans. They were designed to expire on December 31, 2010.

What we are simply assuming in this budget resolution is that that decision will be taken when we reach it. When we have to cross that bridge, we will cross that bridge. We will know then what our deficit is in 2010. We hope we will have a surplus by that point in time; and if we have a surplus, we will know whether or not we can offset it against the extension of some of these tax cuts.

I will say this and will say it repeatedly: Read this budget resolution. Give us a fair shake. And you will find in two different places prominently inserted, this resolution says we endorse, we support, and we will seek the renewal of the middle-income tax cuts that have been passed since 2001 and 2003, the marital tax penalty, the child tax credit, the 10 percent bracket, State tax reform. All of these things we embrace and we pledge ourselves to the extension to see when they expire, as they will, they will be duly renewed.

We will have this debate continually throughout the night. It will be brought up again and again and again. But I want to say one final thing: This budget resolution does not raise taxes, and it does not cause the expiration of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. They expire of their own volition.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 12½ minutes.

Mr. Chairman, first off, I would like to start off this debate by paying a compliment to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT). The gentleman from South Carolina is just that. He is a gentleman. He is a good man, he is a man who has a tough job, and he is a man who I enjoy working with.

The key to this year's budget debate is not whether Congress should balance the Federal budget. Republicans and Democrats this year are agreeing that we need to balance the Federal budget. The key is about how we are going to get there.

Today, as this House debates both the Democrats' and the Republicans' budget proposals for fiscal year 2008, it will become clear that this is much more than a simple discussion about numbers and how they add up over the next few years. Instead, this is going to be a bigger debate about our different governing philosophies, about what kind of society we envision, about what kind of country we want to leave to future generations.

The budget that the Democrats have proposed is true to their philosophy. I give them credit for that. They believe that more government is better government and that the best way to solve the myriad problems we face in this country is to spend more and more and to tax our people more and more to pay for that spending.

The Democrats' budget reflects this philosophy by calling for the largest tax increase in American history. I will make this irrefutably clear throughout the course of this debate: They call for immense new spending and postponement of critical entitlement reforms for another 5 years.

If Congress passes this budget tomorrow, this will enshrine the raising of taxes to the tune of $400 billion on the American family, worker and business. And we are not just talking about raising taxes on the rich, as they would like to have us believe. We are talking about raising taxes on every single American income tax payer. This means raising marginal income tax rates on all taxpayers; eliminating the 10 percent bracket that has benefited numerous low-income individuals; raising the tax on capital gains and dividends and discouraging investment in our economy and saving for our seniors; slashing the child tax credit in half; reinstating the marriage tax penalty; reimposing the death tax; and eliminating the State and sales tax deduction for States like Texas and Florida.

Let me just show you where the lie is. It is not in the numbers. The lie is in the so-called reserve funds. They can give you all the words they want. They can say they put all these fancy words in this budget that says we don't want to raise taxes, we want this new spending. But what a budget resolution is is a bunch of numbers, and numbers don't lie, Mr. Chairman.

This budget requires, banks on, plans for, assumes, insists upon the largest tax increase in American history. Otherwise, they don't balance the budget.

So my friends on the other side of the aisle can have it one way or the other, but not both. They can say they are balancing the budget. But, according to their budget, they therefore have to raise taxes. Or they can say they are not raising taxes, at which hand they then are not balancing the budget. They can't have it both ways.

□ 1730

The line, the red line, which is the revenue baseline, does not lie.

Now, their revenue numbers show it. And they can bring in all the left-leaning think tanks that have been in favor of tax increases in the past and in the present to say that this isn't a tax increase, but come December 10, January 31, that is the last day people have a $1,000 tax credit. It is the last day married couples won't be taxed for being married. It is the last day the death tax isn't at zero. It is the last day income tax rates don't go up across the board. That is what happens.

They have also made more than $100 billion worth of additional spending

promises in this budget, if they are offset. That's what all these reserve funds are about; more money for this program, more for that program, more money for this program, maybe some tax relief for the middle class. We have a reserve fund for it. My friends, a reserve fund is worth less than the paper it's printed on because all it says is we have these priorities, these ideas, these things we would like to do, we have no money for it; middle-class tax relief, more money for SCHIP, farm programs.

But if we did come up with the money to pay for these programs, we would like to do it; but we don't have the money, so we're not doing it. That is basically what a reserve fund is.

What we really have here, Mr. Chairman, is a huge tax increase, a tax increase that will have the effect of significantly increasing the burden on individual taxpayers and small businesses and will completely ignore the positive growth impacts that these tax cuts encouraged since 2003.

Let's review some of the effects that low tax burdens have had on economic growth, on jobs. Before we provided tax relief in 2003, we were losing an average of 100,000 jobs a month. Since then, we have added 7.6 million new jobs; about 170,000 new jobs have been created per month since the tax relief.

The economy. Before tax relief occurred in 2003, the economy grew at an average rate of 1.1 percent. Now it has been 3.5 percent since then, faster than it has grown in the last three decades, on average.

Unemployment. When we passed tax relief, the unemployment rate was at 6.1 percent, now it's all the way down to 4.5 percent.

Business investment. When we passed tax relief, business investment had been down for nine straight quarters. Since then, business investment has been up for 15 straight quarters. That is where the 7.6 million new jobs got created. Unfortunately, the Democrat budget would ignore all of this, with immense tax increases that threatened to put us right back where we were in the recession of 2001.

And now on revenues. What they will tell you is that the revenues are the reason why we are in deficit. What they will tell you is that the tax cuts drove us deeply into deficits. That is completely untrue. On the contrary. If you take a look at this chart, the tax relief actually had the effect of increasing job creation and revenues coming into the Federal Government.

We had 3 straight years of revenue decline during the recession. The tax cuts kicked in. What happened? Revenues went up exponentially, to the point where we have had double digit revenue gains for the last 3 years, and as a consequence, the deficit has been going down. These surging revenues have been a key factor in reducing this deficit.

Mr. Chairman, the wrong way to balance the budget is to raise taxes. The right way to balance the budget is to control spending. We do not have a revenue problem in Washington. Money is coming in very quickly from taxpayers. What we have here is a spending problem. And the Democrats are making it worse because they are calling for all this new spending.

For all of their talk about reducing the deficit, all they have done since they came into the majority is to spend more and more money, and we are only into the end of March. First they passed the omnibus bill that added $6 billion in new spending. Next came the supplemental for the warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan; they added $21 billion in unrelated and unrequested spending. And now their budget resolution adds another $24 billion in new spending next year alone.

For all the additional spending and gimmicks, the worst thing about this budget is not just the tax increases and the new spending, it's about what it does not include. This budget does nothing, absolutely nothing, to address our entitlement problem. This is what needs to be fixed, Mr. Chairman.

We had all these eyewitnesses, all these experts come from the left and the right that the majority called, from the GAO to CBO to other groups, all talking about the fact that our Nation is facing a fiscal crisis, that entitlements are growing out of control, that our primary responsibility in crafting our budget should be to address entitlement spending. Let me read some quotes from the Democrats' own witnesses.

The Comptroller General of the GAO has called the rising costs of government entitlements a fiscal cancer that threatens catastrophic consequences for our country and could bankrupt America. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve came to testify. He said, ''Without early and meaningful action to address the rapid growth of entitlements, the U.S. economy could be weakened, with future generations bearing much of the cost.'' Even the Democrats' own witnesses from the Concord Coalition testified to the same.

They've heard all of these witnesses, they've heard all these warnings, and they have chosen in this budget to do nothing. There is not a single reform, a single dollar of savings from entitlements. Obviously, they seem to be unconcerned with the $4.6 trillion in liability that Social Security has, which grows every year by $600 billion; or the $32 trillion in liability that my children are facing that gets larger and larger every single year.

With this budget, they have simply accepted that we are going to continue to pile up massive amounts of debt to our children, and we are going to force them to pay double what we pay in taxes today to sustain these programs.

This brings me to my final chart, a chart by the General Accounting Office. We know that if we fail to reform entitlements, the Federal Government will double in size by the year 2040. When my kids reach my age, this budget would leave them with the choice of either paying double our current tax rate, or accepting the fact that we just don't have enough money to spend on health care, defense, national security or education.

I believe this is an enormous missed opportunity by the Democrats. Yes, the Democrats balance the budget in 2012, and they should be commended for reaching that goal. But at what price are they balancing the budget? They hit balance only because they are imposing the largest tax increase in American history. We still will have all of the same problems though.

They are not reforming anything in government. They are not reforming any program. They are just calling for the American taxpayer to send more money in Congress so we can continue to spend too much money. And because of the path of big government and the tax-and-spend policies that the Democrats have chosen, this is going to be a very short-lived success. As soon as we get back to this balanced budget on paper in 2012, the year where their budget gets balanced on the backs of taxpayers, it won't be long before entitlement spending drives the Federal Government right back into deficits as far as the eye can see.

This is not a Republican and Democrat issue. The fact is every independent expert in America that watches fiscal issues knows that government is growing out of control. We have really important programs that need our attention, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the three most important programs, in my particular opinion, in the Federal Government. Important programs, and programs people depend on, organize their lives around. We have to reform these programs in order to save these programs, yet they are doing nothing to do that. And because their budget does nothing to save these programs, they are hastening the day at which they go bankrupt. That is an abdication of responsibility.

No matter how you put it, Mr. Chairman, this is a tax increase. No matter how you put it, Mr. Chairman, a reserve fund, no matter what flowery language you can attach to it, no matter what left-leaning think tank you can have to say whatever you want, a tax is a tax.

In our budget, we make sure that these tax increases don't hit American families. We make sure the marriage penalty stays away. We make sure the child tax credit stays up. We make sure tax rates are down. We make sure the death tax goes away. What do they do? They insist upon, they require, they depend up all these tax increases. If they don't, their budget doesn't balance. They can't have it both ways.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, before yielding to the gentleman from Texas, I yield myself 1 minute to reply.

Mr. Chairman, the gentleman will acknowledge that they have requested in their budget resolution $278 billion in reconciled tax cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, student loans and a number of different areas. He is faulting us for not joining in this endeavor. That is partly because, number one, we don't agree with his specific cuts. But number two, having so-called saved $278 billion, there is then enacted by reconciliation directive to the Ways and Means Committee $447 billion in tax cuts.

So the net effect is not to use entitlement cuts for reform, but to actually add to the deficit $168.5 billion.

Mr. Chairman, I now yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, a distinguished member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. DOGGETT. I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this resolution.

You know, listening to these Republican complaints about this budget resolution, it kind of takes you into some sort of strange magic kingdom. They live by the first law of Disney, that wishing will make it so. They thought they could wish away the results of their tax policy changes, but we all suffer in national debt as a result of them. And no matter how long they wish and how hard they wish, they will not find the phantom taxes that they claim are increased in this budget resolution. We write our tax policy right in the black and white.

This year, additional revenues, zero. Next year, zero. The following year, zero. The following year, zero. The following year, zero. 2012, zero, but that year we still achieve a $154 billion surplus, the first time we will have a surplus in our budget since President Clinton left office.

You know, like Mickey Mouse and Tinker Bell, the Republicans are living in a land of fairy tales. But instead of imaginary friends, they've got imaginary demons, tax demons that come out. We cannot follow them on a path that is paved with fools gold deeper and deeper into national debt.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy and I appreciate his calling the attention, if not to our Republican friends, but to the American public, that they can look at page four in the resolution that is before us and find what has been said is simply not true.

Additionally, they can keep thumbing to page 46, which deals with what our policy is, in fact. Because we do want to minimize the impact on middle America. We make it clear that we are very interested in terms of being able to support extensions, the extension of the child tax credit, the extension of the marriage penalty relief and the extension of the 10 percent individual income tax. What we are not interested in doing is buying into the grab bag of special interest tax benefits, most of which flow to the Americans who are most well off.

I want, if I could, to just make one point in terms of talk of the largest tax increase in American history. Well, it's coming. There is a tax tsunami that is bearing down not just on the rich, not just on the upper middle class, but on middle America, and it is called the ''alternative minimum tax.''

For 6 years, Republicans in charge have had an opportunity to rebalance tax priorities in this country. My colleagues and I have called upon them to deal with permanent adjustment to the alternative minimum tax. They have refused. So now we have inherited a serious problem that is going to mean that middle America is facing the alternative minimum tax. Twenty-six million American families, 89 percent of people who earn between $75,000 and $100,000 will pay the AMT by 2010. Stopping this increase is our priority, that is what we are going to focus on, that is what we have committed to, that is what we are going to do, something that the Republican majority have failed to do in 2001, 2003, 2004.

Mr. DOGGETT. Indeed, those are the true missed opportunities, 6 years of missed opportunities under this administration.

As the gentleman points out so well, our objective here is to respond to the legitimate tax concerns of middle-class families, but to do it in a fiscally responsible way. No more will we borrow from our children and our grandchildren to finance tax cuts for the wealthy few now.

Mr. Chairman, I know, the gentleman from California, serving on the Ways and Means Committee, is very familiar with what we have gone through in this last 6 years of Republican borrow and spend policies.

I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BECERRA. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I agree with my colleagues.

As we discuss here what we are going to do in this Democratic budget resolution, I think the first thing we have to remember is we are going to pass a Democratic budget resolution. Guess what? Last year, the Republican majority did not pass a budget resolution so we had no guidepost, no blueprint to tell us how the Congress would spend its money. And does it surprise anyone to know that we went further into debt?

Unfortunately, as we continue to hear our colleagues, our friends on the Republican side say they want to see further tax cuts, what they don't mention is all those tax cuts that they passed in the last several years, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts that the President proposed, they paid this way.

□ 1745

This is what they did. They took out this credit card. Because every single one of those years we have been in deficit. And after using up the Social Security trust fund dollars, because they had to use the entire amount that was preserved for Social Security to help pay for the tax cuts, they still were in debt. So, guess what? They had to pull out the credit card, and we have been deficit spending for the last 7 years to pay for these tax cuts that have principally gone not to the middle class but to the folks who are on the highest level of our income scale.

This chart shows what happens, and it goes to the point of the gentleman from Oregon. What happens here is if you continue to extend the Republican tax cuts, you are going to help those that make over $1 million. The AMT, which the gentleman from Oregon pointed out, is going to hit folks that are making less than $200,000 or so most, the folks that were not helped by the Bush tax cuts. That is where we want to concentrate our tax cuts, right here, to help middle America.

Mr. DOGGETT. So this balanced budget resolution is a pledge for relief for legitimate middle-class working folks who are out there that have concerns without borrowing to finance more breaks for those over $1 million.

Mr. BECERRA. Precisely. We are going to provide middle-class Americans with these targeted tax cuts, targeted tax relief; and, as you mentioned before, Mr. DOGGETT, we are also going to be able to balance the budget in 5 years and have a surplus by 2012.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DOGGETT. I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I just think it is important that the American public can listen to politicians debate on the floor of the House, but they also have an opportunity to deal with independent groups.

Mr. DOGGETT. Let me say, I believe this is one of the most impressive, it can't be discounted as a Democratic group, because the gentleman is aware that the Concord Coalition is a bipartisan, nonpartisan group that has a Republican and Democratic co-Chairs. And they have said, again, in black and white, ''Thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' It just demonstrates this imaginary demon that they have over here, which is about all they can unite around.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. And I appreciate the gentleman's pointing the Concord Coalition that makes it clear that it does not call for or require a tax increase and the type of mindset we are getting from our friends on the other side that they would dismiss former Senator Warren Rudman, Republican from New Hampshire, establishing a left-wing think tank.

Mr. BECERRA. If the gentleman would yield for a moment.

Mr. DOGGETT. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BECERRA. The real distinction comes here. Our tax cuts will be targeted towards the middle class, not towards the wealthiest. And, at the same time, we have priorities. We are going

to balance this budget. We have committed to our PAYGO policies that we will pay for whatever we propose. But, at the same time, we are going to try to make sure that interest payments on the national debt don't consume everything, because today this is what happens when you do deficit spending.

Mr. DOGGETT. It is really a debt tax.

Mr. BECERRA. This is a debt tax, what happens when you do deficit spending. Deficits do matter. Under the last 7 years of Republican leadership with these tax cuts that have gone principally to very wealthy people, this is what happens. You have interest payments of over one quarter trillion dollars, yet veterans and education programs are suffering. This is what happens when you do deficit spending. You end up spending over a quarter of a trillion dollars to pay interest on the debt. That does nothing to help anyone.

Meanwhile, we have said we are going to focus money on veterans and education. We are not going to do it on interest payments. If you are fiscally responsible, you can do that.

Mr. DOGGETT. That debt tax is a tax that gets imposed on all Americans, and that is a tax that we are eliminating by moving back to a budget surplus.

Mr. BECERRA. It is $29,000 per person. A child born today is born with a birth tax of $29,000 he or she will owe.

Mr. DOGGETT. Of course, as the gentleman knows, that also jeopardizes our ability to preserve Social Security when you let that much debt and that much debt tax build up; and that is something else that we address in this resolution. We don't think when you talk about entitlements that just cutting grandma's Social Security check or reducing Medicare is the way to do it. We do need to come together on a bipartisan basis on entitlements. We could well have done that had President Bush not been so intent on privatizing Social Security.

But this resolution is well-rounded. That is why groups like the Concord Coalition have spoken out about it. And it is time now for the Republicans, like every child, to give up their imaginary demons and recognize they have done tremendous damage to our country in recent years. But if we work together on a bipartisan basis, it is possible for us to meet legitimate tax concerns, not increase taxes, and still meet the needs of our veterans and protect Social Security.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of rebuttal, I yield myself 1 minute.

I think we may set a record today on the floor on charts.

But, first, let me say, if you really don't want to raise taxes, if you are telling us that you have these words in your budget that says you don't want to raise taxes, you want middle-class tax relief, then why didn't you put it in your budget?

The fact is, Mr. Chairman, we gave the Democrats ample opportunity to put it in their budget to make sure that these taxes wouldn't increase. We had amendments in the Budget Committee to prevent the increase on the marginal tax rates, to prevent the elimination of the $1,000 per child tax credit, to prevent the elimination of marriage penalty, cap gains, dividends, State and local tax, bring back the death tax. We had all these votes to say, let's make it clear in the numbers: Don't raise taxes.

What happened? Party line vote after party line vote after party line votes, Democrats voted on every one of these amendments which put in the numbers the prevention of these tax increases.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California, a member of the House Budget Committee, Mr. LUNGREN.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I must disappoint you. I have no charts. I was in this body a number of years before and then left and came back; and, frankly, I have never seen such a war of charts as we have on the Budget Committee. They are instructive. But facts really matter.

Dandy Don Meredith, the famous philosopher on Monday Night Football, once said, ''If ifs and buts were candy and nuts, then every day would be Christmas day.'' And that really describes the Democrats' commitment towards not raising taxes. They say it as a matter of policy, but in terms of actually doing it, they not only wouldn't put it in but they resisted every amendment we brought forward.

And they like to talk about, well, let's go back to the last few years; let's see what happened back here and what has happened with the Republicans.

I came to this House in 1979, one of the last times the Democrats had control of the White House, control of the House, control of the Senate, and they were talking about budgets then and they were coming forward with their proposals. And what did we have then? We had something called stagflation. We had inflation raging at 13.5 percent, the prime lending rate was 15.3 percent, the unemployment rate was 7.1 percent. Of course, the top marginal rate was 70 percent. They were resisting tax cuts.

We came in and said it might make sense, when President Reagan came in, to reduce marginal rates, to reduce the impact of taxes on the American people, not only because it was fair to them but because the real genius of our economy is the production of jobs in the private sector.

And I would like to ask them, what do they think would happen if we go back to their same old days, one of the last times we had, for an extended period of time, the Democrats controlling the Senate, the Democrats controlling the House, and what they want to do in 2 years is control the White House as well.

If we move in that direction, we may very well get back to the times of Jimmy Carter when you did all those things, and the worst impact was not on tax rates, was not on inflation, it was on jobs. Jobs. Economists were telling us at that time, following your prescription, that we couldn't have a sustainable rate of unemployment below 6.5 percent. We now have it at 4.5 percent, 4.6 percent. That is the greatest social welfare program we have ever had in this country, jobs to American citizens.

And I understand how you have greater faith in the Federal Government, have greater faith in government at all levels to create jobs than do we, but the facts speak for themselves.

Looking at your particular proposal with the tax increases it has, it would not only affect the wealthy, it would affect in my home State of California 12,839,000 people at an average increase of $3,331.

Now, you may not want to admit to it, but your increases in spending, your refusal to do anything about the increases in mandatory discretionary spending that are taking place during the lifetime of this budget that you present, and your claim that somehow you don't raise taxes but you magically come up with a balanced budget, it just doesn't add up. It is like that movie, The Illusionist. It may sound good, it may look good, but, you know, you go behind the curtain, and there is nothing there.

Now, if you can explain to us how economics would allow you to raise spending, refuse any cuts, refuse to even bring down the rate of spending, and you don't increase taxes but you have a balanced budget, God bless you. Bring your charts out. We would love to see it.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield myself 1 minute.

While the gentleman was on his extended sabbatical back in California, he missed the heyday of our experience here under the Clinton administration and seems not to know that during those years the average job creation was 237,000 jobs per month. By comparison or by contrast, for the Bush administration comparable figures are 68,000 jobs per month.

Now, you can fudge that number by starting to count in August of 2004, claiming that it doesn't apply until then. But if you go back to January of 2001, the average per monthly increase for the Bush administration is 68,000 versus the Clinton administration which was 237,000.

Furthermore, the Clinton administration every year had a better bottom line in the budget. Every year, the deficit got smaller and smaller, to the point where, in 1997, we had a surplus for the first time in 1998 in 30 years; and in 2000 we had a surplus of $236 billion.

I now yield 1 minute to Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Chairman, I agree with my good friend from California, Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN, that facts do matter. And these are the interesting facts, Mr. SPRATT:

While Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN was on his sabbatical in California, the two political sides shifted. The old progressive party decided that it believes in fiscal discipline. That is why we have the PAYGO rules. And the previously conservative party is advocating an AMT tax continuation that would bring 26 million families into its purview. Let me put this in perspective.

There is one budget on the floor that, for the period 2008 to 2012, would raise taxes as much as $2,300 per person on 26 million families. It is not the CBC budget, it is not the Spratt budget, it happens to be the budget of the President of the United States.

So we have switched. The progressives have become the people who want to restrain spending, and our friends on the conservative side no longer care about raising taxes on the middle class.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN, a number of things have indeed changed.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, the gentlemen on the other side are right, we have charts. Because you can see what is going on with a chart.

We have been lectured by those who have created these red lines. The Democratic plan is the blue line, and this is what has happened in the last 6 years: the red line.

We are being lectured by people who have put us in the ditch. In fact, the Republican policies turned a $5.5 trillion surplus into approximately a $3 trillion deficit, deterioration of the budget of about $8.5 trillion.

Now, the $500 billion we have spent on the war is about 0.5; $8.5 trillion deterioration, 0.5 on the war.

Now, they say we have stimulated the economy. This is the change in the Dow Jones Industrial Average: Reagan's first term; Reagan's second term; Bush I's term; Clinton; Clinton, 4 years. In 6 years, the Dow has not increased as much as it had in each of the previous 4 years back through the Reagan administration. So there has been no economic growth.

They brag about job growth. Add them up: Tied for last place since Herbert Hoover.

Now, they keep talking about this 2003 tax cut. You ought to talk about the 2001 tax cut, add up all the jobs through the tax policy: worst since Herbert Hoover.

We can do better than that. We don't want to be lectured by those who put us in the ditch. We need to make sure that we have good economic growth, good tax policy, balance the budget, and go forward.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time I yield myself 20 seconds to say, the gentleman from Virginia who just spoke, Mr. Chairman, according to the numbers in this budget, that State will have an average household tax increase of $3,119; and this will hit another 2,958,000 taxpayers in the State of Virginia.

□ 1800

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member of the committee for yielding.

This budget resolution we are talking about tonight is a target-rich environment for things that we can disagree about that are in there. I have been tasked to talk about the things that aren't in the budget that we wish we would have been able to get in the budget, such as process reform.

Every year that we have this opportunity to do a budget, we have an opportunity to reform our processes and do this budgeting process in a better way. We spent all day last week in the Budget Committee during the hearing to try to get some of that done; and, quite frankly, we failed miserably on our side to convince our colleagues of the value of some these reforms.

Reforms like strengthening PAYGO to make it really mean PAYGO in the way our folks back home would understand it, to have PAYGO apply to the very first year of this budget. We were unable to get that done.

I offered an amendment that said if you are going to start a new program, a new, great idea in this vast array of programs that we have in our Federal Government, you would have to kill an existing program of equal or greater spending.

Well, in the rarified air of that room that night, I got laughed out of the room. I don't do instant messages, but I think the term ''LOL'' comes to mind. They were laughing out loud. One Member rolled their eyes the way my 14-year-old daughter used to do about, I guess, how naive I was about this process.

But I can assure you, I can assure you that back in Texas the idea of setting priorities, of trying to decide between good things, what we can afford and what we can't afford, and putting in place a mechanism that helps us with that discipline, does not get laughed out of the room. It is only in Washington that would be a laughingstock.

We also attempted to do away with the Gephardt rule. I have heard for the first 2 years of my service here night after night after night people decrying the fact that we had hidden in our arcane way of doing business raising the debt ceiling without taking an up-or-down vote, without standing in here and doing it the way we ought to do.

We offered an amendment that would have eliminated the Gephardt rule. A vote for this resolution is a vote for whatever requisite debt ceiling limits are necessary; a separate vote would have been better on that.

We offered up other process reforms that had been offered in the 109th Congress by the Democrats. We brought these to the committee hearing on a word-for-word basis for what they proposed, brought and voted for just last year. Not one of those passed. Every single one of those went down on a party-line vote.

I am here tonight to express my disappointment with the fact that we were not able to gain some process reforms in this resolution. I am disappointed that it is not in the underlying resolution. I will oppose it for that reason and a lot of others. I am here to express my disappointment, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chairman, a budget is a statement of priorities. What this budget states clearly is that our Federal Government's first priority must be to defend our Nation from terrorists and foreign enemies. We begin by fully funding the administration's 2008 request for national defense and our military, $5.3 billion, and that is just the first step.

Next, we invest more than the administration had proposed to defend our homeland against terrorism. For example, this budget funds the implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, such as increasing screening of cargo on passenger aircraft. We do more to scan shipping containers destined for the United States while those containers are still in foreign seaports. Why? Because we must stop nuclear terrorists long before their weapons reach U.S. shores.

This resolution says ''no'' to the administration's ill-advised proposals to cut funding for first responders. Why? Because our police, firefighters and EMS personnel must be well trained to respond to terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

On national defense, this budget states loudly and clearly that a strong national defense begins with supporting our troops and our veterans and their families. This bill includes the largest increase in funding for veterans' health care in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration, and our service men and women, Mr. Chairman, and our veterans have earned every dollar of this funding with their service and sacrifice.

This means better health care for those with traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, and better health care for over 5 million of America's veterans. It means shorter waiting lines for those who have earned their benefits through service-connected combat injuries. And in the aftermath of the Walter Reed Annex 18 tragedy, we say in this resolution that no soldier, no veteran should ever again have to endure the indignity of living in moldy, rat-infested housing. Never.

A vote against this budget is a vote against the largest increase ever in veterans' health care funding.

We also reject the administration's proposal to put in effect a $1,400 annual tax on our military retirees by raising their TRICARE health care premiums. It is interesting, the administration didn't ask members of the President's cabinet or Members of Congress to raise our health care premiums by $1,400 this year, and yet it would do so to men and women who served in the military for 20 to 30 years. That's wrong, and this budget resolution rights that wrong.

This budget provides for a strong national defense. It improves our homeland security against terrorism, and it supports our military forces and veterans with our deeds, not just our words. Our troops, our veterans, and our Nation's defense deserve a ''yes'' vote on this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Texas for giving me this opportunity to speak so I can applaud my friend, John Spratt, the gentleman from South Carolina, for bringing to this House floor a fiscally responsible budget, particularly as it relates to defense. It is an excellent budget.

The fiscal year 2008 budget resolution provides the same level of funding for national defense as was requested by the President. It provides for $507 billion for national defense and another $145 billion for overseas deployments, numbers consistent with the CBO's re-estimates of the President's budget.

The budget resolution includes proposals that would reorient the national defense priorities, including more funding for CTR and nonproliferation programs, which I think are very important, and greater assistance for wounded veterans, including fixing the problems at Walter Reed. This is serious.

Earlier today we passed legislation that was the first step in fixing the challenges at Walter Reed Hospital, and this budget resolution gives us greater assistance in doing just that, and we will be able to do that in the Armed Services Committee.

The budget resolution also calls for a significant increase in funding for veterans' health, and I fully support this proposal which falls within the jurisdiction of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Budget resolutions are difficult at best. But if you look at it through the eyes of the Committee on Armed Services and if you look at it through the eyes of national security, this is an excellent approach. It gives us the opportunity to work our will within the committee, to make things even better, particularly for the young men and women in uniform. They are our national treasures, and this budget resolution gives us the opportunity to do something positive about that.

Again, I thank my friend from Texas.

Mr. EDWARDS. I thank the chairman for his remarks.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I yield to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) who has been a strong advocate and a national leader on veterans' affairs issues.

Ms. HOOLEY. I thank my friend from Texas for yielding, and I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for the fabulous job he did.

I rise today to speak on the budget, a budget I am very proud of. This budget keeps our promise to our veterans, gives us the tools to defend our country, grows our economy, provides American children health care, and much more. All of it is done in a fiscally responsible way, ensuring a balanced budget by 2012, and all the while not raising taxes.

This budget before us sets priorities and ensures that a promise made to our brave veterans will truly be a promise kept. Too often over the last 6 years we failed to meet our basic obligation to our veterans. American veterans who served with honor and distinction deserve better. This budget is a step towards making sure our veterans get what they have earned.

We also have to remember that today's soldiers are tomorrow's veterans. At a time when we are asking our men and women in uniform to sacrifice so much, it is inexcusable not to honor their service by providing the benefits and health care our veterans were promised.

This budget, Mr. Chairman, puts us back on track. I am proud to say that the $5.4 billion increase in funding for veterans is a record 18 percent increase.

We are sending a strong statement to our veterans and service men and women of today that we as a Nation will not forget their sacrifices. I have three letters that I would like to submit for the RECORD, and I would like to quote from them.

First of all, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Gary Kurpius, Commander-in-Chief, says: ''We have long argued that the price of health care and benefits for this Nation's veterans are the ongoing costs of war. The $3.5 billion increase above the President's request is a strong acknowledgment that you agree and that this Nation must do more to live up to its sacred obligation to those who have defended her. The costs of war are not just about buying bombs or tanks, but about providing for our sick and disabled when they return and helping those heroes care for families and independents. The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you.''

From the Disabled American Veterans, National Commander Bradley Barton says: ''The budget recommendations that came out of the House and Senate Budget Committee will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans. This is especially important as our Nation is at war.''

And finally, from Steve Robertson, director, National Legislative Commission of the American Legion says: ''The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee. As a Nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families.''

I support this budget. I support our veterans. This is a good budget. Again, I want to remind people, it does not raise taxes. But if you want to support our veterans, you should vote for this budget.

MARCH 21, 2007.

Hon. JOHN SPRATT,
Chairman, Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SPRATT: On behalf of the 2.4 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW), and our Auxiliaries, I would like to offer our gratitude for the leadership you have demonstrated on veterans' issues through your dramatic increase above and beyond the President's request for fiscal year 2008 funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We have long argued at the price of health care and benefits for this Nation's veterans are the ongoing costs of war. The $3.5 billion increase above the President's request is a strong acknowledgement that you agree and that this Nation must do more to live up to its sacred obligations to those who have defended her. The costs of war are not just about buying bombs or tanks, but about providing for our sick and disabled when they return, and helping these heroes care for their families and dependents.

The dramatic increase in this budget recommendation will help to ensure that all veterans—those from Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom and those from all our previous conflicts—have access to the high-quality health care VA provides, and quicker resolution to their veterans' disability compensation decisions.

The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you, in support of your strong advocacy for this Nation's veterans. We thank you for your strong leadership on veterans' health care and benefits, and we look forward to working with you to ensure the success of this budget.

Sincerely,

GARY KURPIUS,
Commander-in-Chief.

HOUSE, SENATE BUDGET PLANS KEEP FAITH WITH VETERANS

WASHINGTON.—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is urging lawmakers to support a recommended $6.6 billion increase in funding for veterans health care and other programs as called for in 2008 budget blueprints being debated in the House and Senate.

''The budget recommendations that came out of the House and Senate Budget Committees will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans,'' said DAV National Commander Bradley S. Barton. ''This is especially important as our nation is at war.''

Both budget resolutions reported out of committee call for $43.1 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs, the bulk of which is for veterans health care. That is $6.6 billion above the fiscal 2007 enacted level and $3.5 billion above the President's request. The congressional budget blueprints do not include user fees and higher prescription co-payments contained in the President's plan.

Commander Barton praised Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D–N.D.)

and House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D–N.C.) for their support of discretionary funding levels in line with recommendations in The Independent Budget authored by the DAV and other veterans service organizations. ''This much-needed funding increase will allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to better meet the needs of the men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as all veterans who have served in the past,'' he said.

While the draft budget resolutions call for significant increases in spending for veterans programs in fiscal year 2008, the DAV is concerned about future projected funding levels. ''Funding must keep pace with rising health care costs and an expected increase in veterans seeking services from the VA,'' Barton said. ''The DAV will continue working with Congress to ensure that future budgets meet the needs of our nation's sick and disabled veterans.''

The 1.3 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation's disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation's disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization's Web site www.dav.org.

MARCH 21, 2007.

Hon. JOHN M. SPRATT, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on Budget, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee for the Budget Resolution recommendation for $43.1 billion in discretionary funding for Veterans (Function 700). This represents an increase of $3.5 billion above the President's budget request for FY 2008 and $6.6 billion above current funding level for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As a nation at war, this funding will help cover the ongoing cost of war to care for the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and their families. Your recommendations closely parallel the views and estimates submitted by The American Legion earlier this year.

The American Legion urges the Congress to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with sufficient funding to meet the needs of taking care of America's service members—past, present, and future. We look forward to working with you and your congressional colleagues in ensuring the Department of Veterans Affairs remains a solid agency that meets this nation's obligation to those men and women sent into harm's way.

Sincerely,

STEVE ROBERTSON,
Director,
National Legislative Commission.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute.

The gentlewoman from Oregon who just spoke, the tax increase in this budget would hit the average Oregon household with an annual tax increase of $2,751 which would affect 1,336,000 taxpayers in that State alone.

I would like to take a moment to compliment my colleagues on the other side on the veterans' portion of the budget. They do add more resources for veterans, to veterans' health care. They do meet the President's numbers on defense. This is a part of their budget that I would like to compliment them on. We, too, in our substitute, will add additional resources to veterans and veterans' health care. This is an area where I think they have made some improvements over the President's budget in their budget.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BONNER).

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin, our ranking member.

Either our friends on the other side of the aisle have a bad case of amnesia, or their selective memory is such that they need to check themselves into the House physician's office.

The Democratic majority likes to claim that when President Bush came into office, we had a budget surplus, which we did. But because of those evil tax cuts, which let the record also show that many of our Democratic colleagues actually voted for, and some even still profess to support, that because of these dastardly tax cuts, all of the problems we are facing now are because of George Bush and the Republican Congress.

□ 1815

Mr. Chairman, our Democratic colleagues either have forgotten or they fail to acknowledge the fact that when President Bush came into office in January of 2001, he was walking into a recession left courtesy of the outgoing Clinton administration. A few months later, the dot-com bust and the corporate scandal made matters worse. And then remember September 11, 2001, and the ensuing costs associated with responding to the worst terrorist attack in American history and the additional costs associated with fighting the global war on terror.

I mention this, Mr. Chairman, because this budget is step one in the Democratic majority's plan to dismantle the tax policies that Republicans have put in place these past few years, policies that have actually worked, and replace it with the single largest tax increase in American history.

Do not take my word for it, Mr. Chairman. Consider the following: During the past 45 months the tax relief was enacted, 7.6 million new jobs have been created, an average of 168,000 per month; contrast that with the 27 months prior to the tax relief, where we lost 2.7 million jobs.

During the past 15 quarters since the tax relief was enacted, real GDP growth has averaged a robust 3.5 percent, faster than the averages of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In the nine quarters prior to the tax relief, actual GDP growth was just 1.1 percent.

Since the enactment of the tax relief, unemployment has fallen from 6.1 percent in June of 2003 to a near 5-year low of 4.5 percent. This is below the averages of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

My friends in Alabama know a good economy when they see one. Our unemployment rate under the leadership of Republican Governor Bob Riley is just 3.3 percent, the lowest since we became a State in 1819.

Mr. Chairman, no one on our side is saying that we can continue the great economy or that everyone who has a job has the job they hope to retire from.

One thing is for certain. The Democratic majority had 32 opportunities last week in committee to vote on amendments that would have made these tax cuts permanent, 32 opportunities where they had an opportunity to vote for it, put it in writing, make it acceptable to the American people; and all 32 times they voted it down on a party-line vote.

Mr. Chairman, I do not have a chart. I have a picture of America's children. These tax increases are going to result in Alabama alone of an increase of $2,500 for the average working, tax-paying family. That means no braces, no college education fund, no family vacation. That is what this budget is about, our children.

And I thank the gentleman.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I will take a little time on our side to try and catch up. I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for yielding the time.

I find this such an interesting debate every year, Mr. Chairman. You know, as we come down here and debate the budget every year, we do talk about the budget, and it should be a reflection of the priorities of the people of this Nation. And what we see in the budget document that is before us is the priorities of the bureaucracy reflected. Because what we see is a budget document that is going to make spending permanent and tax reductions temporary.

Now, one of the things that we all know is that is not what the American people voted for. That is not what they wanted. They did not want to grow spending. They did not want to increase what the Federal Government spent. They did not want to increase the Federal Government's reach into their lives. What they wanted to do was to see that size reduced. But we do have a budget before us that is going to raise taxes $392.5 billion over 5 years.

Now, the last time the Democrats were in control in 1993, 1994, they passed what was then the largest tax increase in history, about $240 billion over 5 years; and this year it did not take them but about 3 months to come back and decide they were going to get it while they could.

You know, it is baseball season. They were going for a home run. They have earned the moniker of the hold-on-to-your-wallet Congress because America, yes, indeed, can be sure they are coming to a pocket near them as quick as they can get there for a wallet; and they are going to take $2,600 out of every wallet of every one of my constituents in Tennessee, $2,600.

And to add insult to injury, our sales tax deductibility, which was restored

in 2003 because we do not have an income tax in Tennessee, thank goodness, we just have a sales tax, that is being taken away in this bill, $1,100 per family, $2,600 total. It is a tax increase.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 20 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE) with the request that he be allowed to yield part of the time that is allotted to him to other Members.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, if I may just interject, may I just inquire as to how much time is on each side remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) has 63 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 56½ minutes remaining before yielding to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the Chair.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. On the question of yielding control of time, the Chair would advise that the Committee of the Whole may not, even by unanimous consent, alter the scheme for control of time for general debate that was established by the House in House Resolution 275. The gentleman from South Carolina controls the time.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, today with this budget resolution the majority party, the Democratic Party, takes an important step towards restoring fiscal discipline as a priority of our government, something the Blue Dogs in Congress have advocated for years.

When the administration took office in 2001, it inherited a projected surplus of $5.6 trillion. Within 2 years, the surplus was gone; and, since 2001, $3 trillion in new debt, to my friends here, $3 trillion in new debt was added to our country's bottom line.

Because of the previous majority's lack of fiscal discipline, our gross national debt now stands at over $8.8 trillion. They talk about tax cuts, and they are just not providing accurate information at all. It is not true information.

They say that our budget proposes tax increases, which simply is not true. They wrote the tax cuts back in 2001 that were implemented in 2001, and they were to last for 10 years, and they still will be going until 2010. The Democrats are not doing a thing in their budget to raise taxes, not one single thing, to the contrary of what our friends across the aisle are saying.

In fact, our friends across the aisle have added $3 trillion of debt to our country, to our children and grandchildren. That is the way you paid for the tax cuts, was by adding $3 trillion of debt.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Mr. MOORE, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

This is a very healthy debate taking place. I so appreciate the budget that has been brought out of the Budget Committee, and I appreciate the ranking member for offering a budget. Because, in offering a budget, now the contrast is clear.

Pay-as-you-go is the fundamental foundation of fiscally disciplined budgeting, because it means you have made a decision the deficit goes no deeper. We have heard about the soaring deficits, the astonishing turnaround from a surplus to nearly $3 trillion of deficit spending during the years of Republican control, now yielding us a national debt approaching $9 trillion.

I was pleased to see a picture of children raised by a Member of the other side, because I think that is exactly what it is about. We cannot continue to raise this debt on the children, and that is why pay-as-you-go budgeting was passed in the first 100 hours of this new Congress included in this budget.

Now, the alternative budget, they take a little different view. They say pay-as-you-go does not apply if you are going to cut taxes; you do not have to pay for cutting taxes. In fact, they cut taxes $470 billion without any pay-fors, just cut taxes.

Can you imagine a family sitting down saying, man, we have got to tighten our budget, we have got to cut this, we have got to cut that, we have got to this, we have got to cut that. This is so depressing that I am going to quit working full time. I am going to work half time.

It would not make any sense. You have got to count the revenue side; you have got to cut the spending side. That is our plan.

But that is not the end of the Ryan budget and what it means in terms of overall budget picture, because they do have cuts. This is an important final point to make. It reminds me a little bit of the budget policies we debated in the 1990s, where they wanted to cut the heck out of Medicare in order to fund tax cuts disproportionately flowing to the wealthiest people of this country.

In this budget you have a directive to the Ways and Means and the Energy and Commerce Committees to cut $250 billion. We know where those cuts are coming from. I am on the Ways and Means Committee. That is the Medicare committee. They are coming right back after Medicare again, taking dollars from the seniors' health care in this country in order to fund these tax cuts for the wealthiest people, to the extent they are funded at all.

Here is a chart illustrating the distribution on their tax cuts. This is for those over $1 million. This has been the most regressive series of tax cuts ever enacted in this country. We know the benefit has gone all to the rich, predominantly to the rich, disproportionately to the rich.

To think that they fund it out of cutting Medicare, while driving the debt deeper, shows the budget choice. Fiscal discipline, balanced budget by 2012; cutting Medicare, deeper deficits. Go for the Spratt budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

The Republicans are plain wrong; and, worse than that, they are not telling the truth when they stand over there and say that our budget raises taxes. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This Democratic budget does not raise taxes one single penny. In fact, section 203 of the Democratic budget explicitly provides for tax cuts.

One, middle-income tax cuts, including the marriage penalty. That is in this budget. That is a tax cut. Including child tax credits. That is in this budget. That is a tax cut. And the 10 percent tax bracket. And on top of that, you talk about the President's tax cuts, the President's tax cuts in 2001—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman must direct his remarks to the Chair and not directly to other Members. The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Well, Mr. Chairman, my point was simply to try to respond to the accusations that were made to our side. I will respect that.

But my point, if I may continue, is that it really gets on your nerves a bit when the other side makes these accusations which are totally bald-faced wrong. When it says, for example, the previous speaker said, for example, that we did not support the President's tax cuts. Not only did we, as they said, on the Democratic side, some of us did, but we have very seriously kept, the tax cuts of the President from 2001 and 2003 are secured in this budget. That is a fact. And they are consistent with our House pay-as-you-go rule.

The alternative minimum tax, which otherwise would hit tens of millions of families, these families are protected in this.

And the area where it presses us so and in previous budgets, the President's previous budgets have cut veterans. We increase the funding for veterans by over $2 billion in this budget.

It is a good budget.

□ 1830

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1⅔ minutes.

I would simply say the gentleman from North Dakota represents a State that pays a lot of capital gains tax and farm income, death taxes. Under this bill, the average household of North Dakota will see a tax increase annually of $2,613, which had 244,000 taxpayers. In the State of Georgia, the gentleman just spoke, that State will see an average household tax increase per year of

$2,743, which will hit 3,132,000 taxpayers.

If this budget doesn't raise taxes, then why is it that the Democrats shot down every single amendment that was offered to prevent all of these tax increases?

If you really believe it doesn't raise taxes, then why would you prevent us from adjusting the numbers to make sure it didn't raise taxes? You can read any word you want.

You can read any word you want of these so-called reserve funds. At the end of each of these reserve funds, it says, well, we got to come up with offsets to pay for these priorities. We don't want to raise these taxes. We want to extend the child tax credit, but they are not paid for. Actions are louder than words.

More importantly, numbers are louder than words.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman would please direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, the numbers are very, very clear. The numbers, equivocally, have the largest tax increase in the American history.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART).

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Chairman, this budget does include $392 million in increased taxes. Unfortunately, this Democrat tax increase plan affects all Americans. Those increases would hit middle income families, low-income earners families with small children, business, just to name a few.

Now, we have heard here tonight from our friends on the other side of the aisle that they don't want to raise taxes in this budget and that this budget doesn't raise taxes. Mr. Chairman, there is a problem, that the votes here in this body are recorded, they are actually recorded, just last week, not last year, not last century, just last week.

I know memory sometimes fails, but last week, when we marked up this budget, the Republicans offered several amendments making sure that the taxes did not go up. Not a single Democrat in that committee voted for those amendments.

So here they come, on this floor tonight, and say that they do not raise taxes, but last week they voted against an amendment extending the $1,000 per child tax credit. They say, tonight, on this floor, that this budget does not raise taxes, but voted against an amendment last week on this budget that would have extended the marriage penalty tax relief. They say tonight on this floor that they do not want to raise taxes and this budget does not raise taxes, but just a few days ago, they voted against extending the elimination of death tax and even voted against extending the State and local tax deduction.

That is on the record. You see, you can say a lot of things, but votes are recorded.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't take my word for it, don't take theirs. Go on the Internet. Look at the votes. They voted to extend, they voted against those amendments which would have kept the taxes low.

What does that mean for every American family? For example, a middle income family of four earning $60,000 will see an increase of 61 percent to their tax bill in 2011.

But wait, there is a lot more. But wait, like the TV commercial says, but, wait, there is more, 150 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, of $1,795 by 2011. In the State of Florida alone, there are over 7.6 million taxpayers. I hate to break the news, there aren't 7.6 million rich people in Florida. Over 7.6 million taxpayers in my home State of Florida will see their taxes increase by an average of $3,036.

Mr. Chairman, this is the largest tax increase in the history of this country.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield myself 1 minute just to read some clarifying language, which is in the Democrats' budget.

At the end of these reserve funds, so called, for middle income taxpayers, it says we want to provide this tax relief, but only to the extent that such bills or joint resolutions in the form placed before the House in the Committee on Rules would not increase the deficit or decrease the surplus for fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

Then, in section 401, where they talk about these tax extensions as a statement of their policy preferences, they assume that the cost of such a policy is offset. What does that mean? That means they are not covering the tax cuts. That means if you want to extend these tax cuts, they would have to pay for them on top of raising these taxes.

What this budget resolution also does, if you simply merely want to extend this tax relief, that is past 2010, you would have to come up with more tax increases to do so. This prohibits the ability of Congress to simply extend this tax relief, thereby bringing these tax increases to a curve.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT).

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, our friends on the other side have complained that I guess we Republicans don't know what fiscal mismanagement is. What does it mean? I guess our Democrats, by their actions this year, especially looking at this budget, I think that fiscal mismanagement means that we are not spending enough. Apparently, if the Republicans had spent more money on everything, including everything in this budget, everything would be perfect, but we certainly know that is not the case. The Democrats seem to think that the IRS tax collectors just need to bring in more money.

But let me tell you exactly what has happened. Collections over the past year are up $2.5 trillion. That figure keeps going up every year. We are collecting more tax revenue, as a share of the economy, more than the average over the past 40 years.

So I guess they are telling me it is not enough. According to the Democrats, there is still too much uncollected tax revenue out there. So their budget, like the budget in the Senate that was produced last week, calls for the IRS to make up the difference trying to close this magical tax gap. I am sure somebody will tell me exactly what this magical tax gap is some time tonight.

In short, this Democrat budget has found that the Federal Government budget is almost perfect. I guess all we need to do is spend more money. Clearly, my colleagues and I have a different approach. Number 1, we think prosperity and economic growth mainly comes from economic investors and workers, not the Federal Government. We think creative ideas, the ones that lead to progress and higher standards of living come from thinking outside the box, not inside the box, because that is government.

I guess last of all, we believe, as President Reagan said in his first inaugural address, we are a Nation that has a government, not the other way around. We believe these things, because we believe the government should limit its taxing and spending, ease the burden on the economy, and let it grow.

Judging by this budget, the Democrats, they don't see that. They think government should call the shots and keep widening its control.

For that reason, this budget trusts the government more than the people that are paying the tax bills. We believe this budget is fundamentally a failure.

If you want to bring it home, in South Carolina terms, so I can let the folks in South Carolina know, this is about a $2,500 tax increase for my average South Carolinan home, $2,500. We believe in freedom. With freedom comes less government, and that is a good thing.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to a distinguished member of the Budget Committee, a member who has great financial expertise, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL).

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, you know, I am a little stunned by this debate tonight, by what's being said by the other side. I am hearing a lot of stuff about how this budget balances the budget, but also about how it doesn't raise taxes. The gentleman from Georgia said, and I believe I wrote it down correctly, that it ''does not raise taxes one single penny.''

Well, this budget either doesn't raise taxes, or it doesn't balance the budget. But it absolutely mathematically cannot do both. It will not and cannot mathematically do both.

This budget includes every penny of tax increases, in the dollars, in the revenue dollars, every penny, which will tax my constituents and the people of California $3,331 each per taxpayer per year. Now, your numbers, the numbers of their budget, includes every bit of cutting the child care tax credit, eliminating the marriage penalty deduction, raising rates at every income bracket, raising the capital gains tax, raising the dividends tax, raising the death tax, raising all of those taxes. Every penny of that is included.

That is how their budget balances. Without it, it doesn't balance. Without it, it has a deficit in the fifth year of somewhere close to $100 billion, which is just a little less than the deficit that we have now.

Now, we didn't write this budget. This is their budget. I will give them the benefit of the doubt, and, presume, that perhaps they would like to have a budget that doesn't raise taxes, or perhaps they would like to have a budget that balances.

But they have increased spending in this budget, which is the reason we have the deficit today. It is not because taxes are too low, it is because spending is too high.

So, I would say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, choose. You are either raising taxes, or you are not balancing the budget, but you mathematically cannot do both. It is your budget, it is your decision. You tell us which one you are going to do.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will suspend. The gentleman will direct his remarks to the Chair, please.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, they should tell the American people which one they are going to do, because they either are increasing taxes or not balancing the budget. They mathematically cannot do both.

Mr. Chairman, the budget, the way it is written, is, absolutely is, and assumes every penny of the largest tax increase in American history, and that is something the people of this country cannot afford.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, before yielding to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) let me just say once again that this budget resolution leaves in place all of the tax cuts implemented in 2001 and 2003. Had we wished, we could have repealed those tax cuts. It leaves them in place in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. The year 2010, December 31, those tax cuts expire their provisions, because they were written and designed to expire by the other side, by the Republicans. That is what happened to them.

This present resolution does not trigger their re-elimination, it doesn't trigger their determination. It doesn't decide either way. By its open volition, by its own terms, these tax cuts will expire on that very day unless they are renewed.

For the purpose of renewal at that point in time, 2010, 2011 and 2012, we will have a surplus of $450 billion, and those surpluses, over time, according to our projection, according to this budget resolution, will build to $1 trillion. If we so choose then, depending on the situation, we can so choose, then, to apply these to all or some of the renewable tax cuts. But that decision can be reached and made then better than it can be now. In the meantime, the tax cuts stand for the next 4 years.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, just to save my good friend from Wisconsin the time, I represent a State where 7.5 million people will not see the repeal to their marriage penalty relief, a State where 7.5 million people will not see capital gains rates go back up under this budget, where 7.5 million people will not lose their child care tax credit, et cetera. Here is what these budgets say about taxes.

In 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, the present law remains in effect. There is no tax cut that was enacted that is modified, limited or repealed.

□ 1845

On December 31 of 2010, whomever is in control of this Congress will have a choice to make, and that choice will be which, if any or all, of the tax cuts should be extended beyond their expiration date.

Here is the difference between our budget and the President's Republican approach. We say that we should think first, analyze first, and then make the right choice. We say that when we get to December 31 of 2010, let's look at what surplus may exist. If Mr. SPRATT's budget is adopted, the budget will be in surplus of $154 billion by fiscal year 2012.

We say, let's look at the revenues that come in. Our budget, of course, is based upon the CBO's more pragmatic and conservative revenue estimates.

The President's budget, Mr. Chairman, is based upon more optimistic revenue assumptions. We hope that he is right. We hope that the optimistic revenue assumptions are correct, and there will be an even greater surplus at that point in time.

Our budget contains significant investments in closing the tax gap, in going after the tens of billions, if not hundreds of billions, of dollars that are owed under present law but not collected. And we say, let's see how we do in collecting some of those funds. Let's look at the Nation's priorities, and then let's make an intelligent choice about what to do.

The President and the Republican Party have fallen back into the same old rut of saying, when we get to December 31 of 2010, let's do what we have done throughout our period of primacy and majority. Let's borrow more money. That is how we got into the mess that we inherited when we took this majority in January.

We believe that this budget should not borrow money from the Social Security trust fund and from foreign governments like the People's Republic of China to meet our obligations. We believe we should pay as we go, whether it is adding a dollar for the Children's Health Insurance Program, or reducing a dollar in taxes paid by the people of the country.

We believe that the right choice and the first choice and the dominant choice is to stop running this country on borrowed money from the Social Security trust fund, from the Chinese and from others.

So when my friend from Wisconsin read from our resolution, I thank and commend him, because that is exactly what we stand for. When we get to December 31 of 2010 and the question about which tax cuts to renew should be taken up by this Congress, if we are the majority at that time, we will make a wise choice based upon what the surplus is, what the economy looks like and what our options are. But we will not borrow the money from the Social Security trust fund and from other creditors around the world.

We have tried that under them for the last 6 years. It is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe for a cataclysm in the next decade when Social Security and Medicare come due in a very, very large way. So our principle is not to increase this deficit and to build a surplus, and we stand by it.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. I would like to deeply thank, Mr. Chairman, the chairman of our Budget Committee, the very able and distinguished gentleman from South Carolina, JOHN SPRATT, who has led our committee to produce a budget that will balance in the next 5 years with no tax increase. It is going to take pay-as-you-go and it is going to take a real regimen to correct America's net negative savings rate.

Certainly, the Bush administration has done much damage in the last 6 years by making a mess of fiscal policy, just as it has made a mess of foreign policy; and now we have got these overhanging budget deficits and trade deficits. For, in fact, in 2001, the administration inherited a projected 10-year surplus of nearly $6 trillion; and within 2 years alone the surplus had been eliminated and we began piling up debt, adding $2.8 trillion over 6 years, much of it purchased by foreign investors, which I will talk about here in just a second.

I want to thank Chairman SPRATT for doing what is right for America. Many organizations, like the Concord Coalition, states, ''Thus, to be clear, the Democratic budget resolution does not call for nor require a tax increase.''

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said this month as well, ''The House Democratic plan does not include a tax increase.''

And the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution of this month also says, ''The Democratic budget would not raise taxes.''

I think that those on the other side of the aisle doth protest too much, because, in fact, you didn't produce this kind of budget. Now, you might be well intentioned. I used to think Republicans balanced budgets. I have since learned differently after serving here in this Congress.

I want to talk about what is so dangerous about the debt that the Republicans and the Bush administration have accrued. If you look at who is footing the bill, it is foreign countries, Japan, the oil-producing and exporting nations, China. In fact, China now holds over $1 trillion in U.S. dollar reserves, and they are looking to diversify away from the Dow. And if you look at what is happening to the price of gold, it is skyrocketing as the U.S. dollar's worth is dropping.

Our accounts are badly out of order. This budget maintains in the reserve account all of the tax breaks that were given to the American people, the extension of the child tax credit, the marriage penalty relief, extension of the research and air experimentation tax credit, extension of the deduction for State and local sales taxes, school construction bonds and so forth.

So even with the incredible drag of the Iraq war on our Federal budget and our Nation's economy, this Democratic budget that Chairman SPRATT and members of our committee have produced does achieve balance within 5 years. It is rigorous, it will make the Nation more healthy, and I just want to commend him for taking a most difficult challenge and doing what is right for the American people, for our children and grandchildren.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

I was just taken aback when I heard one of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I think from South Carolina, talk about the concern they have about being, that they weren't big spenders enough. Well, what we have seen under Republican control, where they had the executive and both branches, the spending has skyrocketed. In fact, we saw essays from Republican conservative pundits saying that probably they should have lost in the last election because they have lost control of the budget process. The greatest increase since the Great Society.

I think it is important to go back and look at their record. When they had complete control, spending was out of control, and the most conservative pundits said so. The facts reveal it. They may try and run away from their record at this point by attacking a balanced budget, pay-as-you-go, and focus on priorities that the American public supports, but their record does not support the assertion.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, we have just heard from the other side about what we are doing. And based upon what they are doing, it is very important for us to set the record straight, that they have had control of this place; and for the last 5 years, since 2001, under this Congress and this administration, they have borrowed more money just from foreign governments alone, from foreign nations, more money than all of the previous 42 Presidents and administrations.

And I know that is shocking to the American people. But it is important. That alone is a glaring example of the outright mismanagement and the lack of fiscal responsibility that they put us in debt to that tune.

Again, since 1789, the foundation of this country, all the way up to 2001, they borrowed more money in the last 5 years, $1.6 trillion. We only borrowed $1.3 trillion from 1789 from foreign countries to 2001. That is why we have to move with a responsible measure like this.

On top of that, Mr. Chairman, finally, I want to say that, in addition to borrowing that money, they inherited a surplus of $5.6 trillion that was squandered in addition to the debt that was acquired.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3½ minutes to the chairman of the RSC, a distinguished member of House Budget Committee, Mr. HENSARLING from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. I hope that the American people, Mr. Chairman, are paying very careful attention to this budget debate. The budget is really about priorities. We have heard about the priorities of the Democratic budget, and that is, let's increase the Federal budget at the expense of the family budget. I can hardly believe what I am hearing with respect to taxes. We know that, having been in power fewer than 90 days, the Democrats have now proposed the single largest tax increase in American history, almost $400 billion of new taxes on the American people.

Well, guess what? Last time they were in the majority, Mr. Chairman, they proposed the single biggest tax increase in American history. I suppose there is something to be said for consistency.

Now, I have heard from our distinguished chairman, and I have the utmost respect for him, and others that there is really not a tax increase. We just have expiring tax provisions.

Well, Mr. Chairman, when people all over America all of a sudden look at their tax bill and see how much they are going to have to pay, I think that is going to be a distinction that is lost on them. Either you are paying more in taxes or you are not.

And I might point out, Mr. Chairman, that all the members, all the Democratic members of the Budget Committee had the opportunity to make sure that the tax relief for American families was permanent, that we extended it. But, instead, they voted against it. They will have another opportunity tomorrow. So there is the old saying that your actions are so loud that I can hardly hear your words.

And so what are we left with? Again, the Democrats are proposing the single largest tax increase in American history.

Now, I have the honor and privilege of representing a lot of good people in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas. And in my home State, the single largest tax increase in American history that Democrats are trying to impose is going to mean an extra $2,700 burden on a family of four in my State.

And I asked people, I asked people from the Fifth District, what is this going to mean to you? And I heard from a lady, and I will use first names here, Diana from Mesquite, Texas, a suburb of Dallas. She said, Congressman, I wanted to let you know that I am a single mom that does not receive any type of child support, and an increase of this amount would break me. I would be at risk of losing my home with this type of increase. I am writing to ask your help to keep this from happening. This would be devastating to middle-income families in my situation.

Mr. Chairman, what the Democrats don't seem to realize again is when they spend more money on the Federal budget, they are taking money away from the family budget with their single largest tax increase in American history.

Let's hear from Brian from Dallas. Dear Congressman HENSARLING, the tax increase would most likely affect our ability to pay tuition and books for our daughter to go to college. She is a junior this year, and we are trying to save money for her education. The loss of these funds due to an increase in taxes will have a negative impact on our plans for her education.

They are taking money away from the family budget. They are putting Diana's home in jeopardy. They are putting the education of Brian's daughter in jeopardy.

Vote down this single largest tax increase in American history.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the House Budget Committee, Mr. SMITH from Nebraska.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Chairman, I rise with great concern about the proposed budget and how sustainable it is or it is not.

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I would express it concerns me a great deal when I see the fact that 115

million taxpayers would see their taxes increase on average by almost $1,800 in 2011. I think this discussion can be healthy, and I appreciate the fact that the majority does want to keep some of the tax relief, but it needs a budget that comports with that intent.

It concerns me a great deal when I look at the long term when we see absolutely no change in direction from prior spending. We hear that there has been borrowing that has taken place. It has. There is no denying that. But now it seem that the option is to take more tax dollars from the taxpayers, and that is what I think will be damaging to the economy as a whole and certainly the economy of households all across America. When I look at what I see as very damaging to seniors with the dividends tax relief plan that would be cut off, that concerns me a great deal, and when I look at the impact to my State of Nebraska in the increases in taxes, I just don't see where this new budget sets a new direction.

We were told in the Budget Committee several times that we need fundamental reforms in entitlements, and yet this budget presents absolutely no reforms in entitlements.

Mr. Chairman, those are my concerns and they are concerns about the future.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), the former superintendent of education in the State of North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of North Carolina's children and our working families and the people of America, I rise this evening in support of this budget resolution and congratulate my good friend the chairman of the committee, JOHN SPRATT, for his visionary leadership in crafting this important document.

With this budget resolution, the new Democratic majority will succeed where our Republican predecessors have failed. To budget is to govern, and this resolution will produce a balanced budget with balanced priorities, and that is important.

As the chairman has indicated, I am proud to be the only chief State schools officer serving in Congress, and I am particularly pleased about the measures providing for education and innovation in this budget. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership.

Specifically, rather than continuing the Republicans' record of passing a crushing debt burden on the future generations, the Spratt resolution contains tough budget discipline for a new direction for the Federal budget. The Spratt resolution rejects the President's proposed education cuts and instead provides greater investment in our Nation's schools, including the school construction bonds that Chairman RANGEL and I have been working on for nearly a decade. It provides $50 billion for children's health insurance, and it protects millions of middle-income families from the onslaught of the alternative minimum tax.

There are many reasons to support this resolution, but in my brief allotted time, I want to say that I support this resolution on behalf of my grandson, William, and my granddaughter, Virginia, and all the children of America and their families who deserve a budget that puts their needs first.

My friends, this is what the Republican leadership has done for the last 6 years. They used a credit card. No one in America could get away with paying nothing but the interest on a credit card. They have run up the debt for my grandchildren and every child in America, and that is wrong. The definition of a good budget is when you do what is right for the next generation. That is the definition of this budget, and it is a budget that is truly balanced. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your hard work.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, if a Nation is judged by how it treats its weak, its vulnerable, and its children, then American families can be proud of the fiscal year 2008 Democratic budget.

For the past 6 years, this administration and its allies in Congress have pit ordinary people and their struggles against the interests of the wealthiest in our society.

The Democratic budget represents a dramatic change of course, putting children and families first by investing in health care and education, accommodating tax relief to middle-class families, and providing assistance for hurricane-ravaged communities and supporting the poorest of the poor, those who have no tax liability. We budget for expansion of the State children's health insurance program.

We often hear folks say that education is the key, but, of course, money is what unlocks the door. The chairman's mark increases funding for education and social services, job training by almost $8 billion over the 2008 program level in the President's budget for vital services such as Head Start, IDEA, and programs under No Child Left Behind.

We reject the President's cuts to critical social services programs by helping struggling families make ends meet, and in doing so, we recognize that the number of Americans living in poverty has increased by 5.4 million since 2000. We provide the resources to help support energy assistance, food stamps, and child care for low-income families. The Democratic budget rejects the President's proposal to eliminate the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, serving nearly 5,000 seniors each month in my district.

This evening's budget debate is about our priorities as a Nation as well as our morality. In short, the Democratic budget represents a downpayment to fulfill the commitment we have made to our Nation's children and families.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise as a member of the Budget Committee. I am now in my second term. There is a great contrast between what went on in the last 2 years when I was in the Budget Committee and this budget that is being presented.

I want to compliment, first of all, on behalf of the people in my district, the 13th Congressional District in Pennsylvania, and as a proud American, to be able to do the right things fiscally, to be responsible, to compliment and congratulate Mr. SPRATT for putting forward a budget that is fiscally disciplined and fiscally responsible. And it is very different than the budgets we saw presented by the President or that I have seen passed in my last 2 years in Congress.

This budget is fiscally responsible, and it is a budget that is committed to new priorities for Americans, priorities that recognize the needs of the American families. This budget ends the Republicans unsustainable borrow-and-spend policies.

One of the most irresponsible things we could do we have watched them do for the last 6 years, and that is, spend money we simply do not do not have, with no real expectation about how we are going to repay the debt that we have incurred. In the last 6 years, we have reached a point where we have, because of their borrow-and-spend priorities, an almost $9 trillion national debt.

This budget will put our Nation on sounder financial footing. It won't correct everything because the fact is that you can't deal with an $8 trillion debt in 1 year, and we won't. But this budget does put us on sound fiscal footing, and that is something we should all be proud of and we should all support, both sides of the aisle, because what this budget does is it says that we are going to finally take responsibility to pay for what we spend and we are going to reach a balanced budget in 5 years.

We are going to have some surplus at the end of that 5 years. We are going to be able to start paying down our debt that we would otherwise be leaving to our children and our grandchildren. And at the same time, we are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure that we spend a few extra dollars, take money other places, pay as you go, as we have talked about, to actually be able to put some more spending into education and health care and veterans' health.

You have heard about some of that already this evening, Mr. Chairman, but we want to be absolutely clear that this budget requires any new Federal spending, including what we do this year, to be fully paid for, rather than left to future generations. It balances the Federal Government's checkbook within 5 years without raising taxes. It sets us on a course to pay down that debt and to pay for Social Security. It

is committed to tax relief for hard-working Americans, particularly the middle class, and we are committed to do so in a way that is fiscally responsible by saying we will do it and we will pay for it.

And we have asked our committees to take that seriously. I am on the Ways and Means Committee. We fully expect to deal with what would be an enormous tax increase on middle-class Americans, the alternative minimum tax, by not just patching it for 1 year, as the Republicans suggest and have been doing for 6 years, but by, in fact, fixing it permanently.

This budget also, Mr. Chairman, and I want to emphasize this, recognizes the priorities of American families as they seek to meet their obligations, just as we should as the Federal Government.

Fifteen years ago, a long time ago now, in 1992, I worked successfully as a Pennsylvania State Senator to start one of the Nation's first children's health insurance programs. We call it CHIP; the Federal Government calls it SCHIP. But as a result after 1992 to now, we have 150,000 children in Pennsylvania who have health insurance they wouldn't have had otherwise, private health insurance, and 4 percent of Pennsylvania children still don't have coverage. And nationwide, there are 7 million children across America who are uninsured. This is unacceptable.

So let me just say, Mr. Chairman, this budget responds by dedicating resources to insure those children. So let me just say this budget is a win for America's children, and it is a win for America's family. It is a budget that values our Nation's future economic outlook. It balances the budget. It lays the future groundwork for prosperity for the future of this country. It gets us to a point where we can pay down our debt. This budget is a proposal that presents a new direction for America. We should all be for it. It is fiscally sound and makes that investment.

I am proud to support this budget. We all should be.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT).

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Chairman, I have heard someone say, appropriately so, once they saw the Democrats' budget plan, ''Be afraid. Be very much afraid.'' And the reason they said that was because they were looking at one of the points that have already been raised here, and that is the Democrats' largest tax increase in U.S. history. As people have already noted, a $392 billion increase in taxes on American families. That certainly is reason alone to be afraid of this budget and what it will mean to the American taxpayer.

But mind you, the Democrats don't stop there. After they raise your taxes once, they are going to be coming after you a second time. And they do that in the form of trying to fill the so-called ''tax gap.''

What is the tax gap? The tax gap is their position of how they fill up any shortage in their funding by going after people who are not adequately paying their current tax amount.

I think the average American would say that we are already paying far too much in taxes. I think if you ask the average American, they would tell you that they are already paying their fair share. But the Democrats are saying that in addition to the $392 billion in additional taxes that American families are going to pay, they are going to go after you one more time.

Right now, 86 percent of Americans, according to the IRS, are paying their fair share and paying at the respective time. The Democrats are saying that they are going to go for another around $300 billion from Americans. Now, in committee, what they said they were going to do is go after those egregious loopholes in corporations and the like. I think Members on both sides of the aisle would agree that we should try to close those loopholes and go after corporations who are not paying their taxes.

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But do you know what? In the testimony before our committee, the IRS Commissioner told us that when he goes after corporations, that is only about 10 percent of all the outstanding taxes that are out there. That means one thin dime on the dollar is maybe available.

I pointed out to you already that they want to get another $300 billion from you and I from this so-called tax gap. What does the IRS say about that? They say the most realistic figure they could come up with is around $20 billion. And not just in one year. It would take about 5 years in order to achieve that $20 billion.

So what does it come down to? It comes down to that the Democrats are raising your taxes on one hand and going with the other hand one more time at you to try to fill that tax gap. What does that mean to the average family, you and I?

Well, yes, they will tell you they are going to go after the bad guy out there who is not paying his taxes, but, in order to do it, they are going to have to change the Tax Code, strengthen the IRS, put more agents out there.

As a matter of fact, again, the IRS Commissioner came and testified before the committee. He said, in order to achieve even a part of what the Democrats want to do, they are going to have to impose draconian changes to the Tax Code. That means you put in a 1099 to pay your niece when she babysits or pay your neighbor when he mows the law. Draconian effects, added to this tax increase is what the Democrats would cost the American family.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

Mr. MCHENRY. I thank my colleague from Wisconsin.

Mr. Chairman, this is a landmark day in the House of Representatives; and records are being broken. In fact, they are being shattered here on the House floor.

Democrats are poised to pass a $392.5 billion tax increase to this Federal budget and a spending increase to match it. And, you guessed it, it sets the record for our Nation's history, the record of the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, they should be proud, because they have outdone themselves from their budget in 1993, which was then the largest tax increase in American history. One hundred and fifteen million taxpayers will see their taxes increase by $1,795; 48 million married couples will see their taxes increase by $2,899; 17 million elderly individuals will see their taxes increases by $2,270. This isn't chump change for the American people. It is real money. It is real money the Democrats believe the American people owe them.

And why do Democrats feel entitled to this money? Because it is what they do. It is what they do. They tax and they spend. They spend and they tax. It is what the Democrat Party here in Washington does. And why is that? Well, I think it is because they haven't had a new idea in 70 years with the advent of the New Deal.

But as a side note, for the American people listening today, Mr. Chairman, I think it is very interesting, very striking, the level of hypocrisy in this budget. Because it also does something very interesting with this budget today. It accepts the President's funding levels for the troops in Iraq through 2009.

Well, this is pretty interesting, because just last week the liberal majority voted to cut off funds in 2008, right before the general election, didn't they? I think this is a high level of hypocrisy out of this budget. And what they said last week is ''we are standing against the war in Iraq. Get our troops out in 2008.'' What they are saying with this budget here today is, ''we will fund it a little longer.'' It is a level of hypocrisy here in Washington, D.C., Mr. Chairman, that the American people need to know about. They say, forget about last week.

This Democrat party is the party of consistent inconsistencies.

Another glaring error is, in their first majority budget in 13 years, they don't tackle the entitlement programs. They don't tackle reforming entitlement programs to make sure Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security can last for generations. We need entitlement reform.

Republicans, when we were in the majority, we had $280 billion worth of entitlement savings and reform to preserve Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and all the entitlement programs. But the Democrats ignore the looming entitlement crisis.

I think what we have to go back to is this is the tax-and-spend party, and we must oppose them. I urge my colleagues to vote against this budget.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER), a member of the Budget Committee and the distinguished chairman of the Republican Policy Committee.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Chairman, in addressing my issues with this budget, I prepared some elaborate charts. I know that you are pretty worn out of charts by now, but I think these will try to encapsulate some of the problems that I believe my party and myself in particular have with this budget.

Some of the problems I think have to be dealt with right off the top. We have a budget that promises to balance by 2012. It does so with many promises for future spending, and it promises to hit American taxpayers with the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, we are told not to be concerned about that. As someone with young children who would like to be out of the poorhouse when I retire, I worry about that greatly. I worry about that greatly, the economic opportunities that they will have in the future.

So when I see that it is being defended, the largest tax increase in human history is being defended because there are promises contained within the budget that, no, we do not mean this, we will only raise certain of your taxes, that still provides me very cold comfort indeed.

When I hear there are promises for billions upon billions in future spending in things called reserve funds, which means there is no money in it, it constitutes an IOU account, which to its name you have signed the American taxpayer, I also take very cold comfort in that.

When I hear that we talk about trying to find tax gap money to pay for new spending, I am reminded of the fact that tax gap funding is the difference between taxes levied and taxes collected. In short, tax gap money has to go for deficit reduction or debt reduction, because you are going to collect money for which services have already been purchased. If you allow new spending based upon that money, you will continue to perpetuate a deficit.

Now, I have come to this also as a father with young children and as a member of Generation X. I know I don't look it, because I am bald, but I am far younger than my service here has rendered me to look.

In the final analysis, there is no true entitlement reform here. My generation is the one that thinks it is never going to see Social Security, that the babyboomers will break the social safety net. We are concerned about Medicare, we are concerned about Medicaid, and yet we are told that we will deal with that later.

We are told by the Democratic majority that, when they were in the minority, somehow we impaired their ability to think and devise plans to save the social safety net of the United States, and let us wait. I tell you, I am not getting any younger, and I prefer not to wait.

Now, one of my particular concerns I have to address. I have much respect for the Blue Dogs in the Democratic Party. My father was a Blue Dog Democrat. He wound up being a Reagan Democrat, which I think is pretty good.

The Blue Dog Democrats looked like this before in the past when they were in the minority, trying to show that they were fiscally conservative. Now, I don't know that I would let this dog watch my wallet, but I wouldn't think he would bite me. So I might take a chance on him or not.

But today's budget, for the Blue Dogs who support it, I want you to see what America is going to think of you. There you are. There you are, with a fine new hairdo. There are you are with silk and threads, purchased with the largest tax increase in American history.

Now, that dog might not bite you, but I certainly wouldn't trust it to guard my wallet either.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I thought I had seen it all, until I just saw the cartoon. What we have seen tonight is a sort of unrelenting attack for 3 hours on a straw man, a demonized version of this particular budget resolution. Because if you read it, you read it in vain in search of any particular language or place where these tax cuts are terminated or extended. That decision, as we have said, has been left open until a better time when we know better where we stand.

If we had wanted, if we had wished, we could have repealed all of the deductions, credits and exemptions passed in 2001 and 2003. We did not do that. They remain in effect this year, next year, 2009, 2010. Then they expire on December 31, 2010, because that is the way they wrote them to expire, in order to diminish the size of the tax cuts somewhat and shoehorn them into the budget situation, which would only provide for so much tax expenditure reduction.

I have also heard it said out here something about defense spending. Let me mention to you one little anomaly we haven't brought up tonight. But in order for the other side to say they are spending more than us on defense, I guess, I surmise, they have added $38 billion to budget authority, BA, for national defense. But, at the same time, they have taken $60 billion out of the outlay stream. That is the real money that is outlaid, that is spent by the Pentagon.

So they have taken $60 billion away from our troops in the field by their assumption about outlays, if it were efficacious; and, in fact, it is not efficacious. You can't control outlays. So they have an anomaly like that in the middle of the budget.

So I don't think it behooves them to criticize our budget resolution or to make it something that it isn't, because they have got things there in their own budget resolution that won't bear scrutiny and require explanation.

But the tax cut, let's get down to the bottom line, this budget resolution does not raise taxes. It allows all of the tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 to remain in place until they expire December 31, 2010, and leaves for then the decision as to what to do about their renewal.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAHONEY).

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise tonight on behalf of Florida's 16th Congressional District in support of the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2008.

I decided to run for Congress 18 months ago because I wanted to protect my daughter Bailey's American Dream. I was appalled by how Republican leadership had turned a budget surplus into a $3 trillion deficit. I was appalled by out-of-control earmarks that put political payoffs over good government. Tonight, my daughter's legacy of this Republican mismanagement is her personal debt tax of $29,000.

I am proud to stand here tonight with Chairman SPRATT and my fellow Blue Dogs in support of a fiscally responsible budget that reflects the priorities and values of the American people. I am proud that the Democratic Party is taking yet another step in bringing fiscal responsibility back to our Nation.

Our first step happened within hours of our swearing in, when we began to clean up the Republicans' culture of corruption by passing earmark reform. Next, we passed the pay-as-you-go, PAYGO, rule that forces this Congress to live within its means, just as American families do. I am proud that this budget follows the PAYGO rule, as it demonstrates a Democratic commitment to walk the walk of fiscal responsibility and not just talk the talk.

Instead of a fiscal policy that gives tax breaks today and funding them by going into debt and mortgaging our children's future, this budget begins the process of bringing spending under control and lays the foundation to return to a budget surplus so that we can legitimately lower taxes.

While the President's budget imposes nearly $81 billion in new taxes over the next 5 years through user fees for veterans, seniors and other taxpayers, our budget reduces taxes on middle-income families.

While the President's budget increases taxes by more than $300 billion by cutting employer-provided health care, our budget lowers taxes by extending the child tax credit, the marriage penalty tax relief, the 10 percent individual income tax bracket, the research and development tax credit and the deduction for State and local sales tax, something that is critical to my constituents in Florida.

And while the President's budget increases the deficit by over $1.4 trillion

over the next 10 years, our budget would create a budget surplus within 5 years.

This budget resolution provides for a strong national defense, giving the President what he requested, while increasing homeland security funding for port security and our first responders. It takes care of those who have served our country by increasing funding for veterans service programs by a record $6.6 billion. It stands up for Florida's 1.8 million small business owners by rejecting the President's plan to slash the Small Business Administration's budget by 26 percent.

Mr. Chairman, this budget puts children and families first by investing in health care and education. It helps 733,000 of Florida's most vulnerable children who do not have health insurance.

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This budget helps 733,000 of Florida's most vulnerable children who do not have health insurance by increasing funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and invests in our children and our economy's future by honoring the President's broken promises by funding No Child Left Behind and special education and Head Start.

This budget resolution funds our priorities and reflects the priorities of our districts, the States and Nation; it lowers taxes, not raises taxes.

Mr. Chairman, I encourage my colleagues to support the House budget resolution.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I yield myself 30 seconds, Mr. Chairman, only to say that I can't understand how you can say that their budget lowers taxes, let alone doesn't raise taxes.

You can't have it both ways. Either you are raising taxes and balancing the budget or you are not raising taxes and not balancing the budget. It is mathematically impossible for the other side to say they are balancing the budget and not raising taxes.

With that, I yield 6 minutes to the distinguished ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. BUYER of Indiana.

(Mr. BUYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BUYER. I compliment Mr. RYAN for his budget. I speak in support of the Republican alternative for fiscal year 2008 budget resolution.

In particular, I would like to address the veterans discretionary health care and programs which would provide $42.4 billion, most of it for health care. This budget is $2.9 billion above the administration's overall request.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican alternative would provide our Nation's veterans with an increase of $8 billion more than the Democrats over the next 5 years, without any tax increases on the very same veterans. That is a budget of $8 billion more for our veterans versus a tax increase of $392.5 billion on America's veterans.

Now think about that. They want to stand up and say, oh, we are going to be against enrollment fees and copays, but what are they really doing? They are increasing taxes on veterans to do what? Increase funding for veterans programs. Think about it. Over 25 million veterans they want to increase taxes on.

The assumptions behind the numbers of Mr. RYAN's budget here, within the $28.5 billion for medical services for FY08, House Republicans would provide $1.3 billion more than the President's request, including $463 more in increasing demands on VA health care system, $200 million for mental health over and above the President. These numbers are over and above the administration. $100 million more on OIF, OEF, $100 million for chiropractic care, $100 million for dental care, $80.2 million on long-term care, $50 million more than the administration on polytrauma care, $65 million for prosthetic and sensory aids, $25 million for blind rehabilitation. Republicans would also provide nearly $100 million more than the administration's request for the medical and prosthetic research.

We also fund $1.4 billion above the administration's budget for construction and facilities. This includes $585 million to the O&M accounts for improving our current medical facilities, an additional $691.7 million to support a substantial investment in the construction, renovation, planning and design of major medical VA facility projects, and $120 million for the gravesite expansion in the National Cemetery Administration.

When you look at the chart, the zeros on the chart, the dots here are the National Cemetery expansions. Those would include Calverton, New York; Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania; Canton, Georgia; Abraham Lincoln, Illinois; Dayton Ohio; Houston, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona and Riverside, California.

When you look at the diamonds, what this would include would be advanced planning for construction projects in Tampa, Florida; in Bay Pines, Florida; Seattle, Washington; American Lake, Washington; Seattle, Washington; Roseburg, Oregon; Palo Alto, California; San Francisco, Loma Linda, Los Angeles; Dallas, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; Butler, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.

In North Carolina it would be in Salisbury, Ashville and Fayetteville; Wichita, Kansas; Omaha, Nebraska. And in South Carolina, it would be in Columbia and in Charleston. In Alabama, it would be Birmingham. Perry Point, Maryland; Bronx, New York; West Haven, Connecticut.

With regard to major construction projects and full funding, that is depicted by the stars on this map, you would have in Los Angeles, California would be seismic corrections of $103.8 million; Fayetteville, Arkansas, clinical addition $59 million; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a campus consolidation of $105.5 million; Lee County, Florida outpatient clinic of $89 million. St. Louis, Missouri, is medical center improvements of $25.8 million. Columbia, Missouri operating suite replacement of $32.5 million. And in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a spinal cord center of $30 million.

With regard to how we get to the $8 billion differential, it is this: The Democrats assume an assumption over the 5 years of an increase of 5.8 percent. The Republican proposal over 5 years is an increase of 7.2 percent. What I did is I looked at the medical inflation plus utilization rate, and when you work those numbers, we actually come up with a differential of $8 billion. The Republican alternative is an $8 billion increase in veterans funding over and above the Democrat proposal. And we do that without increasing taxes on America's veterans. I think that is pretty important.

When I think about the taxes on America's veterans and families, let's see, those are tax increases on middle-income veterans and their families, tax increases on low-income earners, tax increases on veterans with children, those who own small businesses. Think about it. It is going to be an increase in marginal rates potential, the child tax credit reduction could be wiped out. You've got the increase in the marriage penalty, increase in death taxes, increase in capital gains and other tax increases. That is going to be upon America's veterans, and I think that is pretty disturbing.

So a $392.5 billion Democrat tax increase, who does it hurt? It hurts America's veterans. It hurts our wounded warriors. It hurts our low-income veterans. It hurts veterans with children. It hurts our veterans who are business owners.

Now think about this for a second. I want to go back to it. I support the copays, I support enrollment fees for proper utilization. But what is happening here? You see, my Democrat colleagues will stand up and say to the veterans community, oh, I don't want to increase any copays, I don't want to do enrollment fees, but what are they doing instead? They are taxing America's veterans, who in turn will then take those dollars and roll them back into veterans programs. But they are going to champion that we are not going to increase copays, I am not going to increase enrollment fees, but what I am going to do to 25 million veterans is I am going to tax them, not only during your life, but I am going to tax you when you die.

Thank you, for the time Mr. RYAN and I thank you and your staff for your hard work on this budget. It is a budget of which we can be proud.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican Alternative for Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution for veterans discretionary healthcare and programs would provide $42.356 billion, most of it for health care. This budget is $2.939 billion above the administration's request.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican alternative would provide our Nation's veterans with an

increase of $8 billion more than the Democrats over the next 5 years without any tax hikes on those same veterans.

Within our $28.5 billion for medical services for FY08, House Republicans would provide $1.3 billion more than the President's request, including: $463 million more for increasing demands on the VA health care system; $200 million for mental health care; $100 million more for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom; $100 million for chiropractic care; $100 million for dental care; $80.2 million for long-term care; $50 million more than the administration for polytrauma care; $65 million for prosthetic and sensory aids; and $25 million for blind rehabilitation.

Republicans also would provide nearly $100 million more than the administration's request for medical and prosthetic research.

We fund $1.4 billion above the administration's budget for construction and facilities. Included in this is $585 million for improving our current medical facilities and an additional $691.7 million to support a substantial investment for the construction, renovation and planning and design of major medical facility projects. The Republican Alternative also includes $120 million for the National Shrine Commitment of the National Cemetery Administration and expands gravesites in the following locations: Annville, PA; Canton, GA; Elwood, IL; Riverside, CA; Calverton, NY; Houston, TX; Elwood, IL; Dayton, OH; and Phoenix, AZ.

This is why the Republican alternative also funds an additional $691.6 million above the administration's request to support a substantial investment for the construction, renovation and planning and design of major medical facility projects.

$105.5 million for the consolidation of campuses in Mr. DOYLE's district in Pittsburgh, PA. Constituents in Mr. ALTMIRE's, Mr. MURPHY's, and Mr. MURTHA's district will benefit as well.

$103.8 million for seismic corrections in Mr. WAXMAN's district in Los Angeles, CA. Constituents all over the Los Angeles area would also benefit including constituents in Ms. HARMAN's and Ms. WATSON's district.

$32 million for a Spinal Cord Center in Ms. MOORE's district in Milwaukee, WI. Constituents in Ms. BALDWIN's, Mr. SENSENBRENNER's, and Mr. RYAN's district will benefit.

$89 million for outpatient improvements in Mr. MACK's district in Lee County, FL. Constituents in Mr. MAHONEY's, Mr. DIAZ-BALART's, and Mr. BUCHANAN's district will benefit as well.

$59.9 million for a clinical addition in Mr. BOOZMAN's district in Fayetteville, AR. Constituents in Mr. SNYDER's, Mr. BLUNT's, and Mr. ROSS' district will also benefit.

$92 million for medical center improvements in Mr. CARNAHAN's district in St. Louis, MO. Constituents in Mr. LACY CLAY's and Mr. AKIN's district will benefit.

$25.8 million for operating suite replacement in Mr. HULSHOF's district in Columbia, MO. Constituents in Mr. GRAVES', Mr. SKELTON's, and Mr. AKIN's district will benefit.

Mr. Chairman, the Republican Members also fund advanced planning for medical facilities. The funding represents about 5 percent of the estimated cost of the project and is an important first step in the construction of these new facilities.

$36.8 million for a co-located joint use medical facility with the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. This project is in Mr. BROWN's district but constituents in Mr. CLYBURN's district will benefit as well.

$8 million for Poly-trauma center expansion and a bed tower in Tampa, FL. The project is in Ms. CASTOR's district, but it will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. PUTNAM, and Mr. YOUNG.

$1.9 million for seismic improvements in Seattle, WA. The project is in Mr. MCDERMOTT's district but will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS and Mr. SMITH.

$6.8 million for inpatient and outpatient clinic improvements in Bay Pines, FL. This is in Mr. YOUNG's district and the project will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. BILIRAKIS, Ms. CASTOR, and Mr. PUTNAM.

$26.5 million for land to build a new medical facility in Louisville, KY. This project is in Mr. YARMUTH's district but will also benefit constituents in the districts of Mr. DAVIS and Mr. LEWIS.

$14 million for seismic correction in ambulatory care in Palo Alto, CA. This project is in Ms. ESHOO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HONDA, Mr. LANTOS, and Mr. STARK will also benefit.

$2.4 million for seismic corrections in American Lake, WA. This project is in Mr. SMITH's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS, Mr. MCDERMOTT, and Mr. REICHERT will also benefit

$3.6 million for seismic corrections for the mental health building in Roseburg, OR. This project is in Mr. DEFAZIO's district but constituents in the districts of Ms. HOOLEY and Mr. WALDEN will also benefit.

$2.9 million for a spinal cord injury center in Dallas, TX. This project is in Ms. BERNICE JOHNSON's district but other constituents in the Dallas area will also benefit.

$4.1 million for a spinal cord injury center in Bronx, NY. This is in Mr. SERRANO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. RANGEL, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. ENGEL will also benefit.

$4.3 million for seismic corrections to five buildings in San Francisco, CA. This project is in Speaker PELOSI's district but constituents in the districts of Ms. WOOLSEY, Ms. LEE, and Mr. LANTOS will also benefit.

$7.5 million for seismic corrections to thirteen buildings in Los Angeles, CA. This project is in Mr. WAXMAN's district but all constituents in the greater Los Angles area will benefit especially those in the districts of Ms. HARMAN and Ms. WATSON.

$2.2 million for an outpatient clinic in Butler, PA. This project is in Mr. ENGLISH's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. ALTMIRE and Mr. PETERSON will also benefit.

$6.5 million for seismic corrections for buildings in Seattle, WA. The project is in Mr. MCDERMOTT's district but will also help constituents in the districts of Mr. DICKS and Mr. SMITH.

$3 million for an outpatient clinic in Palo Alto, CA. This project is in Ms. ESHOO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HONDA, Mr. LANTOS, and Mr. STARK will also benefit.

$8.5 million for outpatient clinic expansion in Washington, DC. This project would affect constituents in ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON's district but also benefits constituents in Mr. DAVIS's and MORAN of Virginia, as well as constituents in Mr. WYNN's and leader HOYER's district.

$2 million for a clinical addition in Salisbury, NC. This project is in MELVIN WATT's district, but constituents in Mrs. BONO's, Mr. BACA's, and Mr. MCKEON's districts will also benefit.

$3.75 million for medical and surgical bed, and ambulatory modernization in Wichita, KS. This project is in Mr. TIAHRT's district but will benefit all veterans in Kansas.

$2.6 million for diagnostics and specialty care facility renovation in Columbia, SC. This project is in Mr. WILSON's district but the constituents in the districts of Mr. SPRATT, Chairman of the Budget Committee, and Mr. CLYBURN will also benefit.

$5.9 million for clinical expansion in Dallas, TX. This project is in Ms. BERNICE JOHNSON's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. SESSIONS and Mr. MARCHANT will also benefit.

$1.6 million for an outpatient clinic in Huntsville, AL. This project is in Mr. DAVIS' districts constituents in the districts of Mr. ADERHOLT and Mr. BACHUS will also benefit.

$2.5 million for a nursing home care unit in Perry Point, MD. This is in Mr. GILCHREST's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. MILLER and Mr. SARBANES will also benefit.

$5.2 million for a clinical ward tower in West Haven, CT. This project is in Ms. DELAURO's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. HALL, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. MURPHY and Mr. COURTNEY will also benefit.

$7.8 million to fix heating and air conditioning and clinical deficiencies in Omaha, NE. This is Mr. TERRY'S district but I am sure all Nebraskan veterans will benefit.

$1.8 million for outpatient expansion in Ashville, NC. This project is in Mr. SHULER's district but constituents in the districts of Mr. DAVIS and Mr. DUNCAN, of Tennessee, will also benefit.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to my next chart, which shows the Republican alternative budget outlays for the next five years.

As you can see, the President's five-year average budget growth rate for VA discretionary spending is 1.60 percent, the Democrat's is only 5.8 percent and the Republican alternative five-year average growth rate is 7.2 percent.

This number accounts for the cost of medical inflation that is calculated by the consumer price index and annual increased use of VA by all veterans.

What this means Mr. Chairman is that over the next five years Republicans would increase spending by $8 billion more than our friends on the other side of the aisle and we will do this without a tax increase.

Mr. Chairman, at first blush the Democratic budget appears good for veterans, but it is really just smoke and mirrors.

The Democratic budget contains a $392.5 billion tax hike. This includes tax hikes on middle income veterans and their families, veterans who are low-income earners and veterans who own a small business. Democrats also blocked every amendment offered in the Budget Committee that would stop unfair taxes on veterans and their families.

Mr. Chairman, the last time Democrats were in the majority they passed the largest tax hike in history. Now, with only 3 months in office they have already broken their own record. This is the wrong message to send to our veterans and their families.

Mr. Chairman, we are a nation at war, and we will win this war. The best way to maintain morale of our servicemembers is not to micromanage the fight, pretending that's good for the troops; it is to make tough decisions here that will engender their confidence in our capacity to preserve the vitality of this nation while they fight for its freedom.

I believe that the Republican budget helps do exactly that, while honoring the promises we have made our veterans.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, may I inquire as to how much time is left on each side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman from Wisconsin has 31½ minutes and the gentleman from South Carolina has 23½ minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I will yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, if America is watching this debate, I'm sure they are getting confused by all this minutia, which is very, very important. So the things that they really need to be listening to tonight is, and I hope America is paying attention to this, this is the largest tax increase in the history of the United States by the people who said they weren't going to do it when they were running for office. They promised a streamlined government. They promised less spending and lower taxes.

Let me tell you what they are going to raise, and I hope everybody in America is listening because this isn't minutia, this is the facts. Marginal tax rates are going up by $192 billion. The reduction in child credit, if you've got a child, the reduction in child credit is $27 billion. That's an increase. The increase in the marriage penalty is $13 billion, you know, the marriage issue that has been around for a long time.

The death tax. If you are going to leave your business to your kids, if you want to reduce that so that you can leave your children your farm or something, they are going to increase that by $91 billion. They are going to increase the capital gains tax. If you are a small businessman trying to make it in this very competitive society in which we live, they are going to increase the cost of capital gains by $32.5 billion, and then other tax increases by $47 billion.

So, America, if you are listening tonight, and I hope you are, it is late in the day, except in California, I guess in California it is only about 5 o'clock or a little before, but if you are listening, remember, the people who promised you a streamlined government, the Democrats, the people who promised you lower taxes and better government, the Democrats, remember, they are giving you, across the board, the largest tax increase in the history of America, $392.5 billion over 5 years.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Members are reminded that they are to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to the television audience.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for putting together such a great alternative budget.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the budget resolution being considered today, and I do urge support for the minority substitute budget.

Totaling nearly $3 trillion, the 2008 budget, as introduced, is the largest in history, and it fails on many levels.

First, it fails to provide significant entitlement reform. Second, it fails to provide fiscal restraint on discretionary spending. And finally, it fails in reducing the physical burden on taxpayers.

The 2008 budget, as introduced, also fails to provide a blueprint for reining in our bloated farm programs. I want to talk about that for a minute.

This budget is consistent with CBO's March baseline and provides funding for reauthorization of current farm bill programs. But it also allows for up to $20 billion in so-called ''reserve spending'' over 5 years. Even with select commodity prices as high as they are, allowing for farm programs to continue at their current funding level is a tough pill to swallow.

Even though an estimated allocation is included in the budget, under the current farm programs, the actual amount of spending will depend on future commodity prices. Should crop prices fall, as they did after the 1996 farm bill, we will see dramatic increases in farm payments, spending that we have not accounted for or that we have otherwise offset for.

According to the CRS, the 1996 farm bill was expected to cost $37 billion over 7 years, but with farm prices falling dramatically, the Federal Government actually spent nearly $90 billion. This could happen again. With the volatility inherent in current farm program spending, taxpayers should not be saddled with an additional $20 billion over 5 years in so-called reserve spending.

While at this point this reserve spending requires offsets, there is no way to ensure that that requirement will actually stick in the outyears.

Mr. Chairman, I urge support for the minority substitute, which includes fiscal restraint and an unprecedented level of transparency. The substitute budget includes about $300 billion worth of savings in entitlement reforms and balances the budget in 5 years without increasing taxes.

With 77 million baby boomers set to retire, pushing the total cost of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from today's 8.4 percent of GDP to 18.9 percent of GDP in 2050, we literally cannot afford to do nothing. The substitute budget also does not provide the additional reserve spending for agriculture programs.

Finally, the substitute budget includes a requirement that earmarks be included in the text of appropriation bills. This is a measure that I have championed for a while, and I should point out in the last Congress I had good bipartisan support. Many Democrats supported this legislation. They are not today. I think it should be noted, if it was good last year, it's good this year as well.

I urge support for the substitute budget.

Mr. SPRATT. Before yielding to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), let me read from three letters we received in our committee. One is from the American Legion with respect to our support for veterans' health care.

''The American Legion and its 2.8 million members applaud the Budget Committee,'' that's us, Democrats, ''for the budget resolution recommendation of $43.1 billion in funding for veterans' health care. That is our recommendation.'' That is the American Legion speaking.

The DAV says, ''The budget recommendation coming out of the House will make a real difference in the lives of America's sick and disabled veterans. This is important if our Nation is at war.''

And the Veterans of Foreign War, the VFW says, ''The members of the VFW stand firmly behind you in support of your strong advocacy for this Nation's veterans.'' These letter go on and on and on. We had a press conference yesterday where they endorsed our budget resolution because of what we provide for veterans' health care, the biggest increase in veterans' health care funding in the history of the organization.

Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

We have been lectured. And sometimes you just have to be reminded about what's been happening to the deficit. We have been lectured by the people who created this chart. You don't create charts like this by accident. Those that created this chart are the ones that are lecturing us on what to do. Just look at the chart.

Now, one way to improve this mess is to improve the economy. Some economic policies help the economy, some don't. We know that creating jobs is extremely important.

□ 1945

If you look all the way back to Herbert Hoover, the job growth under this administration is tied for last since Herbert Hoover. We know that the job growth during this administration in fact isn't even as good after two major budget-busting tax cuts, isn't even as large as the Congressional Budget Office suggested it would be if we had done nothing. They had a projected job growth if we do nothing. They cut the taxes, and we actually didn't even do as well as that. So, the worst job performance since Herbert Hoover.

And what has it done to the stock market? Every 4 years, since the first Reagan administration, the first 4 years of Reagan, the second 4 years, the first 4 years of the first Bush administration, Clinton, the aggregate 4 years change in the Dow, worst since before 1980. That is what is the result of the economic policy.

Now, we know that we can grow the economy if we reduce the deficit, reduce the vulnerability to foreign countries. Three-fourths of our net debt has been financed by foreign investments, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia being three of the largest. You can't negotiate trade deals if you are borrowing money from somebody. You can't negotiate oil prices if you are borrowing money.

We can also grow the economy with investments in education, job training, and science. The Democratic budget does it. You can help with health care, with help in productivity. You can invest in agricultural, rural communities, and transportation. Our budget does that. And we can grow the economy with fiscal responsibility, and the Democratic budget will help dig us out of the ditch that was formed by the Republican policy starting in 2001.

There will be a number of budgets introduced. I will be introducing the Congressional Black Caucus budget that I frankly think does even a better job and makes tougher decisions. But this budget will dig us out of the ditch because it will make those important investments in the economy.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for recognizing me.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this fiscally responsible and morally sound budget resolution. I am especially proud that it prioritizes health care for our neediest children over tax breaks for our wealthiest few.

For the first time in my tenure in Congress, I feel we have a blueprint that invests in our future. I want to commend Chairman SPRATT and my colleagues on the Budget Committee for including the necessary funds to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program to every child who qualifies. These are children of hardworking families. Low-income children and their families should have access to the same quality health care as everyone else, but the reality is that they don't. Under the President's budget, even more of them would have been cut off from SCHIP and Medicaid.

As a former school nurse, I can tell you that children without health care translates into children who do not receive primary care, who do not receive dental care, who are sent to school sick, who suffer from preventable illnesses.

I applaud the $50 billion investment into SCHIP because it is sure to bring us great returns, returns in the form of healthy, productive children. After all, that is what we have been sent here to do. I urge my colleagues to support this budget and support this bill.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, given the history of the last few years, there is no reason to take what the Republican minority is saying seriously. And I say that because the history of the last 6 years has been to prove that people who don't believe in government don't run it well.

It is also true that past Republican budgets have never made permanent the President's tax cuts. So there is rank hypocrisy to suggest that there is a tax increase embedded in this one when there was a similar increase embedded in past Republican budgets.

But, beyond that, what we are really talking about is criticism from a party which ran up $3 trillion in the Federal debt over the last few years; and they have done that, frankly, by putting their tax cuts for the richest people in the country on a credit card. Only they don't intend to pay the credit card. They intend our children and grandchildren to pay back the credit card with $3 trillion of additional Federal debt.

Now, we could go on, on that subject, but the bottom line is budgets are about priorities; and the Democratic priorities in this budget are very, very different from what the administration and the Republicans have done before.

For example, clean water. In my home State of Maine, we value the environment. A good environment is absolutely essential to the health of our economy, because so many people come to me precisely because we have clean air and clean water and a beautiful place to visit. So it is important to the economy. People move to Maine because it is a fabulous place to live, and the quality of the environment is important there as well. Our future responsibility for the planet is all tied up in environmental issues.

But the President and the past Republican Congress has reduced the Clean Water State Revolving Fund over the last few years. Clean water is a basic value for all Americans, and they tried to reduce funds for the Clean Water Revolving Fund. Conservation and preservation of important resources, important to all people in this country, they tried to cut it. We are increasing that funding.

The bottom line is this: Our budget priorities are dramatically different. We have rejected the administration's proposed cuts to core environmental programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Fish and Wildlife Refuge System, and EPA's own budget. They have been trying to reduce funding for the Environmental Protection Agency. We have a different set of priorities. We increase that funding, and this makes a dramatic difference. This budget funds conservation and environmental protection infrastructure at $31.4 billion, $2.46 billion more than the President requested.

We have provided a deficit neutral reserve fund for the reauthorization of the farm bill, and a significant portion of that increased funding would go toward enhancing the Department of Agriculture's natural resource conservation programs.

I would go on to say that expanded agricultural conservation programs help farmers better comply with environmental regulations, and they certainly provide valuable natural resource benefits for the public.

The bottom line is this: clean water, clean air, protecting public health, improving the environment, fulfilling our responsibility to preserve the planet for our children and grandchildren, to preserve our parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and open space. That is what this Congress should be doing. That is what this Democratic budget does. It is a dramatic change from the past, and I just want to congratulate Chairman SPRATT for the good work he has done in making this budget environmentally sensitive.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, what we are hearing this evening almost gives hypocrisy a bad name. We have our friends on the other side of the aisle somehow chastising us for not doing enough on entitlement reform when they have had 6 years of being in control. We have a situation, in spite of their collapse of the budget process last year, they couldn't put it together, collapse of the appropriations process and, quoting from the Heritage Foundation, that they presided over one of the largest run-ups in spending in American history. They somehow are looking at our budget and thinking that it is wanting.

Well, through their warped prism, I can understand that. Their top priority is not dealing with the tsunami of the alternative minimum tax, which they have ignored for the last 6 years, but to put $1 trillion in the hands of the top 1 percent over the next 10 years with their tax priorities.

As my friend Mr. ALLEN pointed out, this is about priorities. And, for the first time in 6 years, we are going to reverse their negative priorities dealing with the environment, one of the few areas that they could control spending. Now, bear in mind, these are the folks that gave us the rainforest in Iowa which they are now concerned about, the Bridge to Nowhere.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. LYNCH). The gentleman must direct his comments to the Chair.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the advice of the Chair.

They cut spending for the environment, the 300 section, 16 percent; and under the leadership of Mr. SPRATT and the Democrats, we are reversing it. We can't deal with all their problems in just one year, but we are making a good start with over $2.5 billion to deal with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, dealing with cleaning up of superfund sites and toxic waste.

But look at the details of what they offer in their alternative later. Mr. RYAN has suggested almost $19 billion of reductions in ag, transportation, and

natural resources. These are conservation, these are clean water, these are environmental protection. The contrast could not be more stark.

We are investing in America's environmental future. They, if their alternative were adopted, would continue the deterioration, the disinvestment, the attack on America's priorities. I would respectfully suggest that this alone ought to be a compelling argument to reject their alternative offered later and to adopt the Democratic proposal that is before us this evening.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from the Budget Committee, Mr. HENSARLING from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that the last speaker is reading the same budget that I am. I mean, it is incredible to be lectured here on the whole question of entitlement spending, and the Democrat budget alternative is stone cold silent on the issue, the number one fiscal issue that is challenging our Nation.

And don't take my word for it, Mr. Chairman. Look at the testimony of the Congressional Budget Office. Look at the testimony of the General Accountability Office. Look at the testimony of our Federal Reserve Chairman, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of OMB. Anybody who has any responsibility for fiscal policy in America will tell you that we are on the verge, we are on the verge, and to paraphrase the Comptroller General, we are on the verge of being the first generation in America's history to leave the next generation with a lower standard of living.

So when we get lectured about entitlement spending, why is the Democrat alternative silent on it? Why have all the Democrats refused to join us in doing anything to save Social Security, save Medicare, save Medicaid for the next generation?

Let's look here. They speak about what has happened in the Federal debt, and they should be concerned about it. But when it increases $3 trillion, look at what has happened to the unfunded liability in Social Security and Medicare when they refuse to do anything, anything to reform entitlement spending. If you do not reform Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, they will not be there for the next generation. They will not be there. If you do not reform them, you lose them.

So how their budget, Mr. Chairman, can be described as fiscally responsible when they are absolutely silent on the number one fiscal issue that faces our Nation is beyond me.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS).

□ 2000

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member for yielding me this time.

I appreciate Mr. HENSARLING's comments as well. My comments this evening are going to be directed toward the entitlement program known as Medicare. It does seem that the budget, before this evening, the budget we are debating, does lack a lot. It has a significant deficiency.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) has already pointed out the lack of any real entitlement reform; but there is a missed opportunity in this budget which is disturbing. Yesterday in the Rules Committee, I offered an amendment which was not made in order. This amendment was relatively simple. It would have provided for reconciliation instructions, require the House Judiciary Committee to take up and report to the full House a bill that would reform our medical justice system, and limit the number of lawsuits of questionable merit in order to achieve an overall savings of $2 billion over 5 years.

By capping noneconomic damages at $250,000 per provider, $500,000 per case for noneconomic damages, the CBO estimates that this amendment would save nearly $2 billion over 5 years, $4.5 billion over 10.

Because the practice of defensive medicine is so pervasive, this amendment would establish a liability safety net for many States. It would also insulate providers from lawsuits of questionable merit while ensuring just compensation for those who have been truly injured.

Defensive medicines increases the cost of medical care. It reduces access for patients, and increases the cost of programs like Medicare and Medicaid for the United States taxpayer. This is doubly important as costs increase in Medicare and Medicaid year after year, and we seek savings to make certain that these programs are solvent and viable for those who depend on them now and well into the future.

Medicare and Medicaid represent a growing expenditure of over $600 billion a year for the Federal Government. As the medical liability crisis grows, a large fraction of these dollars will be spent on inefficient health care services provided more to protect the provider from a lawsuit than to improve the patient's health.

Effective medical liability reform would constrain the growth of vital programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, and ensure their long-term viability.

I am happy that the Republican substitute addresses this issue in a responsible manner. Once again, it is an example of a missed opportunity by the budget before us tonight. I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the budget and ''yes'' on the Republican substitute.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BISHOP).

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this resolution. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle argue that this budget represents the largest tax increase in history; nothing could be further from the truth. This budget does not increase taxes by a single dime.

Rather, this budget simply extends current law as the President and the then-Republican majority designed with the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, which expire on December 31, 2010. At that time we will have a decision to make: Whether to renew those tax cuts, and how to pay for them. The era of blank checks for tax cuts is over. Today, we restore fiscal responsibility to the budget process. With respect to entitlement reform, I think many of us would like to hear some acknowledgment from our friends on the other side of the aisle that the $3 trillion in debt that was accumulated on their watch makes dealing with the growing demands on Medicare and Social Security all the more difficult to contend with.

We balance the budget within 5 years and set the table for tax-writing committees to do their job, which first and foremost, should result in repeal of the AMT for middle-income Americans once and for all.

As this budget puts us on the glidepath to fiscal responsibility, it dramatically raises spending levels education, veterans, and health care. These priorities will never be overlooked on our watch.

We reject the President's proposal to cut funding for education by $1.5 billion and eliminate 44 programs. We give college students and their families a chance to succeed by rejecting the President's plan to zero out SEOG, Perkins loans and need-based grants.

Mr. Chairman, I commend the distinguished chairman and his staff for their excellent work, restoring middle-class priorities is accomplished. Fiscal responsibility is achieved. Finally, the fiscal blueprint of America's future reflects our hopes, dreams and the promise of economic prosperity and security in the years ahead.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I stand here tonight as probably the only Member of this House of Representatives that is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Blue Dogs, as well as the New Dems. That is a broad cross-section of diversity within our party that is not shared by this party, and I make that observation only because the American people are watching this tonight. The truth must come out and be said properly.

That is why all three of these groups, moderate, conservative to the liberal are behind this budget. Let me state very quickly, because there is one fact I want understood tonight, and that is that this budget is not a tax increase, does not raise taxes one penny.

Let me quote, for example, and this is not Democrats who are just saying this, this is what economists from the Concord Coalition, moderate conservative economists say. ''Thus to be

clear, the Democratic budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' That is not just us saying it.

From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this is what they say: ''The House plan does not include a tax increase.''

The Alexander Hamilton Project of the Brookings Institute says this: ''This Democratic budget does not raise taxes.''

Now, that is so important for us to get across tonight. They have run the polls. They did their surveys. Stick it to the Democrats, just say they are raising taxes. That will stick with them.

But not tonight, Mr. Chairman, not tonight. These are other people who are speaking and saying that the Democrats' budget does not raise taxes.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute to simply say, you can get every left-leaning think tank to say whatever you want, but the Congressional Budget Office is saying: This raises taxes. Plain and simple.

We can reinvent new words and come up with new language. We can put reserve funds that are meaningless into the budget.

Mr. SPRATT. If you are quoting the Congressional Budget Office, can you cite the quote?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. The CBO says that their baseline, which the gentleman is using for his budget, if the tax cuts expire, the baseline goes up, that is what they are using.

Let me put it another way. According to the Congressional Budget Office, their budget does not balance if they don't raise taxes. Their budget does balance, which they are claiming it does, by letting these tax cuts expire and raising taxes across the board.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH).

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, whatever the rhetoric, the Democratic budget resolution fails to keep faith with the American people.

Instead of embracing fiscal responsibility, it underwrites a saturnalia of spending propped up by, and listen to my words, the largest tax increase in American history.

Instead of maintaining pro-growth tax policies that grow the economy and reduce the deficit, this budget clobbers the American economy by requiring nearly $400 billion of new revenue.

Instead of protecting middle-class families, it lays the groundwork for tax increases on a whole new level of taxpayers.

Instead of setting new priorities, it throws priority setting to the wind and undercuts the benefits of tax policies that have clearly helped the middle class.

The details are stunning. For starters, the Democratic budget threatens to reduce the child tax credit by half, increase the lowest tax bracket from 10 to 15 percent, reconstitute the marriage penalty and eliminate incentives for higher education savings like the student loan interest deduction.

In my home State of Pennsylvania, the average taxpayer can expect to see an estimated $3,000-plus increase in their annual tax bill. That is an increase in the tax bill for a working family of more than $15,000 over a 5-year period. That is a different standard of living.

So much for their empty rhetoric about children and families. Not only does this budget contain the largest tax increase in American history, it also chooses to employ smoke and mirrors instead of underwriting real financial relief from the AMT for Americans.

For years, the AMT has been a growing monster because while originally intended to close loopholes for the very wealthiest taxpayers, it was never indexed for inflation. It is now hitting more and more middle-class taxpayers. As a result, this year, without relief, 23 million taxpayers will be forced into AMT status and hit with a significant tax increase, ten times the number than if it had been indexed to inflation. The Democrats' budget does nothing, sets aside no resources to address this problem.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle fail to include an AMT repeal in their budget. They don't even include the bare minimum step of a patch to keep it at bay as Republicans have in previous years. Instead, this budget resolution holds millions of middle-class taxpayers hostage to a record tax increase. Don't let the rhetoric on the other side of the aisle fool you. The reserve fund that is folded into this resolution is utterly meaningless. This is a piggybank that doesn't even rattle when you shake it.

America's working families deserve better. I urge every Member who cares about working families, cares about protecting their earnings to vote ''no'' on this budget today.

Mr. SPRATT. How much time is left on each side, and who has the right to close?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has 7½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) has 18 minutes remaining.

The gentleman from South Carolina has the right to close.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield to myself 1½ minutes.

I want to go to the point that I mentioned a minute ago about who says what about what this budget does. Let me talk about the Congressional Budget Office. By law, that is what we use.

Here is what the Congressional Budget Office says: The year 2010, all of these tax cuts expire. I think we all agree with that. All of these tax cuts expire in 2010. But we are talking about marriage penalty, per child tax credit, death tax, capital gains dividends, income tax rates across the board, they all go up.

That is the red line. That red line shoots up because all of those taxes are increased. That is the line the Democrats are using to run their budget. That is the line the Democrats are using to finance their new spending. That's the line the Democrats are using to show that they get to a balanced budget.

The green line, the dotted line, that is the CBO line that says here is what revenues will be if you extend the tax cuts. That's the line we are using in our budget. We are balancing the budget by controlling spending.

So reserve fund, shmerve fund, that means nothing. What matters are the numbers. And the numbers, not by the Center For Budget and Policy Priorities, not by the Brookings Institution. The Congressional Budget Office. The Congressional Budget Office shows us very clearly, black and white in the numbers, in the numbers in your budget resolution.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair reminds Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, what I am saying, the red line shows all the tax increases kicking in and hitting American taxpayers. That is the line that the Democrats are using to run their budget, to balance their budget, to pay for their new spending.

You can use any word you want, you can't escape the fact that they are imposing, banking on, planning on, assuming, legislating the largest tax increase in American history.

They want to smoke screen it with reserve funds and cute language. The fact is the fact, and the fact is underlined by the Congressional Budget Office.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

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Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman, the ranking member, for yielding once again; and I wish to follow up on his insights about this single largest tax increase in American history that the Democrats are trying to impose. Again, Mr. Chairman, it is reminiscent of what they did 12 years ago, the last time they were in the majority. Again, as I said, they at least get an A for consistency.

But, Mr. Chairman, this is very, very serious business; and we need to take a good hard look at the numbers. But beyond the numbers, Mr. Chairman, we need to look at the people.

Earlier this evening, I read some correspondence from some constituents from the Fifth District of Texas that I have the honor of representing in Congress. These are people who will be hurt by the single largest tax increase

in American history that the Democrats are attempting to impose upon America today.

I heard from Carrie of Dallas, and she said: ''Jeb, you asked us to let you know what we'd be sacrificing if I had to spend another $2,200 in taxes. Well my family's basic needs may not be met, food, shelter, school clothes for the kids. Not to mention not being able to pay my creditors. Please continue to do your best to help the working class and families.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to let Carrie in Dallas know that I want her to be able to keep her earnings, and I am going to fight this single largest tax increase in American history that the Democrats are trying to impose.

Mr. Chairman, I heard from Lorri in Palestine, TX: ''Dear Congressman, I have a son going to college and my mother is on a fixed income and needs my help more times than less. The tax relief I received gave me the opportunity to help my family with their needs. If my taxes are increased again, my family would suffer tremendously.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to let Lorri in Palestine know that I am going to do everything I can to make sure she can keep more of her earnings and fight this single largest tax increase in America's history.

Mr. Chairman, I had a particularly poignant letter from Linda from Rowlett, TX, that I have the honor to represent in Congress. She said: ''This tax increase would make the difference whether my daughter and her husband would be able to purchase a car or not. For my husband and I, it helps us continue with his radiation treatments for his prostate cancer. It allows us to continue providing in-home assistance for my elderly parents, one of whom has Parkinson's and one who has dementia. Please allow us to retain this money for our needs. Please do not let our government take additional tax dollars from us. Please allow us to decide how this money will be spent. Please do not allow the government to decide for us.''

Well, Mr. Chairman, again, I have a message for Linda of Rowlett. I am going to do everything I can to ensure that she gets to keep her earnings for her family, for her health care needs, for her housing needs, her transportation needs.

Vote against this largest tax increase in American history.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. POMEROY). Who seeks time?

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I am reserving my time to close.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

As a representative from the State of Wisconsin, each of us represents about 670,000 people in our congressional districts, and in my home State of Wisconsin, the average tax increase on the average household in the State of Wisconsin will be $2,964, and this will hit 2,164,000 taxpayers. Numbers do not lie. The CBO certifies it. If we pass this budget and it comes into being, that is what will happen. Mr. Chairman, I think that is wrong.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY).

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I look at our families in Texas, everything seems more expensive these days, whether it is getting your kids through school or paying medical bills or insurance or paying light bills; and it is tough enough for family budgets to stretch as it is. I just cannot imagine why we in Washington would hand our families another tax bill for $2,700 for Texas families and expect them to like it, especially since we can balance this budget without that tax increase.

When I talk to our Texas seniors, the first thing they tell me is, please stop spending our Social Security money, quit spending the trust fund; that is our money. Yet, the Democrat budget spends that Social Security trust fund. The Republican budget for the first time in 40 years stops spending it, preserves it for Social Security.

When I look at small businesses, who are the backbone of our country and really struggle to make payroll, I used to be a Chamber of Commerce manager. I know how hard it is to meet that payroll. And 26 million small business owners, we are going to hand them another tax bill of about $4,000 on top of what they struggle today? That is just asking too much, especially when we can balance the budget without those tax increases, without taking senior's Social Security, and do it the right way.

That is why I respectfully disagree, strongly disagree with this bill and why we need to pass the Republican alternative. It makes much more sense for our families.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the remaining time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a very important debate. It is an important debate about our priorities as a country. It is an important debate about how we run the fiscal ship of state, but it is more important than that. It is an important debate about our future.

I related a story the other day in committee that I want to share again with my colleagues.

When I first ran for Congress in 1998, I was a 28-year-old young guy, single, no children. I remember at a Kiwanis Pancake Day, we have a lot of pancake days in Wisconsin. It is how we raise money for charities. I remember going up to a woman in line, not much older than me, and she had three little children. I asked her for her vote. I asked her to support me in my race for Congress.

She said something to me. She said, I do not think I am going to vote for you. I said, well, why not? She said, because I do not think you can relate to me. I said, well, why can I not relate to you? She said, because you do not have children and you do not know what it is like to have children; you do not know what it is like to think about their futures. I said, well, I was in a family. I know what it is like to be in a family. And you know, I did not understand what she was saying to me at the time.

You know what? Now that I have a 5-year-old daughter, a 3-year-old son and a 2-year-old son, I understand exactly what that woman was telling me. I understand exactly what it feels like to really, really, really care about the next generation. It is like your heart is walking around in someone else's body. I can only imagine what grandparents feel like.

So this debate is about numbers. It is about priorities, how much for the Pentagon and how much for veterans and how much for this program and that program. But it is also about what is that horizon we are looking for, what is that vision on the horizon and what are we doing for our kids and our grandkids? What legacy are we putting in place for our country?

The great, beautiful thing about America, the American Dream is that one generation leaves a better standard of living for the next generation. That was drilled into me by my parents, that they were working and thriving so that we would have a better life than they had. That is what our job in Congress is to do.

We have big challenges and our country has faced big ones before, the Great Depression, World War I, World War II, the Cold War. We have got three challenges right now hitting us simultaneously, the global war on terror, globalization, and this entitlement explosion, the retirement of the baby boomer generation which we are not prepared for. This budget is about all of those things, but let me talk about two of them.

Globalization: We have got new kinds of competitive pressures against us unlike that which we have ever seen before. No longer do the oceans separate us from competitive pressures. We have broadband and digital technology. We have competition from countries like China and India unlike any we have ever seen before, and it is something we have to respond to so that our kids and our grandkids can have that higher standard of living.

At the same time, we have got entitlement programs that are exploding before us. We have an enormous debt on our horizon that we have to address.

Now, you heard this talk about taxes, tax increases. This budget does unequivocally raise taxes. I will not belabor that point.

Let me show you three lines. The lower line here, the blue line, shows you what revenues would look like if we kept those tax cuts permanent. That is what our budget will propose to do. Do not raise taxes, keep the marriage penalty down, keep the kid credit where it is, keep income tax rates where they are, get rid of the death tax, do not raise taxes. That is the blue line.

The red line right here shows you what happens if we let the tax cuts expire as this budget proposes to do if you increase taxes. It shows you a $400 billion tax increase.

What really matters here is not the red and the blue line at the end of the day for our children and grandchildren, matters a lot, but at the end of the day what matters is the green line, the spending line. This is the line that is occurring right now under our watch. This is the spending trajectory of the Federal Government because of Republicans and Democrats, both of us. We are all in this thing together. This is the line that happens.

So if you do not address the spending, you are not addressing the real problem. That is why I really have a big problem with this budget. Not only does it have the largest tax increase in history, not only does it raise taxes about $400 billion, it does nothing to control spending. It does not reform our entitlement programs. If you want these entitlement programs to succeed, to exist, to continue, you have to reform them.

Let me show you one more chart. This is the Government Accountability Office. This shows you the trajectory we are on when you take a look at Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, interest on the debt, when you take a look at all the discretionary spending. It shows you this: By the year 2040, that is when my kids will be exactly my age, by the year 2040, our Federal Government will be doubled in size.

Let me put it another way. If we want to have no new programs whatsoever, keep today's government in place, no fewer programs, no more programs, just today's Federal Government, the cost of that Federal Government when my kids are my age will be double what it costs today.

Let us put it another way. We have historically run our government, the Federal Government, by taxing about 18 percent of GDP to fund the Federal Government. Since about 1960, the Federal Government has had to tax the American people at about 18 percent of the economy and its output to fund the Federal Government. When my kids are my age, to fund today's Federal Government at that time it will require us to tax 40 percent of GDP. We will literally have to tax our kids at twice the rate we are taxing ourselves today if we do nothing to reform spending and reform these entitlements.

You cannot survive globalization if you are going to double the tax rates on every man, woman and child in America at that time. We cannot win when we are competing against the likes of China and India if we are going to crank taxes up like that.

So the real problem with this budget is not what it contains, the largest tax increase in American history. The even larger problem with this budget is that it contains no reforms. It contains no spending control. It includes immense new spending.

You have 12 of these reserve funds which are worth less than this piece of paper. They do not pay for anything, but the one thing they do say is we want to spend $115 billion in more money. We do not have the money for it, but if we can have the money for it, we would do it. The other reserve funds say we do not want these taxes to go up, but we are planning on having them go up. We would stop them going up if we had money to do it, but we really are not stopping these tax increases.

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say you are going to balance the budget and not control spending without raising taxes. In order for your budget to balance, in order for the Democrat budget to balance, Mr. Chairman, they have to raise taxes, especially since they are not only not controlling spending, they are increasing spending. That is the way mathematics works.

But more important than all of this, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that we have to get our kids and our country ready to compete in the global economy. We are not prepared for that. We have got to do more to help them compete, and we do not do it by doubling their taxes.

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We tax our country, our businesses and our capital more than any other country in the industrialized world except for Japan, and they just finished two decades of recession. We can't tax our way out of this problem. We will tax ourselves out of being the leading economic superpower. We will tax ourselves out of a good standard of living.

If we don't tackle this problem, we will have severed that American Dream, that American legacy, that legacy that says each generation should leave on to the next a better country, a better standard of living. That is what is really wrong with this budget. We can't keep spending or taxing our way out of these problems. If this budget achieves balance on paper, which I will clearly, freely admit that it does, it will only do so for a short period of time.

Because if you don't fix these entitlement programs, it will drive us that much deeper into debt, that much more in the deficit, just around the corner. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are the big three entitlements. They are very important programs. Health care for low income, health care for people in old age, retirement security. We all agree with that. We think that is the right thing.

But you have got to reform these programs if you are going to save these programs. You have got to reform these programs if people are truly going to be able to count on these benefits. Because if you don't reform these programs, you are driving the debt even higher. You are driving taxes up on our kids and grandkids even more. Not only will we not have programs to depend on for our livelihood when we reach the age of 65, not only will we not be prepared for the baby boomers, we will hit our kids with the biggest tax burden this country has ever seen.

We will lose our greatness, and we will not pass on this legacy of a better country and a higher standard of living to our children. I urge a ''no'' vote on this budget.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, we have been treated to a show tonight featuring a one-trick pony. Every Republican who has come to the well of this Chamber has come with the same mantra, the same slogan, alleging wrongfully that our budget resolution would raise taxes. We have repeatedly explained why, only to have them keep coming to the floor basically on the belief if they say it often enough, maybe somebody will believe it.

Here is one thing you can believe. There is no conjecture in this. These are matter of fact. As Casey used to say, you can look it up. You can look it up. There is the debt of the United States, $5.7 trillion before President Bush came to office. Here is the debt of the United States today, $8.8 trillion. That arithmetic is very simple and very straightforward. It's a $3.1 trillion increase of debt of United States on their watch. This isn't conjecture, this is a matter of record.

I will just show you this chart one more time, because it shows that the revenue flows that we are projecting, based upon CBO's base-line certification of projection of revenues is essentially the same as the President is assuming in his budget from OMB, there is a 1.2 percent difference. This is the so-called biggest tax increase in American history. The President is right where we are, 1.2 percent difference between us.

Now, why all of these shenanigans? Partly it is because this is a red herring. They don't want to talk about really what is in their budget resolution. It's their resolution they will have to pass tomorrow. They bear the burden of truth and persuasion. You would think they would be talking about it.

But deep down in that resolution, you have to dig hard. You will find the same thing in the Agriculture Committee. This year they are to renew and reauthorize the farm bill. We want you to reconcile $9.85 billion in cost reduction in the agriculture bill. It will be awfully hard to get that farm bill out if that reconciliation is implemented.

They say to Labor, which has student loans, Pell Grants under its jurisdiction, you can cut $4.9 billion. Where from, student loans? No where else to go.

They say to Energy and Commerce, with Medicare and Medicaid in its jurisdiction cut $97.539 billion over the next 9 years. Judiciary and our law enforcement programs, cut $3.5 billion

dollars; Natural Resources, already strained, huge backlog for our national parks, cut $4.7 billion; Transportation and Infrastructure, about to run short of funds for our highways, cut $4.2 billion; Ways and Means, with all kinds of safety net programs, this is an instruction to Ways and Means, to cut $153 billion.

Now, this is done under the name and guise of balancing the budget. But what's the bottom line? They also tell Ways and Means to cut taxes by $447 billion.

When you net the $447 billion tax cut against the $278 billion in reconciled spending cuts, the result is $168 billion more to be added to the deficit. That is why they are talking about this other subject. That is why they wouldn't talk about their own resolution. Our resolution will stand on all fours. Our resolution is a good resolution. It's not the best, but it is doggone good.

It brings us to balance by 2012. It fully funds defense. By the way we don't have any shenanigans with the outlays. We don't short up guys in the field $67 billion in outlays. When we get through paying and providing for defense, which is a big item there, is not a lot left over. We husband our resources. We say to our veterans, by golly, you deserve what you are talking about. We give the biggest increase in history, $5.4 billion over current services for veterans health care.

Education, we think it's critically important. We genuinely believe in it on this side. We provide $9 billion more than the President for education next year, over the next 5 years, we provide $46 billion more for education than does theirs.

Children's health insurance, it's going to expire this year. What they propose will not even allow us to insure the children now on the program. We want to not only renew it, but expand it. We also want to pay for it. So we say to those who advocate SCHIP, its expansion, if you pay for it, you can go up to $50 billion in expanding the program. That is in our budget resolution.

Why do they want to put this red herring out there? To keep us from talking about these things that the American people really care about, the health of their children. They should.

We don't have any Medicaid cuts, and we don't have any Medicare cuts. I will tell you, because I have been at this business of the budget for a long time, in 1990 and 1991 Democrats voted for budget measures that truly reduced the deficit and had some restraints on Medicare and Medicaid in them; 1997, the same thing; 1993, with Mr. Clinton, the same thing. When we knew that it was going to improve the bottom line and not be used simply to offset another of their tax cuts, we were willing to pay for Medicare and Medicaid reduction. They have not been able to or willing to.

Finally, as to taxes, we have no tax increase anywhere in this resolution, none whatsoever. For that matter, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, particularly those middle-income tax cuts, which we list and enumerate, not once but twice in our resolution, we fully protect them and leave them in place, full force and effect, this year, next year, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

They only expire then, not because of anything in this budget resolution, but because when the Republicans first wrote those tax cuts and passed them, they put that sunset date in there in order to diminish the size and shoehorn these tax cuts under what was allowed under that budget resolution.

We have got a good budget resolution. It will stand on all fours. It brings the budget to balance in 2012, encourages less in deficits and depth than the President does. Furthermore, we have got a track record to talk about.

When President Clinton came to office in 1993, there was a deficit of $290 billion. Every year thereafter, every year thereafter, the bottom line of the budget got better, to the point where in 2000, there was a surplus of $236 billion. That is what happened on his watch.

President Bush came to office with an advantage few preceding Presidents have enjoyed, a surplus of $5.6 trillion projected by his own economists. He has run that into a deficit of $8.2 trillion. We haven't seen a reversal like that since the Great Depression. That was not the President's fault in the 1930s.

This is the record they have to rely on. The record we have to rely on is the record of the Clinton administration, which balanced the budget in the year 1998 for the first time in 30 years, and built up a surplus of $236 billion, which we turned over to Mr. Bush.

We will discuss this further tomorrow. But what we offer is a responsible budget resolution that reaches responsible results but is balanced well in its priorities.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) each will control 30 minutes on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, as Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee, I am pleased to speak in the time reserved by the Budget Act for a discussion of economic goals and policies that is traditionally led by members of this committee.

Mr. Chairman, we have a responsibility to chart a more sensible course for economic policy than has been pursued over the past 6 years, and this budget starts us down that path.

The President says his policies are working to make the economy strong, and that all Americans are benefiting. But evidence of a slowing economy is building, and an anxiety over the state of the economy remains high. The meltdown in the subprime mortgage market is also adding to worries about the overall health of the economy.

American families are optimistic by nature, but they are understandably worried about the future, because the economy is weakening, even before many have shared in the gains from the economic growth we have seen so far.

Despite 5 years of economic expansion, most American families have struggled just to hold their economic ground on President Bush's watch. Job growth has been modest. Wages are barely keeping pace with inflation. Real incomes have fallen, household debt is rising, employer-provided health insurance coverage is declining, and private pensions are in jeopardy.

These are the economic barometers that matter most to America's families. Having a job is the key indicator of economic well-being for the vast majority of Americans. The President likes to talk about these 7.5 million jobs created since August of 2003, but he neglects to mention the fact that more than a third of those jobs were necessary just to replace the ones that were destroyed between 2001 and 2003.

Most Americans depend on their earnings to support themselves and their families. But unfortunately, workers' pay has lagged far beyond productivity, and wage growth has been weaker and more unequal than in the late 1990s. Strong productivity growth has translated into higher profits for businesses. Corporate profits are at an all-time high as a share of GDP, but not more take-home pay for the average worker.

Focusing on usual weekly earnings of full-time workers, we see only modest gains concentrated in the upper half of the distribution from 2000 to 2006. As we see in this chart, the red bars show the unequal gains during the Bush administration, and the blue bars show the Clinton years when earnings grew for everyone across our country.

The divergence between the haves and the have-nots in the Bush administration economy stands in marked contrast to the last 4 or 5 years of the Clinton administration when real wage gains were strong up and down the wage ladder as productivity growth first accelerated.

These earnings figures do not reflect bonuses of highly paid executives or capital gains and other nonwage income earned at the very top of the income distribution. This picture likely understates the disparities. The people experiencing the largest income gains are executives and highly compensated individuals, while ordinary American workers are only just beginning to see some gains in their paychecks after inflation.

Workers' pay and benefits, the red line, have grown only half as much as productivity; the blue line over the last 6 years. Typically, real compensation of workers, their wages and benefits, tend to track productivity growth as

they did in the late 1990s. But that has not happened since the 2001 recession. Productivity growth has been strong, but real inflation-adjusted compensation growth has been weak.

The compensation growth we have seen came much more from benefits than from wages, but not because employers suddenly became more generous. Benefit costs have been increasing because health insurance costs are rising and employers have had to make contributions to restore the solvency of their pension plans.

□ 2045

Higher benefit costs have squeezed take-home pay, but workers have not been getting more generous benefits in return. Slow job growth and stagnant wages during much of the Bush administration have depressed families' incomes. Median household income in 2005 was nearly $1,300 lower than in 2000, a loss of 2.7 percent during the President's first 5 years in office. Clearly, many American families have a lot of lost ground to make up.

Those who are already well-to-do are doing very well in this Bush economy, but the typical American family is struggling to make ends meet in the face of high costs for energy, health care and a college education for their children.

College tuition is up 44 percent, health insurance premiums are up 87 percent, and the price of gasoline was only a $1.45 per gallon when the President took office.

Somehow, the President's tax cuts were supposed to make up for all of this. But the lion's share of the tax cuts went to the people at the very top, especially the top 1 percent of earners.

The legacy of the President's tax cuts has been to run up massive deficits and debt that leave us unprepared to deal with the budget challenges posed by the retirement of the baby boom generation, and that weakens the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren.

This administration has presided over a stunning reversal of fortune. The $5.6 trillion, 10-year budget surplus that they inherited turned into a deficit over those same 10 years of at least $2.3 trillion.

The administration has incurred the three largest budget deficits on record, including a $413 billion deficit in 2004. The deficit may be retreating, as it usually does in a business cycle recovery, but each year's deficit still stands in marked contrast to the projected surpluses when the President took office.

The gross Federal debt is now almost $9 trillion, or more than $29,000 per person. That is how much every man, woman and child in America owes to this debt. This is the fiscal mess that we have to clean up. Thanks to the President's policies, we are now a Nation of debtors, relying on the rest of the world to finance our budget deficits and excessive spending.

Our current account deficit, which is the broadest measure of our trade deficit with the rest of the world, rose to a record-smashing $856 billion in 2006, from $791 billion in 2005.

This administration keeps giving us records, but they are the wrong kind of records. Record deficits, record debts, and record amounts of money owed by each American citizen. The amount of Federal debt owed by foreigners has more than doubled under President Bush, rising to $2.2 trillion, with Japan and China alone holding $1 trillion of our debt.

Recent stock market volatility underscores just how vulnerable the U.S. economy has become to the decisions being made in other countries. When China sneezes, a half a world away, the U.S. economy catches a cold.

Our future prosperity depends on increasing our normal saving and making wise investments. It depends on being ready for the retirement of the baby boom generation and the pressure we know that that will put on our budget.

The challenge for this Congress is to return to the fiscal discipline that has been squandered by the President and Congress over the past 6 years, and that is what this Democratic budget proposal does.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the ranking member of the Joint Economic Committee, Mr. SAXTON, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

A couple of corrections here. Let me make the point that the American economy is still one of the strongest in the Nation, in the world, the largest economy in the world. We have had 42 straight months of job growth. We have created 7.6 million new jobs under President Bush. We have low unemployment. And this was all done as President Bush inherited a recession as he took office.

I should make note that President Clinton inherited an expanding economy. President Bush inherited one that was slipping into recession. And you don't need to take my word for it. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Laureate and President's Clinton's own chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, observed the economy was slipping into recession even before President Bush took office.

So let's talk about the facts. Let's talk about this budget. I actually think it is a healthy thing that we are arguing over how to balance the Federal budget. That is something that ought to be a goal of both parties.

And, frankly, as a Republican, I am convinced one of the reasons we got fired from management of Congress is that we forgot to pursue a balanced budget. We forgot to limit spending. We forgot to try to look out for the American taxpayer.

I oppose this Democratic budget because it increases the Federal deficit by billions of dollars next year. It continues to raid the Social Security trust fund, and it does include the largest tax increase in American history. And that is not only fiscally irresponsible, it means a staggering $2,700 tax increase for our average Texas family of four.

Now, this budget will spend nearly $3 trillion next year, and we will impose almost $400 billion of tax increases to finance new Federal spending. If you look at what it does, it allows President Bush's tax relief to expire, bringing back the marriage penalty, bringing back the death tax, cutting the child tax credit in half, and raising the income capital gains and dividend tax rates.

And their budget, closer to home, next year it also kills the State and local sales tax deduction, which I and others on both sides of the aisle worked so hard to restore. That State sales tax deduction saves Texas families $1 billion annually, and they will see a new tax increase shortly after this holiday season.

And what is, I think, most absurd, I was listening to the chairman of the Budget Committee's discussion on shenanigans and I thought, I have not seen a bigger shenanigan in any budget in history than what is called the reserve account in the Democrat budget. What they say is, we will do tax relief for middle-class families, but we will pay for it with the reserve account. You ask, what is in the reserve account? And not a single dime, not a single dollar. It is as if someone said, here is a check for what I promise you, but the bank account is empty. I don't know if there will be money in it ever. I don't know how to put money in it. But, trust me, here is a check. Those reserve accounts are the biggest shenanigan.

And after years of criticizing President Bush for not eliminating or at least reforming the alternative minimum tax, the Democrat budget doesn't allow for even 1 year of it, which means an additional 20 million Americans will be hit by this growing tax next year.

I am backing an alternative budget, the Republican budget, that balances the budget in 5 years without a tax increase and ends the raid on the Social Security trust fund.

It seems to me tonight we have probably as clear a choice as we have had in many years between the Democrat philosophy of balancing the budget and the Republican.

The Democrat philosophy in this budget is, we will balance it, which is good for them. We balance it by increasing spending and increasing taxes on hardworking families.

The Republicans approach is, we will balance it a different way, by limiting the spending and by keeping the tax relief that families need. And there has never been a clearer choice.

And I think, too, I look at the promises that were made last campaign by

our new majority. We are going to reduce the deficit. Yet, under this budget, the deficit will actually increase $36 billion in 1 year, $36 billion. That compass is headed the wrong direction.

They said, we will stop spending the Social Security trust fund, but they spend all of it this year and in every year. And they say, we promise middle-class tax relief, but, instead, they provide tax increases on families and small businesses and single moms with children.

In a moment I am going to go through some of those tax increases which, frankly, as expensive as life is these days for most families, I know our families in Texas can't quite handle that big a hit.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I just want to remind my dear friend on the other side of the aisle that the Bush administration has given this country several records, only they are the wrong kind of records: $9 trillion in debt, the largest debt this country has ever carried; $859 billion trade deficit, the current account deficit, the largest trade deficit in the history of this country. And out of that $9 trillion, each of us in this room and each person across America owes $29,000. That is their portion of the debt that we owe.

Once again, we have heard about job creation. As I have said earlier, a third of the jobs created since 2003 were necessary just to make up for earlier job losses. Under President Clinton, the economy created 237,000 jobs per month, and this administration has created well less than 100,000 jobs per month.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute to make the point that under President Clinton's watch we did have a strong economy. It turned out that much of it was false, based on the supposed paper accounts of Enron and WorldCom and others. Too many families woke up after the Clinton administration and realized that retirement fund they had counted on their whole life wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

And I will make the point, too, that after the attacks of 9/11, after this recession, after this administration handled the fallout of this recession, that we bounced back with tax relief that created 7.6 million new jobs in America. We are going in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), former head of the Republican Study Committee and one of our leaders on fiscal discipline.

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding; and I express strong support for his leadership and remarks concerning the Joint Economic Committee.

I also would echo the sentiments of the chairman who expressed on this floor, moments ago, the importance for pursuing a ''more sensible course for economic policy.'' And, as she did, I will reflect on the fact that that begins with the Federal budget.

We are in the midst, Mr. Chairman, of considering the Federal budget; and I rise this evening to reflect on that, however briefly. But I must tell you, I have a strong sense of deja vu as I come to this floor. It seems like it is the 1970s all over again.

I mean, seriously, if you think about it, there are hostages in Iran; Congress is making plans to withdraw from another unpopular war; the Equal Rights Amendment is about to be considered in the Congress, once again; and the tax-and-spend policies of a liberal Democrat majority are about to beset Washington, D.C.

□ 2100

The contrast between the Democrat plan for tax and spend and the Republican plan to balance the budget by 2012 could not be more startling, and I would like to speak about that this evening.

On taxes, under the Democrat budget that will be considered tomorrow, we find the largest tax increase in American history. Despite hollow promises, the tax hikes are in the numbers, and in a budget resolution the numbers don't lie.

The Republican budget, no tax increases, period.

On the spending side, the Democrat budget includes a $22 billion increase in nondefense spending above the President's request on top of $22 billion of unrequested spending in the supplemental and $6 billion in the omnibus. More taxes and more spending.

Under the Republican budget, we see a courageous effort to freeze nondefense, nonsecurity spending, while providing additional funds for veterans, the war on terror, CDBG, the National Institutes of Health and Science and Technology.

And perhaps most grievous and most startling a contrast, Mr. Chairman, is under the Democrat budget that will be considered tomorrow, we see a majority party in Congress that is prepared to ignore the trillions of dollars in unfunded obligations in entitlements altogether. The Democrat budget ignores the Nation's looming entitlement crises and allows unfunded liabilities in Medicare and Social Security to actually grow by an additional $25 trillion.

Again, the Republican alternative includes $279 billion in savings and commonsense reforms to entitlement programs to preserve our social safety net for future generations. And on budget process reform, believing, as I always have, that we must change the way we spend the people's money, the Democrat budget relies on gimmickry and hollow promises of reserve funds and PAYGO strategies that will only chase higher spending and higher taxes.

Under the Republican plan, we see legislative line item veto and PAYGO for all congressional spending.

So the contrasts have been startling, and it does seem like deja vu. But who will pay the price? Well, under the Democrat plan, working families in Indiana will pay an additional $2,700 per year. The Democrat budget resolution will increase marginal tax rates for all Americans, eliminate the new 10 percent tax bracket, increase taxes paid on capital gains and dividends, reimpose the death tax, cut the child tax credit. And that is just a start.

The GOP budget alternative will preserve tax cuts, will protect Social Security, and will balance the Federal budget by the year 2012. It is truly an historic recommitment by this Republican minority to the principles of fiscal discipline and reform.

It is, in fact, the 1970s all over again. But I would say very humbly, Mr. Chairman, let's not, as a Nation, relearn those lessons. Let's rather say ''no'' to bell bottoms, to disco, and to the tax and spend policies of the 1970s; and say ''yes'' to the fiscal discipline and reform reflected in the Republican budget resolution.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. First of all, Mr. Chairman, I find it rather ironic that my good friends on the other side of the aisle are lecturing us on fiscal responsibility. After all, let us remember that the $5.6 trillion 10-year budget surplus that Mr. Bush and the Republican majority at that time inherited turned into a deficit over those same 10 years of at least $2.3 trillion. Numbers do not lie, Mr. Chairman. They turned a $5.6 trillion surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit. And they are preaching fiscal responsibility.

The administration has incurred the three largest budget deficits on record, including a $413 billion deficit in 2004. And let's remember that the Bush administration not only lost 3 million manufacturing jobs since they took office, but we now have almost a $9 trillion debt, and that breaks down to all of us in America owing, our own individual share, $29,000. Now, that is what they have given the American people.

On top of that they gave us another record, another horrible record. The highest trade deficit in the history of our country, $857 billion. So they give us the record debt, the record trade deficit, and the record budget deficit in the history of this country, and they are talking fiscal responsibility. And then on top of it they turn the surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit.

Believe me, I am so glad that for the future of America we have a Democratic budget before us today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to my colleague from the great State of Washington, Congressman MCDERMOTT.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what I heard out here.

I was sitting in my office listening, and it is interesting to imagine yourself being like the people at home listening on television to the Republicans talk about fiscal responsibility. Now, you have just heard the figures, but I want to bring back some images to your mind because a budget is a statement of your principles and what you care about in society.

I remember when Katrina hit and we were sitting watching television looking at the absolute chaos and failure of the Republicans to deal with a national crisis. Those pictures looked like the Third World. In fact, we were quicker to go out to Indonesia to deal with the effects of tsunami than we were to deal with the problems of people in our own country, in New Orleans.

In large measure, I believe, the election of 2006 was a rejection by the American people of the Republican we-don't-want-government-to-work philosophy. Anybody who appoints a guy who runs cattle shows or horse shows to run the emergency management organization in this country does not care about the security of the American people. Meanwhile, giving tax breaks. Unbelievable. Spending us into a deficit.

I mean, when I came to Congress, all I heard for the first 6 years were Republicans coming out and saying, We have to pass a balanced budget amendment. By God, we have got to balance the budget.

So we did in 1994. We did it, and lo and behold, here comes all this money in and soon we have a balanced budget with a potential surplus. The Republicans win, and I don't know whether they had amnesia or they didn't really mean it in the first place when they talked about a balanced budget. You can choose which of those you want.

Either they were deceiving the people or they just lost their minds when they got in control and spent us into this hole. Now for them to come out and say we are going to balance the budget in 2012, why don't you say you are going to balance the budget in 2049? That is as good a date as any. You don't mean it. You never meant it because when you came in, you made decision after decision after decision that dug the hole deeper. The old aphorism everybody knows in this country: If you are in a hole, the first thing you should do is stop digging. But the Republicans, session after session, came out here and dug the hole deeper. I don't know what they were looking for. Maybe they were looking for china or gold. I don't know where they were going. But, clearly, the budgeting that has come out of the Republicans was phony from the outset and the people said we don't want any more of that.

The people want a government that works. There is a reason why we have government. We have government to do those things for people that they cannot do for themselves. All of us over here believe in individual responsibility. We think people should be responsible. They should save money. They should get an education. They should raise their children. None of us over here disagree with that individual responsibility.

But there are some things that people cannot do for themselves. They cannot prevent the effects of a hurricane. They look to the government to deal with that. But the Republicans said, No problem. Leave the jobs open. And you could find the same kind of things all through this budget, whether you are looking at the national parks or you are looking at what they have done to the environment.

The President bragged about what a great education Governor he was, and he came in here and told us we are going to have this No Child Left Behind bill. Then he proceeded to underfund it by $17 billion. Now, if you are serious about schools, you put the money in schools. You don't give tax breaks to people making a half million dollars a year. They have got enough to get by. Most all of them can pretty much get by on half a million. But there are schools in this country which are failing for the lack of money to do the things that are necessary for the school system.

And the choice the President made was let's give the tax break. Never mind that silly bill I had about No Child Left Behind. He didn't mean it. You didn't mean it. And that is why we had the election of 2006. And the budget you see out here is the priorities of the Democrats trying to bring some sense back to a government that we want to actually function when the people look to it and need it.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The gentleman does make many relevant points, just not relevant accuracies.

The truth of the matter is he claimed that the Democrats balanced the budget in 1994, but there was a $200 billion deficit in 1994. In fact, it was the Republican Congress that balanced the Federal budget for the first time after 40 years of Democrat leadership in Washington, D.C.

The gentlewoman from New York claims that manufacturing jobs were lost under President Bush, but manufacturing losses began in 1998, 1999, and 2000 under President Clinton's administration.

And while I agree with the gentlewoman that the $9 trillion debt is unconscionable, I will point out that in every budget that we passed in the 10 years that I have been here, Democrats voted against it because it was not spending enough. And the gentleman in front of me just said we haven't spent enough on Katrina, we haven't spent enough on education, we haven't spent enough on health care; yet they say we shouldn't be spending this much. And that $9 trillion debt, when I go onto their Web sites, when I look at the press releases on all the pork barrel projects, I brought home this highway fund, this university research, I brought home this special program, now, either they didn't support that spending or they are just claiming credit for that spending.

You can't have it both ways. You can't be fiscally responsible. You are spending too much. No, you are spending too little, and I am taking credit for what you did.

The fact of the matter is when we look at the Democratic budget, what we see is a massive tax rate, massive new spending, all in an effort, I think, to reclaim the title of the biggest government possible.

□ 2115

I try to explain this to my taxpayers back home and my families, what does this budget mean to you?

You look at an elderly couple in Texas with $40,000 income. That is where the husband and the wife is still working. Under the Democrat bill, this elderly couple in Texas, their tax bill would rise by $1,000 a year. That is a lot of money for a senior citizen and his wife.

A family of four with $60,000 in earnings, that is maybe a firefighter and a secretary, this bill would increase their taxes by $1,800. A family of four, which probably is struggling already to make ends meet.

For a single parent with two children and $30,000 in income, that is a single mom working in the local school district, under Republicans, at the end of the year she would get back almost $2,500. Under the Democrat tax increase bill, she would get $1,600 less.

I know in Washington $1,600 doesn't seem like a lot, but when you are a single mom working at the local school district with two kids, that is a lot of clothes, that is a lot of car insurance, that is a lot of medical bills for young people. This budget hands these families a tax hit that, frankly, they can't afford.

Taxes will rise, on the average, for 26 million small business owners by almost $4,000. That is a lot of payroll. That may be the only profit they make all year.

Then, by eliminating the lowest tax bracket, you are going to take 5 million taxpayers in America who didn't have to pay taxes, we are going to hand them a tax bill and say we want to do this so we can spend more in Washington. So that we can try to balance the budget on the backs of hard-working families in America, we are going to spend more.

What my Democrat friends have never figured out is, Washington has all the money it needs. It just doesn't have all the money it wants. It is time we know the difference.

I am supporting the Republican alternative, which balances the budget without this massive tax increase. In fact, there is no tax increase at all. For the first time in many, many years, it does not spend the Social Security trust fund, which is just critical.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. POMEROY). The gentlelady from New York is recognized to close.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the American people voted for change, and this Democratic leadership has given them change, not only in the direction in Iraq but the direction in our budget.

I repeat, it is unbelievable. I am mystified that the Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle are talking fiscal discipline. Let us remember, they are the ones that gave us the largest debt in history, $9 trillion, the largest trade deficit, over $859 billion, and they turned the $5.6 trillion 10-year budget surplus into a $2.3 trillion deficit. That is what they gave this country.

Within the first 100 hours of this Congress, the new Democratic leadership instituted pay-as-you-go budgeting requiring that new spending be offset. In other words, we are not spending money we don't have. We are not going to grow that deficit. Adhering to this policy helped turn deficits into surpluses in the 1990s during the Clinton administration but was abandoned by the Bush administration and the Republican-controlled Congress. That is what led us to these huge debts and deficits.

Today, Democrats in Congress present a realistic budget plan that adheres to PAYGO principles for controlling the deficit and bringing revenues into line with the amount we need to spend to defend the country and take care of the needs of our citizens.

Our budget provides health care for millions of additional uninsured children. We make investments in veterans health care and benefits. We restore critical funding for first responders and State and local law enforcement.

In order to spur innovation that will keep America number one in the world, we provide increased funding for the National Science Foundation, increase investments in math and science and education, and make college more affordable for our young people, investing in the future of our country.

We also expand renewable energy and energy efficiency to reduce global warming and dependence on foreign oil.

Democrats target tax relief to those who need it most. Our plan protects 19 million middle-American families from a tax increase by setting up a reserve fund for a long-term fix for the alternative minimum tax, which is snagging millions more families each year in its widening net. We pay for these tax cuts in part by eliminating tax loopholes and closing the tax gap to make sure that middle-class families don't have to pay the tab for tax cheats.

Mr. Chairman, this budget resolution is an important step toward putting our fiscal house back in order and creating greater economic opportunities and prosperity for all American families.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 99, the Congressional Budget Resolution for fiscal year 2008.

I am extremely pleased that the budget proposed by Chairman SPRATT recognizes the critical importance of meeting our nation's infrastructure investment needs, even while achieving a balanced budget by the year 2012.

Increased investment in our transportation infrastructure has far-reaching effects on our nation's economy, our competitiveness in the world marketplace, and the quality of life in our communities.

Yet, too often, capital investments are shortchanged due to a more immediate need to finance day-to-day operations.

This budget does not make that mistake. Rather, it assumes full funding for programs financed by the Highway and Aviation Trust Funds. These programs are funded by highway and aviation system users and do not contribute to the deficit.

Specifically, the proposed budget fully funds highway, transit, and highway safety programs at the levels guaranteed by the surface transportation reauthorization act, commonly known as SAFETEA–LU. It rejects the Administration's proposal to cut highway and transit funding below the guaranteed levels by $631 million and $309 million, respectively.

The Administration's proposal to cut transit funding was particularly ill-advised. The Administration proposed that Capital Investment Grants receive $1.4 billion, compared to $1.7 billion authorized by SAFETEA–LU. Of the $1.4 billion requested for Capital Investment Grants, the Administration proposed to fund 11 existing Full Funding Grant Agreements, seven projects that are currently in final design, and three other projects currently in preliminary engineering. However, the Administration's request ignores the significant pipeline of new start projects seeking funding, including 11 projects that are currently in preliminary engineering, as well as another eight projects that are very close to approval to enter preliminary engineering.

Furthermore, within the $300 million reduction in Capital Investment Grants proposed by the Administration, $100 million was to have come from the small starts program. The small starts program is authorized in SAFETEA–LU to receive $200 million in fiscal year 2008. The Administration proposed to provide just $100 million, to fund four small start projects. There are, however, at least 11 other small start projects around the country which may be ready for project development approval in fiscal year 2007.

Given that traffic congestion has become a major national problem costing motorists more than $63 billion in wasted time and fuel each year, the Administration's proposal to cut funding for transit investments is just plain wrong, and I am pleased it is not included in the Concurrent Resolution before us today.

Beyond highways and transit, the Concurrent Resolution lays the groundwork for reauthorization of Federal Aviation Administration programs by allocating the full amounts recommended by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). As requested in the Committee's Views and Estimates, the proposed budget provides an allocation for AIP of $3.8 billion in FY 2008, $3.9 billion in FY 2009, $4.0 billion in FY 2010, and $4.1 billion in FY 2011. In contrast to the Administration's proposal to cut AIP funding to $2.75 billion in FY 2008, the increased funding levels provided by this Resolution will allow the AIP program to keep pace with inflationary cost increases, and begin to address the investment gap in airport safety and capacity needs.

I commend Chairman SPRATT for bringing this Resolution to the Floor, and look forward to working with him on continued improvements to our nation's infrastructure.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 99.

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, yesterday I was thrilled to join four distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee—Ms. DAVIS, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. CONAWAY, and our esteemed chairman, Mr. SKELTON—on a tour of Fort Riley.

I am proud to represent Fort Riley in Congress, and my pride only grew as I saw the professionalism and patriotism of Fort Riley's troops. Fort Riley is charged with training Military Training Teams—small groups of American soldiers who recruit, organize, and train Iraqi forces to take charge of their nation's security.

Fort Riley goes to tremendous lengths to prepare soldiers for their tours in Iraq. The fort runs complex simulations of battle conditions—they engage actors to portray Arab citizens; they encourage soldiers to behave throughout their training as though they are already in Iraq.

For transition teams at Fort Riley, the war begins months before they leave American soil. Their war will continue through twelve months of hazardous, exhausting deployment in Iraq. And even when they return home, their war will continue still. Many will bear the scars of the Iraq war—both physical and mental—for a lifetime.

Just as Fort Riley has recognized that we cannot drop soldiers into a war zone without adequate preparation, this Congress must realize that we cannot abandon soldiers upon their return to America. We owe veterans nothing less than a lifetime of support. Abraham Lincoln understood this concept when he charged America ''to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.'' It is time that this Congress meet our obligation.

I was proud in January to support a continuing resolution that increased VA funding by $3.4 billion. Last week this House passed a supplemental bill that provided a further $1.7 billion. These increases were meaningful and long-overdue—but our support must not waver now.

The Budget Committee has provided superb leadership toward that end. The Committee proposed a fiscally responsible, comprehensive 2008 budget that includes a $6.6 billion increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Their approach has earned praise from AMVETS, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the American Legion.

I urge my colleagues to follow the Budget Committee's lead.

No one can doubt that every Member of this esteemed body supports America's veterans. The only question is whether we will demonstrate our support using the most powerful tool at our disposal: the federal budget.

I urge you to turn words of support for veterans into action, to transform sentiment into financing. Please vote for full funding of the VA.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCDERMOTT) having assumed the chair, Mr. POMEROY, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 99) revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012, had come to no resolution thereon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 99 and S. 1002.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO MEXICO-UNITED STATES INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h, and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group:

Mr. PASTOR, Arizona, Chairman

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ, California, Vice Chairman

Mr. FILNER, California

Mr. REYES, Texas

Ms. SOLIS, California

Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Texas

Ms. GIFFORDS, Arizona

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

HEALTH CARE: THE BIGGEST DOMESTIC CRISIS FACING AMERICA

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the biggest domestic crisis facing America today is health care. Every 30 seconds, an American files for bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious health problem. So says a recent study from Harvard University. And that is just one of the chilling new statistics that should compel Congress to act.

Every Band-Aid has been tried and has not solved the problem. Instead, the crisis of health care has been allowed to fester like an open wound. We cannot continue to tinker around the edges.

Today, the health care system is increasingly dysfunctional. America is fast becoming a nation of haves and have-nots, those wealthy enough to afford comprehensive health care coverage and the vast majority of American people struggling to maintain coverage.

It is time to provide universal health care for every American, and the only delivery system that works is a single-payer health care system, which is what I propose in H.R. 1200. We don't need to change the way health care is delivered. We do need to change the way we pay for it.

Today's health care system is pockmarked with inequities, overutilization and uncertainty. We don't get the benefit or the cost-savings of a risk pool that includes every American. Instead, we have wildly different programs, costs and outcomes across this country.

The casualties are mounting and spreading. America's health care crisis is fast becoming America's economic crisis, especially for small business, the backbone of the U.S. economy.

Data compiled by credible organizations reveals the depth of the crisis. We are spending over four times as much on health as we are on national defense, yet 47 million Americans are defenseless because they don't have any health care coverage at all. We are spending over $2 trillion a year on health, an average of $6,280 per person, and it is too much.

A Harvard study found that 68 percent of the people filing for bankruptcy had health insurance, and they also had an average of $12,000 in health-related debt. Unpaid medical expenses play a role in half the bankruptcies in this country.

America is better than that. People don't deserve to fall into financial ruin in the richest nation on Earth because of an illness or an injury.

We tried everything else except the only effective solution, a single-payer system that guarantees every American has a minimum set of health care coverage benefits, decisions made locally in their own town, closest to the patient, in a universal system that covers every American.

We do this for essential programs and services across America, from national defense to local police and fire. It is a tried and true system that protects everyone by involving everyone working together for the common good.

We have to take the pragmatic approach contained in H.R. 1200 for the good of the American people and the U.S. economy. Big business confronted an 8 percent increase in health expenses last year. Small businesses saw expenses rise by more than 10 percent. The average premium for an employer to provide health insurance to cover a family of four was $11,500 a year, and employees typically paid $3,000 of that bill.

□ 2130

These costs are only going to go higher in the current dysfunctional system.

Uncontrolled business expenses like these are unsustainable. At least one respected business consulting group projects that health expenses will overtake profits in many American businesses next year, 2008. This is not something 40 years down the road, it's next year. More Band-Aids won't stop the bleeding. America's health care system is failing the American people and business.

Affordable health care coverage should be a right, not a privilege, in America; but that's not the way it really is. Those who profit most by the inefficient, bloated and broken system in place today will spend millions of dollars on ads trying to scare you into believing that paying them more and more is in your best interest.

Remember Harry and Louise, that baloney in '93? You're going to see it again. Every American deserves affordable health care coverage. H.R. 1200 will do just that. We have waited too long, and we can't wait any longer.

It is time to act and pass H.R. 1200, universal health care coverage for all Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

RETURN SOVEREIGNTY BACK TO THE STATES, THE SCHOOL BOARD, AND THE PARENTS

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, with the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind before us this

year, we all have an obligation to consider reforms that both further education policy, and also maintain consistency with our constitutional duties.

The Federal Government began its interference, if you will, in education through land grants, and over time has transformed into a bureaucracy that we see today. I would like to highlight some of the serious flaws in this tangled web we have weaved and pose a question to my colleagues and our constituents as well. Are we better off today with the Federal Government's involvement in education as it has been over the years?

Since 1965, American taxpayers have invested more than $778 billion on Federal programs for elementary and secondary education. The GAO, the Government Accountability Office, reported in 1994 that 13,400 Federally funded full-time employees in State education agencies work to implement Federal education programs. That is three times the number then working at the Department of Education.

The same report found that state education agencies are forced to reserve a far greater share of Federal and State funds for State-level use by a ratio of 4–1, due to the administrative and regulatory burden of Federal programs. And because it cost so much to allocate a Federal dollar than a State dollar, 41 percent of financial support and staffing of State education agencies was a product of Federal dollars and regulations. In other words, the Federal Government was the cause of 41 percent of the administrative burden at the State level, despite providing just 7 percent of overall education funding.

Again, according to the GAO, the testing requirements alone for No Child Left Behind will cost the States about $1.9 billion between 2002 and 2008. And that is if the State uses only multiple choice questions that can be scored in machines, as opposed to essays and what have you.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, No Child Left Behind increased State and local governments' annual paperwork burden by 6,680,334 hours at an estimated cost of $141 million. So while No Child Left Behind advertises that it helps to attract and maintain highly qualified teachers, some States, in fact, have now responded to it by actually lowering their testing requirements for new teachers.

Since the law enactment, Pennsylvania has dropped its testing after finding that too many middle school teachers had failed the test. In Maryland, New Hampshire and Virginia, they have made their basic skills test for teachers easier to pass now than before we had No Child Left Behind.

In Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada and West Virginia, they, too, have lowered their requirements for teachers trained out of state. So what is happening is as State officials become more familiar with the No Child Left Behind statute and with U.S. Department of Education's interpretation of it, more States have rushed to lower their own standards. So by September 2004, 47 States had filed requests with the U.S. Department of Education to approve changes to their No Child Left Behind plans that would, in many cases, make it easier for them to show adequate yearly progress than before.

Now, to address all this, in the near future, I will come back to the floor as I will be introducing legislation that will immediately cut both the financial and the regulatory strings between the Federal Government and the States that choose to opt out and relieve the Federal education system.

How it will work is this: Under my proposal, States that elect to opt out of the Federal education funding system would be eligible to keep their own money, keep it in their own States through a mechanism, a Federal tax credit. It would be a refundable Federal tax credit, and it would be available to all the residents in that State that chose to opt out. Therefore, what we have here is not only would that State free itself up from the education regulations and all the costs I have just laid out here, but by taking this deduction, those residents in those States won't have to be taking money out of their pocket, sending it to Washington, Washington handling it for a while, and some of it coming back to their States. In effect, what will happen is you will not have to send your money to Washington at all.

But the bottom line is this: We should not waste this unique opportunity that we have now, now that No Child Left Behind is coming up for reauthorization. We should use this as an opportunity to return sovereignty back to the States, and most importantly, back to the parents themselves.

So Mr. Speaker, I will close on this to say I look forward to the time when all education decisions are returned back to the States, to the legislatures, to the local school board, and most importantly, to the parents themselves.

SUPPORT THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS BUDGET

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is offering a budget to help us get out of the financial mess that we're in. We have seen this chart before, it shows the deficit over the years, how in 1993 we started to eliminate the deficit, ran the budget up to a surplus, creating a 10-year budget of over $5.5 trillion. The policies that have now gotten us into a mess have changed that $5.5 trillion surplus into an almost $3 trillion deficit, a swing of $8.5 trillion.

The first thing the Black Congressional Caucus budget does is to repeal the policies that got us into this mess by rolling back the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for that portion of a person's household income over $200,000. By rolling back the brackets for the first two brackets and eliminating the tax cuts for capital gains and dividends, primarily for that portion of the household income over $200,000. People will say it is a big tax cut. So what. Those policies got us in the ditch. We are repealing those policies to get out of the ditch.

Now what does that do to the budget? The Congressional Black Caucus deficit is better every year than the President's budget. The President's budget is in red, the Democratic alternative is in blue. The Congressional Black Caucus beats both of them every year, except the last year, we only had a $141 billion surplus in the last year, the Democratic budget has $153 billion, but of course, the President's budget is still in the ditch. We have significantly reduced the deficit $339 billion better bottom line cumulatively than the President.

We also save interest. By reducing the deficit, we save interest. Every year, we have saved more and more interest. $27 billion less interest paid over 5 years than the President's budget. In fact, $18 billion more than the Democratic alternative.

We have also addressed our priorities with the money left over. After we have reduced the deficit and reduced the amount of interest, we have also made important investments. SCHIP, $66 billion more in health care than the Democratic budget, over $100 billion more than the President. We can fund health care for each and every child in America.

No Child Left Behind. We are funding over $158 billion more in education and training than the President. We have honored our veterans by spending $42 billion more than the President's budget. We have attacked fraud, waste and abuse in the Democratic budget. We have made communities more secure with investments in juvenile justice, gang prevention, prison re-entry. We have provided community support through community development block grants in nutrition and housing. We have contributed to diplomacy by fighting global AIDS, child survival. We have spent significantly more in these priorities, Mr. Speaker, than both the Democratic alternative and certainly the President's budget.

The Congressional Black Caucus repeals the policy that put us into a mess. We address important priorities that are so important, and we have a much more fiscally responsible budget.

We would ask the House to adopt the Congressional Black Caucus budget that gets us out of the mess and puts on the right track.

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

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

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS ALTERNATIVE FISCAL YEAR 08 BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise as the Health Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus to express my strong support for the Congressional Black Caucus' alternative fiscal year '08 budget and to urge its passage.

I want to begin by applauding our leadership, our chairwoman, CAROLYN KILPATRICK, and the person who headed up our Budget Task Force for his hard work, skill, leadership and commitment to justice it represents, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT.

This is a smart and responsible budget that is as fiscally sound as it is congruent to the needs, hopes and aspirations not only of African Americans, but of all Americans.

This budget uses the Democratic budget, a good budget itself, as a starting point and takes a step further by putting $112 billion more in education, training, employment and social services; $9 billion more in veterans benefits and services; $8 billion more in homeland security. And over a 5-year period, it spends more than $101 billion on health care. It does all of this and more while balancing the budget in 2012 and creating $141 billion surplus, beginning to reduce the burden that the Republican spending spree would have placed on future generations.

Four years ago, the current administration began taking us down the slippery slope of huge deficits and unprecedented debt by giving tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans instead of using that money to strengthen our country by investing in the American people. This budget rescinds some of those tax cuts and incentives, including the tax cuts to the top two tiers of income, tax cuts that this country could not afford then and cannot afford today.

By rescinding those tax cuts, which is where our budget departs from the Democratic base budget, we begin now to correct the wrong that was perpetrated particularly on the poor and middle class, and we put the interests of the majority of this Nation's hard-working families at the forefront of our spending priorities, and Mr. Speaker, it is about time.

While this is true across every line item, it is especially true as it relates to spending on health and health care. As I have previously observed and stated on the RECORD, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget proposes to eliminate, cut or flat fund every single program that is critical to reducing health disparities or to strengthening the health and wellness of African Americans and other people of color across this Nation.

The Democratic budget, for which I applaud Chairman JOHN SPRATT, does much to restore these programs, at least in part. But the health deficit of African Americans and other people of color, of the poor and rural Americans requires a major investment to reverse the severely adverse impact of long-term neglect, neglect which is not only causing excess deaths, but driving up the cost of health care and undermining the quality of care for all Americans.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the CBC alternative budget uses the additional funding stream from the funds we put back into the budget to maintain, create or expand programs that are proven to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities that have left more people of color in poorer health, without access to adequate health care, and more likely to die prematurely from preventable causes often during their most productive years for far too long.

Programs like Healthy Start, nurse education and other health profession programs, the Ryan-White Care Act, Health Careers Opportunity programs, Gulf Coast Health Infrastructure, Maternal and Child Health get the funding they need. And NIH and community health centers get an additional increase as well.

Most importantly, we create a health equity fund to fund prevention programs that pay for themselves and create value, and which make that investment to fill in the gaps in health care in poor and rural communities and communities of color, and to improve the health status of all Americans.

□ 2145

The CBC budget through its investment in education, economic opportunity, housing, and all of the social determinants of health provide that kind of holistic approach to our communities and our Nation's well-being that had been missing and for which we are all, but especially people of color, paying the price.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King once said that the moral arc of the universe bends at the elbow of justice. The CBC resets the moral compass of our Nation, and the CBC sits at the elbow of justice. And by supporting the CBC budget we not only will be championing justice and equity in health care but in all social, public and economic policies and programs that currently fail far too many of our Nation's citizens and which have thus created two Americas separated by a wide and deep chasm of inequality.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King also said that the time is always right to do what is right. Well, that time is now, and doing what is right is passing the CBC alternative budget. I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for this well-constructed, sound budget that sets a new direction for this country not just for today but for tomorrow.

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

(Mr. POE 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 Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CBC BUDGET

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

Ms. WATERS. I would like to begin by congratulating Congresswoman CAROLYN KILPATRICK, the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, Chair of the CBC Budget Task Force, for their leadership in developing the CBC budget.

I strongly support the CBC budget because it provides sufficient funding for critical domestic priorities such as health care, education, and community development. For example, the CBC budget spends $112 billion more than the Budget Committee's budget and $158 billion more than the President's budget on education, training, employment, and social services. Yet the CBC budget still eliminates the deficit by 2012.

As the Chair of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, I am deeply concerned about the need for affordable housing in America. The CBC budget recognizes that affordable housing is all but out of reach for many Americans. Just imagine, the 2006 average minimum wage required to rent affordable housing is $16.31 an hour, more than three times the Federal minimum wage of $5.15 an hour, putting most housing out of reach for many American families.

Approximately 6 million persons in this country are very needy, paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing. This is a real threat to families trying to educate their children and make ends meet. Affordable rental housing is critical to communities across this Nation. Public housing is still part of the solution, community development programs are part of the solution, and the renewal of the section 8 voucher and many other housing programs is part of the solution.

The President's fiscal year 2008 budget request would cut overall net funding for public housing by $477 million, from $6.4 billion to $5.9 billion, a cut of 7 percent. While the budget increases the operating fund by $136 million, public housing authorities are estimated to receive only 80 percent of their total operating expenses. The budget decreases the capital fund used to repair

and modernize public housing units by $415 million, to only $2.0 billion.

Continuing a downward spiral in funding, this is part of the effort to dismantle public housing as we know it. We cannot sit idly by and let this happen. The community development programs would be seriously eroded and undermined if left to this administration. The Brownfields and the section 108 loan guarantee program would also be eliminated. The Community Development Block Grant Program would be cut by 20 percent, losing $735 million. And the list goes on and on.

In addition, Section 202 and 811 housing programs for the elderly and disabled would be cut drastically in the administration budget proposal. Rural housing programs would also suffer serious cutbacks faring no better.

The administration's budget proposes to terminate the major Rural Section 515 rental housing program, which would leave thousands of families living in rural communities, many poor, working families with children, and the disabled and elderly without affordable housing.

There is another issue that I feel strongly about that is addressed in this budget. As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I am highly concerned about the origin and proliferation of gangs in communities throughout the United States. Along with full committee chairman JOHN CONYERS and Crime Subcommittee chairman BOBBY SCOTT, I plan to retool existing authorized Federal programs to comprehensively address this problem. This requires full funding of the following programs: the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant, the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, the Youth Violence Reduction Demonstration Projects that are administered by the Department of Justice, and the Compassion Capital Fund, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

In the city of Los Angeles, there are approximately 4,000 gangs and 39,000 gang members. For 2006, there were about 470 homicides, and 250 were gang related. Of the shootings in the city last year, 70 percent were gang related. According to a September 1, 2006, report by Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, it costs about $287 million to treat and hospitalize victims of nonfatal gang assaults countywide in one year.

This is not only in Los Angeles. There are gang problems all over America, and not simply in our cities but in our rural communities, in our suburban communities.

It is about time that we focus some efforts on dealing with the gangs from two perspectives:

Number one, we have got to have prevention. We have got to be able to provide social services. We have got to be able to meet the needs of people in communities that have no hope.

Number two, yes, we must be tough. But the answer is not simply lock them up and throw the key away. The answer is, how do we prevent young people, young children, from connecting and getting involved with gangs in the first place? We need serious funding and smart assembly of existing programs to effectively halt the recruitment of new gang members.

We need serious funding and smart assembly of existing programs to effectively halt the recruitment of new gang members; to reduce the incidence of homicide and violence between gangs; to implement programs that deliver support services and job training; and to enable communities to solve problems that lead to race-related gang tensions.

CONCLUSION

I urge all of my colleagues to support the CBC Budget so that we can begin to tackle important issues like gang violence and the need for affordable housing in our communities.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana 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 Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BUDGETING FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today the House began debate on the budget for the next year. This is the time when each party shows its true priorities. The Democrats have promised to ensure our homeland security while providing for the needs of America's working families: health care, education, safe communities.

This is another chance to tell the people to tell the administration that we are not going to fund this misguided occupation of Iraq. We are quickly approaching one-half trillion dollars for the occupation of Iraq, including billions that have been lost, misallocated, or squandered, while drastically cutting important domestic programs in the United States of America.

Let me say that one more time: one-half trillion dollars. What comes after a trillion? A zillion? This might not mean much to some of the folks in Washington, but to the people scraping to get by this means everything.

We are in the fifth year of this occupation, and if we follow the leadership of the administration we will be there for years to come. In fact, they even say that the exit strategy for Iraq will be decided by future presidents. Presidents. Not one, but many. This is really unacceptable.

The Progressive Caucus budget, the Peace and Security budget, takes a stand against the ridiculous budget request and puts the money where it will do the most good. By ending our military presence in Iraq, we can save at least $202 billion over the next 2 years. Doing that, we can focus on the real needs of Americans.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus budget will fully fund No Child Left Behind and IDEA and improve the Teacher Corps and job training. It will provide affordable, accessible, quality health care for Americans, starting with fully funding the SCHIP program to ensure that every American child is covered for basic health insurance. It will rebuild America's communities by increasing funding for Community Development Block Grants, Hurricane Katrina relief, and reconstruction and community policing. It also guarantees veterans health care and ensures that the Federal funding that is needed will be available to provide health care, including mental health care, for every single American veteran, including but not limited to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

This Peace and Security budget gives a fair shake for working families by increasing funding to protect fundamental worker rights, enforcing credit and lending practices, and promoting liveable wages and safe work places. It also will renew the social contract and 21st century safety net by substantially increasing funding for decent, affordable housing, for anti-hunger programs, and more quality child care for low-income and impoverished Americans, including Hurricane Katrina victims.

Does this mean that we will abandon our obligation throughout the world? Absolutely not. We will support the Smart Security Plan by increasing nonmilitary spending to enhance homeland security and to fight the root causes of terrorism, a real 21st century diplomacy plan that meets basic human needs such as fighting HIV and AIDS and providing for universal basic education.

If we had spent the last 4 years focusing on the real needs of America's working families and not fighting this endless, misguided occupation of Iraq, America would be safer, more prosperous and a leader in peace and security worldwide.

It is time to bring common sense and reason back to our foreign policy. I call on my colleagues to join me in supporting the Progressive Caucus budget, the Peace and Security budget, and to join me in the call to bring our troops home now.

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

(Mr. WOLF 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. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE 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 Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland 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 Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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 New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York 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 gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON 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 Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LANGEVIN 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 Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come to the floor. Mr. RYAN and I have spent a long time, Mr. Speaker, when it was just Mr. RYAN and I on the floor. This goes back to the 108th Congress and a little of the 109th Congress, and I am so glad we are having the opportunity to come to the floor to talk about not only the budget but what we were able to do last week, last Friday, moving in a new direction as it relates to the emergency supplemental.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the 30-Something Working Group comes to the floor to not only share facts but to also do away with the fiction that many of the Members on the other side of the aisle come to the floor many times sharing information that I guess someone gave them some information and said, go on the floor and say this, or what have you.

□ 2200

I can't help but watch some of this debate on the floor and question where some of the information comes from.

The good thing about the 30-something Working Group, we actually have third-party validators for information that we share here on the floor. We want to make sure that every Member is able to make a sound decision and that the American people are able to get great information from what we share here on the floor.

As you know, every time we come to the floor, we talk about a number of issues. But tonight, again we are going to talk about the budget. We are also going to talk about the ongoing issue of Iraq and the courageous step we took just last week, and the Senate has taken a step in that direction also in accountability measures within the emergency supplemental.

Mr. RYAN, I don't know if you had an opportunity to see the President's press conference today, but it was quite interesting. It was like he was trying to sell something to the American people. He was speaking to the Cattlemen's Association, and he took that opportunity not to talk about beef, but to talk about what the Congress is doing in the area of making sure that we bring about accountability.

He was saying he is going to veto what we actually passed. What he is trying to do, and there is a word on the street that is used, flipping the script. He is trying to flip the script and trying to fake the American people out in saying that the Democratic Congress is standing in the schoolhouse door of the funding getting to our troops.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ and I think we have prima facie evidence here to show that the emergency supplemental, everything in the emergency supplemental is a true emergency, making sure that we fund our troops beyond what the President has called for, making sure that we stand up on behalf of our veterans, an unprecedented commitment to Veterans Affairs and to the VA in the history of this country.

Because we already had a system that needed work and needed funding, this Congress stepped forth and put forth, the 110th Congress, the Democratic controlled Congress stepped forward and made sure we did what we needed to do for the veterans, and we are just getting started.

At the same time, Mr. RYAN, we have to look at the issue of Hurricane Katrina. The President said there is other funding in there. We are doing things in the emergency supplemental for the people on the gulf coast that have been waiting on the President. They don't want lip service, they want action. If the President wants to veto that, that's on him. But I guarantee you that the American people will see through what our President is saying as it relates to and as he continues to explain how he is going to veto an emergency supplemental.

He is saying if the money runs out, and it is on the back of the U.S. Congress. Well, I can tell you this: The American people are on the side of the U.S. Congress. They have asked us to lead, and we are leading. They didn't ask us to balk at the first threat that the President makes. Or I am going to veto. Well, okay, that is something that you are going to have to live with. That is something you will have to explain. But we are going to continue to do what we need to do here in providing the kind of leadership necessary.

America said in November they want to move in a direction. They said they want accountability. They no longer want a rubber stamp. They want a do-something Congress and not a do-nothing Congress. We will talk about that tonight.

Mr. RYAN, I am so glad you are here as we continue to share this information with the Members so they can make an accurate decision tomorrow when we vote on the budget, on our priorities, making sure that we give every child in the United States health care, and making sure that we move in the direction that the U.S. mayors have asked us to move in, making sure that we move in the direction that governors have asked us to move in, and giving the necessary dollars to homeland security to protect the homeland.

We are going to make sure that the Members know exactly what they are voting on so when we go on a 2-week break, Mr. Speaker, Members can't go home and say, I didn't really understand what was in the budget.

I yield to Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate what you are saying, and there are a couple of points I would like to add.

When the President says he is going to veto the supplemental bill, he is going to veto a $1.7 billion understand increase for veterans. We have seen Walter Reed and heard the stories from across the country. We know we have more veterans coming back. He is going to veto a $1.7 billion increase from his recommendation. And then he is going to veto a $1.7 billion increase for defense health care for our troops, not yet veterans but still needing access to care. And $500 million is for

post-traumatic stress disorder. And $500 million is for brain injuries.

Those of us who have been to Walter Reed have seen these veterans who are more affected than any of us. They are the ones that are hurt. They are the ones with the brain injuries, and we get in and we try to put in $500 million in addition to what the President wants for brain injuries, and the President threatens to veto it.

That is $500 million for post-traumatic stress disorder, and the President threatens to veto it. We put in this supplemental bill, Mr. Speaker, rules that the Department of Defense and the Pentagon say we need. That if you don't have the proper equipment, you shouldn't go off to war. If you don't have the proper rest, you shouldn't go off to war. If we can't put the proper armor on your Humvees when you are on patrol in Baghdad, you should not go. The President said he is going to veto that.

So the President is saying he is okay with sending our American troops to Baghdad to drive in a Humvee that is not up armored, to send the soldiers out in the field without the proper body armor, and to sending kids back when they have only been home for a few months, sending them right back. That is what the President is saying he is going to veto, Mr. Speaker.

I am not okay with that. And the Democratic Congress is not okay with that. And the Senate is not okay with that. And the American people are not okay with sending our troops to Baghdad to ride in Humvees that don't have the proper armor on them. Period. That is the debate. That is what the President says he is going to veto.

Let's be very, very clear about what the Democratic Congress has passed and put in front of the President and what he is threatening to veto. Now, we have even given him a few months to get done what he wants to get done. Many of us want our troops home now, I'm one of them, but I recognize there are a lot of us here, and we need to have some level of compromise.

All we are saying is if there is not progress by July, we start bringing our troops home. The war has already been longer than World War II. If you haven't done it by now, it can't be done. Bring them home.

But if there is progress, we will give them until October. If they don't meet the benchmarks that the President set out, Mr. MEEK, in January, and these are the President's benchmarks. These aren't the Speaker's benchmarks or Senator REID's benchmarks; they are not Kendrick Meek's benchmark. They are not mine. These are the benchmarks the President of the United States set out in his speech of January 10.

All we are saying, is you have been able to say one thing and not live up to it. You have certain goals, and then not get there, and we just all go on our merry way. What we are saying, is you've got to be accountable for the benchmarks you have set out. If they don't meet those benchmarks, we are coming home. We are bringing our troops home.

So I think it is very important that the American people understand what is going on. You mentioned Katrina. Everybody wants to talk about there is pork in this bill and this and that; the majority of this goes to the troops, and the next biggest chunk goes to Katrina relief. We are trying to free up money to rebuild the gulf coast.

And the hold-up the whole time has been that the President and the Republicans want a 10 percent match from a local community in order to draw down 90 percent of the Federal money. And we wonder why the coast isn't getting rebuilt, it is because the towns have been completely destroyed. They don't have the 10 percent match, Mr. Speaker. They are wiped out. They don't have police, they don't have fire, they don't have roads, sewer, anything.

And the former leadership in our last Congress was so ideological they said no, you have to have your 10 percent match, and then billions of dollars did not get down to the gulf coast. That is what the President is also going to veto. I feel strongly about this.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, they don't say 10 percent match for the special interests. When it comes down to big oil and some other big guys and gals here in this town, Mr. Speaker, they don't say you have to match us halfway. They say just, we will give you what you need. As a matter of fact, we will give you technical assistance to be able to take the U.S. taxpayer dollar and do what you want. And guess what, we will not even look. We will cover our eyes. We won't even have hearings.

Get my hearing chart, Mr. RYAN. I want to get down to the nitty-gritty here.

Mr. Speaker, we come to the floor 10 minutes past 10, 12 minutes past 10, and there are some things that we could be doing, but this is serious business.

We come with the facts. These numbers are from the Clerk of the House of Representatives. It is not from the DNC, and it is not from my cousin back in Miami that said hey, this looks good, maybe you want to take that to the floor and talk about it. This comes from the Clerk's Office. I actually like the Clerk's Office. These are the facts. The 107th Congress, 108th Congress, this is the 109th Congress that many media outlets have called the do-nothing Congress.

At this point in March of 2005, compared to March of 2007, the new Democratic Congress, the new direction Democratic Congress, the Congress only had 90 roll call votes. We have already had 189 roll call votes and counting for this month.

When you look at suspension bills that are coming over from the Senate what have you, kind of agreed upon, 26 votes that took place by this time; 72 we have done here in this new direction Congress, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at bills passed under a rule, 11 votes by this time in the last Republican-controlled Congress; 24 in this Congress.

We are here to do business. Days in session, 26 days in the Republican-controlled Congress; 48 days under this new direction Congress, Democratic-controlled Congress.

We bring these facts to the floor to make sure that not only Members, but the American people understand we are here to carry out the business of the American people. Mr. RYAN has some numbers when it comes down to accountability on Iraq because some Members would lead you to believe, a small number, would lead other Members to believe that there was some backroom decision that was made about accountability in Iraq, and all of the things that we are learning about Iraq, all of the accountability measures that we come up with as it relates to Iraq and policing the U.S. taxpayer dollars and all of the protection measures that we have in for the troops and men and women in uniform, they just think it happens in some backroom here in the capitol.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Here is the difference we are starting to see. When Members turn on the television, Mr. Speaker, and they see what is happening with the Attorney General's Office, when they hear about $10–12 billion in Iraq that nobody knows where it is, and now all of this information that is coming out, hearing about the gulf coast, hearing about Halliburton. If a truck blows a tire, Halliburton puts in for another truck instead of putting a new tire on the truck.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. If the gentleman would suspend, is this the company where the CEO is moving to Dubai?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Yes, just moved to Dubai. You would think that with all of the taxpayer money they get, they would at least stay in the country.

But all of this is not just coming out by coincidence.

□ 2215

There have been 104 hearings related to the Iraq War. Oversight and accountability. One of the key responsibilities of the United States Congress is to provide oversight to the executive branch agencies, and we did not hear about any of this stuff for 6 years when the Republican House and the Republican Senate sat on their hands while all of this was going on. This is not stuff that is on the news. This is not stuff that just happened. This is stuff that happened when the Republican Congress was in charge.

Now, I understand that we are all loyal to our political parties, but at some point, when it begins to hurt the American people, you need to provide the oversight of their tax money and the kind of inadequacy that has been going on in Iraq.

Now all of the sudden they want to change course. Now all of the sudden

the commander in the Middle East is running around saying that we do not have time. You know why they do not have time? Because we are putting the heat on them to get things done. 104 hearings on oversight. That is our responsibility.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. One last point before we recognize Ms. JACKSON-LEE because I know we want to get to our next discussion, get into the budget.

Mr. Speaker, to hear the President say even the word ''veto'' is something we have never heard since he has been President of the United States. He has never vetoed anything. Spending out of control, foreign debt, record numbers, passing tax cuts for the superwealthy and for the special interests, President never said a mumbling word. Cricket sounds of special interest subsidies and tax breaks, rolling through this floor, Members held hostage here on the floor, voting for special interest legislation for hours upon hours, the board is left open, not a mumbling word out of the President, not a mumbling word.

And now legislation happens to pass that he no longer has his rubber stamp Congress, he no longer has a Speaker who says, hey, this is the way I want it or no longer has President, this is the way we want to do it over in the Senate, so shall it be written, so shall it be done, his original thoughts are not followed through here in the Congress. Since that no longer exists, now all of the sudden, the President wants to get animated when it comes down to I am going to veto what they send and they are blocking money.

We are not blocking money for the troops. Matter of fact, we are giving them more than what he asked for. We are dealing with the issue of the VA. We are dealing with the issue of the crisis that we have here in the United States of America. It is an emergency. The children do not have health care. This is not an emergency for Iraqi children. It is an emergency for kids in Alabama. It is an emergency for the kids in Georgia, and it is an emergency for the kids in the Midwest and in Florida.

This chart here, and I am going to leave it alone and I am going to recognize Ms. JACKSON-LEE, I have over 12 percent of uninsured. This is my State here in Florida. Over 12 percent of the children in the State of Florida, more than 12 percent are uninsured. That is my State. Texas, hello, President of the United States, he has a house there. It is where the West White House is. Over 12 percent of the children in that State do not have health insurance. This is an emergency to the American families. This is an emergency here in this country. It cannot be Iraq, Iraq, Iraq, and that other issue, Iraq.

We have to care about our own country, and if we cannot put that in an emergency supplemental without the President threatening a veto, if he vetoes that bill he is denying U.S. children, need it be Republican, Democrat, Independent, concerned citizen thinking about voting in the next election, yes, your children, too; yes your State, too; yes, your community, too, will be without health insurance because the last Congress decided not to do it. They decided not to do it, and I think it is important when you look at this, as we move into the budget, if we were to follow what the President wants to do as it relates to vetoing this emergency supplemental, $2 billion for what we call the State insurance plan for children. In the budget resolution that we have, $50 billion to make sure that we cover the costs of that as we look in the projection as the years go out.

So I am glad that Mr. RYAN is bringing these issues up, and as we now segue into the budget, the next thing you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess when we pass this budget tomorrow, we will probably end up being a bipartisan vote just like the emergency supplemental was a bipartisan vote in the House and Senate, that the President will probably have a press conference tomorrow and say I am going to veto the budget, too. So, if he now believes in vetoes, after 6 years of being President of these United States, out-of-control spending, record borrowing from foreign Nations, and now there are accountability measures in the budget and in the emergency supplemental, I do not even want to tell the President to have at it because, as an American, I am going to do everything I have to do to stop him from doing it.

I yield to Ms. JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me first of all thank the distinguished gentleman from Ohio and distinguished gentleman from Florida for allowing me to join you this evening. We do this on occasion, and I thank you for setting the record straight.

I just want to say this brief comment on this question of the Iraq War and the veto. Usually there is a phrase that says if you break it, fix it. Well, this government was broken. Nobody in the last several Congresses wanted to fix it, and it is now our task to fix it. That is why you had a board that showed accountability and oversight, and that is why it is imperative that we took the vote last Friday and the Senate took the vote yesterday to go forward and make a difference with a framework in Iraq that the American people asked us to do.

I frankly thought that when we won the election that this President would do what many Presidents do in a divided government, sit down with the Speaker and the majority leader and work to save lives in Iraq. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and so I applaud you for bringing to the light the idea of accountability.

I just want to quickly move forward with a couple of points about the budget vote and the budget that we have to engage in, and when I look at this particular board that talks about the economy and jobs, I think of places like Texas, Ohio, Florida, the Midwest, New York. I think of the time of the past presidency under President Clinton, a Democratic President, when there were 236,000 jobs created per month. Now, we are at 68,000 jobs per month.

Clearly, the Bush economy job growth is among the slowest of any administration in over 70 years, and this literally shows Presidents Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford. Ford had, of course, inflation. It shows Carter. It shows Reagan. It shows Bush I, Clinton and now this President.

The balancing of the budget that we intend to do with a vote taken tomorrow clearly speaks to energizing the economy.

Now, let me just talk to those who say that we are raising taxes in this budget. That is false. That is not true. This budget does not contain a single penny of tax increases, period, and the Republicans have been misdescribing this budget because they have had the largest tax cut in the history of the United States. But who benefits the most when the tax cuts are fully enacted? As usual, it is those making over $1 million.

That is why Democrats are focusing on middle class taxes. That is why we are cutting middle class income tax. That is why we are focusing on fixing the alternative minimum tax, to shield middle income taxpayers. That is why we have relief for the child tax credit, the marriage penalty relief, and we do something about the estate tax, because any tax cut by this administration, $17,500 would go to those making over $1 million. I would simply say to the gentlemen, who are we representing, the special interests, the rich, or are we trying to represent the working middle class?

Now, there are many budgets that will be on the floor tomorrow, and I just want to comment on one. The Congressional Black Caucus budget improves the deficit by $107 billion even over our Democratic budget and $339 billion over the President's budget. There will be a number of budgets, but I am very proud of this budget which really improves the deficit, and when we improve the deficit, being that when we lower the deficit, we work on the high interest rates. Many of us have been hearing unfortunately about large numbers of foreclosures. Part of that is because of reverse mortgages and poor people being plagued upon, if you will, by predatory lending, which are some challenges that fell into this administration, where there was no oversight and accountability of our financial industry. I am delighted that we have a new chairman of the Financial Services Committee to begin to look at the massive foreclosures, and I would encourage those who are tragically in the jaws of foreclosure, get on the phone and call your Members of Congress to speak out against predatory lending and asking for some relief because you are deserving of it.

My attentiveness on what Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK were speaking about drew me to bring to the attention of our listeners and to my colleagues on the floor this whole question of why not only do we need this budget but why it is I think ludicrous for the President to have a veto threat on the emergency supplemental.

Who is going to respond to the emergency conditions at Walter Reed? Who is going to respond to the emergency conditions of large numbers of Iraqi veterans who are returning, along with the veterans from Afghanistan, with brain injury, post-traumatic stress, the need of prosthetics, the need of outpatient clinics and the need of family resources and health resources?

Well, I hate to tell you that I think over the last 8 years, last 6-years, this administration has, in fact, been poor to poor veterans. January 2003, this lays out how the Bush and the Republican budget funding for veterans has been poor and the veterans have been doing poorly. The Bush administration cuts off veterans' health care for 164,000 veterans.

Why do you not walk in your veterans hospitals like many of us have done? I did a couple of Sundays ago, visited with veterans who are paraplegic, paralyzed from the neck down, paralyzed from the legs down, and you ask the question, how can you can cut off veterans' health care for 164,000 vets? Our budget fixes these problems.

In March 2003, Republican budget that cut $14 billion from veterans' health care passed by Congress with 199 Democrats voting against it. We voted against the cut of $14 billion from veterans' health care.

March 2004, Republican budget that shortchanged veterans' health care by $1.5 billion passed by Congress with 201 Democrats voting against it. Our record is very clear.

And in March 2005, President Bush's budget shortchanged veterans' health care by more than $2 billion for 2005 and cut veterans' health care by $14 billion over 5 years but passed with 201 Democrats voting against it.

But what I would also say is that it was Democrats who had to come back on this floor and pressure this Congress to put more money back in the budget and back into the resources for our veterans.

Let me just say this as I wind down on this budget. Tomorrow there will be a number of substitute budgets. If I could write my own Sheila Jackson-Lee budget, I would have all of it for domestic spending, for housing and health care. Though we have done a great job on the SCHIP program, and I thank Mr. MEEK for holding up the embarrassment that we have across America, with States that have as high as 12 percent of our children uninsured, when we could, in fact, have universal health care for all of our children if we were more responsible and we had a more responsible government, I am grateful for the fact, even with a budget that I would have written differently, with more money for health care, as I said more money for housing, and probably more money for the gulf region because we think of Katrina, but the whole gulf region was undermined by this terrible hurricane and it has remained so, so it needs a boost in its economy, but I am grateful that this budget includes a $50 billion reserve fund to expand the State children's health insurance to cover more of the 9 million children without health insurance in this country.

So we tried to fix what was broken. We did not break it, but the fact is it is broken, and therefore, I am very proud to stand with Democrats in this budget to be able to come to a Ohio or to be able to tell you that we are going to stop the bleeding on jobs leaving this country, and stop the bleeding of jobs not being provided for Americans.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am excited and I called my mom on the way over here, and I was just saying, this is really great because we are actually getting things done to help people. That is what is exciting about this is that next year at this time, all of us are going to be able to go back home and campaign about how many thousands of kids in your congressional district now have access to health care because of what we are going to do through the SCHIP program.

□ 2230

All of are going to be back home. We are going to be able to talk about the increase in the Pell Grants, and how many more kids have access to higher education. We are going to be able to go into the VFW and the American Legion and talk about the highest increase in the history of the Veterans Administration, who supports the troops. I am excited about the opportunities that we are going to have over the next year to go out, and as our Speaker said, this is a movement of hope for the American people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it is very good, interesting, because I have a lot of veterans in my district. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to a group of veterans yesterday that came to this capital. We had an opportunity to talk. You know, veterans, why are you giving the President a hard time about funding, the President loves us. The President loves veterans. We all do. Who doesn't? Who is running around here saying I don't like veterans? No one.

But it is not what you say, it is what you do.

Mr. RYAN, I think you pointed it out. I just want to share this information and the sources from the House budget committee, and also from the Office of Management and Budget, and the Congressional Budget Office, and this is from the president's budget office and the Congressional Budget Office, and it is from the House Budget Committee. So you have three, third party validators to these numbers.

As we look at the President's budget as he proposed for the United States of America, when you look at the veterans, the Democrat budget is $32 billion above what the President's budget over the next 5 years. You can see the numbers going across. But let's just get all the way over to 2010. The President's budget is $39.7 billion. We have $48.3 billion.

All right, what do these numbers mean? It means shorter waits at VA hospitals. It means better care for our veterans. It means that we will have a system set up for when these men and women come home, and those that are in the system now. Doctors will be able to receive the kind of training they need. Medical professionals will be able to receive the training. VA medical facilities will better. There will be oversight because we have made an investment there. It won't just be the same old thing over and over again. These are the facts.

Politically, you know, if someone just says, I am with the President, that is fine. But have the facts, have the facts.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me first of all thank Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN for yielding to me and allowing me just to join what I think has been an enormously instructive discussion.

The point that I want to leave on is, and I love what your display is saying, the budget would not raise taxes, but what I do want to just acknowledge, all that you have said, is because we are choosing people over special interests, because I leave you with this large brown bar that shows you that if the taxes that the President wants to keep in his budget, and the Republican budget, were to go forward, all the work that we are trying to do, whether it is the emergency supplemental and SCHIP and Pell Grants and more jobs being created, go down the tube, with the $17,500 tax relief to those making over $1 million. This is what put us in this enormous deficit.

Of course, the Iraq war with no oversight and control, $12 billion lost in Iraq somewhere, contracts not accounted for, but I am glad that we have got one in emergency supplemental that will get us out of Iraq and will help people in this country. We have got a budget that will not focus on special interests, but we will focus on veterans and children and health care.

Mr. MEEK, you know, you were saying about that, hours-long vote, that was Medicare. As you well know, we are still paying for that Medicare prescription drug benefit now.

Let me thank both of you. I am proud to be part of the fix-it Congress after we have been walking through the muck, if you will, of a broken Congress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so much, Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Thank you so much for coming down and sharing information that you shared with us. I think it is also important to note in the budget resolution that we have, it

will not change the tax structure that the taxes, the President's tax cuts will sunset 2010. It doesn't change that.

So as we start to move along. But I just want to make this point. I think it is very important. I am just going to ask the question, since we have three Members on the floor, and I know, Ms. JACKSON-LEE, you are about to leave. Here at the Capitol, when we are walking across the street to come over here to vote, and even when we have groups come up to visit with us, and even in my district office, in the 5 years, 5, going on 5 years that I have been in Congress, Mr. RYAN and I have been here 5, you have been here longer than us, that not one millionaire or billionaire came to me and said, please protect my tax cut. Not one billionaire wearing Polo shoes walked up outside of the Chamber and said, Congressman, I am a billionaire, you know, with a pinky with diamonds and everything on it. Please protect my tax cut. Done give my tax cut to kids without health insurance, not one. Not one.

I am just trying to figure out, but I can tell you, people from the State of Florida, that is in government, say please help insure our children. There have been veterans running in here saying, I can't wait 6 months to see the ophthalmologist any more. Can you help us?

Back in the District, Congressman, have you been to the VA hospital recently, or the clinic? Do you have to pin your nose when you walk in because of the conditions there?

I have seen that. I haven't seen a billionaire or millionaire run up and say, please, fall on your knees, Congressman, whatever you do, do not take my tax cut away that I didn't even ask for.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You know what I have heard? Do you know what I have heard from folks around the Capitol, people who don't make a lot of between, $100,000, between $50,000 and $100,000. Do you know what I heard them say? I don't mind paying taxes. But if I am going to pay taxes don't give it to the oil companies and corporate welfare. If I am going to pay taxes out of the $50,000 I make a year, living in D.C., very expensive town, don't spend $2 billion of it a week in Iraq. I don't mind paying, but if I am going to pay, give it to the poor kids who need health care. Make college more affordable. Make investments in our economy. You know, I think most people recognize they have got to pay their own fair share. But what they get frustrated about is where it goes.

Now, are you telling me Halliburton is going to get billions and billions and billions of dollars out of a guy or a woman who makes $50,000 a year, who is paying those taxes? And then that same company moves off, out of the country? No respect for anything. But I want to make a point here as we begin the wind down.

Mr. Speaker, many people have made comments on this floor over the past several hours that our budget somehow raises taxes on the American people.

Now, we are big on third-party validators here. I am going to give you three, this is the Hamilton project at the Brookings Institution. ''The budget would not raise taxes.''

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Just stop right there, Mr. RYAN. Brookings Institute.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Would not.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Would not. Now this is the Center on Budget and Policy, statement, March 28 ''This claim about raising taxes is incorrect. The House plan does not include a tax increase.'' That is a third-party validator.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Third party validator.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have one more. This is the Concord Coalition. This is the gold standard of the budget hawks. This is bipartisan, this is deficit hawks, Republicans, Democrats. In an issue brief of March 28, quote, ''Thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase.'' That was three, separate, third-party validators.

I am just going to make this statement, and I am going to kick it to one of my friends. The same people that are saying we are raising taxes are the same people that said we would be greeted as liberators. They are the same people that said, you know, we use the oil money for reconstruction, the same people that said it would only cost us $50 billion to run the war in Iraq, the same people that said we are in our last throes, the same people that said mission was accomplished, those are the same people that are saying that the Democratic budget is going to raise taxes, which three third-party validators have not say. All I am going to say is this. Let's ask the American people to reserve judgment.

Next January and February, when you file your taxes, you compare them to the taxes you filed this year, and you will see that the Democrats have not raised your taxes. Reserve judgment, keep your sheets, keep your forms from this year, and you will see next year that we have not done it, and that will be one more that you could add to the list of inaccuracies that have been levied towards the American people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Don't get too far from the rhythm here. Don't go anywhere.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am not going anywhere.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. On this potent point, first of all, Mr. MEEK, let me say the people that have come to my office say can you provide for funding for child care so I can be at work. I have not heard, Warren Buffett has not been in my office, but Warren Buffett himself has said he would rather see an investment in the domestic economy as opposed to the enormous tax cuts for the rich.

The reason why I think this is important, let me have you see something else in 12 months besides the filing of your taxes, an economic engine that may see an increase in jobs just because the Democrats had enough courage to stand up to the President's budget and do our own budget that doesn't have tax increases, but invests in the economy.

Maybe we will also see more students going to college. Maybe we will also see more children getting SCHIP money based upon the appropriators and the budget coming together. Maybe we will see, you know what, my country cares for me. They actually care about what I need, because they have brought down the deficit. That is what this President would sign this budget and work with this Congress, maybe we will see what it means to care about Americans as opposed to putting forward special interests.

I thank the gentlemen. I would just like to read that as I go, thus, to be clear, the budget resolution does not call for or require a tax increase. That is the Democratic budget resolution.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I think it is important that we continue to say this. Mr. RYAN, you said something that I thought was very interesting, very interesting.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thank you.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are welcome. Again, third-party validators, and I have here Congressional Budget Office numbers here, there is nothing it is nothing like the truth, and it is nothing like the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I can tell you when we look at, these are the same individuals in the White House, and some of the same Members on this floor that were left over from the days of just spend, spend, spend, borrow, borrow, borrow, don't worry about it, we are not going to be here to fix it, but here is the truth, $5.6 trillion surplus was here when the President got here, President Bush.

We have had an $8.4 trillion swing, deficit, from a $5.6 trillion surplus, which means, projection, we had money, and these numbers were based on 2002 to 2011 projections, to now, a $2.8 trillion deficit. Republican policies and this, you know, that got us there, $8.4 trillion.

Let me just share this with you. The amount of foreign debt held more than doubles under the Bush administration. He didn't do it by himself, that is why we have a Democratic Congress, because the American people caught on to what he was doing and what the rubber stamp Congress was doing last Congress. We are talking about accountability. We are talking about being responsible with U.S. tax dollars, foreign-held debt. Look at it skyrocket, going straight up.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Those are trillions of dollars.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Trillions of dollars. Trillions of dollars. We have kids now, growing up, can't even get to the trillion part. Who are we getting the money from? That is interesting, a list of countries. Mr. RYAN has been to a few of these countries.

Japan has $644.3 billion of our debt. They bought that debt because of Republican policies and because of the rubber-stamp Congress. We have to have a paradigm shift here. We want to change.

China, $249.8 billion, I think it is important to also understand that. The UK, $239.1 billion. You can see it goes across, and all of these countries have a part of American apple pie now.

□ 2245

This is the same group, the same folks that are saying that we are going to continue to raise taxes and we don't manage. We are the party and we are the majority, back when we had the majority 12 years ago, that balanced the budget and took us into surpluses. So who has the track record as relates to doing the right thing on behalf of the country?

Budget resolution reaches balance by 2010. The numbers come from the Congressional Budget Office. And this is the House resolution, our bill. The Bush budget is projected to be $31 billion under, still in deficit. We are going to be at a surplus. These are the projections by 2010, $1.53 billion. These are the facts, Mr. RYAN. And I know they hurt for some Members, but they are educational to others, and they give them what they need to be able to come here and make sound decisions.

Mr. RYAN, the bottom line is this. We are not by ourselves. Let's talk about why we are not by ourselves. And I just want to read a couple of the folks that are with us on this issue. And I think it is important, and there are so many, I had a list here, Mr. RYAN, that kind of a little cheat sheet here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I have got it right here, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Tell you what. You start naming off a few, and then I will name off. Because we need to make sure the Members know that this not just something that came out the back room.

Oh, I have my list here now. There is so much information, Mr. RYAN, that we have to share.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I would like to ask to submit this for the RECORD, Mr. Speaker.

So this will be listed and memorialized in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the organizations who have endorsed the 2008 budget.

The following organizations have endorsed the 2008 Budget Resolution:

American Academy of Pediatrics, March 27
American Association of People with Disabilities, March 26
American Association of School Administrators, March 27
American Association of University Women, March 27
American Farmland Trust, March 28
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, March 27
American Hospital Association, March 28
The American Legion, March 21
American Public Transportation Association, March 23
The ARC of the United States, March 26
Association of Child Support Attorneys of Los Angeles County, March 27
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, March 27
Association of Public Television Stations, March 27
Audubon, March 27
Catholic Charities USA, March 27
Child Support Directors Association of California, March 27
Coalition on Human Needs, March 27
Committee for Education Funding, March 27
Computer & Communications Industry Association, March 28
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, March 26
Catholic Health Association, March 27
Council on Competitiveness, March 28
Defenders of Wildlife, March 22
Disabled American Veterans, March 21
Electronic Industries Alliance, March 28
Emergency Campaign for American's Priorities, March 27
Environmental Coalition (including American Rivers, Audubon, NRDC, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society and many others), March 26
Families USA, March 26
Food Research and Action Center, March 27
Independent Budget, March 21
Information Technology Association of America, March 27
Information Technology Industry Council, March 27
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., March 27
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, March 28
League of Conservation Voters, March 27
Military Officers Association of America, March 26
National Child Support Enforcement Association, March 27
National Low Income Housing Coalition, March 26
National Women's Law Center, March 27, 2007
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, March 27
National Association of Counties, March 27
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, March 27
National Association of Police Organizations, Inc., March 28
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, March 27
National Council of La Raza, March 27
National Council of Social Security Management Associations, March 27
National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals, American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, March 27
National Education Association, March 26
National Head Start Association, March 27
National School Boards Association, March 27
Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors' Association, March 27
OMB Watch, March 26
Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International North America, March 27
Student Aid Alliance, March 27
Symantec, March 28
Technet, March 28
Transportation Construction Coalition, March 23
Trout Unlimited, March 26
The Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and Land Trust Alliance, March 27
United Cerebral Palsy, March 26
United Spinal Association, March 27
US Action, March 27
U.S. Public Interest Research Group, March 27
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, March 21
Wider Opportunities for Women, March 23

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The Members who are in their offices, those that may be on the floor, I don't want them to have to wait to read the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD tomorrow, the next day or what have you. I just wanted to name a few of these folks. I think it is important.

Military Officers Association of America wrote a letter in support of this budget. The National Child Support Enforcement Association, the National Low Income Housing Association, the National Women of Law Centers Association, Fight Crime, Invest in Kids.

The National Association of Counties. Who are they? These are counties throughout the country and parishes that are saying enough is enough.

The National Association of Police Organizations, Inc. Who are they? They are our law enforcement community that is looking for the COPS program to come back.

The National School Board Association, the National Head Start Association, the Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors Association. I thought I would mention that, Mr. RYAN, since you were here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Appreciate that.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The Trust for Public Land and Conservation Fund endorse. The Trust Alliance endorse what we are doing here. The U.S. Public Interest Research Group endorse what we are doing here. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorse what we are doing, because they are seeing the largest increase in commitment that so many Members of Congress have talked about over the years.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. These are the folks that work every day. These are the individuals that come in before we get here and leave after us. These are the works folks that know what it means to punch in and punch out.

The Audubon Society, Catholic Charities, the Committee for Education Funding, the Computer and Communications Industry Association, Catholic Health Association, Defenders of Wildlife, Disabled American Veterans.

These are the individuals, Mr. RYAN, and that is just, I can't go through all of the letters. We have the letters right here. I am not just reading from a sheet, just saying, well, I am just going to read. Anybody want to see this, they can stop by 1039 Longworth, and I will give them several copies of this. And, Mr. Speaker, they can run and take a look at them.

My Republican colleagues, some that I believe that will vote with us on this budget resolution, since it is so good and it is doing the right thing and it is not just about Iraq and Iraq and the other issue, Iraq. It is about domestic priorities. It is about making sure that our children have health care. It is about protecting the homeland. It is about all of the things and all of the reasons why we came to Congress. Not just to hear from the President and say, so shall it be written, so shall it be done.

So, Mr. RYAN, for you to get passionate about this, not that I am not passionate about it, but I think it is important that we share this accurate information with the people, with not only Members of Congress but the American people. So I am glad that you entered it into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Those that may be able to get on-line or even get a copy of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD will be able to see these great American organizations that will endorse.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, as this budget resolution, when we start moving through the process and the Senate product and we go into conference and we send it to the President of the United States, there will be a true momentum of the American spirit that will be rolling over to the White House on Pennsylvania. It will go right down the street here.

If the President wants to veto domestic priorities and things that are going to help Americans every day and be able to make sure that our military is strong and make sure that our veterans get better service that we promised them when they signed up as volunteers to protect this country, then we have to continue, Mr. RYAN and Members, to persuade the President to do otherwise. If he wants to veto it, we have to persuade him not to do it.

I am not going to say have at it. It would be okay if it wasn't the budget of the United States of America. It would be okay if it wasn't an emergency supplemental to make sure that our troops and men and women have what they need and accountability measures are in that emergency supplemental to hold the Iraqi government's feet to the fire, and what the administration has said, and making sure that our troops have what they need when they are sent into harm's way and make sure when they come back home that they are able to even go to their son or daughter's school without coming back in 6 weeks and 2 months being shipped back to Iraq for another 14-month tour. Because the administration, it takes them so long to admit that they have a problem. They just admitted 2 weeks ago, the Defense Department just called the conflict in Iraq a civil war after a year of the media and Members of Congress saying it was a civil war. They just got there, Mr. RYAN.

So the good thing about it is that, and in the last Congress we used to talk about if we had the opportunity to do. Now we have the opportunity, and we are doing, and I would just want the majority of this House to join us in the leadership opportunities that the American people have provided us. And I am not just talking to Democrats, Mr. Speaker, I am talking to my Republican colleagues.

Because, guess what? Maybe not this November but next November is going to be another opportunity for the American people to stand in judgment. And I guarantee you this: People are going to vote their personal priorities over their politics.

The President got out there today. They are going to get us. Terrorists are coming. We have to fight them there so we don't have to fight them over here. Well, guess what? When we passed and fully implemented the 9/11 recommendations, we are ready to protect America. That is what this budget reflects, and that is the way we protect the homeland, not continuing to stay in the middle of civil war.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Exactly. Budgets are priorities. They are blueprints for what you stand for and what you believe. And the Democrats and the Democratic budget is something that I think really is going to invigorate the country. It is not going as far as a lot of us want it to go, but the fact of the matter is we are left holding the bag of a Republican-led Congress and President that added almost $3 trillion in debt to this country, and we have got to deal with that. That is the stark reality of the budget situation.

But, again, I would like to say this. This President has threatened to veto the supplemental bill that adds an additional $1.7 billion for veterans, an additional $1.7 billion for defense health care, $500 million for post-traumatic stress, $500 million for brain injuries. That is what the President is going to veto when he says he is going to veto the supplemental.

The American people are way ahead of us on this war, and the national intelligence estimate said that the war in Iraq has created more terrorists and has made the terrorist situation worse, Mr. MEEK. This war has created more enemies for us, has created more terrorists that are gunning for the United States. So to say that by coming home that that somehow is going to make us less safe is inaccurate and inconsistent with the national intelligence estimate and the basic common sense of most Americans.

So as we move forward in a new direction in Iraq and the budget blueprint that we have that is going to move the country in a new direction domestically, without raising taxes, as the Concord Coalition said, the Democratic budget is not raising taxes. And the Center on Budget and Policy is saying the Democratic budget is not raising taxes. I will say, and another third-party validator, the Brookings Institute, says the Democrats are not raising taxes in their new budget.

I want to repeat this. I am asking, Mr. Speaker, for the Members of this House who know the facts, who will vote on this bill, they know we are not raising taxes, and that is why we are going to get broad support on it.

But for the American people to compare this year's tax returns that they get, reserve judgment on the Democratic tax policy, compare this year's to next year's, and you will see that your tax rates are the exact same, the exact same. And you will have one more piece of evidence to put in the column of we will be greeted as liberators, the same thing, the same column as we are in the last throes, the same column as mission accomplished. You will be able to put the Democratic budget and the Democratic tax policy in that same list.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Very quickly, while you get the chart to give the Web site, Mr. RYAN, I just wanted to say in this letter that Senator REID, the leader in the Senate, and also the Speaker here in the House wrote to the President saying that we will no longer move in the old direction but, rather, a bipartisan majority of the House and Senate believes strongly that the U.S. mission should transition to a counterterrorism force protection and training equipment of the Iraqi forces. Phasing redeployment of U.S. troops should commence.

So this is the stage that we want to move in now. It won't be a total withdrawal but definitely will be making sure that there are accountability measures there, that their troops get trained and that we get our men and women back home more sooner than later.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We just want them to meet the benchmarks that the President set on January 10 of this year. We are going to hold the administration's feet to the fire.

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. For any e-mails you may want to send, www.speaker.dot.gov/30something. All of the charts that Members may want to look at are all available on these Web sites. www.speaker.gov/30something.

THE DEMOCRAT BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARNEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I always come over here with the intentions of using my prepared remarks, and then I hear things being said by the other side and they usually grab my attention.

I want to talk tonight a little bit about the Democrat budget, but something that one of my colleagues said just a few minutes ago needs to be repeated.

He said, budgets are what you stand for and believe. Well, what the Democrats stand for and believe is greater government spending, taking more of your money and giving to the government.

And he also said, this budget doesn't go as far as some wanted. Well, that is the truth, I am sure. I am sure there were many Democrats who wanted to raise taxes a whole lot more and spend a whole lot more of the American people's money than they are going to do, but they are going to do plenty of damage, even not going as far as some of them want to go.

So the truth is, they told it to you tonight. The budget is what you stand

for and believe; and what they stand for and believe is, again, taking more of your money and spending it.

A lot of times I speak to school groups. I spoke to one on Monday.

□ 2300

And they often ask me, What is the difference between Democrats and Republicans? And I tell them that the short answer to that is Democrats believe that government is the answer to everything. Just have more government. Take more money from the American people and put it into government. Republicans think that Americans have survived very well on individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and individual responsibility, and we don't need the government to run our lives completely. So there is a big difference.

Also, the Democrats think the government knows how to spend your money more than you know how to spend your money. Republicans think that you are quite intelligent enough to know how to spend your money and we don't need to take it away from you and give it to some bureaucrat to spend it for you. So that is the big difference. And I think, again, the Democrat budget illustrates that.

It also illustrates how out of touch they are with the citizens of this country. As one of my colleagues said the other night, and I wish it had been my line, they promised change, but what they didn't tell you was it was going to be the change left in your pocket from taking your money away from you for increased taxes.

Now, under the assumptions in the Democrats' proposed budget that is going to be voted on tomorrow, we are going to see a massive tax hike. In fact, you are going to see the largest tax increase in our Nation's history. The Democrat budget increases taxes by $392.5 billion over 5 years, shattering their last record tax increase of $240 billion in 1993, when they were last in control of the Congress. In fact, they would increase taxes by $231 billion in 2012 alone.

Today, almost 100 million Americans from virtually every walk of life have a financial plan for their future that involves saving and investing, and millions more benefit from the countless jobs and opportunities that a capital marketplace creates. In addition, more than half of America's seniors receive dividend income every year and more than 30 percent receive capital gains income.

Under the Democrat budget, these seniors will see a tax increase of an average of $1,100 on dividends and capital gains. Overall, 28 million American families will pay an additional $1,000 a year in new investment taxes as a result of the budget. Many of these people earn annual incomes of $50,000 and less.

This is more than just a reckless policy that endangers the strength of our economy. I see it as a cause for serious concern for the livelihood of the people of North Carolina's Fifth District, whose tax bills would skyrocket under the proposed budget. In North Carolina alone, more than 3.1 million taxpayers would see their tax bill go up. It wouldn't be a little bump either. The average tax increase for those 3.1 million North Carolinians would be $2,671.

This approach is completely backwards. We should be looking first to put money back into taxpayers' pockets, not taking it out.

The current budget proposal is a squandered opportunity to reform spiraling Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid costs and to give Americans the permanent tax relief they deserve. Instead it allows widespread tax increases that hit middle-income families, low-income earners, families with children, small businesses, and many others.

Some people would see more than a 100 percent increase in their taxes. For example, an elderly couple with $40,000 in income would see a tax increase of 156% in 2011—from $583 to $1,489.

And a family of four with $60,000 in income would have a tax bill that would rise from $3,030 to $4,893 in 2011—an increase of more than $1,850, or 61%.

And these increases are no accident. During the budget markup, Democrats rejected every one of a series of amendments that would have prevented tax increases.

But ultimately, this budget proposal isn't a real surprise. It's business as usual for the Democrats and proves that their promises to be fiscally responsible are just empty rhetoric. If this budget is approved it will signal a return to the Democrats' beloved Tax-and-Spend model for government.

For example, if you take one look at the more than $20 billion in pork that was added to last week's troop emergency funding bill, it becomes crystal clear where the Democrats stand on spending. And worse, they proved they don't mind using our troops as bargaining chips.

Democrats have willfully abandoned their pledge of fiscal responsibility. They pledged to follow pay-as-you-go budget rules and spending restraint to curb the deficit. And then we get this budget, which would give us the largest tax increase in history and ignore the larger consequences for our economy.

These massive tax increases would threaten to reverse the economic gains that have developed since adoption of the 2001 and 2003 tax laws.

Job Growth—A total of 7.6 million new jobs have been created—an average of 168,500 per month.

Unemployment Declines—The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.1 percent to 4.5 percent.

Economic Growth—In the past 15 quarters, real gross domestic product [GDP] has grown an average of 3.5 percent per year. In the nine prior quarters, average GDP growth was an anemic 1.1 percent.

Investment Growth—Business investment has increased for 15 straight quarters, reversing a previous nine-quarter decline.

Stock Market Gains—Despite recent market corrections, the Dow Jones Industrial Average remains 41 percent above its 2003 level.

Ignores Fiscal Benefits—These tax increases also threaten to reverse the substantial deficit reduction that has occurred in the past several years.

Total federal tax revenue has increased from 16.5 percent of GDP in 2003 to 18.5 percent this year—exceeding the average percentage of the past four decades.

Tax revenue grew by 14.6 percent in 2005, 11.5 percent in 2006, and 9.3 percent in the first five months of fiscal year 2007.

Deficit Reduction. This revenue growth was the principal factor in reducing the budget deficit from $412.7 billion in 2004 to an estimated $214 billion this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Raising the 10% Tax Rate Bracket to 15 percent—More than 5 million individuals and families who previously owed no taxes would become subject to the individual income tax in 2011 if Democrats are successful in raising the 10% tax rate bracket to 15%, and reducing or eliminating other low-income tax benefits.

Eliminates Marriage Penalty Relief—23 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $466 in 2011.

Cuts the Child Tax Credit in Half—31 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $859 in 2011.

Every Working American Would be Affected by Democrats' Tax Hike—115 million taxpayers would see their taxes increase, on average, by $1,795 in 2011; 83 million women would see their taxes rise, on average, by $2,068; 48 million married couples would incur average tax increases of $2,899; 12 million single women with children would see their taxes increase, on average, by $1,082; 17 million elderly individuals would incur average tax increases of $2,270; and taxes would rise, on average, by $3,960 for 26 million small business owners.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCDERMOTT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. KILPATRICK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ELLISON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BRADY of Texas) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Ms. Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

S. 494. An act to endorse further enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to facilitate the timely admission of new members to NATO, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 29, 2007, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

986. A letter from the Chief Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Withdrawal of Final Flood Elevation Determination for the Listed Communities in Yuma and Coconino Counties, AZ [FEMA Docket No. D-7642] received January 16, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

987. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's annual report on the Economic Dispatch of Electric Generation Capacity, pursuant to Sections 1234 and 1832 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

988. A letter from the Deputy Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — National Archives and Records Administration Implementation of OMB Guidance on Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension [DOCKET NUMBER: NARA-06-0010] (RIN: 3095-AB56) received March 2, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

989. A letter from the Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting the Endowment's report for Fiscal Years 2001-2006, in accordance with Title II of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

990. A letter from the Secretary to the Board, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting in accordance with Section 647(b) of Division F of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY 2004, Pub. L. 108-199, the Board's report on competitive sourcing efforts for FY 2006; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

991. A letter from the Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule — Inflation Adjustment of Civil Money Penalty Amounts [Docket No. FR-5104-F-01] (RIN: 2501-AD30) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

992. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's report entitled, ''Buckle Up America: The National Initiative for Increasing Safety Belt Use, Ninth Report To Congress and Seventh Report to the President'' June 2004, as required by House Report 105-188 and Executive Order 13043, highlighting activities from January 1, 2005, through December 31, 2005; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

993. A letter from the Vice President, Government Affairs and Communications, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, transmitting the National Railroad Passenger Corportation (Amtrak)'s Financial Performance of Routes, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 24315(a); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

994. A letter from the Dir. Regulations Mgt., Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Home Schooling and Educational Institution (RIN: 2900-AM37) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

995. A letter from the Dir. Regulations Mgt., Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Priority for Partial Grants to States for Construction or Acquisition of State Home Facilities (RIN 2900-AM42) received February 27, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

996. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Corporate Reorganizations; Additional guidance on distributions under sections 368(a)(1)(D) and 354(b)(1)(B) [TD 9313] (RIN: 1545-BG29) received March 1, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

997. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Moore v. Commissioner, T.C. Memo. 2006-171 [T.C. Docket No. 11634-05L) received March 1, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

998. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Depreciation of MACRS Property That is Acquired in a Like-Kind Exchange or As a Result of an Involuntary Conversion [TD 9314] (RIN: 1545-BF37) received February 28, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

999. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the report entitled ''Second Report to Congress on the Evaluation of the Medicare Coordinated Care Demonstration'' in response to the requirements Section 4016(c) of Public Law 105-33, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

1000. A letter from the Chair, Good Neighbor Environmental Board, transmitting the tenth annual report of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board; jointly to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Energy and Commerce.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mrs. BONO (for herself, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. ISSA, and Mr. CALVERT):

H.R. 1725. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the Rancho California Water District Southern Riverside County Recycled/Non-Potable Distribution Facilities and Demineralization/Desalination Recycled Water Treatment and Reclamation Facility Project; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself, Mr. KUCINICH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, and Mr. MORAN of Virginia):

H.R. 1726. A bill to promote more humane treatment of farm animals; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mrs. BONO, Mr. LANGEVIN, and Mr. BILIRAKIS):

H.R. 1727. A bill to enhance and further research into paralysis and to improve rehabilitation and the quality of life for persons living with paralysis and other physical disabilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HONDA (for himself, Mr. FARR, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CLEAVER):

H.R. 1728. A bill to authorize the National Science Foundation to establish a Global Warming Education Program; to the Committee on Science and Technology.

By Mr. HAYES (for himself, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. COBLE, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. SHULER, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, and Mr. WATT):

H.R. 1729. A bill to amend the Trade Act of 1974 with respect to the trade adjustment assistance program, and for other purpose; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. WALDEN of Oregon (for himself, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. PAUL, Mr. EDWARDS, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. SIMPSON, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HERGER, Mr. MATHESON, Mr. TERRY, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. FORBES, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. KIND, Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. REHBERG, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. PICKERING, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. RENZI, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MANZULLO, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. BERRY, Mr. HARE, Mr. ROSS, Mr. LATHAM, Mr. BOREN, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. UDALL of New Mexico):

H.R. 1730. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure proportional representation of rural interests on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BAIRD (for himself and Mr. SOUDER):

H.R. 1731. A bill to eliminate the annual operating deficit and maintenance backlog in the national parks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland (for himself, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. PITTS, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, and Mr. RENZI):

H.R. 1732. A bill to provide alternative retired pay rates under title 10, United States Code, and alternative disability compensation rates under title 38, United States Code, for members of the Armed Forces with a combat-related disability, with such rates based on the average monthly salary for high school graduates in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BILBRAY:

H.R. 1733. A bill to prohibit the inclusion of earmarks in conference reports that were not in the House- or Senate-passed bills; to the Committee on Rules.

By Mr. BLUMENAUER (for himself, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. WU, and Mr. DEFAZIO):

H.R. 1734. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 630 Northeast Killingsworth Avenue in Portland, Oregon, as the ''Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Post Office''; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. BUCHANAN:

H.R. 1735. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide mandatory imprisonment for certain kidnapings by illegal aliens; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CANNON:

H.R. 1736. A bill to amend the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992 to provide for conjunctive use of surface and groundwater in Juab County, Utah; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mrs. CAPPS:

H.R. 1737. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the design, planning, and construction of permanent facilities for the GREAT project to reclaim, reuse, and treat impaired waters in the area of Oxnard, California; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Ms. GRANGER (for herself and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 1738. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a national screening program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide States the option to provide medical assistance for men and women screened and found to have colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. HARMAN:

H.R. 1739. A bill to require the approval of a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court judge or designated United States Magistrate Judge for the issuance of a national security letter, to require the Attorney General to submit semiannual reports on national security letters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Intelligence (Permanent Select), and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. HINCHEY (for himself, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. PALLONE, and Mr. LOBIONDO):

H.R. 1740. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to permit the simplified summer food programs to be carried out in all States and by all service institutions; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. KLEIN of Florida (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. CRENSHAW, and Mr. SALAZAR):

H.R. 1741. A bill to impose a 2-year moratorium on implementation of a proposed rule relating to the Federal-State financial partnerships under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. LANGEVIN (for himself, Mr. CANTOR, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. GRIJALVA):

H.R. 1742. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to classify automatic fire sprinkler systems as 5-year property for purposes of depreciation; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. LYNCH (for himself, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. OLVER, and Mr. MCNULTY):

H.R. 1743. A bill to establish the National Center on Liver Disease Research, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. OBERSTAR:

H.R. 1744. A bill to provide for a hospital in Cass County, Minnesota; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. ORTIZ (for himself, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. REYES, Ms. LEE, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Ms. BORDALLO, and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 1745. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to waive inadmissibility based on a misrepresentation in the case of an immediate relative of an active duty or reserve member of the Armed Forces and to extend the V nonimmigrant visa program for spouses and children of such a member; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. PENCE, and Mr. CHABOT):

H.R. 1746. A bill to require disclosure of Holocaust-era policies by insurers and establish a federal cause of action for claims arising out of a covered policy; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. SOLIS (for herself, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. INSLEE, Mr. WEINER, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. WYNN, Ms. DEGETTE, and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY):

H.R. 1747. A bill to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to require a national primary drinking water regulation for perchlorate; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. WAMP (for himself, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. KIND, and Mr. RAMSTAD):

H.R. 1748. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand workplace health incentives by equalizing the tax consequences of employee athletic facility use; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. WELCH of Vermont:

H.R. 1749. A bill to establish an Ombudsman in the Department of Defense to assist members of the Armed Forces seeking medical care at military medical treatment facilities; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. WYNN:

H.R. 1750. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend from 90 days to one year the period after release of a member of the Armed Forces from active duty during which the member is protected from mortgage foreclosure under that Act; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself and Mr. UDALL of Colorado):

H.R. 1751. A bill to establish a coordinated avalanche protection program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas (for himself and Mr. MANZULLO):

H. Res. 281. A resolution expressing the support of the House of Representatives for the goals and ideals of National Internet Safety Month; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SIRES:

H. Res. 282. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should discontinue the practice of contracting out mail delivery services; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

MEMORIALS

Under clause 3 of rule XII, memorials were presented and referred as follows:

14. The SPEAKER presented a memorial of the Legislature of the State of Florida, relative to House Memorial 11A urging the Congress of the United States to support a National Catastrophe Insurance Program; to the Committee on Financial Services.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 17: Mr. MITCHELL and Mr. HILL.
H.R. 39: Mr. CASTLE.
H.R. 63: Mr. BACHUS.
H.R. 66: Mr. ETHERIDGE.
H.R. 89: Mr. BOREN.
H.R. 171: Ms. SUTTON and Mr. STARK.
H.R. 178: Mr. STARK.
H.R. 241: Mr. HOEKSTRA.
H.R. 303: Mr. LATHAM.
H.R. 321: Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 339: Mr. BOREN.
H.R. 359: Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. SCHIFF.
H.R. 394: Mr. MCCOTTER and Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H.R. 464: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.
H.R. 468: Ms. NORTON.

H.R. 471: Mr. SALI and Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 473: Mr. STEARNS and Mr. CASTLE.
H.R. 503: Ms. WATSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. HUNTER, and Mr. WYNN.
H.R. 549: Mr. GONZALEZ.
H.R. 592: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY and Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 634: Mr. BONNER, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. GERLACH, Mr. GILCHREST, Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina, Mr. PETRI, Mr. RADANOVICH, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. KAGEN, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mr. GOODE, Mr. MACK, Mr. TIBERI, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. PENCE, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. WYNN, Ms. FOXX, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky, and Ms. GIFFORDS.
H.R. 694: Mr. RUSH.
H.R. 695: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 697: Mr. LINDER and Mr. TIAHRT.
H.R. 698: Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. KAGEN, and Ms. HOOLEY.
H.R. 704: Mr. GONZALEZ.
H.R. 708: Mr. MCHUGH.
H.R. 726: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida.
H.R. 728: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts and Ms. CARSON.
H.R. 734: Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. ALTMIRE, and Mr. RAHALL.
H.R. 741: Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 769: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H.R. 774: Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H.R. 784: Mr. BOREN, Mr. OLVER, and Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.
H.R. 853: Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. WALBERG, and Mr. MCCOTTER.
H.R. 872: Mr. HARE.
H.R. 882: Mr. UDALL of Colorado and Mr. FARR.
H.R. 887: Mr. BERMAN.
H.R. 938: Mr. CARTER and Mr. BAKER.
H.R. 943: Ms. SCHWARTZ, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. PASTOR, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Ms. SOLIS, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr. ROSS, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. BOUCHER, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. BERRY, Mr. KIND, and Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 957: Mr. KILDEE, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BONNER, Mr. TERRY, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. MICA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MACK, Mr. BOREN, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WELLER, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. LINDER.
H.R. 971: Mr. GILLMOR, Mr. PICKERING, and Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 989: Mr. CANNON and Mr. SHIMKUS.
H.R. 997: Mr. UPTON, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, and Mr. WAMP.
H.R. 1026: Mr. BOOZMAN and Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi.
H.R. 1038: Mr. HOEKSTRA.
H.R. 1055: Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.
H.R. 1076: Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. BOSWELL, and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1082: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. COURTNEY, and Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 1084: Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 1091: Mr. STEARNS, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. MICA, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mrs. BONO, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.
H.R. 1110: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN.
H.R. 1112: Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 1147: Mr. TANNER.
H.R. 1157: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. FERGUSON, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. NORTON, Ms. HOOLEY, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. DENT, Mrs. CUBIN, and Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 1225: Ms. MATSUI.
H.R. 1237: Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. HOLDEN, and Ms. HOOLEY.
H.R. 1246: Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 1248: Mr. SAXTON, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. ROTHMAN, and Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 1280: Mr. HARE.
H.R. 1283: Mr. HALL of New York, Mr. GOODE, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.
H.R. 1291: Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, and Mr. MCHUGH.
H.R. 1303: Mr. WALSH of New York.
H.R. 1332: Mr. BISHOP of Utah and Mr. FILNER.
H.R. 1338: Mr. SESTAK and Mr. LEWIS of Georgia.
H.R. 1346: Mr. MEEKS of New York.
H.R. 1357: Ms. HARMAN, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. BONNER, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Mr. MICA, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MACK, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. BOREN, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. WELLER, Mr. TERRY, Mr. LINDER, Mr. FORTENBERRY, and Ms. BERKLEY.
H.R. 1363: Ms. HERSETH.
H.R. 1366: Mrs. BACHMANN and Mrs. DRAKE.
H.R. 1384: Mr. COSTA, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. FILNER, Mr. GALLEGLY, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, and Mr. BILBRAY.
H.R. 1391: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1394: Mr. GERLACH, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Ms. NORTON, and Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota.
H.R. 1400: Mr. CALVERT, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. COSTA, Mr. BILBRAY, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. CHABOT, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. SESTAK, Mr. WEINER, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. RENZI, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. SHADEGG, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SIRES, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. WAMP, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. EHLERS, Mrs. CUBIN, Mr. SKELTON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky, Ms. BERKLEY, and Mr. GALLEGLY.
H.R. 1407: Mr. WILSON of South Carolina and Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 1413: Mr. WEXLER and Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.
H.R. 1424: Mr. GILLMOR.
H.R. 1428: Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.
H.R. 1438: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. STARK.
H.R. 1453: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 1469: Mr. SNYDER and Mr. MORAN of Virginia.
H.R. 1476: Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, and Mr. REICHERT.
H.R. 1506: Mr. COHEN, Mr. FARR, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. DELAHUNT, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. HOLT, and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.
H.R. 1514: Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. SOUDER, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. FILNER, Mr. TERRY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, and Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.
H.R. 1535: Mr. WEXLER and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1542: Ms. HIRONO and Ms. BALDWIN.
H.R. 1548: Ms. SHEA-PORTER.
H.R. 1560: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.
H.R. 1576: Mr. ALLEN.
H.R. 1589: Mr. PLATTS.
H.R. 1590: Mr. COURTNEY and Mr. HARE.
H.R. 1596: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. CALVERT, and Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H.R. 1609: Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. HOLT, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H.R. 1645: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. MCGOVERN, and Mr. WEINER.
H.R. 1647: Mr. ROSS, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. PETRI, Mrs. BONO, Mr. BISHOP of New York, and Mr. SHAYS.
H.R. 1650: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1653: Mr. JEFFERSON.
H.R. 1662: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mrs. CUBIN, and Mr. HERGER.
H.R. 1673: Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SAXTON, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HOBSON, and Mrs. CAPPS.
H.R. 1675: Mr. JONES of North Carolina.
H.R. 1676: Ms. HERSETH, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. BACA, and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1680: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.
H.R. 1681: Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.
H.R. 1688: Ms. LEE and Mr. ELLISON.
H.R. 1691: Mr. ACKERMAN and Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California.
H.R. 1717: Mr. LINDER.
H.R. 1718: Ms. SHEA-PORTER and Mr. DELAHUNT.
H. Con. Res. 68: Mr. RENZI, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Ms. WOOLSEY, and Mr. TANCREDO.
H. Con. Res. 100: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.
H. Con. Res. 102: Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. WOOLSEY, Mr. STARK, and Mrs. DRAKE.
H. Res. 101: Mr. SMITH of Washington.
H. RES. 121: Ms. CLARKE, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. ALLEN.
H. Res. 123: Mr. JEFFERSON and Mr. HOLDEN.
H. Res. 125: Mr. LINDER.
H. Res. 128: Mr. MCCOTTER.
H. Res. 186: Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. KIND, Mr. KIRK, and Mr. EHLERS.
H. Res. 209: Mr. STARK.
H. Res. 221: Ms. NORTON.
H. Res. 231: Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina.
H. Res. 245: Mr. PALLONE.
H. Res. 248: Mr. UPTON.
H. Res. 259: Mr. REGULA, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. CUELLAR.
H. Res. 268: Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. PENCE, Mr. WAMP, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. WYNN, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. LUCAS, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. AKIN, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. FILNER, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. GOODE, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. GORDON, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. ROSS, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. MATHESON, Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. SHULER, Mr. FORBES, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. RADANOVICH, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. JORDAN, and Mr. BACHUS.
H. Res. 272: Ms. NORTON.
H. Res. 273: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

DELETIONS OF SPONSORS FROM PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were deleted from public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 695: Mrs. EMERSON.
H.J. Res. 40: Mr. HALL of Texas.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk's desk and referred as follows:

6. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the Village of Pomona, New York, relative to a resolution requesting that the Congress of the United States pass legislation requiring

the Nuclear Regulatory Commission conduct an Independent Safety Assessment of the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7. Also, a petition of the New Orleans City Council, Louisiana, relative to Resolution R–07–89 urging the Congress of the United States to fully fund all necessary improvements to the various flood control and drainage projects that have been designated for funding to date, as well as those forthcoming in the immediate future; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8. Also, a petition of the City Council of Honolulu, Hawaii, relative to Resolution 07–044 urging the Congress of the United States to support S. 57 and H.R. 760, the Filipino Veterans Equity Acts of 2007, conferring benefits on Filipino World War II Veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *110th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2007 *No. 54*

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, You have said that the truth will set us free. We thank You that Your idea of freedom leads to harmony and not discord, to consensus and not conflict.

Liberate our lawmakers from deceptions that distort and misrepresent facts. Teach them the fine art of conciliation, and inspire them to choose rational roads instead of emotional dead ends. May they commit their time, effort, and resources in formulating policy which is in accordance with Your will.

Lord, lift them above partisan rancor, and give them the power to walk in Your light, to act in Your strength, to think with Your wisdom, to speak with Your truth, and to live in Your love. We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 28, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CARDIN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 1591

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous order with respect to the timing of the three rollcall votes this morning be modified to provide that the votes be delayed until 11:45 a.m., under the same sequence as previously ordered and the other provisions as previously ordered; that following the 60 minutes of debate, the amendments be set aside and that Senator COBURN then be recognized to debate his pending amendments and that all other provisions remain in effect.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this morning, as indicated, we are going to have a change of schedule, but it will work out just fine. I have spoken with the distinguished Republican leader. We are going to do what we can to finish this bill today. It is extremely important. It will give the House and Senate 2 full days prior to the recess to have this important bill worked on in regard to the conference that must take place. Hopefully, the first day or two that we get back after the break, we can have a conference report to vote on. I hope we can do that. That would be extremely important if we could.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 997 AND S. 1001

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before I turn to my distinguished Republican colleague, it is my understanding that there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for a second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 997) to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for human embryonic stem cell research.

A bill (S. 1001) to restore Second Amendment rights in the District of Columbia.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these bills, en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the first vote will be with respect to the Wyden county payments amendment, then the Burr county payments amendment, followed by a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the bill. Members have until 10:30 this morning to file

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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their second-degree amendments. Other votes will likely occur this afternoon.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there are a number of germane amendments which will be in order postcloture. I have indicated to the majority leader that we hope to have a number of those voted on. Whether we finish this bill today or tomorrow, I certainly share the view of the majority leader that we need to get this bill conferenced by staff at the very least—both the staff of the House and the Senate—over the break so that the conference can be completed, we can get the bill down to the President for a veto, and get it passed in a form that gets the funding to our troops at the earliest possible point. There will be maximum cooperation on this side toward that end. We need to get through this process and repass this bill as quickly as possible because the troops need the money.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1591, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1591) making emergency supplemental appropriations for fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Cochran (for Lugar) amendment No. 690, to provide that, of the funds appropriated by this act under the headings ''DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PROGRAMS'' and ''ECONOMIC SUPPORT FUND'' (except for the Community Action Program), up to $50 million may be made available to support and maintain a civilian reserve corps.

Wyden amendment No. 709, to reauthorize the secure rural schools and community self-determination program and to provide funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program.

Obama amendment No. 664, to appropriate an additional $58 million for Defense Health Program for additional mental health and related personnel, an additional $10 million for operation and maintenance for each of the military departments for improved physical disability evaluations of members of the Armed Forces, and an additional $15 million for Defense Health Program for women's mental health services.

Burr amendment No. 716 (to amendment No. 709) to require that payments to eligible States and eligible counties only be used for public schools.

Webb amendment No. 692, to prohibit the use of funds for military operations in Iran.

Coburn amendment No. 648, to remove $100 million in funding for the Republican and Democratic Party conventions in 2008.

Coburn amendment No. 649, to remove a $2 million earmark for the University of Vermont.

Coburn amendment No. 656, to require timely public disclosure of Government reports submitted to Congress.

Coburn amendment No. 657, to provide farm assistance in a fiscally responsible manner.

Coburn amendment No. 717, to make certain provisions inapplicable.

Coburn amendment No. 718, to make certain provisions inapplicable.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 709 AND 716

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there is 30 minutes of debate on amendments Nos. 709 and 716, with the time equally divided between the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN, and the Senator from North Carolina, Mr. BURR.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senator HATCH and Senator ROCKEFELLER as cosponsors of our bipartisan amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, it is my intent to take a couple of minutes to lay out the reason it is so important to pass this county payments amendment this morning. Then I plan to yield 5 minutes to my good friend and teammate on this issue, Senator CRAIG, and then it is my intent to close for our side.

This issue of county payments funding is literally an issue of survival for rural counties across this country. It is going to determine whether the Federal Government will keep a more than 100-year obligation to rural communities or whether the Federal Government is going to turn its back on these communities and allow them to become national sacrifice zones.

Mr. President, 100 years ago, the Federal Government entered into an agreement with rural communities in exchange for creating national forests and restricting how local communities manage their forest lands. The Government would provide a partial payment so those local communities could pay for essential services, such as law enforcement and education. But the most recent law guaranteeing those payments—the law the distinguished Senator from Idaho and I wrote, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act—has expired. If the law is not extended—the safety net payments rural communities need in order to carry out essential services—without those dollars, there will be havoc in rural communities across our country.

The votes the Senate is going to soon take are going to decide the future of a lot of these rural communities, and there are two approaches. First, there is the approach Senator CRAIG and I and a bipartisan group of 17 Senators favor that is flexible, that ensures we don't make the decisions in Washington, DC, we don't micromanage these local communities but give them the flexibility at the local level to make choices that make sense for them.

This legislation is sponsored by both Republican Senators from Idaho, both Democratic Senators from Washington State, and many others. We have a broad coalition. The National Association of Counties, labor groups, education advocates—all have said that the approach that makes sense for them is our bipartisan amendment, and they have not been in favor of the amendment offered by the Senator from North Carolina.

I am now going to make 5 minutes from our time available to my friend and colleague, Senator CRAIG. I thank him again for his support.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for yielding. He has clearly outlined the critical nature of this legislation and its reauthorization from the original Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2005. Out in Oregon, they called it Wyden-Craig; in Idaho, they called it Craig-Wyden. But in reality, it became a lifeline for the rural communities that since 1908 had become increasingly dependent upon the revenues that flowed from our public lands. In fact, on and after May 23, 1908—and I am quoting specifically from the law—''25 per centum of all moneys received during any fiscal year from each national forest shall be paid at the end of such year by the Secretary of the Treasury to the State or the territory'' in which that money was generated for the purpose of it flowing down to, it very specifically says, ''public schools, public roads of the county or counties in which such national forests are situated.''

During the decade of the eighties, we reduced the allowable cut on our forested lands by nearly 80 percent. What Senator WYDEN and I recognized at that time—we had counties in near bankruptcy—as a result of that, in 2000, we passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. That act expired on September 30, 2006. Whom did it impact? It impacted 700 counties, 4,400 school districts in 39 States, 8 million schoolkids, and approximately 15,000 miles of roads.

We knew that probably the formula would have to change, and the Senator from Oregon and I have worked mightily on that issue. He offered a reauthorization of the old formula. I finally offered a 1-year extension. We were able

to get the funding for a 1-year extension in the underlying vehicle, but as a result of all of that work, a new formula, a compromise, has come to be that the Senator brought to the floor as an amendment yesterday to this bill.

This is a formula which takes us out to 2012. It is a formula which stabilizes these communities. It is also a package that extends and improves the PILT, or the payment in lieu of taxes, to these large, federally dominated rural counties. It is awfully important to remember that point.

A lot of folks east of the Mississippi don't recognize sometimes that we have counties that are 80 percent and 90 percent public lands. They have no fee-simple private land base from which to fund their public needs and facilities. Yet those are the very lands on which people love to come and recreate. People from the East love to go out there and recreate. They can get hung up on a cliff somewhere and they can't get down, so local search and rescue has to get a helicopter for $10,000 and pluck them off a cliff. And who pays for it? They have enjoyed their recreational experience on the public land, but it is the county and the private funding resource that has to pay for it.

So the extension of PILT, in combination with what we are doing to sustain our rural schools and counties and their roads and bridges, is absolutely critical. It is why we created PILT years ago. It is why, when Teddy Roosevelt asked the American people to create Federal reserves, he wanted to tie the communities of interest to the Federal reserves, and out of it came the 25-percent formula that I just quoted. The extension of that is critical in western rural public land, timber, and U.S.-forest-land-dominated States. It is not, however, just in the West. Other States across the country recognize it, from the East to the South; as I said, 700 counties, 4,400 school districts, 39 States, with 8 million kids.

What does it mean in some districts? It means a third of their budget, gone. Can you raise that much revenue in a local area? Probably not. So the reality of what we are doing is important, it is very necessary, and I thank my colleague from Oregon for persisting in working with us on this formula and developing what is a new approach, probably more balanced and sustainable in the long run than what the old, original bill was, in recognition that times have changed and we need to adjust and change to them.

Let me close with this one thought—48 million kids and their education. That need has not changed, and that is why we are on the floor of the Senate today insisting that this be a part of this supplemental emergency funding program to assure the stability of those rural school districts and those rural counties.

Mr. President, I thank my colleague for yielding to me, and I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, how much time remains on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon has a little over 6 minutes.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank the Chair, and I thank my colleague from Idaho for an excellent assessment of where we are now, both with respect to the need here and our bipartisan amendment.

Here is what it is going to come down to, colleagues. There are going to be two different approaches. One is offered by the Senator from North Carolina, the other is a bipartisan one offered by many Senators, and I and Senator CRAIG have outlined it. Ours is supported by the groups that have the most expertise in this area: the National Association of Counties, educators, labor organizations, and those who are on the ground.

The Senator from North Carolina seeks to dictate from Washington, DC, how this program would operate. I will just say to the Senate, it seems to me what is best for Ashville, NC, may not be best for Amity, OR. Let's make sure these local communities have the freedom to make choices, make judgments with respect to essential services in the law enforcement area and in the roads area. I pointed out yesterday that if the approach offered by the Senator from North Carolina were to prevail, we couldn't, for example, do upkeep of rural roads, which get very snowy in the winter. If we don't make improvements in them, the kids aren't even going to get to the schools, which is the point my colleague from Idaho has mentioned as well.

As Senators think about this, I would like to also stress that this is not some kind of welfare program. I know many Senators are still not up on all the details. They do not live and breathe this subject on a daily basis as Senator CRAIG and I do, but these are not handout payments. This is not welfare. This is part of a 100-year deal which came about when the Federal forest system was created.

As we move on our side to the end of our presentation, I would like for folks to understand what the stakes are in rural communities and give some accounts from my State that are very similar to what Senators are hearing from officials in their States.

In my State, for example, the sheriff of Grants Pass—and I was recently there for a community meeting—told me that without county payments funding, he may have to call out the National Guard to protect public safety. The approach that is offered by the Senator from North Carolina wouldn't make it possible for those local law enforcement officials to be on the front lines in terms of fighting crime, in terms of fighting meth, which is a scourge in so many communities across our country.

The county commissioners of Curry County, a beautiful community on the Oregon coast, report that without county payments funding, they may have no choice but to dissolve their county altogether. They have already begun discussions with our State about dissolving the county. You can be sure if county payments funding is not available, those discussions will continue and, in my view, based on a recent community meeting there, I am of the view that their county may not survive.

Local officials in Coos County, just at the prospect of losing county payment funds, have already been releasing prisoners. So when people talk about what this issue can mean and what it really comes down to in local communities, this isn't an abstract issue in Coos County, OR. They have released prisoners—they have released prisoners—and they are going to lay off people who have had 25 years of service in that community. There are reports in the newspaper that they have already been terminated from their jobs, and I believe that we are going to see, in other communities across this country, similar problems.

I understand my friend from Idaho would like me to yield to him, and I am happy to do so.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Oregon for yielding for a moment, and I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the National Association of Counties supporting the new version of what we call Wyden-Craig, and also the National Governors Association and its support, and a good, balanced observation of the difference between the Wyden amendment as offered and what the Senator from North Carolina is offering.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
March 27, 2007.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. LARRY E. CRAIG,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS WYDEN AND CRAIG: On behalf of the National Education Association, the American Association of School Administrators and the National Association of Counties we thank you for your leadership in developing the amendment to H.R. 1591 to reauthorize the secure rural schools and community self-determination program and to provide funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program.

We understand that Senator Burr intends to offer an amendment to your amendment which would divert increases realized by counties under your amendment to be used solely for education. While well-intentioned, we fear the Burr amendment is ill-conceived and would result in negative consequences.

The Burr amendment requires ''new money'' to be spent on education. This would deny communities and their elected leaders to set their own priorities, superimposing a Washington, DC, one-size-fits-all mandate on those rural forest counties already severely restrained by the presence of tax-exempt federal land.

Further, it appears that the Burr amendment would shift the hard-won increase to

PILT funding offered by the Wyden-Craig amendment away from the counties' general funds to schools, which was never the purpose of the PILT Act.

We also are concerned that the Burr amendment interferes with the authority states have had since 1908 to allocate forest reserve funds—authority explicitly and deliberately retained by Congress in Title I of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. Congress should not upend a 100-year old precedent that has served the forest counties and schools well.

Finally, as you know all too well, your amendment is the result of months, if not years, of dialogue and discussion, among all the stakeholders. It represents a carefully calibrated compromise which should be respected by the Senate.

Please urge your colleagues on our behalf to reject the Burr amendment.

Sincerely,

LARRY NAAKE,
Executive Director.

NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION,
September 19, 2006.

Hon. BILL FRIST,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.
Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.
Hon. HARRY REID,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR FRIST, SENATOR REID, SPEAKER HASTERT, AND REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI:

We write to urge reauthorization this Congress of Public Law 106–393, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. This extremely successful law sunsets at the end of September 2006. Failure to reauthorize this law by passing either H.R. 517 or S. 267 would be a significant blow to over 800 counties in 42 states that depend on the program to fund their schools, roads, forest improvement projects and other essential services.

P.L. 106–393 maintains a congressionally approved arrangement to share revenue generated from our national forests with the rural counties that play host to these federal lands. Without reauthorization, rural forest dependent communities across the nation will lose over $400 million annually. This economic loss will be devastating to the economy and spirit of rural America, as well as to the timber, mining and recreation industries.

Beyond the revenue sharing provisions of P.L. 106–393, the law augments federal and non-federal wildfire management, habitat improvement and watershed restoration. Through the work of citizen-based Resource Advisory Committees, over 2500 projects have been completed on federal lands and not one has been appealed or litigated. Many of these projects leverage the federal dollars to obtain matching private, county and state dollars to conduct a range of essential federal forest management activities, such as necessary fuel reduction to protect our national forests from major fires.

If Congress is unable to adopt a comprehensive reauthorization of the program, we urge at a minimum that funding for the program be extended for at least one year to provide adequate time to build a consensus supporting a longer-term solution.

Sincerely,

GOVERNOR JON HUNTSMAN, JR.,
Chair, Natural Resources Committee.
GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON,
Vice Chair, Natural Resources Committee.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
March 28, 2007.

YES on Wyden Amendment—NO on Burr Amendment

We understand that Senator Burr intends to offer an amendment to the Wyden-Craig amendment which would divert increases realized by counties under Wyden-Craig amendment to be used solely for education. While no doubt well-intentioned, we fear the Burr amendment is ill-conceived and would result in negative consequences.

The Burr amendment requires ''new money'' to be spent on education. While it sounds fine at first, this would deny communities and their elected leaders the ability to set their own priorities, superimposing a Washington, DC, one-size-fits-all mandate on those rural forest counties already severely restrained by the presence of tax-exempt federal land.

We also are concerned that the Burr amendment interferes with the authority states have had since 1908 to allocate forest reserve funds—authority explicitly and deliberately retained by Congress in Title I of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. Congress should not upend a 100–year old precedent that has served the forest counties and schools well.

Finally, as you know all too well, the Wyden-Craig amendment is the result of months, if not years, of dialogue and discussion, among all the stakeholders. It represents a carefully calibrated compromise which should be respected by the Senate.

Please support the Wyden-Craig amendment and oppose the Burr amendment.

Sincerely,

LARRY NAAKE,
Executive Director.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has a minute and a half.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I think the Senate has had a chance—and I thank particularly my friend from Idaho for coming to the floor today—to get a sense of what this issue is all about. I close by saying that Senator CRAIG and I and all those who have been involved in this issue understand that as a result of this updated, modernized approach to the Secure Rural Schools Act, we are going to make sure the rural communities of this country can survive and help them make a transition into other areas.

Senator CRAIG and I held many hearings and have heard from rural communities about how they would like to have very strong thinning programs. This is something you don't know a whole lot about in Baltimore, Mr. President, but we have a lot of overstocked stands in our part of the country. If you don't thin them out, it makes for a big fire risk. If you thin them out, you bring the communities together—labor folks, environmentalists, and others—and you deal with the fire risk and get the material to the mill. Plus you put people to work.

Senator CRAIG and I and others on our committee are prepared to have those kinds of programs. However, if these rural communities can't survive, and I am of the view that many of them won't without this amendment, then we are not in a position to look at the next steps, which are approaches like I have outlined for thinning and biomass, where we take the woody waste off the forest floor, which makes for clean energy. Senator CRAIG and I have heard a great deal of testimony about that.

I hope our colleagues will support the bipartisan amendment that Senator CRAIG and I have talked about this morning, along with 17 of our colleagues, and reject the Burr amendment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

AMENDMENT NO. 697, AS MODIFIED

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I send to the desk a modification to amendment No. 697, which is filed at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Hearing no objection, the amendment is so modified.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF CAPABILITIES OF THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The responsibility for Iraq's internal security and halting sectarian violence must rest primarily with the Government of Iraq, relying on the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

(2) In quarterly reports to Congress, and in testimony before a number of congressional committees, the Department of Defense reported progress towards training and equipping Iraqi Security Forces; however, the subsequent performance of the Iraqi Security Forces has been uneven and occasionally appeared inconsistent with those reports.

(3) On November 15, 2005, President Bush said, ''The plan [is] that we will train Iraqi troops to be able to take the fight to the enemy. And as I have consistently said, as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down''.

(5) On January 10, 2007, the President announced a new strategy, which consists of three basic elements: diplomatic, economic, and military; the central component of the military element being an augmentation of the present level of the U.S. military forces with more than 20,000 additional U.S. military troops to Iraq to ''work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs''.

(6) The President said on January 10, 2007, that ''I've made it clear to the Prime Minister and Iraq's other leaders that America's commitment is not open-ended'' so as to dispel the contrary impression that exists.

(7) The latest National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq, entitled ''Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead,'' released in January 2007, found: ''If strengthened Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), more loyal to the government and supported by Coalition forces, are able to reduce levels of violence and establish more effective security

for Iraq's population, Iraqi leaders could have an opportunity to begin the process of political compromise necessary for longer term stability, political progress, and economic recovery''.

(8) The NIE also stated that ''[d]espite real improvements, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—particularly the Iraqi police—will be hard pressed in the next 12-18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities''.

(9) The current and prospective readiness of the ISF is critical to (A) the long term stability of Iraq, (B) the force protection of U.S. forces conducting combined operations with the ISF; and (C) the scale of U.S. forces deployed to Iraq.

(b) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF CAPABILITIES OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Of the amoung appropriated or otherwise made available for the Department of Defense, $750,000 is provided to commission an independent, private-sector entity, which operates as a 501(c)(3) with recognized credentials and expertise in military affairs, to prepare an independent report assessing the following:

(A) The readiness of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to assume responsibility for maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying international terrorists a safe haven, and bringing greater security to Iraq's 18 provinces in the next 12-18 months, and bringing an end to sectarian violence to achieve national reconciliation .

(B) The training; equipping; command, control and intelligence capabilities; and logistics capacity of the ISF.

(C) The likelihood that, given the ISF's record of preparedness to date, following years of training and equipping by US forces, the continued support of US troops will contribute to the readiness of the ISF to fulfill the missions outlined in subparagraph (A).

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 120 days after passage of this Act, the designated private sector entity shall provide an unclassified report, with a classified annex, containing its findings, to the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services, Appropriations, Foreign Relations, and Intelligence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 716

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I thank the Chair, and I would ask that the Chair alert me when I have 3 minutes remaining on my 15 minutes.

Mr. President, I want to make two points right up front. The first point is that I support the Wyden bill. I think if you listen to the debate, you would think I am urging my colleagues not to extend this program. North Carolina is 25 percent national land. We benefit from it.

The second point is that I have tremendous respect for Senator WYDEN and for Senator CRAIG, and the realities are that if you take everything that was said at face value, one of two things exists: either we are stretching the truth or we haven't read my amendment because there is no way for my amendment, which deals only with title I of Forest Service payments, to affect law enforcement. Title I of the Forest Service payments specifically says, since 1908, when it was created, that it can be used for schools or roads.

What does my amendment do? It is very simple. There are three payments the Wyden bill addresses: Forest Service payments, BLM land, and payments in lieu of taxes. Within the framework of the Forest Service payment there are three titles: title I, which is schools and roads; title II, which is forestry programs and others; and title III, which is sheriff's search and rescue, law enforcement.

What does my amendment do? My amendment says simply all the new money that goes to title I, schools and roads, which is an increase of approximately $177 million since it was reauthorized in 2000—title I had $300 million in 2000; fiscal year 2007 is projected to be $477 million—so $177 million of new money shall be devoted, 80 to 85 percent, to schools.

My good friend from Oregon said the issue is survival. I would say he is correct. I agree with him. More than 40 percent of America's schools are in rural areas, and approximately 30 percent of all students attend those rural schools. The Senator from Idaho said 8 million kids. To be sure, our rural schools face unique challenges. Often their geographic isolation makes it difficult for teachers to access professional development opportunities. It is often difficult for rural schools to recruit and retain high-quality, gifted teachers.

Additionally, it is also often difficult for high school students in rural areas to access the advanced placement programs that students in urban areas have access to, which sets them on a course ahead of other students for higher education. Nationally, one-third of our students who enter high school in the ninth grade drop out before they receive a high school diploma. If this were a disease in America, it would be called an epidemic. If there were a disease in America, we would take Federal funds, State funds, local funds, and we would focus them to try to solve the problem.

Here we have an opportunity. We are not stealing any money. We are not changing the 1908 agreement. But as we plus up the money, all I am saying to my colleagues is, shouldn't we take the $177 million of new money and shouldn't we devote it to education? Shouldn't we say to these 8 million kids and their families, in 40 percent of America's schools: You know what. We are going to give you extra funds to address the geographical challenges you are faced with because you happen to be located in rural America. It affects North Carolina just as it does Idaho and just as it does Oregon.

As I said, in 1908, Congress first passed this bill and required that 25 percent of the revenues derived from national forest lands be paid to States. I am not trying to change that. I want to make sure that all of these payments—BLM payments, payments in lieu of taxes, Forest Service payments—go. I don't want to get into title III, where law enforcement is affected. I don't want to get into title II, where forestry programs and forestry management are affected. I do believe, however, that we can look at the challenges that we are faced with and say: If we are going to put new money into it, why don't we put 80 percent of it in education, the No. 1 challenge we have in America today.

I don't have any statements in support of my amendment. As a matter of fact, yesterday, the National Education Association sent out an e-mail alert to Senators warning them of this amendment. It basically said that a potential amendment would be offered by an unnamed Senator—they knew exactly who I was—that would divert funds away from the Secure Rural Schools Community Self-Determination Act. We urge you to oppose any such amendment.

I am beginning to figure out what is wrong with education. We are letting other people influence what we do, people who do not care whether we get our kids educated. Here is the National Education Association, the labor union of teachers, the ones who are supposed to be most concerned about our kids. Here is an amendment that puts $177 million into rural schools in America, and they are telling everybody to vote against it. Aren't they the ones who are supposed to stand up for our kids?

The ones who need to stand up for our kids are Members of this institution. They need to listen to the parents or these kids back at home and not listen to the organization that says they represent teachers and children that, frankly, when offered more money—it doesn't disrupt anything—they say oppose it.

The information contained in the NEA's e-mail is blatantly false. I am not trying to do anything to ensure anything other than 80 percent of new money, $177 million, goes, 80 percent, to schools. As a matter of fact, if you do the math, it means there is more money in 2007—where the other 20 percent is dedicated to roads—than there was under the 2000 reauthorization of this program. So, in fact, communities that are affected are going to have more money to put into roads. But, you know, an amazing thing is going to exist. They are also going to have more money to put into schools, exactly where I think we need to go.

One can look at the history of how this money has been spent. It might give you an indication as to why there is opposition and concern. Oregon, which will receive over $300 million, spends almost all of its money on roads. In 2004, Oregon spent $433 per student, compared to $7,388 per mile of road, out of title I, the Rural Schools Act. Let me say that again: $433 per student, compared to $7,388 per mile of roads.

Idaho spends almost 10 times the amount it spends on roads to what it spends on education, out of this program. Maine will see its share of funding increase from $40,000 per year to almost $1 million when this is reauthorized, and I support its reauthorization.

But in 2004, Maine spent only $4.12 out of this program, per student, compared to almost $700 per mile of road.

There are some successes, though. Alaska dedicates all its title I money to public schools, about $10 million in 2006. If this bill is reauthorized, Alaska will receive almost $20 million. That will double the amount that Alaska invests in its rural schools through the same program that the National Education Association says would be devastating to the education of our children in this country.

As a matter of fact, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Vermont, and Virginia commit 100 percent of their money to education.

I am not here amending the legislation to say you have to spend the 100 percent. I am not here taking title I in total and saying let's change the formula for the entire thing. All I am saying is, if we are going to put new money in it—and we are putting new money in—why not take the bump-up of money and say, with what we are faced in this country, with only 70 percent of our kids graduating with a high school diploma, on time, maybe we ought to try to address that. It certainly is higher in rural America than it is in urban America.

Mr. CRAIG. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BURR. I am happy to yield.

Mr. CRAIG. The Senator quoted States that, by the action of their legislatures, directed full amounts to education. I understand in the Senator's State that is also true, 100 percent.

Mr. BURR. That is correct.

Mr. CRAIG. So what does the Senator's formula do to his State legislature's allocation of money? Does it cut it back, adjust it or change it?

Mr. BURR. No, it has no effect.

Mr. CRAIG. So, in other words, the impact the Senator is advocating nationwide already happens in his State?

Mr. BURR. That is correct.

Mr. CRAIG. And States have that option, if they so choose, based on a State decision as to the importance of it rated as compared to public rural schools.

Mr. BURR. The Senator is correct. The Senator's point is I am taking power away from the decisions of the local community. The Senator is right. I make no bones about it. I plead guilty. I wish they were as concerned about their children's education as I am.

I have a school system where the graduation rate this year was 46 percent. The amazing thing is nobody has been fired. As a matter of fact, nobody is outraged at it. Today's jobs that we create in the 21st century require a different level of education for our children. If you are not competitive—you will not be invited for an interview if, in fact, you do not have a high school diploma.

The reality is, here is one little way we can have an impact on it, a little way that doesn't cost anybody anything because, as I said, this is all new money, from 2000 when it was at its peak. That is because, I remind everybody, in 2000 this was a 7-year program that was set to sunset, to go away. It was going to be no more. This was the adjustment period for all the States, including North Carolina, that received Federal money.

It is not going away. We are going to reauthorize it until 2012, and in 2012 it will be reauthorized until 2020, and the likelihood is the money will go up every year.

Our responsibility is, is the taxpayer money being used in a way that has a positive effect on the communities with Federal money? All I am saying is, as we put new money in, maybe we ought to have some Federal hand in saying let's focus it where we have a cancer. That cancer is in education. If we can't raise the graduation rate from 70 percent to 100 percent, we have individuals who come into our system incapable of competing for a job.

This is a very simple decision for Members of the Senate. I am sad today to tell you I do not expect to win on my amendment. Some will say I have tried to undo 100 years of public policy. I have changed the next 100 years, possibly.

They say I have trampled on States' rights by choosing how they pay for it. I am guilty. I admit it. Why? Because of our children. Our children's future is important. If it were not, we wouldn't be good parents. I am convinced this can have a small but a positive impact on rural schools and the education of our kids in rural communities. I urge my colleagues to consider supporting my amendment, which will, in fact, alter in a very small way the impact of the total Wyden amendment.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the debate time on the two amendments—the Wyden amendment, the bipartisan amendment and the Burr amendment—be extended until 11 a.m. and that the time be equally divided, which would mean, I think, we would have 10 minutes on our side so that I and Senator CRAIG would continue this discussion and then the distinguished Senator from North Carolina would have 10 minutes as well. I make that unanimous consent request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to continue the discussion on the point made by our friend from North Carolina. He is going to be the ranking member on the forestry subcommittee. He and I are going to sit next to each other for a great many hours during the course of this session of the Senate. I know there are going to be many times when we agree because that has certainly been the case during our long years of service, both in the House and it is now an honor to serve with him in the Senate.

I wish to pick up on a couple of points. Senator CRAIG, in the very important discussion he had with the Senator from North Carolina, pointed out that North Carolina already spends every dollar of their county payments money. The distinguished Senator from North Carolina indicated his concern about the 40-percent graduation rate in one of his school districts. But the amendment offered by the Senator from North Carolina will not provide an additional dollar for that school district because under his State statute, every dollar of county payments his State gets already has to go to schools, and the amendment would not change that.

I think this has been a very instructive discussion. As Senators consider the next 15 or 20 minutes of this debate, I want to come back to where the organizations that are most intimately involved in this program, on a day-to-day basis, stand.

The Senator from North Carolina made mention of our support from labor. We are very proud to have a strong cross-section of labor groups that are aligned with our proposal. But in addition, the support from the National Association of Counties and the National Governors Association for our bipartisan effort is particularly important. I wish to read a little bit from the National Association of Counties' letter to myself and Senator CRAIG. It says, with respect to Senator BURR—and the National Association of Counties does not talk about anonymous Senators. They are very much aware of who is involved in this debate. The National Association of Counties wrote:

> While well-intentioned, we fear the Burr amendment is ill-conceived and would result in negative consequences.

They go on to say:

> The Burr amendment requires ''new money'' to be spent on education. This would deny communities and their elected leaders to set their own priorities, superimposing a Washington, DC, one-size-fits-all mandate on those rural forest counties already severely restrained by the presence of tax-exempt federal land.

This is a particularly important point and a very telling one about this debate. I think the Senator from North Carolina and I have been in scores of discussions over the years where the charge always was it was the Democrats who were coming up with this ''big Government, run from Washington, DC,'' kind of approach. Here we are with a bipartisan amendment that I, as a Democratic Senator, spent a lot of time talking about with local communities, and the counties say they

favor our approach because it does give them the flexibility on the ground—in Asheville, NC, and Amity, OR, across the country, to make the choices that are best for them rather than to have somebody inside the beltway take out a cookie cutter and stamp all these programs as if one size fits all. That point in the National Association of Counties' letter strikes me as extremely important as well.

The counties also go on to say:

. . . .it appears that the Burr amendment would shift the hard-won increase to PILT funding [the payment in lieu of taxes program offered by the Wyden Craig amendment] away from the counties' general funds to schools, which was never the purpose of the PILT Act.

I say to my colleague, we are going to hear a lot of testimony about this in our forestry subcommittee as well. The changes in the PILT Program, in particular, so that every county with Federal land can get a boost, are going to be especially helpful as we make this transition.

Mr. BURR. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WYDEN. Of course.

Mr. BURR. Does the Senator agree with the letter from the commissioners that I affect the PILT payments in my amendment?

Mr. WYDEN. My understanding is that the Senator's amendment does not affect it.

Mr. BURR. Does or does not?

Mr. WYDEN. Does not.

Mr. BURR. So the letter and the accusation the Senator received from, I think, the counties, is, in fact, inaccurate?

Mr. WYDEN. My sense says the county folks had some difficulty following the Senator's amendment as it went through its evolution. But what we do know is our amendment clearly protects the PILT funding, and that is why it is preferable on all counts.

Now, continuing with what the counties have had to say: We are also concerned that the Burr amendment interferes with the authority States have had since 1908 to allocate forest reserves funds, authority explicitly and deliberately retained by Congress in title 1 of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act.

This point from the counties is especially critical because it goes to the 100-year obligation with respect to county payments. We can debate who has better ideas about PILT. We think we do. That is why so many Senators have been attracted to our proposal, because of the additional support for PILT. But what the counties go on to say here is they are concerned about the 100-year precedent with respect to Federal forest systems.

Mr. President, the Senator from North Carolina has been very gracious. We are dividing the time. How much time remains on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from Oregon has 3 minutes 10 seconds remaining.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I yield the remainder of our time to the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, a cosponsor of the amendment, and I thank him for his many hours of support in putting this together.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and congratulate him on his leadership on this issue. His amendment is well designed and meritorious. I urge all colleagues to support the amendment.

I wish to speak about why I think this is so important to our rural counties. I do think the legislation is important because it lays out a period of years during which counties will know they have a set amount of money coming in to assist with the various responsibilities they have put upon them.

This amendment also, of course, involves a full funding of the payment in lieu of taxes, which is extremely important to many of the counties in my State, particularly. This payment in lieu of taxes is designed to provide some funding to those counties that have lost their tax base by virtue of the Federal Government owning so much of the land in those counties.

Both programs were authorized through the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the committee has remained active on both issues in recent years. With regard to the Secure Rural Schools, or ''county payments'', program, we have held a number of oversight and legislative hearings during the last couple of years. Accordingly, I would like to briefly explain some of the key changes that this amendment makes to the original program.

The most significant change is in the formula. The new formula has three components: the original formula, the number of qualifying acres of Federal land, and per capita personal income. The mathematics of the formula are rooted at the county level, and the ultimate payments are determined by calculating what would be each participating county's portion of the total annual funding for the program. As a result, unlike the original formula, the new formula responds to the annual funding amount, permitting an orderly phase-down of the total annual funding levels.

The legislative text memorializes the component of the original formula at the county level in the definition of ''base share'' in paragraphs (2)(B)(i) and (9)(B)(i) of section 3. In developing the formula, we looked to existing data from the Federal agencies, recognizing that the specific data may change as a result of updating or correction. For the Forest Service, paragraph (2)(B)(i) of section 3 describes what the Forest Service referred to as the ''potential county share'' when it calculated payment amounts under the original formula on March 1, 2002. For the Bureau of Land Management, paragraph (9)(B)(i) of section 3 describes what the BLM referred to as ''payment amounts to each eligible county'' on its November 14, 2002, certification to the Treasury Department of payments made under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. The per capita personal income data was gathered from the Bureau of Economic Analysis' Regional Economic Accounts, Table CA1–3, 030.

Total funding for the program would be gradually reduced to approximately 72 percent of the fiscal year 2006 level by the end of the 5-year reauthorization. During the first 4 years of the reauthorization, additional funds would be provided to the uniquely affected States of Washington, California, and Oregon to ensure that they can make a reasonable transition to the new funding levels under the new formula. For fiscal year, 2007, the transition funding would provide the three States an amount equal to last year's levels, and then their total county payments funding would be reduced by 10 percent annually through 2010. Total funding levels in each of those States would be determined under the new formula in 2011. If counties that received county payments in fiscal year 2006 decided to optout of the county payments program, then those counties would instead receive the payment amounts required by the 1908 or 1937 acts and the county payments funding to their States during that fiscal year would be reduced by their corresponding share of the fiscal year 2006 county payments funding.

The amendment also focuses the county payments funding on resource advisory committee, ''RAC'', collaboration, which was one of the most successful aspects of the original law. Most counties are required to spend at least 13 percent of their total county payments program funding on special projects on federal land—unless they choose to forego that portion of the funding. Exceptions have been made where experience has shown that the 15–20 percent of total program funding available for special projects on Federal land, under title II, may be inadequate.

As recommended by an in-depth study of RACs under the county payments program, we have made a few changes to the RAC representation. The editions allow some key interest groups that currently are not adequately represented to participate on RACs. They also provide communities with some flexibility where existing requirements were unnecessarily difficult or awkward to fulfill.

As discussed in the study, in a number of cases, the Federal land management issues in any particular region simply were not relevant to a couple of the interest groups required to be represented under the original law. For example, while wild horse and burro interest groups are key stakeholders on many RACs, there also are many RACs in areas of the country with no wild

horses or burros. In such cases, the study found that some counties simply could not find individuals willing to serve on RACs that met the letter and spirit of the existing criteria.

None of the editions exclude any of the interest groups currently represented on RACs, and the Secretaries retain appointment authority. As a result, the modest expansion should neither disadvantage any group currently participating on RACs nor disrupt in any way the collaboration on RACs. To the contrary, it should improve the collaboration by ensuring that RACs are adequately staffed with the appropriate interest groups.

County funding under title III has been restricted and focused on programs that indirectly benefit public land management. In addition, provisions have been added to title III to encourage compliance with its terms and greater awareness of the counties' efforts by Federal land managers.

Finally, a degree of stability for revenue sharing payments to counties is provided under the amendment. Stabilizing payments is one of the primary purposes of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, but as the recent experience with its expiration in 2006 exemplifies, a degree of stability remains necessary over the longterm. Section 3 of the amendment provides for 25 percent payments to be distributed based on a 7-year rolling average. This will ensure that counties receive the same level of overall payments while at the same time reducing to a significant degree the sometimes dramatic annual fluctuations of Federal payments that make county budgeting difficult.

By ensuring full funding for PILT, annual fluctuations in those payments also will be reduced through 2012. PILT also is a crucial part of ensuring an orderly transition for the States of California, Oregon, and Washington. And finally, full funding for PILT will provide a more equitable level of support to those counties with Federal land that does not qualify for the county payments program.

In all, the amendment provides for more secure rural schools in more States and counties around the country, healthier National Forests for all Americans to enjoy, and the foundation for a legacy of public lands collaboration that we hope will provide for community, economic, and environmental benefits for decades to come.

Let me also speak briefly about the amendment my friend from North Carolina has offered to insist and to require, I believe, 80 percent of the funds to be used for schools. It will be a substantial mistake to adopt that amendment, because it is a one-size-fits-all solution, when we have very different circumstances in each State.

For example, in my State, we have what we call an education equalization formula. That means the State takes credit for whatever the counties were to put into education. So the effect of giving this money to the counties would be that the State would reduce its contribution to the schools in that county by a proportionate amount or by 95 percent of that amount. This would not work in my State. It would not have the intended effect of getting more money to the schools, which I know is the purpose the Senator from North Carolina has.

It is better to stick with the amendment Senator WYDEN has crafted here, and give the discretion to each State and each local community to decide how to best spend those funds to meet the obligation they have to their constituents. That is the purpose of the legislation. That was the original purpose of the county payments legislation, certainly the original purpose of the PILT legislation, as well. That is the best result.

I hope my colleagues will support the Wyden amendment and will not support the Burr amendment. That is the best result for us. I hope that is the end result once the voting is concluded.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for a spirited debate, and before my colleague from New Mexico leaves, I want to make sure I have the opportunity to share with him, because he did not hear the first part, that there are three funding pieces to this bill. I am supportive of all three of them. It is the Forest Service payment, the BLM lands payment, and the payment in lieu of taxes.

My amendment affects one piece of one section, the Forest Service payment that is broken down into three titles: title 1, which is designated schools and roads; title 2, which goes to forestry programs and other management programs; and title 3, which goes to law enforcement search and rescue.

I do not affect title 2; I do not affect title 3. I only affect the new funding in title 1. There is no county that will be affected on what they have received up until that point. But of the $177 million of new money in title 1 of the Forest Service payment section only, he is exactly right. I would say 80 to no more than 85 percent has to go to the schools. And if, in fact, New Mexico is structured in a way that when a county ups its investment the State decreases its investment in education, he is exactly right, he would end up with no net gain.

That is where our problem is across the country, our students have no net gain. We have been stuck in this rut and we will not do what it takes to get out of it. Five years ago we passed No Child Left Behind. Nationally we are making progress. We actually see the trend going up. We see K–8 performing at math and science levels that, quite frankly, 5 years ago we did not know if we could reach. It is not a plateau they have gotten to; they are on the climb. We have challenged our elementary school students and they have responded, because we have made a commitment we are going to put highly qualified teachers in classrooms. We have made a commitment to them that we are going to provide the flexibility of Federal money so they can decide how best to use that so kids can learn.

In return, we are going to measure their progress. For the first time, America now knows the progress our students make. Parents are no longer reliant on the arbitrary A, B, C, D or, in some cases, pass-fail. Why is that important? It is important because we have got a 21st century economy. We are creating jobs that, quite frankly, without a high school diploma you are not competitive for.

My kids are still in college. I am fortunate in the fact that at least the tools are available to them. But it is their choice now as to whether they absorb it and use it. What about those kids who are still in K–8? Could this have an impact? Yes, it could have a real impact. It is not a whole lot of money. But when you move from, in Oregon I think, $433 per student, compared to $7,388 per mile, if you were to increase that investment locally, I think it would affect the outcome.

What you would be looking at is the outcome. That is the whole spirit behind No Child Left Behind. What is the result of K–8 not working? It is a 70-percent graduation rate, on time, of our high school students 9–12 today.

As I said earlier, if this were a disease, we would call it an epidemic. We would send every Federal, State, and local resource to try to cure the problem. Well, here is one of those ways: We can say, with the increased money, the $177 million worth of new money these counties have never had, let's use 80 to 85 percent for schools.

Mr. WYDEN. Would the Senator from North Carolina yield?

Mr. BURR. I yield.

Mr. WYDEN. We continue to look at the language. I think it goes back to the reason the counties and the Governors were so troubled by it. Where in my friend's amendment does it say it applies only to increases in funding? Because, as we read it, it would apply to all of the funding in section (2) of the amendment, subsection (d) payments received by a State under subsection (a) and distributed to eligible counties shall be only for public schools——

Mr. BURR. Reclaiming my time. I will say to the Senator, if for some reason it is not perfectly clear—and we have had the best legislative folks in the Senate who wrote the amendment; I do not think they got it wrong, but if they did, it will change.

But the reality is, it is not going to pass and the Senator from Oregon knows it is not going to pass, not because there are questions on whether it is all title 1; it is not going to pass because they are not willing to let the $177 million worth of new money be devoted to education. It is not because of some technical problem we have with

my amendment. The Senator's bill was awfully large, and there were still changes being made to the bill yesterday. It was a moving target to try to figure out exactly how to do an amendment. The Senator may remember, yesterday it was a second-degree amendment, but to accommodate the majority leader, we decided to do it as a side-by-side, which meant I had to incorporate now my amendment into the Wyden bill. So we have got a Wyden bill by itself, and a Wyden bill with this change. What my colleagues are going to be asked to do is not to vote against Wyden; either way they vote, they get the Wyden bill. But if they vote for the Wyden bill with the Burr amendment, they have now made a commitment to education. They have now made a commitment to the children. They have now made a commitment to 40 percent of America's schools that are located in rural areas, 8 million kids. That is the decision. It is very simple.

So it is not do we understand where it fits. Clearly since the Senator thought it applied to more, since the county letters he got thought it applied to payments in lieu of taxes, since Senator BINGAMAN, when he came to the floor, was concerned about payments in lieu of taxes, we do not affect those. All we affect is title 1 of the Forest Service payments that are already designated in roads or schools, and we do not affect what we have spent in the past, up to that level. We only affect new dollars.

Of those new dollars, 80 to 85 percent has to go to education. So it means for your State, where it predominately goes for roads, they are not disadvantaged. They are actually going to get 20 percent more for roads. They are just going to have to take 80 percent of the new money and make more of an investment than $433 per student.

It is simple for our colleagues. We are going to vote on this, I think now the order calls for about 11:45 or 12 o'clock. I am not sure if it is going to be a series of three votes. I would encourage my colleagues to vote for the Wyden amendment, but vote for the Wyden amendment that has the Burr language in it, so that, in fact, we have a commitment to our kids, their future, and their education.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, when we debated the Senate budget resolution in committee and on the floor over the last few weeks, I raised a concern about the transparency of the budget. One of the problems I pointed out was the over reliance of the budget resolution on unspecified revenue raisers. As ranking member of the Finance Committee, I referred mainly to Finance Committee policy demands that weren't realistically reflected in the budget. I referred to currently expiring tax, trade, and health and welfare spending provisions. The expiring tax relief provisions within the first year of the budget resolution alone amount to $135 billion.

In discussing the budget, I also referred to the track record of the Democratic leadership, while in the minority, of spending the same revenue raising offsets over and over again. There is a clear risk of this deceptive behavior having a real fiscal impact now that Democrats are in the majority. As has been proven over the last few weeks, the Democratic majority can't reduce spending. So taxes are raised to pay for more spending while the spending-driven deficit remains high.

What we have seen is an obsession by the Democratic leadership for going to the tax side of the ledger and gross up the spending side of the ledger. Once again, spending wins out and the taxpayer loses.

Now, comes the Wyden-Craig amendment. It increases popular spending—in this case we are talking about rural schools—and uses revenue raisers to mask the deficit effect of the spending. The budget resolution contains 39 reserve funds that authorize new spending, paid for with unspecified revenue raisers. This rural schools spending program is the subject of 1 of those 39 reserve funds. So, today, Senators WYDEN and CRAIG go to the tax ledger and remove some of the work product of the Finance Committee tax staff to use for their new spending program.

As ranking member of the Finance Committee, I view this effort as an intrusion on the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee. During my tenure as chairman, I am pleased to say that this jurisdiction was protected. I have indicated my concern to my friend, Chairman BAUCUS, that this is the start to a slippery slope of erosion of our committee's jurisdiction.

We have seen that those who advocate new spending can't find a dollar of spending offset within a $2.7 trillion budget. From this fiscal behavior, we can expect that the spending of these amendments will continue to be offset from the same pool of offsets. The Finance Committee tax staff can't do the heavy lifting of finding offsets for every new popular spending program.

By the terms of the Senate Democratic budget resolution, that pool of offsets has already been subscribed for expiring tax, trade, and health and welfare spending.

The Wyden-Craig amendment goes to part of the limited group of offsets and draws from previously passed Senate offsets and a small group of already identified tax gap offsets. These offsets are drawn from the limited group of $43 billion in revenue raising offsets I referred to in my floor statements.

There is a new revenue raiser in the Wyden-Craig amendment. I support it. It would permit section 457 retirement plans to employ a Roth IRA option.

Some will recall from last year's tax reconciliation conference report a similar proposal. The proposal permitted more taxpayers to convert traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs. That proposal met with severe criticism from the Democratic leadership, their allied liberal think tanks, and some in the east coast media who tend to be sympathetic to the views of the Democratic leadership.

I am pleased to see the Democratic leadership has changed its mind. With the Wyden amendment, and the Roth section 457 plan proposal, the Democratic leadership is now on board with the merits of the Roth IRA conversion concept. It will be interesting to see if the liberal think tanks and east coast media are consistent critics or whether they have changed their minds, now that this concept is employed by Senate Democrats. I will be looking for their reaction.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, amendment No. 716 offered by the Senator from North Carolina, Mr. BURR, is modified to be a first-degree amendment.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To reauthorize the secure rural schools and community self-determination program and to provide funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program.)

Beginning on page 75, strike line 25 and all that follows through page 76, line 15, and insert the following:

SEC. 2601. SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION PROGRAM.

(a) REAUTHORIZATION OF THE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000.—The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 500 note; Public Law 106–393) is amended by striking sections 1 through 403 and inserting the following:

''SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

''This Act may be cited as the 'Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000'.

''SEC. 2. PURPOSES.

''The purposes of this Act are—

''(1) to stabilize and transition payments to counties to provide funding for schools and roads that supplements other available funds;

''(2) to make additional investments in, and create additional employment opportunities through, projects that—

''(A)(i) improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure;

''(ii) implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems; and

''(iii) restore and improve land health and water quality;

''(B) enjoy broad-based support; and

''(C) have objectives that may include—

''(i) road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration;

''(ii) soil productivity improvement;

''(iii) improvements in forest ecosystem health;

''(iv) watershed restoration and maintenance;

''(v) the restoration, maintenance, and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat;

''(vi) the control of noxious and exotic weeds; and

''(vii) the reestablishment of native species; and

''(3) to improve cooperative relationships among—

''(A) the people that use and care for Federal land; and

''(B) the agencies that manage the Federal land.

''SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

''In this Act:

''(1) ADJUSTED SHARE.—The term 'adjusted share' means the number equal to the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(A) the number equal to the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the base share for the eligible county; by

''(ii) the income adjustment for the eligible county; by

''(B) the number equal to the sum of the quotients obtained under subparagraph (A) and paragraph (8)(A) for all eligible counties.

''(2) BASE SHARE.—The term 'base share' means the number equal to the average of—

''(A) the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the number of acres of Federal land described in paragraph (7)(A) in each eligible county; by

''(ii) the total number acres of Federal land in all eligible counties in all eligible States; and

''(B) the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the amount equal to the average of the 3 highest 25-percent payments and safety net payments made to each eligible State for each eligible county during the eligibility period; by

''(ii) the amount equal to the sum of the averages calculated under clause (i) and paragraph (9)(B)(i) for all eligible counties in all eligible States during the eligibility period.

''(3) COUNTY PAYMENT.—The term 'county payment' means the payment for an eligible county calculated under section 101(b).

''(4) ELIGIBLE COUNTY.—The term 'eligible county' means any county that—

''(A) contains Federal land (as defined in paragraph (7)); and

''(B) elects to receive a share of the State payment or the county payment under section 102(b).

''(5) ELIGIBILITY PERIOD.—The term 'eligibility period' means fiscal year 1986 through fiscal year 1999.

''(6) ELIGIBLE STATE.—The term 'eligible State' means a State or territory of the United States that received a 25-percent payment for 1 or more fiscal years of the eligibility period.

''(7) FEDERAL LAND.—The term 'Federal land' means—

''(A) land within the National Forest System, as defined in section 11(a) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1609(a)) exclusive of the National Grasslands and land utilization projects designated as National Grasslands administered pursuant to the Act of July 22, 1937 (7 U.S.C. 1010–1012); and

''(B) such portions of the revested Oregon and California Railroad and reconveyed Coos Bay Wagon Road grant land as are or may hereafter come under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, which have heretofore or may hereafter be classified as timberlands, and power-site land valuable for timber, that shall be managed, except as provided in the former section 3 of the Act of August 28, 1937 (50 Stat. 875; 43 U.S.C. 1181c), for permanent forest production.

''(8) 50-PERCENT ADJUSTED SHARE.—The term '50-percent adjusted share' means the number equal to the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(A) the number equal to the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the 50-percent base share for the eligible county; by

''(ii) the income adjustment for the eligible county; by

''(B) the number equal to the sum of the quotients obtained under subparagraph (A) and paragraph (1)(A) for all eligible counties.

''(9) 50-PERCENT BASE SHARE.—The term '50-percent base share' means the number equal to the average of—

''(A) the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the number of acres of Federal land described in paragraph (7)(B) in each eligible county; by

''(ii) the total number acres of Federal land in all eligible counties in all eligible States; and

''(B) the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(i) the amount equal to the average of the 3 highest 50-percent payments made to each eligible county during the eligibility period; by

''(ii) the amount equal to the sum of the averages calculated under clause (i) and paragraph (2)(B)(i) for all eligible counties in all eligible States during the eligibility period.

''(10) 50-PERCENT PAYMENT.—The term '50-percent payment' means the payment that is the sum of the 50-percent share otherwise paid to a county pursuant to title II of the Act of August 28, 1937 (chapter 876; 50 Stat. 875; 43 U.S.C. 1181f), and the payment made to a county pursuant to the Act of May 24, 1939 (chapter 144; 53 Stat. 753; 43 U.S.C. 1181f–1 et seq.).

''(11) FULL FUNDING AMOUNT.—The term 'full funding amount' means—

''(A) $526,079,656 for fiscal year 2007;

''(B) $520,000,000 for fiscal year 2008; and

''(C) for fiscal year 2009 and each fiscal year thereafter, the amount that is equal to 90 percent of the full funding amount for the preceding fiscal year.

''(12) INCOME ADJUSTMENT.—The term 'income adjustment' means the square of the quotient obtained by dividing—

''(A) the per capita personal income for each eligible county; by

''(B) the median per capita personal income of all eligible counties.

''(13) PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME.—The term 'per capita personal income' means the most recent per capita personal income data, as determined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

''(14) SAFETY NET PAYMENTS.—The term 'safety net payments' means the special payment amounts paid to States and counties required by section 13982 or 13983 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (Public Law 103–66; 16 U.S.C. 500 note; 43 U.S.C. 1181f note).

''(15) SECRETARY CONCERNED.—The term 'Secretary concerned' means—

''(A) the Secretary of Agriculture or the designee of the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to the Federal land described in paragraph (7)(A); and

''(B) the Secretary of the Interior or the designee of the Secretary of the Interior with respect to the Federal land described in paragraph (7)(B).

''(16) STATE PAYMENT.—The term 'State payment' means the payment for an eligible State calculated under section 101(a).

''(17) 25-PERCENT PAYMENT.—The term '25-percent payment' means the payment to States required by the sixth paragraph under the heading of 'FOREST SERVICE' in the Act of May 23, 1908 (35 Stat. 260; 16 U.S.C. 500), and section 13 of the Act of March 1, 1911 (36 Stat. 963; 16 U.S.C. 500).

''TITLE I—SECURE PAYMENTS FOR STATES AND COUNTIES CONTAINING FEDERAL LAND

''SEC. 101. SECURE PAYMENTS FOR STATES CONTAINING FEDERAL LAND.

''(a) STATE PAYMENT.—For each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011, the Secretary of Agriculture shall calculate for each eligible State an amount equal to the sum of the products obtained by multiplying—

''(1) the adjusted share for each eligible county within the eligible State; by

''(2) the full funding amount for the fiscal year.

''(b) COUNTY PAYMENT.—For each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011, the Secretary of the Interior shall calculate for each eligible county that received a 50-percent payment during the eligibility period an amount equal to the product obtained by multiplying—

''(1) the 50-percent adjusted share for the eligible county; by

''(2) the full funding amount for the fiscal year.

''SEC. 102. PAYMENTS TO STATES AND COUNTIES.

''(a) PAYMENT AMOUNTS.—Except as provided in section 103, the Secretary of the Treasury shall pay to—

''(1) a State an amount equal to the sum of the amounts elected under subsection (b) by each county within the State for—

''(A) if the county is eligible for the 25-percent payment, the share of the 25-percent payment; or

''(B) the share of the State payment of the eligible county; and

''(2) a county an amount equal to the amount elected under subsection (b) by each county for—

''(A) if the county is eligible for the 50-percent payment, the 50-percent payment; or

''(B) the county payment for the eligible county.

''(b) ELECTION TO RECEIVE PAYMENT AMOUNT.—

''(1) ELECTION; SUBMISSION OF RESULTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The election to receive a share of the State payment, the county payment, a share of the State payment and the county payment, a share of the 25-percent payment, the 50-percent payment, or a share of the 25-percent payment and the 50-percent payment, as applicable, shall be made at the discretion of each affected county by August 1, 2007, and August 1 of each second fiscal year thereafter, in accordance with paragraph (2), and transmitted to the Secretary concerned by the Governor of each eligible State.

''(B) FAILURE TO TRANSMIT.—If an election for an affected county is not transmitted to the Secretary concerned by the date specified under subparagraph (A), the affected county shall be considered to have elected to receive a share of the State payment, the county payment, or a share of the State payment and the county payment, as applicable.

''(2) DURATION OF ELECTION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—A county election to receive a share of the 25-percent payment or 50-percent payment, as applicable shall be effective for 2 fiscal years.

''(B) FULL FUNDING AMOUNT.—If a county elects to receive a share of the State payment or the county payment, the election shall be effective for all subsequent fiscal years through fiscal year 2011.

''(3) SOURCE OF PAYMENT AMOUNTS.—The payment to an eligible State or eligible county under this section for a fiscal year shall be derived from—

''(A) any revenues, fees, penalties, or miscellaneous receipts, exclusive of deposits to any relevant trust fund, special account, or permanent operating funds, received by the Federal Government from activities by the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service on the applicable Federal land; and

''(B) to the extent of any shortfall, out of any amounts in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated.

''(c) DISTRIBUTION AND EXPENDITURE OF PAYMENTS.—

''(1) DISTRIBUTION METHOD.—A State that receives a payment under subsection (a) for Federal land described in section 3(7)(A) shall distribute the appropriate payment amount among the appropriate counties in the State in accordance with—

''(A) the Act of May 23, 1908 (16 U.S.C. 500); and

''(B) section 13 of the Act of March 1, 1911 (36 Stat. 963; 16 U.S.C. 500).

''(2) EXPENDITURE PURPOSES.—Subject to subsection (d), payments received by a State under subsection (a) and distributed to counties in accordance with paragraph (1) shall be expended as required by the laws referred to in paragraph (1), except that, in a case in which a payment amount exceeds the payment amount for fiscal year 2006, the excess amount shall be used only for public schools in the county.

''(d) EXPENDITURE RULES FOR ELIGIBLE COUNTIES.—

''(1) ALLOCATIONS.—

''(A) USE OF PORTION IN SAME MANNER AS 25-PERCENT PAYMENT OR 50-PERCENT PAYMENT, AS APPLICABLE.—Except as provided in paragraph (3)(B), if an eligible county elects to receive its share of the State payment or the county payment, not less than 80 percent, but not more than 85 percent, of the funds shall be expended in the same manner in which the 25-percent payments or 50-percent payment, as applicable, are required to be expended, except that, in a case in which a payment amount exceeds the payment amount for fiscal year 2006, the excess amount shall be used only for public schools in the eligible county.

''(B) ELECTION AS TO USE OF BALANCE.—Except as provided in subparagraph (C), an eligible county shall elect to do 1 or more of the following with the balance of any funds not expended pursuant to subparagraph (A):

''(i) Reserve any portion of the balance for projects in accordance with title II.

''(ii) Reserve not more than 7 percent of the total share for the eligible county of the State payment or the county payment for projects in accordance with title III.

''(iii) Return the portion of the balance not reserved under clauses (i) and (ii) to the Treasury of the United States.

''(C) COUNTIES WITH MODEST DISTRIBUTIONS.—In the case of each eligible county to which more than $100,000, but less than $350,000, is distributed for any fiscal year pursuant to either or both of paragraphs (1)(B) and (2)(B) of subsection (a), the eligible county, with respect to the balance of any funds not expended pursuant to subparagraph (A) for that fiscal year, shall—

''(i) reserve any portion of the balance for—

''(I) carrying out projects under title II;

''(II) carrying out projects under title III; or

''(III) a combination of the purposes described in subclauses (I) and (II); or

''(ii) return the portion of the balance not reserved under clause (i) to the Treasury of the United States.

''(2) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Funds reserved by an eligible county under subparagraph (B)(i) or (C)(i)(I) of paragraph (1) shall be deposited in a special account in the Treasury of the United States.

''(B) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts deposited under subparagraph (A) shall—

''(i) be available for expenditure by the Secretary concerned, without further appropriation; and

''(ii) remain available until expended in accordance with title II.

''(3) ELECTION.—

''(A) NOTIFICATION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—An eligible county shall notify the Secretary concerned of an election by the eligible county under this subsection not later than September 30 of each fiscal year.

''(ii) FAILURE TO ELECT.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), if the eligible county fails to make an election by the date specified in clause (i), the eligible county shall—

''(I) be considered to have elected to expend 85 percent of the funds in accordance with paragraph (1)(A); and

''(II) return the balance to the Treasury of the United States.

''(B) COUNTIES WITH MINOR DISTRIBUTIONS.—In the case of each eligible county to which less than $100,000 is distributed for any fiscal year pursuant to either or both of paragraphs (1)(B) and (2)(B) of subsection (a), the eligible county may elect to expend all the funds in the same manner in which the 25-percent payments or 50-percent payments, as applicable, are required to be expended, except that, in a case in which a payment amount exceeds the payment amount for fiscal year 2006, the excess amount shall be used only for public schools in the eligible county.

''(e) TIME FOR PAYMENT.—The payments required under this section for a fiscal year shall be made as soon as practicable after the end of that fiscal year.

''SEC. 103. TRANSITION PAYMENTS TO THE STATES OF CALIFORNIA, OREGON, AND WASHINGTON.

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) ADJUSTED AMOUNT.—The term 'adjusted amount' means, with respect to a covered State—

''(A) for fiscal year 2007—

''(i) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 102(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the covered State that have elected under section 102(b) to receive a share of the State payment for fiscal year 2007; and

''(ii) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 103(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the State of Oregon that have elected under section 102(b) to receive the county payment for fiscal year 2007;

''(B) for fiscal year 2008, 90 percent of—

''(i) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 102(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the covered State that have elected under section 102(b) to receive a share of the State payment for fiscal year 2008; and

''(ii) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 103(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the State of Oregon that have elected under section 102(b) to receive the county payment for fiscal year 2008;

''(C) for fiscal year 2009, 81 percent of—

''(i) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 102(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the covered State that have elected under section 102(b) to receive a share of the State payment for fiscal year 2009; and

''(ii) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 103(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the State of Oregon that have elected under section 102(b) to receive the county payment for fiscal year 2009; and

''(D) for fiscal year 2010, 73 percent of—

''(i) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 102(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the covered State that have elected under section 102(b) to receive a share of the State payment for fiscal year 2010; and

''(ii) the sum of the amounts paid in fiscal year 2006 under section 103(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) for the eligible counties in the State of Oregon that have elected under section 102(b) to receive the county payment for fiscal year 2010.

''(2) COVERED STATE.—The term 'covered State' means each of the States of California, Oregon, and Washington.

''(b) TRANSITION PAYMENTS.—For each of fiscal years 2007 through 2010, in lieu of the payment amounts that otherwise would have been made under paragraphs (1)(B) and (2)(B) of section 102(a), the Secretary of the Treasury shall pay the adjusted amount to each covered State and the eligible counties within the covered State, as applicable, from funds in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated.

''(c) DISTRIBUTION OF ADJUSTED AMOUNT IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON.—It is the intent of Congress that the method of distributing the payments under subsection (b) among the counties in the States of Oregon and Washington for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2010 be in the same proportion that the payments were distributed to the eligible counties in fiscal year 2006.

''(d) DISTRIBUTION OF PAYMENTS IN CALIFORNIA.—The following payments shall be distributed among the eligible counties in the State of California in the same proportion that payments under section 102(a)(2) (as in effect on September 29, 2006) were distributed to the eligible counties in fiscal year 2006:

''(1) Payments to the State of California under subsection (b).

''(2) The shares of the eligible counties of the State payment for California under section 102 for fiscal year 2011.

''(e) TREATMENT OF PAYMENTS.—For purposes of this Act, any payment made under subsection (b) shall be considered to be a payment made under section 102(a).

''TITLE II—SPECIAL PROJECTS ON FEDERAL LAND

''SEC. 201. DEFINITIONS.

''In this title:

''(1) PARTICIPATING COUNTY.—The term 'participating county' means an eligible county that elects under section 102(d) to expend a portion of the Federal funds received under section 102 in accordance with this title.

''(2) PROJECT FUNDS.—The term 'project funds' means all funds an eligible county elects under section 102(d) to reserve for expenditure in accordance with this title.

''(3) RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The term 'resource advisory committee' means—

''(A) an advisory committee established by the Secretary concerned under section 205; or

''(B) an advisory committee determined by the Secretary concerned to meet the requirements of section 205.

''(4) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN.—The term 'resource management plan' means—

''(A) a land use plan prepared by the Bureau of Land Management for units of the Federal land described in section 3(7)(B) pursuant to section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712); or

''(B) a land and resource management plan prepared by the Forest Service for units of the National Forest System pursuant to section 6 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974l (16 U.S.C. 1604).

''SEC. 202. GENERAL LIMITATION ON USE OF PROJECT FUNDS.

''(a) LIMITATION.—Project funds shall be expended solely on projects that meet the requirements of this title.

''(b) AUTHORIZED USES.—Project funds may be used by the Secretary concerned for the purpose of entering into and implementing cooperative agreements with willing Federal agencies, State and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners for protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and other resource objectives consistent with the purposes of this Act on Federal land and on non-Federal land where projects would benefit the resources on Federal land.

''SEC. 203. SUBMISSION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS.

''(a) SUBMISSION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS TO SECRETARY CONCERNED.—

''(1) PROJECTS FUNDED USING PROJECT FUNDS.—Not later than September 30 for fiscal year 2007, and each September 30 thereafter for each succeeding fiscal year through fiscal year 2011, each resource advisory committee shall submit to the Secretary concerned a description of any projects that the resource advisory committee proposes the Secretary undertake using any project funds reserved by eligible counties in the area in which the resource advisory committee has geographic jurisdiction.

''(2) PROJECTS FUNDED USING OTHER FUNDS.—A resource advisory committee may submit to the Secretary concerned a description of any projects that the committee proposes the Secretary undertake using funds from State or local governments, or from the private sector, other than project funds and funds appropriated and otherwise available to do similar work.

''(3) JOINT PROJECTS.—Participating counties or other persons may propose to pool project funds or other funds, described in paragraph (2), and jointly propose a project or group of projects to a resource advisory committee established under section 205.

''(b) REQUIRED DESCRIPTION OF PROJECTS.—In submitting proposed projects to the Secretary concerned under subsection (a), a resource advisory committee shall include in the description of each proposed project the following information:

''(1) The purpose of the project and a description of how the project will meet the purposes of this title.

''(2) The anticipated duration of the project.

''(3) The anticipated cost of the project.

''(4) The proposed source of funding for the project, whether project funds or other funds.

''(5)(A) Expected outcomes, including how the project will meet or exceed desired ecological conditions, maintenance objectives, or stewardship objectives.

''(B) An estimate of the amount of any timber, forage, and other commodities and other economic activity, including jobs generated, if any, anticipated as part of the project.

''(6) A detailed monitoring plan, including funding needs and sources, that—

''(A) tracks and identifies the positive or negative impacts of the project, implementation, and provides for validation monitoring; and

''(B) includes an assessment of the following:

''(i) Whether or not the project met or exceeded desired ecological conditions; created local employment or training opportunities, including summer youth jobs programs such as the Youth Conservation Corps where appropriate.

''(ii) Whether the project improved the use of, or added value to, any products removed from land consistent with the purposes of this title.

''(7) An assessment that the project is to be in the public interest.

''(c) AUTHORIZED PROJECTS.—Projects proposed under subsection (a) shall be consistent with section 2.

''SEC. 204. EVALUATION AND APPROVAL OF PROJECTS BY SECRETARY CONCERNED.

''(a) CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL OF PROPOSED PROJECT.—The Secretary concerned may make a decision to approve a project submitted by a resource advisory committee under section 203 only if the proposed project satisfies each of the following conditions:

''(1) The project complies with all applicable Federal laws (including regulations).

''(2) The project is consistent with the applicable resource management plan and with any watershed or subsequent plan developed pursuant to the resource management plan and approved by the Secretary concerned.

''(3) The project has been approved by the resource advisory committee in accordance with section 205, including the procedures issued under subsection (e) of that section.

''(4) A project description has been submitted by the resource advisory committee to the Secretary concerned in accordance with section 203.

''(5) The project will improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure, implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems, and restore and improve land health and water quality.

''(b) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS.—

''(1) REQUEST FOR PAYMENT BY COUNTY.—The Secretary concerned may request the resource advisory committee submitting a proposed project to agree to the use of project funds to pay for any environmental review, consultation, or compliance with applicable environmental laws required in connection with the project.

''(2) CONDUCT OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—If a payment is requested under paragraph (1) and the resource advisory committee agrees to the expenditure of funds for this purpose, the Secretary concerned shall conduct environmental review, consultation, or other compliance responsibilities in accordance with Federal laws (including regulations).

''(3) EFFECT OF REFUSAL TO PAY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—If a resource advisory committee does not agree to the expenditure of funds under paragraph (1), the project shall be deemed withdrawn from further consideration by the Secretary concerned pursuant to this title.

''(B) EFFECT OF WITHDRAWAL.—A withdrawal under subparagraph (A) shall be deemed to be a rejection of the project for purposes of section 207(c).

''(c) DECISIONS OF SECRETARY CONCERNED.—

''(1) REJECTION OF PROJECTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—A decision by the Secretary concerned to reject a proposed project shall be at the sole discretion of the Secretary concerned.

''(B) NO ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL OR JUDICIAL REVIEW.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a decision by the Secretary concerned to reject a proposed project shall not be subject to administrative appeal or judicial review.

''(C) NOTICE OF REJECTION.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary concerned makes the rejection decision, the Secretary concerned shall notify in writing the resource advisory committee that submitted the proposed project of the rejection and the reasons for rejection.

''(2) NOTICE OF PROJECT APPROVAL.—The Secretary concerned shall publish in the Federal Register notice of each project approved under subsection (a) if the notice would be required had the project originated with the Secretary.

''(d) SOURCE AND CONDUCT OF PROJECT.—Once the Secretary concerned accepts a project for review under section 203, the acceptance shall be deemed a Federal action for all purposes.

''(e) IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROVED PROJECTS.—

''(1) COOPERATION.—Notwithstanding chapter 63 of title 31, United States Code, using project funds the Secretary concerned may enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements with States and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners and other persons to assist the Secretary in carrying out an approved project.

''(2) BEST VALUE CONTRACTING.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—For any project involving a contract authorized by paragraph (1) the Secretary concerned may elect a source for performance of the contract on a best value basis.

''(B) FACTORS.—The Secretary concerned shall determine best value based on such factors as—

''(i) the technical demands and complexity of the work to be done;

''(ii)(I) the ecological objectives of the project; and

''(II) the sensitivity of the resources being treated;

''(iii) the past experience by the contractor with the type of work being done, using the type of equipment proposed for the project, and meeting or exceeding desired ecological conditions; and

''(iv) the commitment of the contractor to hiring highly qualified workers and local residents.

''(3) MERCHANTABLE TIMBER CONTRACTING PILOT PROGRAM.—

''(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary concerned shall establish a pilot program to implement a certain percentage of approved projects involving the sale of merchantable timber using separate contracts for—

''(i) the harvesting or collection of merchantable timber; and

''(ii) the sale of the timber.

''(B) ANNUAL PERCENTAGES.—Under the pilot program, the Secretary concerned shall ensure that, on a nationwide basis, not less than the following percentage of all approved projects involving the sale of merchantable timber are implemented using separate contracts:

''(i) For fiscal year 2007, 25 percent.

''(ii) For fiscal year 2008, 35 percent.

''(iii) For fiscal year 2009, 45 percent.

''(iv) For each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011, 50 percent.

''(C) INCLUSION IN PILOT PROGRAM.—The decision whether to use separate contracts to implement a project involving the sale of merchantable timber shall be made by the Secretary concerned after the approval of the project under this title.

''(D) ASSISTANCE.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary concerned may use funds from any appropriated account available to the Secretary for the Federal land to assist in the administration of projects conducted under the pilot program.

''(ii) MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—The total amount obligated under this subparagraph may not exceed $1,000,000 for any fiscal year during which the pilot program is in effect.

''(E) REVIEW AND REPORT.—

''(i) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2009, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committees on Agriculture and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report assessing the pilot program.

''(ii) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary concerned shall submit to the Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committees on Agriculture and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives an annual report describing the results of the pilot program.

''(f) REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECT FUNDS.—The Secretary shall ensure that at least 50 percent of all project funds be used for projects that are primarily dedicated—

''(1) to road maintenance, decommissioning, or obliteration; or

''(2) to restoration of streams and watersheds.

''SEC. 205. RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES.

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE OF RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—

''(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary concerned shall establish and maintain resource advisory committees to perform the duties in subsection (b), except as provided in paragraph (4).

''(2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of a resource advisory committee shall be—

''(A) to improve collaborative relationships; and

''(B) to provide advice and recommendations to the land management agencies consistent with the purposes of this title.

''(3) ACCESS TO RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—To ensure that each unit of Federal land has access to a resource advisory committee, and that there is sufficient interest in participation on a committee to ensure that membership can be balanced in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed, the Secretary concerned may, establish resource advisory committees for part of, or 1 or more, units of Federal land.

''(4) EXISTING ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—An advisory committee that meets the requirements of this section, an advisory committee established before the date of enactment of this Act, or an advisory committee determined by the Secretary concerned to meet the requirements of this section before the date of enactment of this Act may be deemed by the Secretary concerned to be a resource advisory committee for the purposes of this title.

''(B) CHARTER.—A charter for a committee described in subparagraph (A) that was filed on or before September 29, 2006, shall be considered to be filed for purposes of this Act.

''(C) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—The Secretary of the Interior may deem a resource advisory committee meeting the requirements of subpart 1784 of part 1780 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, as a resource advisory committee for the purposes of this title.

''(b) DUTIES.—A resource advisory committee shall—

''(1) review projects proposed under this title by participating counties and other persons;

''(2) propose projects and funding to the Secretary concerned under section 203;

''(3) provide early and continuous coordination with appropriate land management agency officials in recommending projects consistent with purposes of this Act under this title;

''(4) provide frequent opportunities for citizens, organizations, tribes, land management agencies, and other interested parties to participate openly and meaningfully, beginning at the early stages of the project development process under this title;

''(5)(A) monitor projects that have been approved under section 204; and

''(B) advise the designated Federal official on the progress of the monitoring efforts under subparagraph (A); and

''(6) make recommendations to the Secretary concerned for any appropriate changes or adjustments to the projects being monitored by the resource advisory committee.

''(c) APPOINTMENT BY THE SECRETARY.—

''(1) APPOINTMENT AND TERM.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary concerned, shall appoint the members of resource advisory committees for a term of 4 years beginning on the date of appointment.

''(B) REAPPOINTMENT.—The Secretary concerned may reappoint members to subsequent 4-year terms.

''(2) BASIC REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary concerned shall ensure that each resource advisory committee established meets the requirements of subsection (d).

''(3) INITIAL APPOINTMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall make initial appointments to the resource advisory committees.

''(4) VACANCIES.—The Secretary concerned shall make appointments to fill vacancies on any resource advisory committee as soon as practicable after the vacancy has occurred.

''(5) COMPENSATION.—Members of the resource advisory committees shall not receive any compensation.

''(d) COMPOSITION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

''(1) NUMBER.—Each resource advisory committee shall be comprised of 15 members.

''(2) COMMUNITY INTERESTS REPRESENTED.—Committee members shall be representative of the interests of the following 3 categories:

''(A) 5 persons that—

''(i) represent organized labor or non-timber forest product harvester groups;

''(ii) represent developed outdoor recreation, off highway vehicle users, or commercial recreation activities;

''(iii) represent—

''(I) energy and mineral development interests; or

''(II) commercial or recreational fishing interests;

''(iv) represent the commercial timber industry; or

''(v) hold Federal grazing or other land use permits, or represent nonindustrial private forest land owners, within the area for which the committee is organized.

''(B) 5 persons that represent—

''(i) nationally recognized environmental organizations;

''(ii) regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations;

''(iii) dispersed recreational activities;

''(iv) archaeological and historical interests; or

''(v) nationally or regionally recognized wild horse and burro interest groups, wildlife or hunting organizations, or watershed associations.

''(C) 5 persons that—

''(i) hold State elected office (or a designee);

''(ii) hold county or local elected office;

''(iii) represent American Indian tribes within or adjacent to the area for which the committee is organized;

''(iv) are school officials or teachers; or

''(v) represent the affected public at large.

''(3) BALANCED REPRESENTATION.—In appointing committee members from the 3 categories in paragraph (2), the Secretary concerned shall provide for balanced and broad representation from within each category.

''(4) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—The members of a resource advisory committee shall reside within the State in which the committee has jurisdiction and, to extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall ensure local representation in each category in paragraph (2).

''(5) CHAIRPERSON.—A majority on each resource advisory committee shall select the chairperson of the committee.

''(e) APPROVAL PROCEDURES.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (3), each resource advisory committee shall establish procedures for proposing projects to the Secretary concerned under this title.

''(2) QUORUM.—A quorum must be present to constitute an official meeting of the committee.

''(3) APPROVAL BY MAJORITY OF MEMBERS.—A project may be proposed by a resource advisory committee to the Secretary concerned under section 203(a), if the project has been approved by a majority of members of the committee from each of the 3 categories in subsection (d)(2).

''(f) OTHER COMMITTEE AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) STAFF ASSISTANCE.—A resource advisory committee may submit to the Secretary concerned a request for periodic staff assistance from Federal employees under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

''(2) MEETINGS.—All meetings of a resource advisory committee shall be announced at least 1 week in advance in a local newspaper of record and shall be open to the public.

''(3) RECORDS.—A resource advisory committee shall maintain records of the meetings of the committee and make the records available for public inspection.

''SEC. 206. USE OF PROJECT FUNDS.

''(a) AGREEMENT REGARDING SCHEDULE AND COST OF PROJECT.—

''(1) AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTIES.—The Secretary concerned may carry out a project submitted by a resource advisory committee under section 203(a) using project funds or other funds described in section 203(a)(2), if, as soon as practicable after the issuance of a decision document for the project and the exhaustion of all administrative appeals and judicial review of the project decision, the Secretary concerned and the resource advisory committee enter into an agreement addressing, at a minimum, the following:

''(A) The schedule for completing the project.

''(B) The total cost of the project, including the level of agency overhead to be assessed against the project.

''(C) For a multiyear project, the estimated cost of the project for each of the fiscal years in which it will be carried out.

''(D) The remedies for failure of the Secretary concerned to comply with the terms of the agreement consistent with current Federal law.

''(2) LIMITED USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS.—The Secretary concerned may decide, at the sole discretion of the Secretary concerned, to cover the costs of a portion of an approved project using Federal funds appropriated or otherwise available to the Secretary for the same purposes as the project.

''(b) TRANSFER OF PROJECT FUNDS.—

''(1) INITIAL TRANSFER REQUIRED.—As soon as practicable after the agreement is reached under subsection (a) with regard to a project to be funded in whole or in part using project funds, or other funds described in section 203(a)(2), the Secretary concerned shall transfer to the applicable unit of National Forest System land or Bureau of Land Management District an amount of project funds equal to—

''(A) in the case of a project to be completed in a single fiscal year, the total amount specified in the agreement to be paid using project funds, or other funds described in section 203(a)(2); or

''(B) in the case of a multiyear project, the amount specified in the agreement to be paid using project funds, or other funds described in section 203(a)(2) for the first fiscal year.

''(2) CONDITION ON PROJECT COMMENCEMENT.—The unit of National Forest System land or Bureau of Land Management District concerned, shall not commence a project until the project funds, or other funds described in section 203(a)(2) required to be transferred under paragraph (1) for the project, have been made available by the Secretary concerned.

''(3) SUBSEQUENT TRANSFERS FOR MULTIYEAR PROJECTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—For the second and subsequent fiscal years of a multiyear project to be funded in whole or in part using project funds, the unit of National Forest System land or Bureau of Land Management District concerned shall use the amount of project funds required to continue the project in that fiscal year according to the agreement entered into under subsection (a).

''(B) SUSPENSION OF WORK.—The Secretary concerned shall suspend work on the project if the project funds required by the agreement in the second and subsequent fiscal years are not available.

''SEC. 207. AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT FUNDS.

''(a) SUBMISSION OF PROPOSED PROJECTS TO OBLIGATE FUNDS.—By September 30 of each fiscal year through fiscal year 2011, a resource advisory committee shall submit to the Secretary concerned pursuant to section 203(a)(1) a sufficient number of project proposals that, if approved, would result in the obligation of at least the full amount of the project funds reserved by the participating county in the preceding fiscal year.

''(b) USE OR TRANSFER OF UNOBLIGATED FUNDS.—Subject to section 208, if a resource advisory committee fails to comply with subsection (a) for a fiscal year, any project funds reserved by the participating county in the preceding fiscal year and remaining unobligated shall be available for use as part of the project submissions in the next fiscal year.

''(c) EFFECT OF REJECTION OF PROJECTS.—Subject to section 208, any project funds reserved by a participating county in the preceding fiscal year that are unobligated at the end of a fiscal year because the Secretary concerned has rejected one or more proposed projects shall be available for use as part of the project submissions in the next fiscal year.

''(d) EFFECT OF COURT ORDERS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If an approved project under this Act is enjoined or prohibited by a Federal court, the Secretary concerned shall return the unobligated project funds related to the project to the participating county or counties that reserved the funds.

''(2) EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS.—The returned funds shall be available for the county to expend in the same manner as the funds reserved by the county under subparagraph (B) or (C)(i) of section 102(d)(1).

''SEC. 208. TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The authority to initiate projects under this title shall terminate on September 30, 2011.

''(b) DEPOSITS IN TREASURY.—Any project funds not obligated by September 30, 2012, shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States.

''TITLE III—COUNTY FUNDS

''SEC. 301. DEFINITIONS.

''In this title:

''(1) COUNTY FUNDS.—The term 'county funds' means all funds an eligible county elects under section 102(d) to reserve for expenditure in accordance with this title.

''(2) PARTICIPATING COUNTY.—The term 'participating county' means an eligible county that elects under section 102(d) to expend a portion of the Federal funds received under section 102 in accordance with this title.

''SEC. 302. USE.

''(a) AUTHORIZED USES.—A participating county, including any applicable agencies of the participating county, shall use county funds, in accordance with this title, only—

''(1) to carry out activities under the Firewise Communities program to provide to homeowners in fire-sensitive ecosystems education on, and assistance with implementing, techniques in home siting, home construction, and home landscaping that can increase the protection of people and property from wildfires;

''(2) to reimburse the participating county for search and rescue and other emergency services, including firefighting, that are—

''(A) performed on Federal land after the date on which the use was approved under subsection (b);

''(B) paid for by the participating county; and

''(3) to develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the appropriate Secretary concerned.

''(b) PROPOSALS.—A participating county shall use county funds for a use described in subsection (a) only after a 45-day public comment period, at the beginning of which the participating county shall—

''(1) publish in any publications of local record a proposal that describes the proposed use of the county funds; and

''(2) submit the proposal to any resource advisory committee established under section 205 for the participating county.

''SEC. 303. CERTIFICATION.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than February 1 of the year after the year in which any county funds were expended by a participating county, the appropriate official of the participating county shall submit to the Secretary concerned a certification that the county funds expended in the applicable year have been used for the uses authorized under section 302(a), including a description of the amounts expended and the uses for which the amounts were expended.

''(b) REVIEW.—The Secretary concerned shall review the certifications submitted under subsection (a) as the Secretary concerned determines to be appropriate.

''SEC. 304. TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The authority to initiate projects under this title terminates on September 30, 2011.

''(b) AVAILABILITY.—Any county funds not obligated by September 30, 2012, shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States.

''TITLE IV—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

''SEC. 401. REGULATIONS.

''The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior shall jointly issue regulations to carry out the purposes of this Act.

''SEC. 402. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011.

''(b) EMERGENCY DESIGNATION.—Of the amounts authorized to be appropriated under subsection (a) for fiscal year 2007, $425,000,000 is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

''SEC. 403. TREATMENT OF FUNDS AND REVENUES.

''(a) RELATION TO OTHER APPROPRIATIONS.—Funds made available under section 402 and funds made available to a Secretary concerned under section 206 shall be in addition to any other annual appropriations for the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

''(b) DEPOSIT OF REVENUES AND OTHER FUNDS.—All revenues generated from projects pursuant to title II, including any interest accrued from the revenues, shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States.''.

(b) FOREST RECEIPT PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE STATES AND COUNTIES.—

(1) ACT OF MAY 23, 1908.—The sixth paragraph under the heading ''FOREST SERVICE'' in the Act of May 23, 1908 (16 U.S.C. 500) is amended in the first sentence by striking ''twenty-five percentum'' and all that follows through ''shall be paid'' and inserting the following: ''an amount equal to the annual average of 25 percent of all amounts received for the applicable fiscal year and each of the preceding 6 fiscal years from each national forest shall be paid''.

(2) WEEKS LAW.—Section 13 of the Act of March 1, 1911 (commonly known as the ''Weeks Law'') (16 U.S.C. 500) is amended in the first sentence by striking ''twenty-five percentum'' and all that follows through ''shall be paid'' and inserting the following: ''an amount equal to the annual average of 25 percent of all amounts received for the applicable fiscal year and each of the preceding 6 fiscal years from each national forest shall be paid''.

(c) PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6906 of title 31, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 6906. Funding

''For each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, such sums as are authorized under this chapter shall be made available to the Secretary of the Interior, out of any amounts in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for obligation or expenditure in accordance with this chapter.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 69 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to section 6906 and inserting the following:

''6906. Funding.''.

(d) INCREASE IN INFORMATION RETURN PENALTIES.—

(1) FAILURE TO FILE CORRECT INFORMATION RETURNS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 6721(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(i) by striking ''$50'' and inserting ''$250'', and

(ii) by striking ''$250,000'' and inserting ''$3,000,000''.

(B) REDUCTION WHERE CORRECTION IN SPECIFIED PERIOD.—

(i) CORRECTION WITHIN 30 DAYS.—Section 6721(b)(1) of such Code is amended—

(I) by striking ''$15'' and inserting ''$50'',

(II) by striking ''$50'' and inserting ''$250'', and

(III) by striking ''$75,000'' and inserting ''$500,000''.

(ii) FAILURES CORRECTED ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 1.—Section 6721(b)(2) of such Code is amended—

(I) by striking ''$30'' and inserting ''$100'',

(II) by striking ''$50'' and inserting ''$250'', and

(III) by striking ''$150,000'' and inserting ''$1,500,000''.

(C) LOWER LIMITATION FOR PERSONS WITH GROSS RECEIPTS OF NOT MORE THAN $5,000,000.—Section 6721(d)(1) of such Code is amended—

(i) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) by striking ''$100,000'' and inserting ''$1,000,000'', and

(II) by striking ''$250,000'' and inserting ''$3,000,000'',

(ii) in subparagraph (B)—

(I) by striking ''$25,000'' and inserting ''$175,000'', and

(II) by striking ''$75,000'' and inserting ''$500,000'', and

(iii) in subparagraph (C)—

(I) by striking ''$50,000'' and inserting ''$500,000'', and

(II) by striking ''$150,000'' and inserting ''$1,500,000''.

(D) PENALTY IN CASE OF INTENTIONAL DISREGARD.—Section 6721(e) of such Code is amended—

(i) by striking ''$100'' in paragraph (2) and inserting ''$500'',

(ii) by striking ''$250,000'' in paragraph (3)(A) and inserting ''$3,000,000''.

(2) FAILURE TO FURNISH CORRECT PAYEE STATEMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 6722(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(i) by striking ''$50'' and inserting ''$250'', and

(ii) by striking ''$100,000'' and inserting ''$1,000,000''.

(B) PENALTY IN CASE OF INTENTIONAL DISREGARD.—Section 6722(c) of such Code is amended—

(i) by striking ''$100'' in paragraph (1) and inserting ''$500'', and

(ii) by striking ''$100,000'' in paragraph (2)(A) and inserting ''$1,000,000''.

(3) FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH OTHER INFORMATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Section 6723 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(A) by striking ''$50'' and inserting ''$250'', and

(B) by striking ''$100,000'' and inserting ''$1,000,000''.

(4) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to information returns required to be filed on or after January 1, 2008.

(e) REPEAL OF SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PENALTIES AND INTEREST.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6404 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking subsection (g).

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the amendment made by this section shall apply to notices provided by the Secretary of the Treasury, or his delegate after the date which is 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN TAXPAYERS.—The amendment made by this section shall not apply to any taxpayer with respect to whom a suspension of any interest, penalty, addition to tax, or other amount is in effect on the date which is 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(f) PARTICIPANTS IN GOVERNMENT SECTION 457 PLANS ALLOWED TO TREAT ELECTIVE DEFERRALS AS ROTH CONTRIBUTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 402A(e)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (defining applicable retirement plan) is amended by striking ''and'' at the end of subparagraph (A), by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting '', and'', and by adding at the end the following:

''(C) an eligible deferred compensation plan (as defined in section 457(b)) of an eligible employer described in section 457(e)(1)(A).''.

(2) ELECTIVE DEFERRALS.—Section 402A(e)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (defining elective deferral) is amended to read as follows:

''(2) ELECTIVE DEFERRAL.—The term 'elective deferral' means—

''(A) any elective deferral described in subparagraph (A) or (C) of section 402(g)(3), and

''(B) any elective deferral of compensation by an individual under an eligible deferred compensation plan (as defined in section 457(b)) of an eligible employer described in section 457(e)(1)(A).''.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2007.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, what is the order now?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1½ minutes under the control of the Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, does our side have any additional time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. No.

Mr. BURR. Since the other side does not get any additional time, I will yield back the remainder of my time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRAIG. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 697, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, it is my understanding there is a Warner amendment 697 at the desk, as modified. I ask unanimous consent that it be agreed to, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment, as modified, is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 697), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. CRAIG. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. CRAIG. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, under the previous order, I believe I have several amendments pending. I rise to discuss those with my colleagues. I will call up several of them as I go along.

It is important for the American public to know what is going on. If we go back to 2003, what we can see is a major growth in emergency spending. Why is that important? It is important because emergency spending is totally outside the budget parameters on which the Senate works. Emergency spending doesn't count against any total cap on what our spending will be. It doesn't count against the budget deficit, and it doesn't count against the budget rules. We merely spend the money outside of any rules of control, and we charge it. We take a credit card and we say: Kaching, grandchildren, you are up.

As my colleagues can see from this chart, from 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, to 2007, as the bill before us today, we see an average of over $100 billion a year, about $110 to $115 billion a year outside of a $3 trillion budget. So no taxpayer dollars presently are going to go to pay for any of this. What we are going to do is ask the Treasury to issue bonds and notes. Guess who will be redeeming those notes. Our grandchildren. Who is at fault in all this? Partly the administration because part of this funding has been for a war that should have been budgeted through the Defense appropriations bill. That will happen next year. But the fact is, we can take $80 billion out of this across the year and apply it to the war.

What about the other $30 billion every year on average that doesn't have anything to do with the war and doesn't have anything to do with an emergency? Remember, this is supposedly emergency spending. How long have we been in this war? Four years. There is nothing emergency about it. We know the spending. It should go through the regular process. Our budget rules define ''emergency'' as something unforeseen, unexpected. We have to question the intellectual honesty of our body when the $18.7 billion that is added on to the defense request in this bill is deemed an emergency.

The first amendment I will talk about is $100 million that is an emergency to fund increased security at the conventions, both in Minneapolis-St. Paul and in Denver. We have known we were going to have conventions every 4 years for a long time. Never before have we funded the security required for these conventions out of an emergency bill. So in essence, what we are going to do is we are going to have two big parties and we are going to send the bill for those parties to our grandkids.

The first amendment I have actually eliminates that $100 million. We have plenty of time under the regular appropriations process with which to supply the money within the budget guidelines. Every billion we spend outside of the budget guidelines means that is another billion which is going to be spent inside, which means we are actually doubling the spending. Something that should have been inside, now we are going to spend outside of the budget. We are going to charge it to our children, and then we are going to spend more money.

How did we get where we are? The important thing to look at as to how we got where we are is to look at what has happened to Defense appropriations every year. There is a requirement that is asked for from the Pentagon in the budget. It is within our budget numbers. What happens when it comes out of here? What happens is, it gets underfunded intentionally. Why does it get underfunded intentionally? So that we can create, in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, additional spending inside the budget, and then we come back and get the actual defense needs in an emergency. It is a shell game that is being played on the American public that says: We are going to underfund what we know we need in defense. Then we know there is going to be an emergency supplemental, and we will make up for that when the emergency supplemental comes. But because we underfunded defense, we can therefore spend the money somewhere else outside of the budget. It is a game that we continue to play that is unfair to the American public.

AMENDMENT NO. 648

I call up amendment 648.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is pending.

Mr. COBURN. Amendment No. 648 removes $100 million. This is not about

being against security for people who are going to attend the conventions. It is ironic that the decisions which are made at the conventions will have already been made probably in February or March. But we are going to charge the American taxpayers $100 million for security outside of the budget. Who are we really charging? We are charging our grandkids. This has never before happened. Always before, if we funded money for convention sites, we have done it within the budget. So it isn't an emergency, and it is markedly unethical to take money that should be inside our budget and place it outside and ask our grandchildren to pay for us to all have a party in August and September.

H.R. 4613, the fiscal year Department of Defense appropriations bill, provided $50 million for discretionary grants for this same purpose associated with the 2004 nominating conventions. We did that in the 2005 bill. We did it within the budget. We have done it before.

Let's talk about the criteria of what is an emergency: necessary, essential, and vital, plus sudden, quickly coming into being, not building up over time, an urgent, pressing, compelling need requiring immediate action, subject to unforeseen, totally unpredictable and unanticipated, not permanent and temporary nature. There is no question the funding for the conventions for the Democratic and Republican parties does not meet any of those criteria. Yet here it is in the bill. Why do we find it in this bill? So we don't have to spend the money inside the budget limitations that are placed on Congress. Here is $100 million outside of that budget limitation that we are then going to spend, another $100 million, because we have not paid for this one, and we should have paid for it within the budget.

This isn't sudden. It is not urgent. It is not pressing. It does not require immediate action, is not unforeseen, not unpredictable, and it was not unanticipated. There have been nominating conventions since 1832. The year 2008 will be the second Presidential election since the 9/11 terrorist attack. There is no question that increased security is required. But this is the first time we have said it is an emergency. It is like saying we don't know the census is coming in 2010. We will have an emergency supplemental for the census. As a matter of fact, we have done that before. The war on terror is an emergency. Having a party for politicians and their political parties doesn't qualify.

We are going to have a vote on this amendment. I expect to lose the vote. But I also expect the American people will ask: Why in the world would we be doing this? Why would we violate their good will by playing games for the political parties? Why would we do that? It comes back to the point of where we are in the Senate, why are we addressing this legislation? Why is there $18.7 billion worth of additional items added to this bill other than to fund the Defense Department?

We will hear all sorts of answers: We need it. We didn't do it. We have emergency agricultural appropriations in this bill.

Actually, I believe there is an emergency in farm country, and we ought to be doing something about it. But we ought to be paying for it. I haven't yet talked to a farmer from Oklahoma who thinks his grandchildren ought to be paying for us to do an emergency supplemental in terms of agriculture. They believe we ought to find it within.

The fact is, Senator CARPER and I held 49 hearings in the last Congress and discovered over $200 billion of waste, fraud, abuse, or duplication within the discretionary budget. That is within $1 trillion, 20 percent. Most Americans probably believe that. The problem is, most politicians don't have the nerve to challenge where that spending is because there is an interest group that wants it spent. There is an interest group, and it is us. It is self-serving that we are going to spend $100 million on increased security for the conventions and not pay for it and spend that money inside the budget on something else. Probably the greatest moral question is, Are we going to have a party on our unborn next generation?

They are going to be the ones who pay back this $100 million. It is not going to be $100 million when they pay it back; it will probably be $500 million or $600 million by the time we get to paying it back with the compound interest.

What would this $100 million do if we were not spending it on security at party conventions? It would buy 31,797 sets of body armor. It would uparmor 658 humvees. It would uparmor 529 ambulances, medic carriers for the guys who are helping our guys in the field.

Instead, we are going to use a bill, intended to cover the cost of winning the war, to protect our national security, fight the war on terrorism, to add $100 million to our national debt that already exceeds $8.7 trillion. We added $1,000 to that debt last year for every man, woman, and child. We added $1,000. If you pass this bill—''emergency''—what we are going to do is add another $400 for every man, woman, and child in this country—the debt just for this bill. So it ought to be about real emergencies.

Federal funding also is already planned for the conventions. The Department of Justice did not request this $100 million. The administration budgeted $15 million for the Secret Service to provide the security at these conventions. Each convention has been designated as a national security, special security event, making security personnel eligible for other Federal tax dollars through grants to cover the expenses. Why are we doing it? There has not even been a security plan for which we are throwing $100 million at formalized for the conventions.

I believe if you are a young person in this country today, what we are doing on this bill, especially with this item, has to be heartbreaking. April 15 is coming up pretty soon. We all look at our pay stubs and see what we are paying in Federal taxes. What you do not see when you get that pay stub is how much additional you are going to owe at the end of the year because we were not responsible. We were not responsible with the taxpayers' money. Yet we play all these shell games of hiding money, underfunding defense so we can bring it back in a supplemental, so we can spend money elsewhere rather than making the tough choices.

Let's read about what was in the news after the last conventions. It is pretty interesting to know. One hundred million dollars of your money for the following: USA Today reported the convention featured more than 200 parties by corporations, lobbyists, trade groups, and other organizations. These were in addition to the high-dollar donor meals, golf tournaments, sporting events held during the convention week. Top sponsorship at these events can cost up to $250,000—golf tournaments, breakfast at Tiffany's, Yankee Stadium fundraisers, champagne and cigar celebration, baseball games.

We are going to spend $100 million of our grandkids' money to protect politicians while they have a party. To me, it is unconscionable. It is even more unconscionable to do it in this bill. There is nothing about this that is an emergency. There is nothing about this that was not foreseen. There is nothing about this that was not anticipated. This is a game.

The last election reminded us—my party—you cannot say one thing and do another, except that is what we are seeing with this bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 649

Mr. President, I wish also to spend some time on amendment No. 649. Over the last 5 years, the University of Vermont has received $400 million in earmarks for things for that university. In this bill is an earmark for $2 million. The first thing we said is we are not going to have earmarks that are not published: who put them in, who sponsored them, and what they are for. This is an emergency bill. There is no question we ought to honor former Senator Jeffords. There is no question we ought to do that. But in an emergency bill that is unpaid for, that does not have anything to do with fighting the war on terror, we are going to send another $2 million to a university that has gotten $400 million over the last 5 years? This is not a place for it. It is not the time for it. It is not the way to do it. Supposedly, we are free of earmarks, and yet here is an earmark for which we do not have the money. We are not going to be able to pay for it, even though the claim is this is offset. It is offset with student loan management money. That is how they have offset it to say it does not

cost any money. Which is more important? More students getting loans and effective management so more people get student loans or giving another $2 million to a university that has already gotten $400 million of the taxpayers' money? I do not think there is any question in the average American's mind in regard to that.

Let me read what the University of Vermont has gotten: year 2000, $54 million for 201 different programs; year 2001, $60 million; year 2002, $69 million; year 2003, $76 million for 249 different programs; year 2004, $70 million; year 2005, $68 million. There is a lot of money that has already gone up there, a lot of it borrowed.

At the present time, the University of Vermont has an endowment of $282,594,000. Now, the interest on that, at 6 percent, gives you about, oh, close to $15 million a year—just the interest off that endowment. I believe they have plenty of money to fund this chair to honor Senator Jeffords.

The endowment grew 16 percent last year. Its growth last year was 20 times the amount of this earmark. Again, it is not unanticipated, certainly not an emergency, certainly it is not something we have to do now.

Again, is it necessary? Essential? Is it not merely useful or beneficial? It is useful. It will be beneficial. Did the demand for this quickly come into being? No. It was part of an earmark in the Labor-HHS bill that was not included in last year's appropriations. Is it urgent, pressing, and compelling, requiring immediate action? No. Was it unforeseen or unpredictable or unanticipated? Is it temporary in nature? No. It is not temporary. It is the start of many years of giving $2 million a year on the same thing.

This project violates the Appropriations Committee's own earmark moratorium. On December 11, Chairman BYRD and Congressman OBEY announced there would be no more congressional earmarks until the new rules were put in place to make the process more transparent and more accountable. Those rules are not in place. The transparency and accountability is not there. Yet we see an earmark.

Here is what the joint statement said:

> We will place a moratorium on all earmarks until a reform process is put in place. Earmarks included in this year's House and Senate bills will be eligible for consideration in the 2008 process subject to new standards for transparency and accountability. We will work to restore an accountable, above-board, transparent process for funding decisions and put an end to the abuses that have harmed the credibility of Congress.

More of the same. There is no end in sight. This earmark was previously included in the report language—not the law, in the report language—for the fiscal year 2007 Labor-HHS appropriations bill. That was on page 251 of that report. It is the first of the earmarks to be resurrected from last year.

I might say as an aside, the Congressional Research Service has refused to honor a request from myself and Senator DEMINT to give us a list of the earmarks in the 2007 appropriations bills—a flat-out refusal. There is a lot of speculation as to why they do not want the American people to know what the earmarks were last year. Come 2008, we are going to get to find out them all under the Transparency and Accountability Act that myself and Senator OBAMA and several others cosponsored, which became law last year.

When we questioned the University of Vermont about this earmark, we asked: What were the estimated costs of the project long term? They could not give us an answer. Who was going to finance it after the program was established? They could not give us an answer. How will the Federal funding be expended? They could not tell us that. Did the university request the funding? We do not know the answer to that either. None of these questions have been answered by the University of Vermont.

This $2 million could be spent for our troops. It would buy 2,857 carbine rifles the National Guard presently does not have so they could conduct training. It would buy 4 mine-protected vehicles or 13 uparmored humvees.

Mr. President, I wish at this time, without giving up my right to the floor, to yield time to the Senator from Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank my distinguished colleague.

AMENDMENT NO. 697, AS MODIFIED

Mr. President, the Senate, a few minutes ago, acted on an amendment, the Warner-Byrd amendment. It is a rather unique one. I first thank my distinguished colleague and mentor in many ways, ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia. We have collaborated together many times on pieces of legislation.

But I approached him, and he concurred in my observations, that this was badly needed by the Congress, by the country, and indeed by the President and his staff, as well as the Department of Defense.

Our amendment calls for the appropriation of a sum of money to enable a private sector entity to make an independent—independent of all entities, the Pentagon and otherwise, in the Federal Government—assessment of the status of the Iraqi security forces, most specifically the army, the national guard, and other elements which are fighting alongside the coalition forces, and primarily the U.S. forces now in the operations in Baghdad.

I have followed this issue for a number of years, and I have referred to the report to the Congress of May 2006, roughly a year ago. In that report, they talk about the:

> Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continue to grow in strength and capability as indicated by:
>
> progress in the training and equipping of ISF personnel;
>
> assessed capabilities of operational units; and
>
> progress in assuming responsibility for security of areas within Iraq.

In another part, on page 46:

> With the generation of Iraqi Army battalions now more than 89 percent complete, the focus of the Army's train-and-equip effort has shifted towards building combat support and combat service support forces.

Now, this is a report, as I say, of a year ago. Compare that to the report Congress received this month, March of 2007, and the following paragraph, observation, from page 25:

> By the end of 2006, the United States and its Coalition partners met their force generation targets, while continuing their efforts to expand the size and capability of the ISF—

''ISF'' being Iraqi Security Forces—

> to meet emergent requirements. As of February 19, 2007, approximately 328,700 forces (not including replenishments) have been trained. The actual number of present-for-duty soldiers is about one-half to two-thirds of the total due to scheduled leave, absence without leave—

That is referred to by those of us who served as ''AWOL''—

> and attrition.

So it is not nearly, in 2007, as encouraging as the report in 2006. I felt, together with Senator BYRD and a group of cosponsors on this amendment, it was imperative we get an independent analysis of some of the reports of the Department of Defense and others to determine what is the viability of this force.

Every plan we lay down and discuss here on the floor regarding Iraq—the amendment yesterday adopted narrowly by Senator REID, calling on certain troop deployments and dates; the President's program of January 20 of this year, in which he revised strategy and initiated what we commonly refer to as the surge operation in Baghdad today—every single plan, concept for the future of Iraq is dependent upon the military proficiency, the viability, the capability of the Iraqi security forces. I felt very strongly that we had to go and get a second opinion—a phrase often used in medicine, but it is just as important here in diplomacy. It is just as important in military analysis. Let us get a second independent opinion about these forces.

Drawing on my own modest military career but a lifetime of experience in working with our military and having served in the Pentagon for over 5 years as Under Secretary and Secretary of the Navy, I have had some experience with training of forces. Our great country, since World War II, took recruits, brought them into recruit training, and in 6 to 7 months they were trained, capable individuals. They were then assigned to other units to have additional training, but they were often ready. Today, those same recruits in this generation of forces that we have serving on active duty in the Army and particularly the National Guard, they are trained in a period of 6 to 8 to 9

months, and then they go into combat situations. We have been training these 325,000 people, most of them, for a period of 2½ years. We need to know at what point this heavy investment of American taxpayers' dollars, the work of the U.S. military to train these individuals, at what point are we able to say: This force is able to take on these operations and perform them because all our planning is dependent on that.

I find it most difficult to see how we have trained 325,000—that is over twice the number of U.S. forces in Iraq—we have trained them for these many years. Why are they not able to step up and take on the major operations now being performed by the U.S. forces? Our President has indicated we will continue to embed our forces with Iraqi units and continue to give them certain supplies and logistics and equipment. It seems to me the fighting, the brunt of the fighting ought to be borne by the Iraqi forces, and we, the United States, be it the Congress or the executive branch—but most importantly the people—are entitled to have an assessment of what we have created with the expenditure of these hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars to train these forces.

Now, the concept is—and I will be working with the administration and hopefully this becomes law and work through the process of appropriations—this sum of money would go to a private, independent entity to engage individuals to make this report, and then the report comes back to the Congress of the United States.

I thank my colleagues who have supported me, particularly my distinguished, longtime friend and associate from West Virginia, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD. We have done our work to initiate this all-important study because every plan we have is dependent upon a better understanding and knowledge of what has or has not been created in terms of the Iraqi security forces.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WARNER. I am pleased to yield to the Senator.

Mr. DURBIN. I respect the Senator and his service to our country in uniform as well as the Secretary of the Navy and of course his service in the Senate. I ask him this question:

Let's assume that 120 days from now, the report comes back and says the Iraqi military is not prepared to stand and defend its own country. What responsibility then falls on our shoulders?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, it seems to me we have to face the reality of fact. Now, this would be an independent report. Obviously, I think the Department of Defense would come back and provide some rebuttal or some additional information, so we would have to take all the viewpoints and put them together. But what I say to my distinguished colleague from Illinois is we are still relying solely upon these reports that come on an annual basis. I read through them, and I encourage others to do so. It is very difficult to glean from these reports that sound, basic fact: Are they trained? Are they equipped? Are they ready? Most importantly, I say to the Senator, do they have the commitment in their hearts to take orders and fight on behalf of the Iraqi people? That is what concerns me because of the large amount of AWOL, absentees, and all the other types of things that are reflected in this report.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, reclaiming my time, as the floor is under my control.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 657

Mr. COBURN. I would like to continue, since my time is going to be limited by what I will be allowed to discuss on my amendments in terms of total time, I wish to spend a minute talking about amendment 657. There is no question we have some critical needs among many of our agricultural suppliers in this country—needs that were unforeseen, needs that were unanticipated, needs that we should have addressed last year but didn't; needs that we should have addressed in the CR, but we were precluded from offering an amendment to offer a way to supply those needs. What this amendment does is it provides farm relief to both our production agriculture individuals, as well as our cattle, in a fiscally responsible manner.

I wish to give some quotes, before I go into the details, from last year's debate with Senator CONRAD and Senator DORGAN. Here are the following quotes:

I am very much in sympathy with Senator COBURN on the notion of paying for this. I appreciate very much—as the Senator knows, I wish to pay for this all as well. We have a way to do a pay-for, but I am precluded from doing so by the rules. On the question of paying for it, I have complete agreement with the Senator from Oklahoma. I wish the rules permitted us to offer an amendment for pay-for. I don't have disagreements about the issues of paying for it. I suggest we do a unanimous consent. I would do a unanimous consent to pay for it. These things ought to be paid for. We have hundreds of billions of dollars come through here with hardly a blink, none of it paid for. That ought to change. I am with the Senator from Oklahoma. Let's try to change that.

The fact is this does not have a pay-for, not because Senator CONRAD doesn't want it there or I don't want it there; it ought to be there.

Well, here is the chance to put those words into action. What this amendment does is strike all nonessential items in the farm title so the scarce resources we have can be maximized for crop and livestock disaster assistance. The language in this amendment leaves verbatim that language in the underlying bill. It requires, though, the underlying funding for the emergency in this bill to be paid for within existing funds at the Department of Agriculture. You are going to hear all this screaming: They can't do it. You know what. They have $8 billion in the bank right now unspent, unobligated; money that is sitting there from this last year and this year that they haven't spent. This total will come to $4.15 billion, $4.15 billion to take care of the real needs of the consumer, the production agriculture in this country that has had 3 years of drought, has had 3 years of floods, has had 3 years where they didn't produce a crop. Those who actually bought crop insurance are going under anyway. What it would not do is add the other $1 billion to the outside of that for special interests that aren't the heart of agriculture in this country and when we do that, we are going to pay for it.

How dare you take money from the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture is, if you compared it on size and budget, the sixth biggest business in the United States. There isn't a big business out there that if they had to scrimp, couldn't save 4 or 5 percent on their business. As a matter of fact, they do it every day. As soon as their stocks start getting low, they start trimming, becoming more efficient, better ideas, better efficiency, and they cut their costs. We can do that at the Department of Agriculture.

This body isn't about to vote for this amendment because they don't want to have that fight. They don't want to have the hard work of making the Department of Agriculture efficient and not allowing the waste, fraud, abuse, and duplication that goes on in the Department of Agriculture. The $1.6 billion of food stamp payments that are paid out to people who are ineligible every year, who are ineligible, who have plenty of money, yet they are getting food stamps. All the other programs that have waste, fraud, and abuse in them, we are not going to take the step and say: Department of Agriculture, take the money that you have now—you have almost $8 billion in the bank—work real hard, trim yourself about 2 or 3 percent, save the money and go out and do what is going to make a difference to the production of agriculture in this country. No, we are going to do what is easy when this amendment goes down.

What we are going to do is we are going to say: Grandkids, we didn't have the courage to do what was right in 2007. We didn't have the courage to look at the programs that weren't efficient. We didn't have the courage to challenge somebody when they were being wasteful. We didn't have the courage to find it within ourselves to not lessen your standard of living because we wanted our standard of living taken care of.

So what they are going to see is an extra $5 billion or $6 billion coming out of their pockets 20 and 30 years from now when we attempt to try to pay back this money, and they are going to wonder: What did we do? What were the standards under which we operated?

What was the character trait in us, as a body, that allowed us to not demand efficiency from an agency of the Federal Government and yet go the easy way and demand it out of the livelihood and opportunity of our grandchildren? That is what they are going to ask. What is the character flaw in that? Is it laziness? The Members of this body obviously care about this country. What is it? What is it that would not make them do the hard work of challenging the inefficiency that we all know is out there in the Federal Government and we all know is within the Department of Agriculture? Not that the Department of Agriculture employees aren't great. They are. They work hard. They are dedicated. But there is still enough money in the sixth largest corporation in America, the Department of Agriculture, to find $4.15 billion and bail out the guys and gals who need to be bailed out right now, just like we have tried to bail out Louisiana.

What is the character flaw? Is it self-centeredness? Is it laziness? Is it not willing to fight to make things better? Or is it so easy to put the credit card into the machine and say: I am not going to worry about tomorrow. I am going to think about the short run right now. Long term doesn't have any consequence to it. I am not going to consider that.

Now, what does this amendment get rid of? What it keeps is $2.09 billion in crop assistance and $1.64 billion in livestock assistance. What does it get rid of? It gets rid of individual earmarks for individual Senators. It gets rid of $40 million for the tree assistance program which includes Christmas trees, shrubs, nursery bushes. It gets rid of $30 million in administration for hiring additional Farm Service Agency personnel and computer upgrades. You tell me we can't find $30 million in the sixth largest corporation in this country to finally fix the computers? Sure we can. It will be hard, but we can do it. But it will never happen unless Congress asks for it to happen—demands that it happen. Once you start asking one agency to do that, it will be easy to ask the next agency to do that. Pretty soon, before you know it, Americans are starting to get good value for their money.

If, in fact—it is not ''if, in fact,'' it is actually a fact. Eighteen to twenty percent of all the discretionary funds spent by the U.S. Government are either waste, fraud, abuse or duplicative. Think about that. That means 20 cents out of every taxpayer dollar you pay in the discretionary side of the budget, one-third of the budget—the rest of it is Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security—is not efficiently managed, spent or directed for the purposes it was intended. So why would we not force this? We are going to hear it is impossible. You can't ask them to find it. I will guarantee, if they were a public company and their stock was tanking and they weren't doing well, they would hire a new CEO and, before you knew it, that would happen. The $4 billion would be made up through efficiency, innovation, and programmatic changes that directed the programs to the most needy at the best time, at the best efficiency, with the least cost and the greatest skill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. COBURN. I thank the Chair.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that the previous order be further modified to provide that the cloture vote occur immediately; that the other two votes with respect to the Wyden and Burr amendments occur at 2 p.m. under the same conditions and limitations; provided further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, the amendments remain in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, we are working on scheduling additional votes at 2 o'clock beyond those specified in the consent now pending.

I intend to vote for cloture. I hope everyone on my side will vote for cloture. We are going through an exercise that is going to ultimately lead to a vetoed bill that doesn't get money to the troops. The sooner we can get this bill out of the Senate and into conference, get the conference completed, and get the bill down to the President for veto, the sooner we can get serious about passing a bill and getting money to the troops.

Ultimately, I recommend that Republican Senators vote for cloture.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I want to get along, but we are serious about this legislation. We believe it is a good piece of legislation. We understand the President wants a bill. If he wants a bill, we can have final passage in about 10 minutes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, further reserving the right to object, if we must debate this now, we will. The fundamental issue before us is whether we are going to get money to the troops, not whether we are going to deal with $20 billion of additional spending over and above the request to get money for the troops.

The only way this bill has a chance of becoming law in time to provide money for the troops, and not send a date for surrender to our enemies, is to get through the process as rapidly as possible.

The leader and I had very cordial conversations earlier today about votes on amendments postcloture. We think we have an understanding that will be satisfactory to both sides.

There will be additional votes this afternoon. There is a possibility that we might finish the bill today but certainly tomorrow. My recommendation is that we invoke cloture and move forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader and I had cordial conversations this morning. We will have them this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we will now move to the cloture vote. Following the cloture vote, it is our understanding that Senators HAGEL and WEBB, under the previous agreement, will speak on the amendment to which they would like to speak. For the information of all Senators, once this vote occurs, Senator HAGEL and Senator WEBB will be speaking, and then we will have votes at 2 o'clock, which were just ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order and pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close the debate on Calendar No. 84, H.R. 1591, the emergency supplemental 2007 appropriations bill.

Harry Reid, Robert C. Byrd, Jack Reed, Patrick Leahy, B.A. Mikulski, Byron L. Dorgan, Christopher J. Dodd, Dianne Feinstein, Richard J. Durbin, Chuck Schumer, Debbie Stabenow, Barbara Boxer, Herb Kohl, Jay Rockefeller, Joe Biden, E. Benjamin Nelson, Daniel K. Akaka, Ted Kennedy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on H.R. 1591, an act making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes, as amended, shall be brought to a close? The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 117 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Akaka	Domenici	Mikulski
Alexander	Dorgan	Murkowski
Allard	Durbin	Murray
Baucus	Ensign	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bennett	Feinstein	Obama
Biden	Graham	Pryor
Bingaman	Grassley	Reed
Bond	Gregg	Reid
Boxer	Hagel	Roberts
Brown	Harkin	Rockefeller
Brownback	Hatch	Salazar
Bunning	Hutchison	Sanders
Burr	Inhofe	Schumer
Byrd	Inouye	Sessions
Cantwell	Isakson	Shelby
Cardin	Kennedy	Smith
Carper	Kerry	Snowe
Casey	Klobuchar	Specter
Chambliss	Kohl	Stabenow
Clinton	Kyl	Stevens
Coburn	Landrieu	Sununu
Cochran	Lautenberg	Tester
Coleman	Leahy	Thomas
Collins	Levin	Thune
Conrad	Lieberman	Vitter
Corker	Lincoln	Voinovich
Cornyn	Lott	Warner
Craig	Lugar	Webb
Crapo	Martinez	Whitehouse
DeMint	McCaskill	Wyden
Dodd	McConnell	
Dole	Menendez	

NOT VOTING—3

Enzi	Johnson	McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 97, the nays are 0. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I call for the regular order with respect to amendment No. 690.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Amendment No. 690 is now the pending question.

AMENDMENT NO. 823 TO AMENDMENT NO. 690

Mr. REID. I now call up my amendment No. 823.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 823 to amendment No. 690.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of the amendment add the following:

The provision in this section shall become effective 2 days after enactment.

AMENDMENT NO. 707

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is now my understanding that there is going to be an amendment that is going to be offered by the Senator from Nebraska and the Senator from Virginia; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is appropriate for the Senator to call for that amendment at this time, if he wishes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I haven't had an opportunity to speak to my friend from Nebraska, but I have spoken to my friend from Virginia, and I have a statement I would like to give. There is 90 minutes for debate. I don't know what their pleasure is or when they would want me to speak.

Mr. President, the amendment is at the desk; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is pending.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, I want to acknowledge how pleased I am to join as cosponsor of this extremely important amendment. I applaud Senators HAGEL and WEBB for returning the focus of the Senate to the issue of our troops and their readiness.

There is a lot of talk around here about supporting the troops. Too often we don't take the kind of action that can achieve that goal. Yesterday, when the Senate voted to maintain the language on changing course in Iraq, it was a good day for our country and for our troops who may finally get the new policy they deserve.

With yesterday's vote, the Senate finally acknowledged the reality in Iraq: The President's policy is not working. It is time to change course. This bipartisan position was backed up in the newspapers around the country today. USA Today and the Associated Press have an article today detailing how the surge is not working. Baghdad, in some instances, may be quieter, but according to the news outlets I have just mentioned, insurgents have taken their attacks elsewhere. I quote:

Nationwide, the number of deaths from car bombs has decreased slightly since the Baghdad Security Operation began. However, the death toll from car bombs has more than doubled in areas outside the capital compared to the previous 6-week period.

Violence has not stopped in Iraq. It has gotten worse. Earlier today, Shiite militants, including local police, went on a violent rampage. When it ended 2 hours later, we do not know how many Sunnis have been killed, but at least 60. The victims were men between the ages of 15 and 60, most of them killed with a shot to the back of the head.

These reports fly in the face of what we heard in the Senate yesterday from some quarters, and we hear from President Bush that things are better in Iraq. The idea that the surge is working or that it needs more time is a fantasy. What we see today in Iraq, months into the surge, is more of the same—the same violence, the same chaos, the same loss of life we have seen over the last 4-plus years, with 3,200 dead Americans and $500 billion spent. It is long past time to change course in Iraq.

If, yesterday, the Senate acknowledged the reality of the Iraq war, today we must acknowledge the reality of what the Iraq war is doing to our military and their ability to defend this Nation everyplace.

Mr. President, we have no better advocates to learn about the reality of combat than Senators HAGEL and WEBB. The authors of this amendment have authority on this subject based on their experience in battle, in war—not the classroom. When CHUCK HAGEL and JIM WEBB speak for a change of course, we should all listen.

CHUCK HAGEL is a Vietnam combat veteran. He served with his brother Tom. Both of them were infantry squad leaders with the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division. For his service, Senator HAGEL earned many military decorations, including having been wounded twice—two Purple Hearts. When I say CHUCK HAGEL is a combat veteran, I mean it. I mean it. Here is a description from a 2005 Washington Post profile of what Senator HAGEL faced in Vietnam:

In Vietnam, Chuck, 21, and his brother Tom, 19, had fought and nearly died together as infantry squad leaders. In 1968, their armored personnel carrier hit a 500-pound mine. It blew out Chuck's eardrums, set him on fire—''the whole left side of my face bubbled.'' Chuck pulled Tom, unconscious, from the burning gunner turret. Chuck saved his brother's life just months after Tom had saved his [brother Chuck's life], when shrapnel ripped through [Senator Hagel's] chest.

That is only part of the story. JIM WEBB was also in Vietnam. He was a marine with the Fifth Marine Regiment. For his service he was awarded the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and also two Purple Hearts. Here is an excerpt from his citation for the Navy Cross:

Continuing the assault, [Webb] approached a third bunker and was preparing to fire into it when the enemy threw another grenade. Observing the grenade land dangerously close to his companion, First Lieutenant Webb simultaneously fired his weapon at the enemy, pushed the marine away from the grenade, and shielded him from the explosion with his own body.

WEBB's service did not stop on the battlefields of Vietnam. In 1984, he was appointed the inaugural Assistant Secretary of Defense. In 1987, under President Reagan, he became the first Naval Academy graduate in the history of our country to serve the military and then become Secretary of the Navy.

These two men are authorities on war, authorities on war and the military. All of us would be wise to heed their counsel. CHUCK HAGEL and JIM WEBB are certified heroes. That is all you can say.

This morning I got up early and went to Walter Reed. I met a new generation of heroes, men and women injured serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was accompanied by my friend, the distinguished Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY. To say I left depressed is an understatement. We have all heard the stories about Walter Reed.

I have two observations from my visit. I have been there on other occasions, but I have two observations from my visit today.

First, private contracting is destroying the ability of the military to care for our troops. Go to Walter Reed. Listen to the parents. Listen to the people who are there, who are hurt. I was walking into Walter Reed and I introduced myself to a man dressed in civilian clothes. He told me who he was: a college graduate.

I said: What do you do?

He said: I am an industrial hygienist.

I said: What do you do?

He said: I am one of those guys who goes around trying to make sure that these places are sanitary and safe. I check for mold.

I said: How are you doing?

He said: Terrible.

I said: Why?

He said: Because of contracting out we went from 15 industrial hygienists at Walter Reed to 5.

So contracting out is hurting our ability to care for our troops.

No. 2, one soldier said it the best. He was sitting there, leg off midthigh. He said: Everyone thinks that this is my problem. He said: That's not my problem. He said: It's this leg—and he had a leg that was terribly mutilated—the calf blown off, dropped foot, scars all up and down it.

He said: You know, but I'm really fortunate because I'm alive.

He went on to say: We amputees are treated pretty well. It's the people with injuries that you can't see who are having a difficult time.

That is the way it is. One young man from Cincinnati, OH, just turned 20 years old—big, as big as the Presiding Officer—big man. He said: I only got shot once. He said: I had a protective vest. I was shot in the stomach. It didn't hurt me too bad. But I survived multiple explosive devices.

He said: My friend—these are his words—''vaporized sitting next to me.''

He is now in big trouble—emotionally, mentally. He has a lot of problems. He said: I have nightmares, I sweat, I become violent, I can't remember anything. He said: I don't know what I'm going to do. He was one of a number whom we visited with there.

Walter Reed is a metaphor of what is happening to our military as a whole. We don't have a single Army unit that is nondeployed that is battle ready. We hear today from one of the generals that in the National Guard, 40 percent of the units are not capable of anything realistically connected to battle. It will take $40 billion to bring the Guard alone up to what it was before the war. The war has badly strained our military. The administration's policies have reduced our military readiness to levels not seen for a long time. Not a single unit, nondeployed Army unit, I repeat, is combat ready. Multiple and extended deployments overseas have reduced readiness and damaged recruiting, retention, and morale. Units have been sent into battle by this administration without the proper training and equipment, in my opinion. That is not supporting the troops; that is breaking the force. We have to do better.

This is not just my opinion. It is the opinion of current and former senior Army officers.

Colin Powell:

The active Army is about broken.

Arnold Punaro, Chairman of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves 15 days ago said:

We can't sustain the [National Guard and Reserves] on the course we're on.

Peter Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the Army, said:

To meet combatant commanders' immediate wartime needs, we pooled equipment from across the force to equip soldiers deploying into harm's way. . . . This practice, which we are continuing today, increases risk for next-to-deploy units and limits our ability to respond to emerging strategic contingencies.

I spoke yesterday to a man in my security detail on his way to Iraq for the third time. Sadly, his story is the norm, not the exception. Of the Army's 44 combat brigades, all but one permanently based in South Korea have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Of those 43 brigades, 12 deployed once, 20 deployed twice, 9 deployed three times, 2 have been deployed 4 times.

Today we have soldiers serving in Iraq who have been fighting in battle well over a year. We have other soldiers who were on their way to Iraq after having been home with their families for a matter of months.

That is not supporting the troops. It is hurting the troops. Our men and women cannot and should not continue to bear the burden of this mismanaged war. We have to do better. That is why the Webb-Hagel amendment is so important.

This amendment will ensure our troops have the equipment they need before they go to battle—before they go to battle. It explicitly states that our troops must have the training and equipment they need or they cannot be sent overseas.

This amendment will also enhance the quality of life for troops and their families and, as a result, improve recruiting and retention. It says that after our brave men and women serve 365 days in Iraq, they are entitled to a significant period of rest back home before they can be redeployed. In short, this Hagel-Webb amendment will improve readiness and our ability to respond to other threats and project power around the world.

We live, we all know, in a dangerous world. We face many threats. From destroying al-Qaida to deterring Iran and North Korea from gaining nuclear weapons, there are critical challenges around the world that we, the superpower, America, must confront. Unfortunately, we have a military stretched too thin to meet these challenges.

After years of overuse and neglect, we must reinvest in the military. With this amendment we will take the necessary steps to make a downpayment on rebuilding our fighting force and keeping our families safe.

I so appreciate these two combat veterans, these two unique, good Senators leading us down this road on which we must be led.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are now going to turn to Senator HAGEL and Senator WEBB, who are both here. We have time allocated until 2 o'clock, at which time, I remind my colleagues, we will have two votes.

Mr. LEVIN. Will the Senator from Nebraska yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. HAGEL. I do yield for that purpose.

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that I be listed as a cosponsor of the amendment, the Hagel-Webb amendment, or the Webb-Hagel. The amendment speaks with real power about what we need to do. They have worked very hard on it. I wish we could adopt it. I know they are going to speak on it now. I just want to indicate my support for their tremendous effort. I ask to be a cosponsor of their amendment.

I think all of us would join in Senator REID's comments. They were eloquent and powerful, and we thank him for them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 707

(Purpose: Relating to Iraq)

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished senior Senator from Michigan who occupies the chairmanship of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

I ask unanimous consent to call up amendment No. 707, offered by Senator WEBB and myself, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nebraska [Mr. HAGEL], for himself, Mr. WEBB, and Mr. LEVIN, proposes an amendment numbered 707.

Mr. HAGEL. I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I wish to offer my thanks as well to the distinguished majority leader of the Senate for his comments and his support of the amendment that I am about to address, as well as my friend and colleague, the distinguished junior Senator from Virginia.

The war in Iraq has pushed the U.S. military to the breaking point. Our troops are being deployed longer than they should be, more frequently than they should be, and without full training and equipment. When we deploy our military, the President and the Congress have a responsibility, an obligation to ensure that our troops are rested, ready, fully trained, and fully equipped.

Senator WEBB and I have introduced this amendment to protect and maintain the readiness and strength of our Armed Forces. Our amendment requires, with the force of law, that our

troops are only deployed to Iraq when they meet the military's own standards for readiness and deployment. We are not creating new standards. We are simply requiring that the military's own standards be met so that our men and women in uniform are sufficiently rested, ready, fully equipped, and fully trained when deployed.

That is the President's and the Congress's responsibility. No American wants to allow a single soldier to be deployed without meeting the required standards of readiness. Our amendment gives the President appropriate flexibility. Our amendment has a 4-month delay, before the provisions come into force, to give the President time to comply.

The President can waive the readiness requirement in case of a national emergency and under circumstances where a unit will receive its full complement of equipment in the theatre of operations. Our amendment exempts from the deployment cap all headquarters personnel and any other U.S. military personnel who are needed in Iraq to ensure continuity of mission between rotating forces.

This amendment will help our troops in a way that avoids having unintended operational consequences for our commanders in Iraq. Our amendment is about our troops. It is about readiness. It is about preventing our troops from being extended 3, 4, 5 or 6 months, as has been and is currently the case today. It is about ensuring a minimum time home between deployments.

This amendment is also about addressing deployment rotations of our troops in Iraq. Many are there for their third and fourth tours of duty. The United States will not be able to sustain the greatest all-volunteer military that the world has ever known if we allow the status quo to continue.

We are witnessing a clear and dangerous consequence of the administration's Iraq policy in Army recruitment. To meet recruitment targets, the military is being forced to issue waivers today. These waivers are for violent offenders, criminals, and for drug abuse. We are waving education requirements. The result is a defining down, a defining down of the standards of the U.S. Army. No institution can maintain any aspect of excellence by dumbing down its standards. If we do not stop this dangerous trend, it will affect the entire institution of our military, an institution that has taken great American leaders 30 years to build.

After the disaster of Vietnam, our military was shredded. Ask Colin Powell. Ask Norman Schwarzkopf. Ask other great military leaders who, in fact, after Vietnam said: No more. We are going to build the finest, greatest, most responsible, best force structure the world has ever known, and they did.

The deployment and operations tempo our military has had to endure in both Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 4 years cannot be sustained without inflicting unacceptable costs to our military power and our standing and influence around the world.

As the Washington Post reported today, General Barry McCaffrey, the former four-star commander of the U.S. Southern Command, tours in Vietnam, led a division in 1991 in the Gulf War, he now believes—according to the article in today's Washington Post—that the U.S. military is in, his words, ''strategic peril.''

Yesterday, LTG Steven Blum, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness. General Blum said the National Guard is, in his words:

> . . . now in a degraded state back at home . . . The Army National Guard has on-hand only 40 percent of its equipment requirement . . . This hinders the ability of our units to train. It also can slow our response to disasters and terrorist incidents in the homeland.

In February, GEN Peter Schoomaker, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. General Schoomaker said: ''I am not satisfied with the readiness of our non-deployed forces.''

At the same hearing, GEN Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acknowledged that today our Army units ''do not have the opportunity that they would normally have in a two-year cycle to train for the combined arms that they may be required to execute elsewhere in the world.''

On March 1, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves issued a report that concluded that: Nearly 90 percent of Army National Guard units are rated as—their words—''not ready.''

There have been repeated reports that senior Army officials now believe there are no nondeployed Army brigades who are rated as combat ready.

Now in our fifth year of the war in Iraq, the Congress must assert itself in a very real and responsible way to fulfill our constitutional responsibilities in matters of war as a coequal branch of our Government.

Over the last 4 years, the Congress has been absent from this responsibility. The American people now expect us to step into this tragedy that we have allowed to happen and begin to reshape our policy in Iraq by placing responsible conditions on our continued military involvement in this war in Iraq.

We are abusing our all-volunteer force in a dangerous and irresponsible way. We are abusing our people. We are abusing their families. We cannot continue to burden our military by continuing to place our military in the middle of a civil war in Iraq and loading onto them, continuing to load onto our military, expectations that they are incapable of fulfilling.

We are asking our military to accomplish things they cannot accomplish, not because they are not brave enough, not because they haven't fought valiantly—they have fought valiantly and we are proud of them—but it is new diplomatic initiatives that must now drive our policies in Iraq. There will not be—nor cannot be—a military victory in Iraq that will achieve peace or any form of stability or security for the Iraqi people or the Middle East.

The future of Iraq will be determined by the political accommodations of the people of Iraq which will result in a political resolution that will be supported by the Iraqi people, its regional neighbors, and other powers, including the United States. Our military should not be asked to do it all. Our military should not be expected to do it all. They have done more than their part.

Our men and women in uniform and their families deserve policy worthy of their sacrifice. I do not believe that to be the case today. Unfortunately, today the Senate will not vote on our amendment. But Senator WEBB and I are committed to this amendment, and we will continue to push for a vote in the Senate in the coming weeks, and we will be back and we will be back.

We have been assured by the majority leader that we will get a vote on this amendment in the Senate. I conclude with this: I often ask myself, who speaks for the rifleman? Who cares about the rifleman? War is not a distraction. Those whom we ask to go fight and die are a very small percentage of our population whom we ask to carry all the burden and make all the sacrifices. But who speaks for them?

Of course, we have a responsibility for a larger geopolitical strategic policy for our interests. We have interests in Iraq. We have interests in the world. We have interests in the Middle East. But do we ever stop enough and listen enough and focus enough on these soldiers, these marines and their families who have nothing to say about policy; but they do what their country asks them to do.

When we frame policy in Washington, part of that prospective of framing that policy must include the right because it must ultimately get to this question: Is the cost worth what we are attempting to accomplish? Is the cost worth the high price we are asking others to pay?

Ultimately, that is the question we should always ask ourselves, those of us who have the privilege and the responsibility to frame policy—if Congress must be part of that—not just constitutionally but morally, but morally.

We each represent constituencies from around this country. We are close to those constituencies. We mirror those constituencies. We are products of those constituencies. We are close to those constituencies. We must do better for our military. We will pay a high price if we do not turn this around. We will pay a high price, indeed, not just in America's blood and treasure but for our future interests and security in the world.

We have not paid attention to our military, we have not paid attention to

the rifleman, and now is the time to start paying attention. I appreciate the time to offer this amendment with my friend and colleague who, as the majority leader noted minutes ago, was one of the most decorated veterans of the Vietnam war. He understands this issue very well. He understands it from the bottom up.

It does not mean Senator WEBB and Senator HAGEL are always right on anything. But we do try to bring a frame of reference to this debate that is relevant, that is important, and focus our attention on the very critical element of who we are. It is our people. Nothing is more important than our people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I would like to first express my profound appreciation for the majority leader's words today. Senator REID likes to say he is not a speaker of eloquence, but I have rarely heard such eloquence of words on this particular issue. They were from the heart, they touched me deeply, and also they were humbling. But most importantly, having the majority leader stand here and bring words to the floor today, as my colleague, Senator HAGEL, and I are attempting to do, in an attempt to inject a reality, a responsible reality to this debate that in many cases has been lacking, is greatly gratifying to me.

I also would like to thank and congratulate my good friend and colleague, the Senator from Nebraska. I greatly respect his service to our country. I greatly admire his courage and his willingness to speak out on this issue over the past several years. I would point out that he and I began our Government service many years ago as people who had come back from a different war and decided we would devote a good portion of our lives to trying to take care of those who had served.

The motivation behind the amendment he and I have worked so assiduously on over the last couple weeks is that same motivation that began nearly 30 years ago. I have seen a lot of comments over the past 3 months, some of it accusatory with respect to people who are trying to bring a different focus to our situation in the Middle East, saying that the people who are doing this were somehow hurting the troops.

The question becomes, how do you support the troops? What does it mean to support the troops? Who is really speaking for the troops? We have a good many Members of this body—and I respect them all—who have come back from multiple trips to Iraq. They have sat down with the military leaders who are charged with the responsibility of carrying out our policies. They have heard in many cases optimistic predictions. In too many cases, they have come back and basically said: If you want to do something different, you are affecting the options of the Commander in Chief, and you are being disloyal to the troops.

Who is really listening to the troops? On the one hand, the people who have been serving in this war are justifiably proud of their military service. On the other, they are carrying out the policies of our political process. If we look at polls—our best way of trying to figure out how the average military person feels about this war—we will see they share the same concerns in the aggregate as everyone else in the country. A little more than a year ago, when I announced for the Senate, there was a poll of our Active-Duty people actually serving in Iraq. Seventy-two percent of those people believed the United States should withdraw from Iraq by the end of last year. This included 70 percent of the Regular Army and 58 percent of the regular Marine Corps.

Our motivation today is to try to put a formula together that will respect the policies of the United States and truly show the best way to take care of the troops.

I note with some irony that the bill before us is called an emergency supplemental appropriation. Beginning the fifth year in this war, we are now calling it an emergency that we need to bring more money to the table. Why? There are a lot of different possibilities, but let's start with this: This has been a war which has been fought without a strategy. You do not have a strategy unless you can clearly articulate the end point of your military operations. I have been saying this for more than 4 years. But what we have had instead of a strategy is the plan of the week. We have had a lot of flailing around from the political leadership that has spilled over into the military leadership—let's try this; let's try that; let's extend our troops; let's deploy our troops early; let's send them back before they have had a chance to rest, recuperate, and refurbish. We are seeing now, as my good friend from Nebraska mentioned, the military cost of that kind of policy. We are also seeing a human cost. Who pays for this lack of clarity? The troops pay. They are sacrificing. They are proud to serve their country, and they can't plan their lives. They have kids being born, weddings to go to, people to visit, holidays to enjoy—all a part of the plan when they were deployed.

This amendment goes to that point, the proper utilization of our military. The first thing that it does is it establishes clearly, as Senator HAGEL and I and others have been saying for a long time, that the primary U.S. policy objective in Iraq should be a political solution that can be obtained through increased, concerted regional and international diplomacy. We have seen the seeds of that over the past couple of months. We are stating that this should be recognized as our primary goal.

The second point is that we are putting in, as the Senator from Nebraska mentioned, legally binding restrictions calling for the certification of any unit in the U.S. military that is going to be deployed, that it be fully mission capable. We have a reality check in this provision. We understand that in terms of heavy equipment, many units deployed fall onto equipment inside the theater of operations. We are not requiring that they have that equipment with them when they first deploy. We also have Presidential waivers in terms of possible national emergencies that might occur. Other than that, we should have unit-ready deployments.

The third portion of this amendment goes to extending deployments. We are basically saying Army units that deploy for a year should come back in 365 days. Marine units that are deployed for 7 months should come back at the end of 210 consecutive days with certain, again, realistic exclusions.

The fourth provision goes to the minimum period between deployments. You are not going to deploy military units until they have been home at least the amount of time they previously were deployed. This goes for individuals as well as units. It is quite possible in today's military for an individual to come back from deployment and, after a very short period of time, be backfilled into another unit that is going. Technically, the unit may have been back here for a year or 7 months, but the individual has not. That has to stop.

We are also saying in terms of the Guard and Reserve that they need a one for five. They need to be able to be home for five times the length of time they have been deployed. On this one-to-one cycle for Active Forces, the military itself, the Commandant of the Marine Corps has said they would like to have a two-for-one cycle—for every year you have been gone, 12 years home. In my experience in the Pentagon, as Assistant Secretary of Defense and as Secretary of the Navy, we looked at a two-for-one ratio for our ships, for our troops, a period of time deployed, a period of time to come back, get reacquainted with your family, get some down time, and then an equal period of time to refurbish and get ready to go again. All we are asking for here is a one-for-one.

If you look at what has happened in the conduct of this war, it has not been operational demands that have created the situation for our troops; it has been a lack of proper leadership. There is nothing in Iraq that would require this sort of chaotic planning. There is no emergency right now that can justify the unpredictability we have built into these deployments.

At the right time, when the Senator from Nebraska is able to negotiate this with the leadership—and I will pursue this as well—we want a vote. We are working to get a vote.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I believe we have until 2 o'clock; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. HAGEL. Seeing no other Senators on the floor wishing to speak on this amendment, unless the Senator from Virginia has additional colleagues that need time, I would, without objection, yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I am aware of at least one other Senator who wants to speak, Senator NELSON of Florida. I don't know procedurally how we would go about that. I assume we could get a call from the cloakroom and see if he could come down. If we could reserve 10 minutes for the Senator from Florida at the time he arrives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HAGEL. With that understanding, and without objection, I yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time is yielded back.

The Senator from Ohio.

AMENDMENT NO. 762

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside, and I call up Voinovich amendment No. 762.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator from Montana, I object.

Mr. VOINOVICH. I understand. Therefore, I would like to speak on behalf of the amendment.

This amendment would strike section 1502 from the underlying bill. I am pleased to be joined by Senators INHOFE, WARNER, HUTCHISON, ENZI, CRAIG, and COBURN in offering the amendment.

Section 1502 would allow State and local governments to trump the Federal Government in matters of national security involving privately owned chemical plants. Concerns have been raised by many about the security of chemical facilities since the tragic events of 9/11. After 5 years of negotiation and several unsuccessful attempts to pass meaningful legislation, a carefully crafted compromise was included in the fiscal year 2007 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act.

This act authorized the Department of Homeland Security for the first time to establish and implement risk-based performance standards at our Nation's high-risk chemical facilities. In order to meet its statutory deadline, the Department of Homeland Security has begun the process of implementing that language and will publish its final interim regulation within the next 2 weeks. Effectively changing recently passed legislation giving DHS the long-sought authority to regulate chemical facilities is premature at best.

In other words, what this amendment would do is strike some language that is going to try to amend this piece of legislation which we passed less than 6 months ago and which was signed by the President 6 months ago. It hasn't even really been implemented thus far. My colleagues do not want to further delay the process of securing our Nation's chemical facilities from future attack.

The legislation we passed less than 6 months ago to protect our chemical facilities from attack anticipated the need for flexibility in setting standards to protect our chemical facilities. The law specifically states that the Secretary ''may approve alternative security programs established by private sector entities, Federal, State, or local authorities, or other applicable laws if the Secretary determines that the requirements of such programs meet the requirements of this section and the interim regulations.''

Basically what that means is that if a State or other local jurisdiction would come to the Department of Homeland Security and ask that they be able to enforce other rules and regulations, this legislation says they have an entree to the Department of Homeland Security, at which time they would be able to discuss what they would like to do.

Along those lines, the draft regulations issued by the Department of Homeland Security in December 2006 invite Federal consultation with any States or localities that want to enact their own chemical facility requirements. For example, the State of New Jersey has some very robust chemical security regulations. I heard the woman that runs that department talk about them. I would suspect that under those circumstances, the Department of Homeland Security would grant the State of New Jersey the right to regulate what they have been regulating for the last couple of years. Specifically, the regulations state that it would ''permit State or local governments and/or covered facilities to seek opinions on preemption from the Department.'' This process fosters collaboration among parties and prevents unnecessary or unforeseen Federal preemption from occurring. I would argue that this flexibility alleviates the concerns expressed—I repeat—by the Senator from New Jersey on this issue.

I believe Federal preemption is necessary to give the chemical industry a single set of comprehensive national standards that are uniformly applied. Without the Department determining the applicability of Federal preemption, we would end up with a confusing situation.

Somebody has to decide whether—if this legislation is passed in the respective States, if they do it—it fits in and is consistent so we do not end up with an inconsistent patchwork of security regulations.

I understand the National Governors Association has sent a letter arguing against preemption. I think many of my colleagues know that as a former mayor and Governor, I do not advocate lightly Federal preemption of State and local action. I usually am a staunch advocate of States rights and have opposed legislation, such as No Child Left Behind, because I believed it was an intrusion by the Federal Government in policy areas that have been traditionally left to the States.

But the security of our Nation from foreign attack is not an arena traditionally left to the States. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution clearly states that Congress is delegated the power to provide for the common defense. We in the Congress have the duty to provide for the security of our States and our people. If there were ever a case for the Federal Government determining the applicability of preemption under the Constitution, the defense of the homeland certainly is the best example of that.

There is ample precedent for Federal preemption in regulatory matters dealing with security of industry. I think some of my colleagues are not aware of this. When Congress developed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the interest of national security, it gave the Federal Government exclusive regulatory authority. The Hazardous Materials Transportation Act explicitly preempts State action and authorizes a waiver only if the State regulation is ''not an unreasonable burden on commerce.'' The preamble to the final rule implementing the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002—another act we put in place to protect our ports—explicitly states that it preempts State regulations relating to the security of facilities if such regulations would ''conflict or would frustrate an overriding federal need for uniformity.''

I would say to my colleagues, the chemical security legislation provides the Secretary with greater flexibility than the three examples I have just discussed. In other words, the ability to grant preemption is a lot more liberal in the Department's regulations dealing with the issue of chemical security in this country than in the cases that dealt with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Maritime Transportation Security Act, and the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, where one of them specifically preempts only if the State regulation is ''not an unreasonable burden on commerce.''

So the fact is, granting State and local governments authority to supplant Federal chemical manufacturing law is not just a minor carve-out. This preemption language in the bill before us overhauls 30 years of settled law regarding the Federal-State relationship on industrial chemical manufacturing laws as established under section 18 of the Toxic Substances Control Act. The Toxic Substances Control Act gives EPA the ability to track the 75,000 industrial chemicals currently produced or imported into the United States.

I want to ask my colleagues: Does it make sense to undermine the critical work of Congress last fall to enhance

our Nation's security by eliminating our ability to set and enforce a single national standard for chemical security? Really, fundamentally, what this is about is to give the Department of Homeland Security the option of determining whether a State or locality that comes in and says: We want to regulate chemical security—it gives them the final say as to whether preemption will occur.

As to the language that is inserted in the supplemental, what it does is leaves it in the hands of the court to determine. For goodness' sake, the last thing we want right now—after 5 years of negotiation and several unsuccessful attempts to pass legislation, is to hinder the implementation of the regulations governing chemical security in the country. Why would we want to throw it up in the air and cause a lot of controversy and court action?

I want to read the words of Section 1502, which was put in the supplemental bill, in regards to the Chemical Security language that was included in the Fiscal 2007 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, which came out of the conference committee less than 6 months ago. It says:

This section shall not preclude or deny any right of any State or political subdivision thereof to adopt or enforce any regulation, requirement, or standard of performance with respect to chemical facility security that is more stringent than a regulation, requirement, or standard of performance issued under this section. . . .

Now, the issue is, who determines whether it is more stringent? Let's say I am the Governor of a State and I come in and say: My State laws are more stringent than Federal laws. Then Homeland Security comes back and says: We don't agree with you. Who decides? The Federal court.

Section 1502 goes on to say:

. . . or otherwise impair any right or jurisdiction of any State with respect to chemical facilities within a State, unless there is an actual conflict between this section and the law of that State.

Again, it just throws the issue about who determines whether a State is going to be allowed to do what they want to do into a court's hands rather than letting the director of Homeland Security make that determination.

I think what we are arguing for today is sensible. I would also like to quote from Section 550 of the Homeland Security Appropriations Act, which gives direction to the Department of Homeland Security on how the regulations are to be implemented. The law says:

No later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall issue interim final regulations establishing risk-based performance standards for security of chemical facilities and requiring vulnerability assessments and the development and implementation of the site security plans for chemical facilities.

That basically talks about how they go about developing the regulations. Then the law goes on to say:

The Secretary may approve—

Very important: ''The Secretary may approve''—

alternative security programs established by private sector entities, Federal, State or local authorities, or other applicable laws if the Secretary determines that the requirements of such programs meet the requirements of this section and the interim regulations.

In other words, there is room for the Department to sit down with other people and say: Let's hear what you want to do, and if we think it makes sense, go ahead and do it.

Additionally, in the regulations issued to implement Section 550 it says:

To meet this need, the proposed regulations at section 27.405, would permit State or local governments, and/or covered facilities to seek opinions on preemption from the Department. Such a process has been used by Congress in other contexts.

They make reference to other sections of the code:

In most cases, the Department would utilize the process to address quickly a specific conflict between a particular application of State law or local law with an approved site security plan or other elements of the section 550 program. Note the Department has the authority to make preemption determinations as it administers the chemical security program under section 550.

So I think the Department, through the regulations, is carrying out the legislation that was passed last October. We should let the law go into effect and not tinker with it today, particularly in the supplemental bill, which, quite frankly, has not a single thing to do with chemical security. It does not make sense to have this into the supplemental bill because Congress has already acted on chemical security.

I suspect that this discussion may become moot because we are going to pass this bill, it will go to conference, the conference will do their thing, they will send it back here, it will be voted on in both Houses, it will go to the President, he will veto it, and then—in basketball parlance—it will be a jump ball in determining what we are going to do at that stage of the game.

I wanted to come to the floor and share my concern about the language which was inserted in the supplemental. Again, it should not have been put in the supplemental. I have spent hours of my time in the Senate on chemical security in the United States. We worked this through the committee and thought we had it taken care of it, and here we are again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the underlying bill, supplemental appropriations, is a must-pass piece of legislation. Attached to it is the language that has caused some controversy because it is an attempt at defining what the policy of the U.S. Government is with regard to the beginning of a redeployment from Iraq.

This Senator from Florida will vote for the funding bill with this legislation attached because America needs a new direction in Iraq. For 4 years, what we have been doing has not been working. It has not been working because—and I am not talking about all the mistakes of why we went into Iraq under misinformation and lack of intelligence and, in some cases, I think massaged intelligence. I am not talking about that. I am talking about that we did not have a sufficient understanding of the history of Islam and the history of that part of the world to understand how much enmity there is between the different sects of Islam and how, ever since 680 A.D.—the Battle of Karbala right in what is, today, Iraq—the Sunnis and the Shiites have been at each other's throats, and we are seeing that played out in gruesome detail right now.

Our men and women in uniform and not in uniform—because we have a lot of people over there defending the interests of the United States who are not in uniform: CIA, DEA, FBI, the State Department; you can go on and on—our men and women are right in the middle of that crossfire, particularly in Baghdad.

Now, when you talk about Iraq, you are talking about multiple differences in the country.

The northern part of the country is predominantly Kurd. They, for all intents and purposes, have an autonomous government. They even had that while Saddam Hussein was in power because the northern part of Iraq was protected by American air cover. They can basically provide for their own protection and their own governance.

The central part of Iraq is predominantly Sunni. It was from the Sunnis that the Baathist Party, the party of Saddam Hussein, dominated the rest of the country.

The south of Iraq is predominately Shiite. This is a Shiite kindredship which we now find—with the disintegration of Iraq—the kinship, the commonality of interests between the Shiites in Iraq and the Shiites in Iran. The big difference between the two is in Iran, they are Persians; in Iraq, they are Arabs.

Now, it took, for years, the hand of a brutal dictator who was gruesome beyond any measure to keep all those factions together because he was so brutal in his tactics. We are certainly glad Saddam Hussein is gone. Nobody like that who would just murder people at will deserves to be in power. You can understand it was a dictator who kept that power and kept that country, with all of its centrifugal forces, together. We as occupiers, as an occupying military force, thought we could keep it together, but we didn't understand the centrifugal forces of Iraq. Instead of being hailed as liberators, as there definitely was a lot of personal thanks toward the generosity of America for deposing the hated dictator, yet you see what started to kick in was the natural centrifugal forces. Will a democracy work in a country such as that? It would be nice if it would, but

I think now, after 4 years, we are seeing it is going to be very difficult.

That is why in a political settlement, at the end of the day there is probably going to be some separation of those sects with autonomy and, hopefully, with a national government that can provide for the common defense and the distribution of the oil revenues according to population. But how do you get there? We thought as an occupying force we could keep the country under control until those seeds of a representative government could start to sprout. But that was one of the mistakes the United States made, because the Secretary of Defense would not listen to the top general, General Shinseki, when he answered the question in our Senate Armed Services Committee: How many and for how long are the American forces in occupation? He said: Several hundred thousand for several years. So with too little forces, you see the results. The question is: What do we do now?

That brings us to the present moment. People criticize what we are doing here and say: You don't have a plan. We most certainly do have a plan. The plan was laid out in a bipartisan commission, unanimously; five very prominent, erudite Republicans and the same, five Democrats, led by the former Secretary of State and the former chairman of the House International Relations Committee, unanimously, and they laid out a plan. They said to start a redeployment, and in the process of that redeployment, still have the American Army present so you are protecting the forces, those who are there, protecting the infrastructure. I would interpret that also to mean helping to control the borders of Iraq. Then they said, No. 2, train and equip the Iraqi Army. The Iraq Study Group even gave specifics of how you could embed advisers and then have a method for protecting the advisers embedded in the Iraqi forces. They said also to continue to go after al-Qaida. It is al-Qaida we are seeing, particularly in the western part of Iraq, that is getting insurrection among the predominant ethnic group there, the Sunnis, and they are causing mayhem all over. That is a mission we should continue.

It also said: Go aggressively after an international and diplomatic initiative, bringing all the countries in the region that would then enforce a political settlement that could be brought about. This is, in essence, what is a part of this bill. I suspect we are going to be able to pass the bill because the funding for the military is absolutely necessary, so it is going to be hard for people to vote ''no'' on this. We already had the real test vote that was a two-vote margin yesterday that kept basically the language in the bill I have just outlined. So I think we are going down the right road. This isn't a mandate. This sets as a goal over a year from now a redeployment of those troops with those three main statements of purpose to continue, and it says we ought to have a comprehensive strategy, a comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic strategy that includes sustained engagement with Iraq's neighbors and the international community. That is exactly what the Iraq Study Group brought to us unanimously.

This Senator from Florida wanted to state very clearly that is why I think the Senate ought to support this funding bill, not only for the purposes of the funding, but also for the statement of what should be the policy of the United States Government with regard to Iraq.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. I make a point of order that a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have offered an amendment to the underlying bill, the supplemental appropriations bill. I wish to describe it for a moment, and then I wish to respond to some comments that were made earlier by my colleague from Oklahoma who is offering an amendment dealing with the agriculture disaster piece I included in this bill as well.

First, an issue I am very familiar with and concerned about. It is an issue called country-of-origin labeling. For those who don't know what that means, it means in 2002, 5 full years ago, the Congress mandated we would have country-of-origin labeling for beef, lamb, pork, fish, fruits, vegetables. Essentially, what you eat shall be labeled. If people walking around this Chamber would take their shoes off, they would find their shoes are labeled. If they took off their T-shirts, they would find they are labeled. Almost everything is labeled these days—made in Taiwan, made in China, made in wherever—so you can get a sense of where things are made. Go to the grocery store and pick up a package of pasta, linguini, spaghetti, take a look on the side and you will see what is in it. You will see where it was made. Labeling.

The only problem is we don't require labeling, for example, on a piece of steak. One day some while ago I brought to the floor of the Senate a piece of steak. I held it up and I said, I challenge anybody in the Congress to tell me where this piece of meat came from. Of course, no one tried and no one could. No one knows where that meat came from. As I asked about where this meat might have come from, I read from an inspector's report who went to a processing plant in Hermosillo, Mexico, the first time any inspector had ever been there to inspect the conditions of the processing of meat in that plant that was being shipped to American consumers. I read from the report. It said:

Carcasses of meat were hanging in rooms that were not refrigerated, layered with feces and flies, and some from diseased animals ready to be put back into the same vat where they were going to grind it for beef and so on. I read the description of what the inspector found.

They shut down that plant. They shut down that plant in Mexico. Then it was reopened because it had new ownership. They made a few changes, reopened the plant, and still ship meat from Mexico to the United States from that plant, and there has never been an inspector back to take a look.

I asked the question: Can anybody tell me this piece of meat didn't come from that plant? Well, of course, nobody could. So you might ask why, if 5 years ago we mandated that there be country-of-origin labeling for meat in this country, why is there no labeling on meat? Well, the majority party in recent years apparently cared a lot about what the big packers thought and all the folks who were opposed to labeling these meat products. I was in a conference committee over in the middle of this Capitol in a small room. We were all packed into this little conference, an Appropriations Committee conference, and it was November of 2005. Country-of-origin labeling, remember, was supposed to have gone into effect on September 30, 2004. But then the majority party got involved and they extended it once.

In November of 2005 I was part of a conference on the Agriculture appropriations bill and I was prepared to debate this issue on country-of-origin labeling. The chairman of that conference banged the gavel, recessed the conference, and we never met again. The next time we saw the results of what those folks had done in a smoky back room some place, they had further extended country-of-origin labeling to September of 2008. They keep extending it and extending it. The law says meat must be labeled by September 30, 2004. It is not now labeled. Why? Because it has been extended and extended again, always done in the dead of night, always done in an amendment that is brought up not in the House or the Senate, but stuck in a conference some place—an unbelievable practice.

The result is we come now to this piece of legislation, an emergency supplemental appropriations bill, and I say: You know what. Let's decide that country-of-origin labeling for meat takes effect this September, several months ahead. Let's decide it does that.

One of the culprits here has been the U.S. Department of Agriculture too, because they almost wore out their shoes by dragging their feet. They have no interest in doing anything this aggressive, even though the Congress said: You must do it. They drug their

feet, got their heels stuck in the ground. That gave their friends here in Congress enough time to do these extensions. The result is in this country today there is no labeling of meat products.

It is interesting. The other day I was listening to news reports, tragic news reports about pet food in this country—millions, tens of millions, I guess, of people who have fed pet food to their pets, apparently containing ingredients they had no notion of, filler wheat from China, apparently rat poisoning, and pets have died. A tragedy for those pet owners. But how would they have known? There is no label. They don't know what is in it. They don't know where it comes from. I assume even if it had a label, it wouldn't say rat poison. I don't know how rat poison would get into pet food. But in any event, as I was listening to the news and watching some owners of pets who had described the terrible, agonizing death of their pets from eating contaminated pet food, it reminded me again of this issue of labeling and of my description of the investigator who went to the one processing plant in Mexico, processing meat for this country.

Why in these circumstances and in this day and age, do we not have labeling on meat that is sold to the American consumer?

Up north in Canada—my heart goes out to those livestock producers in Canada. They are trying hard. They are trying to make a living like everybody else is, but the plain fact is they have had 10 cases of mad cow disease in Canada. Nine of them in Canada, one recently, and one Canadian cow discovered in the State of Washington. That is 10 cases of mad cow disease, including the most recent case a couple of months ago. Yet, even at that point, it seems as if the Secretary of Agriculture wants to do a mad cow cattle drive from Canada to the United States. He is all anxious about opening this market right now; got to do it right now. I am wondering why his inclination isn't first to protect our domestic industry. We have other countries that say, we want to trade with you. We want to buy some beef from you, but we are not interested in buying beef that is intermixed with other kinds of beef. We want beef that is certified as American beef. Why? It is the safest in the world. But if you open this border wide open to the Canadian cattle at this point, especially at this point, given what we have known about BSE in Canada, how can we tell other countries without country-of-origin labeling that we have segregated and we know exactly where this meat comes from?

I think the USDA is making a business mistake. I say to the USDA Secretary this: If you are going to do this, at least be consistent and say you cannot do it without implementing country-of-origin labeling immediately; you must argue for both. Yet he has not been willing to do that.

I don't want, by talking about this, to suggest in any way that people in this country should be concerned about their supply of meat. They should not. We have a lot of ranchers and folks in this country who do a lot of work to keep our beef, lamb, pork, and poultry supply safe. But the American consumer wishes to purchase that which comes from American ranchers. That is why country-of-origin labeling is important, to give the American consumer the choice and the opportunity. I am telling you something. It is long past time when this should have been done. Those who serve in this Congress who want to continue to prevent the consumer from knowing where this meat comes from do no favor to the American consumer, and they certainly do no favor to the producer who is producing the best quality of supply that exists in the world but are told it doesn't need to be labeled because the consumer doesn't need to know. Boy, I think that is dead wrong.

So I have introduced a piece of legislation that will move country-of-origin labeling up to September of this year. It is long past time for this Congress to take action to undo what others have done in the appropriations process in the dead of night to extend this country-of-origin labeling.

Let me also talk for a moment about amendments that will likely be offered to strike from the emergency legislation some assistance to family farmers who suffered weather-related disasters. Almost all of us were here when we debated what to do about Hurricane Katrina, which came roaring onto the shore in this country and devastated a significant part of this country. It flattened it, killed people, ravaged houses, destroyed a city, and then another city. It rendered the gulf coast in shambles. Included in that is the crop that the farmers planted, the crop they put in the fields, hoping it would grow—the destruction of all that crop that was put in for that year by those farmers.

What do we do about that? What we decided to do was to provide emergency help, billions and billions of dollars of help, to those people who were injured by Hurricane Katrina. At least one part of that was to help family farmers who lost everything in the gulf. We said: You are not alone, you didn't cause this hurricane, you are the victims of it. Just like the other victims of this weather-related disaster, we want you to know we are with you and we want to help you.

And we did. Family farmers in that region got disaster assistance and got it with my help. I insisted on supporting that, and I know my colleagues did as well. We had a responsibility to say to those farmers: You lost everything. You are the victims of this weather-related disaster. We want to help you get back on your feet and recover. We want you to be able to continue living and working on a family farm.

So we did that. But that was not the only weather-related disaster. In the last 2½ years, we have had torrential flooding in my State, for example. At one point, we had 2 million acres of land that was planted and completely washed away, or not planted at all. If you are a farmer who owns land in that 2 million acres, you didn't have a crop, or didn't plant one, and you don't have any hope.

Last year, we were the epicenter of a devastating drought. The pasture down near Zeeland, ND, when I drove there to go to a meeting with ranchers and farmers, looked exactly like a moonscape. Nothing was growing at all. Under the best of circumstances—I come from a semiarid area, where 17 inches of rain fall a year. Put that in the epicenter of a drought and you have real trouble. We had farmers who lost everything and not just us, but in other parts of the country the same was true.

We name hurricanes but not droughts or floods. The drought didn't have a name. It wasn't ''Drought Kenneth'' or ''Drought Irma.'' Because these farmers lost everything to disasters that didn't have a name, are they any less deserving? Do we think any less of the interest in keeping them on the land and giving them help to continue farming? The answer ought to be, no, of course not. That is why I added a disaster piece for family farmers in this appropriations bill.

My colleague, Senator CONRAD, and I, and so many others, on a bipartisan basis—Senators BOND, FEINSTEIN, BOXER, and others—have all worked together to try to reach out to family farmers and say: When trouble visits your farm and you have lost everything, you are not alone. This Congress wants to help. This is not a recent urge of ours. We have always done this. We have always done it. So I was proud to be a part of putting this in the appropriations bill. It is on the floor. It should not be controversial. I spoke to President Bush last night and said: Mr. President, do not call this pork; it is not pork. You don't legislate pork, you eat pork. We understand about meat and pork and so on. This is not pork, but some want to call it that. Say that to a farmer and the farmer's family living under that yard light 10, 15 miles from town who lost everything; say to him: By the way, when the Congress wants to help you, somebody believes it is pork. It is not pork; it is in this country's interest to help those family farmers. It is simply in our interest. That is why we have added this, and I know we will have amendments to strip it out or make changes.

The fact is this is a worthy and a noble thing for the Congress to do. I hope that when the amendments are offered, we will be able to defeat them.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DORGAN. Yes.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator for his leadership on behalf of family

farms. I will ask the Senator a couple of questions because he has been here a long time in Congress and we have served together for many years. I see Senator CONRAD coming to the floor as well. The fact is—I want the Senator to let me know if he agrees with this—that the whole purpose of these emergency supplementals, if you look at the Web site that explains to people who want to know more about what we do on emergency supplementals, they have always been used—at least my research shows—is for emergencies, including especially natural disasters. Doesn't it strike the Senator as odd that the President of the United States would support $100 billion for the country of Iraq but tell us he doesn't support anything in this bill for the American people? Isn't that an odd thing?

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the Senator from California is absolutely correct. It has always been the case that there are certain things you cannot predict in the coming year. You can budget for expected expenditures and programs you want to fund, but there are some things you probably cannot predict; for example, Hurricane Katrina is probably the prime example or a devastating drought or torrential rains or ice storms in California this spring. So what we have always done is we have always done emergency supplemental bills to try to respond to those. Only in this Presidency have those emergency bills overwhelmingly been defense bills because the President decided to move our armies overseas. We got involved with respect to Afghanistan and Iraq, and we asked for no expenditures, except he would later ask for emergency funding for it. We have passed roughly $450 billion in emergency funding for defense. That is not the basis, generally, of what emergency supplemental bills have been about. They have been to respond to the unanticipated events in this country, such as agricultural disasters and other things.

I said yesterday, when I spoke on the floor, I thought it curious that in the Senate, when we did an $18 billion emergency funding for reconstruction of Iraq, nobody stood up, that I am aware—and Senator WYDEN and I cut it by about $1.8 billion—and said: OK. You are going to invest in health clinics. If you do that in Iraq, it is national security; if you do it in America, it is pork. You are going to invest in road programs. In Iraq, it is for national security; in America, it is called pork. You are going to invest in any number of dozens of other things, and as long as it is in Iraq with the reconstruction programs, that is OK, that is part of our national security issue. But if it is doing it in this country, they say, no, no, no, no, you cannot do that.

I observe one thing. Some of what we do is flatout spending. I understand that. We need to tighten our belts. But some of what we do is investing in this country's future. I think investing in this country's future includes saying to family farmers that this country values having you on the farm. You are the seedbed of family values that nourishes our country from the small towns to the big cities. Culturally and economically, you matter to this country.

When we pass a disaster bill that includes disaster help for family farmers, I think it represents the best instincts of this country and, frankly, it is what we must do if we are going to maintain a network of family farms producing America's food. Finally, we understand, all of us, that big corporations could probably farm from California to Maine—buy up the whole country and farm it. We know what would happen to food prices. Our country is much better served by having a network of family farmers out there, with their families living under yard lights, producing America's food supply. That is why I think the best instincts of this Congress is to do what we did in this legislation, to provide disaster help for those who need it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I say to my friend from North Dakota, thank you for being here to talk about this issue because there is a huge misconception out there that is being perpetrated by the administration and that is that there is something wrong with the Democrats in Congress who are insisting the emergency needs of the American people be met in this bill.

Mr. President, in my question to the Senator from North Dakota, I was trying to make the point that history will show these emergency supplementals have always been used to help the American people. After all, it is their taxpayer dollars being used. The reason I wanted to take the floor this afternoon is because there are a number of amendments coming that will strip from this bill the help for the American people they deserve. Many of these people are the ''salt of the Earth'' people that we all know, that we visit, and I will talk about them in a minute. I will talk about the hardships they have gone through.

Here is something interesting. If you look at the Senate's Web site—this is not part of my Web site; this is the Senate's Web site, so it is written with Republicans and Democrats—you will find a glossary of terms that is intended to help the public understand what it is we are talking about when we use terms of art on the floor, such as ''emergency supplemental appropriation.''

The Senate glossary—and remember it is bipartisan—states this:

> Supplemental appropriations generally are made to cover emergencies, such as disaster relief, or other needs deemed too urgent to be postponed until the enactment of next year's regular appropriations act.

So the supplemental appropriations are meant to cover emergencies in America. Now, the President has tried to lead people astray when he says: No, no, this is only about the war in Iraq; I want all of the money to go to Iraq. I don't want any money to go to the people of America because this isn't the right vehicle to take care of those problems. Not true.

Mr. CONRAD. Will the Senator from California yield for a question?

Mrs. BOXER. I am delighted to yield for that purpose.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask the Senator, is it not a curious thing that the President, in his proposal on the supplemental appropriations bill, has a plan to rebuild Iraq but has no plan to rebuild parts of America that have been devastated by disaster? Is that not a curious thing?

Mrs. BOXER. It is not only curious, it is wrong. That is why I am so proud of the work that Senator CONRAD and so many others did to make this bill a balanced bill that meets the needs of our people. Yes, we are giving the President what he is asking for in Iraq. We have been critical that the President has not funded Iraq in the regular budget. So we are saying: OK. We are not happy about it, but, yes, we will give you every penny, plus what you ask for, for Iraq. But for goodness' sake, you are getting $102 billion for Iraq. How about $20 billion for the needs at home? I think my friend is right. It is curious, and it is wrong that he didn't balance his request.

Mr. CONRAD. And isn't it the case, I ask the Senator from California——

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the request?

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, if I can inform our colleagues, we are in the process of working to get a unanimous consent agreement to move the two votes that were scheduled for 2 o'clock to 2:30 p.m. We are going to be putting that together. We should have it in just a few minutes. If our colleagues will allow us to let Senator BOXER continue for a few minutes, we will have that put together.

Mr. GRAHAM addressed the Chair.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I believe I have the time. I ask unanimous consent for the additional time, if there are no objections.

Mr. GRAHAM. I have no objection. I wish to make a request. Is it possible for me to speak for 5 to 10 minutes before 2:30, after the Senator from California speaks?

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I inform the Senator that we have about eight Senators here who are all wanting about 5 minutes between now and 2:30 p.m. If the Senator wouldn't mind withholding, we will try to accommodate him after the votes.

Mr. GRAHAM. Absolutely.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from California is recognized for an additional 10 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am going to yield to my friend for a question. But I say to my friend, Senator

MURRAY, when she has that agreement, I will be happy to suspend at that time.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask the Senator, in conclusion, isn't it the case that the history in the Senate has been that emergency matters, of whatever type—whether they flow from a war or whether they flow from natural disasters—in this country are dealt with in a supplemental appropriations bill? There is nothing new in this at all. Isn't that the case?

Mrs. BOXER. My colleague is not only correct, but as I said, if we look at the Senate glossary written by both sides, its agreement on defining what a supplemental appropriations bill is—and I am going to quote it exactly for my colleague:

Supplemental appropriations generally are made to cover emergencies, such as disaster relief, or other needs deemed too urgent to be postponed until the enactment of next year's regular appropriations act.

So it is absolutely in the definition on our Senate Web site.

Mr. CONRAD. I think that is clearly the case. I have served here—I am in my 21st year. This has always been the case with supplemental appropriations bills, that disasters are dealt with in this manner. Here we have a case where we had damage from Katrina that is addressed in this bill; where we have had devastating natural disasters affecting agricultural producers, whether it was drought or flooding or freeze, that are dealt with in this supplemental appropriations bill, which is the regular order, is it not, in the Senate?

Mrs. BOXER. My colleague is exactly right. All we are saying as Democrats to our friends is: Take care of the American people. Take care of them. They deserve it.

I am waiting for some photographs of the freeze that occurred in my home State. I see they have arrived. I need to share these with my friends.

There is a song called ''Strawberry Fields Forever.'' I want my colleagues to look at what happened to the strawberry fields in California as a result of the freeze. When we look at this, I say to my colleague from Washington—I want to get her attention just to look at this and to thank her for helping us. This is a strawberry field. It looks like an ice rink. The strawberries are destroyed.

I want to show my colleagues our oranges. This is an orange tree. This is what has happened because of the frost. This picture is of an orange. You can hardly see it beneath the frost. A picture is worth a thousand words. I say to the President and my Republican friends: Don't turn your backs on these good people who endured these losses. And, by the way, in my State, in the most Republican part of my State, what are you doing? We need to help people. We need to help the workers. That is what is in this bill.

Yes, we provide all the funding for the troops and more. And, yes, thanks to the leadership of the Senator from Washington and the Senators from Hawaii and the majority leader, we have funds in this bill for Walter Reed Army Medical Center. And, yes, we look at what happened in Louisiana. We look at what happened with the levees, and we tried to help those living in FEMA trailer parks.

Why would this President turn his back on the people of Louisiana once again? Once again. We saw the lack of response, and now in this bill we are saying help the people, Mr. President. You went down to New Orleans. You stood there—I will never forget the speech—and you said: We will stand with you. Yet he says he doesn't want help for the people of Louisiana in this bill.

My farmers have suffered $1.3 billion in losses. I showed the pictures of the freeze. We know about the drought that hit the Midwest. So instead of pledging to work together, we find this administration threatening to veto this bill.

I say to this President: If you veto this bill, then you come to my State and you look into the eyes of these farmers and you look into the eyes of these workers and you tell them they didn't have an emergency. You tell them they don't qualify for assistance from a country they love, to which they are devoted. It isn't right.

And, yes, we added some language to the bill that says: We are not going to have an open checkbook forever for Iraq, and we are not going to have this continuous stream of wounded and dead coming back. Yes, we want to have a timeline that is fair and just.

If the President vetoes that, he is ignoring the will of the people.

I will suspend, Mr. President, withhold my time, not lose the floor, and let the Senator from Washington make her request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, if the Senator from California will yield for a minute for a unanimous consent request.

Mrs. BOXER. I yield.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous order be further modified, for the last time, and that the votes slated to occur at 2 p.m. be delayed until 2:40 p.m., and that the time until 2:40 p.m. be divided 30 minutes in opposition to the Coburn amendments Nos. 657 and 648, and that Senator COBURN control 5 minutes; that upon disposition of the Burr amendment, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Coburn amendment No. 657, to be followed by a vote in relation to amendment No. 648; that no amendments be in order to either amendment; that there be 2 minutes for debate prior to each amendment covered under this agreement; and that after the first vote, the time be limited to 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, we will then have four votes beginning at 2:40 p.m.

I thank the Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. I was happy to yield. Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the new consent agreement, the Senator could control 30 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. I won't do that, of course. I will complete in 5 minutes.

Mrs. MURRAY. I yield 5 additional minutes to the Senator from California.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we have spent half a trillion dollars from our Treasury on the war in Iraq, and we know there are 3,000-plus dead, 20,000-plus wounded. I think it is instructive to listen to what President Ronald Reagan once said. He said:

History teaches that war begins when governments believe the price tag of aggression is cheap.

Let me say that again:

History teaches us that war begins when governments believe the price tag of aggression is cheap.

Well, the Bush administration thought the price of this war would be cheap. They were wrong. We heard Secretary Rumsfeld tell Congress: The war will last 6 days, 6 weeks, I doubt 6 months. Budget Director Mitch Daniels said Iraq ''will be an affordable endeavor.'' And we remember the President saying, ''Mission accomplished,'' when it wasn't anywhere near accomplished. We remember Vice President CHENEY proclaiming ''they're in the last throes, if you will, of the insurgency.''

They were all wrong, and Congress has to weigh in. That is what this last election was about. We were weighing in with the help of a couple Republicans yesterday. We said to this President: Your one-man show in Iraq is over, Mr. President. You need to deal with the people of this country through their elected representatives. And don't issue these veto threats because that doesn't move us forward.

Senator REID has asked the President to please meet with us; we can talk, we can work things out. So it is really up to him. He is wielding a veto pen because he doesn't like the fact that Congress has finally a spine to say, no, we are not going to have an open checkbook anymore for Iraq, we are not going to keep sending our troops over there to die, we are not going to put them in the middle of a civil war, we are going to change the mission in Iraq from a combat mission to a support mission.

We say to this President: Accept reality, please; it is time you do that. If you love the troops, you have to give them a mission they can accomplish. If you love the troops, you don't send them to moldy hospital rooms to recuperate from their injuries. And thanks

to the Senator from Washington, we have money in this bill to fix Walter Reed. If you love the troops, you don't send them back to fight with a post-traumatic stress disorder and a bottle of antidepressants.

We will give the troops what they need, but we will also be heard when we say: Don't put them in the middle of a civil war, Mr. President. Give them a mission that works, a support mission, to train the Iraqis. It is their country. They have to stand up and fight. We can no longer do it for them. And that was the importance of yesterday's vote.

In this bill, we do a lot of good things. We deal with the problems we are facing in Iraq. We say we ought to change the mission and make it binding and give a date that says, yes, start bringing the troops home and a goal for when we will bring them all home, except for those limited missions.

It is a smart piece of legislation, I say to the President.

And, yes, don't forget America. Don't forget the people, the ''salt of the Earth'' people who are suffering because of this freeze. I will show a few more pictures as I wind down on my time.

My State was devastated by the freeze. It left thousands of farm workers without employment. One of my constituents, a 46-year-old single mother of two in Tulare County, spent years working in the citrus fields and now has no job.

In this picture we can see the ice icicles near these avocados.

A look at this picture tells a thousand words. We can't turn our backs on these people. We can't turn our backs on our salmon fishermen who have been suffering so much. We can't turn our backs on the American people.

In conclusion, we have to serve as a check and balance on the Executive. When this Executive says it has an open checkbook for Iraq, nothing for America, we say: Whoa, whoa, whoa, Mr. President. That is not right for the American people. Look at the people who have been suffering because of natural disasters. Look at for what we are supposed to use emergency appropriations bills. Come to the table with us. Don't wave your veto pen because we have a spine and we stand up for these people and we stand up for our fighting men and women. Come to the table, we say, let's work things out.

If we read the Constitution, that is exactly what we are supposed to do.

I was interested to hear Senator HAGEL talk about the fact that this is not a monarchy, and he is right. We already had one King George, and that was enough.

It is my sincere hope that the President will respect the rule of the people and come to the table. I strongly support this bill, and I will vote against any amendment that hurts the people.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I now yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Minnesota, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and 10 minutes to the Senator from Colorado, Mr. SALAZAR.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 648

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly about the security funding the State of Minnesota and the State of Colorado need to prepare for the Presidential and Republican National Conventions. The Republican Convention is going to be held in Minnesota in September of 2008. I know the Senator from Oklahoma disagrees with our efforts to get funding for this important convention, for its security, but today I stand tall to protect the security of Republicans across the country when they come to my State.

The need for funding is obvious and urgent. As my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are well aware, preparations for the convention have already begun. I imagine they would want security to be a high priority on the list of preparations. As a former law enforcement person, and someone who was a prosecutor, I know you have to plan ahead for these things. Delaying this funding until the normal appropriations process would prevent Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies from conducting the proper planning they need to do. This is an enormous effort that involves law enforcement from all over our State. We have to be reimbursed or taxpayers all over our State will have to foot the bill.

The Secretary of Homeland Security has already designated next year's event to be held in Minnesota a national special security event based on threat assessment. There is clear precedent for Congress providing convention cities with security funding. Four years ago, Congress gave $50 million each to New York and Boston, the two cities hosting Presidential nomination conventions, to help them defer their security costs. This included a total of $50 million designated as emergency spending.

The bill provides an equal amount of money this year to Minnesota and Colorado, and nothing more. The funding was approved by the Appropriations Committee with bipartisan support, including Chairman BYRD and Ranking Member COCHRAN. Senator COLEMAN also supports this funding.

I support this funding, and I join my Minnesota colleague and my friends from Colorado in insisting that the States we represent receive support equal to that support which Congress has provided in the past, and that the funding for security for the Republican Convention in Minnesota be protected in this bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition to amendment No. 648 offered by my friend from Oklahoma. I commend the Senator from Minnesota for her comments and standing tall for security for the national Republican Convention in Minneapolis, and I am here to stand tall in support of that Republican Convention in Minneapolis as well as to say we have to do the same thing in Denver, CO, where we will have the national Democratic Convention in November 2008.

Why is this money important, and why is it important at this point in time? We are living in a new world, as everybody in this Chamber recognizes. In these days after 9/11, we have to realize targets in America are vulnerable areas that would likely be hit by those who wish to do our Nation harm. If you are one of the bad people and you say, where am I going to do the most harm in this Nation, you would want to focus on those places where you have the national leadership assembled. In the conventions for both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in these two cities, you will have the President of the United States, you will have the Vice President of the United States, you will have 100 Members, I am sure, of the Senate, and you will have 435 Members of the House of Representatives, as well as the national leadership all located in one place. Therefore, it makes sense to have these events designated as security events, as Secretary Chertoff has already done on March 5 when he said these are security events we ought to provide funding for so we can provide the kind of security that will protect the Americans who will be attending these events.

I wish to look back at what has happened in the past, in terms of what happened in Boston and New York, and I will make a couple of points. The first is for those conventions, back in 2004, when President George Bush was elected to be President of the United States, this Congress provided emergency funding to take care of the security needs in both Boston and New York. We did that in an emergency supplemental attached to the Department of Defense appropriations bill back in 2004. If it was good enough to do it in 2004, it ought to be good enough to do it in 2008.

Secondly, there is an enormous amount of planning that is required when you put on these kinds of events where you have hundreds of thousands of people who are watching and coming to these events in both of these cities. As the former attorney general for the State of Colorado, and having been involved with local, State, and Federal law enforcement, and planning for these kinds of events in the past, I can tell you the enormity of planning that has to take place is something that boggles the mind.

We are not that far away from these national conventions. These national conventions are going to happen in August of 2008. That is a little more than

a year away. How can we provide the security needs for these two conventions, how can we provide the security needs that are required to protect this country and the leadership of America, unless we provide the funding now? It is necessary for law and order to be able to take every precaution and to provide security at these events.

Third, I say to my friend from Oklahoma, who has said we can do this in the normal course of the appropriations cycle, if we look at what happened in 2006, there was a failure of the appropriations cycle in this Congress. If that were to occur again in this Congress, which I dearly hope does not happen under this leadership, but if it were to occur again, that we are not able to get to the normal appropriations cycle, we simply would not have the resources and the time to be able to put together the kind of security plan for the 2008 conventions in Minneapolis and Denver.

It is important to this country that these two historic events, which will ultimately lead to the election of the next President of the United States in 2008, have the kind of security that is required to make sure all of the people in the communities which are hosting these conventions have the kind of security we can all be proud of.

I ask my colleagues in this Chamber to join me in opposition to amendment No. 648, the amendment that is offered by my friend from Oklahoma.

Mr. President, may I inquire as to the time remaining for myself?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time under general allotment retained for the majority is about 12½ minutes.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have an additional 5 minutes to speak about another amendment, No. 657, which has been offered by the Senator from Oklahoma.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered. The Senator may proceed.

AMENDMENT NO. 657

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise also to speak in opposition this afternoon to amendment No. 657, which again my friend from Oklahoma has offered to strip out agricultural disaster emergency assistance to our farmers and ranchers across this country.

I came to this Senate 2 years ago and began at that time to work with Senator KENT CONRAD and Senator BYRON DORGAN and a number of other Members of this Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, to try to figure out how it is we could help out those areas of our country that were facing agricultural disaster emergencies. We saw it in the places of North Dakota and South Dakota and in many States across our country, but we certainly have seen it in my State of Colorado as well.

In many places in my State, across the vast eastern plains, we are now in the seventh year of what is an unprecedented drought—the seventh year of what is an unprecedented drought—including one of those years being the driest year of record in the entire history of the State of Colorado. On top of that drought, we also saw this last year in the State of Colorado, in January of this year, a blizzard that came in unexpectedly and ended up killing approximately 15 million cattle across all of the eastern plains. So today, I stand with my colleagues who say that kind of emergency and that kind of disaster requires us to act, to take some action to help those farmers and ranchers of America who are often forgotten by Washington simply because Washington can't connect to those farmers and ranchers and to those small rural communities across America.

This is our opportunity to make sure we are providing the kind of emergency disaster assistance that will help these ranchers and farmers see their way through the disaster they are currently facing. If we fail to act, what will end up happening is these ranchers and farmers across rural America are going to be so hurt that many of them are going to be driven off their farms and their ranches.

As I have traveled the eastern plains of my State, I have met with ranchers who have lost upwards of 50 percent of their herd. I am sure they are wondering, and we should be wondering in this body today as well, how are they going to pay off their bank note? How is it they are going to continue to provide for their livelihood? Are they going to have to sell off their farms or their ranches in order to continue?

Today, we have an opportunity to stand for rural America, for the forgotten America, and to say we believe in the food security of this Nation, we believe in our rural communities and in those farmers and those ranchers who are out there struggling every day to make sure we have the food on the table that feeds this Nation. I ask my colleagues to join me and others, both Democrats and Republicans in this Chamber, in casting a ''no'' vote against amendment No. 657, which would strip the agricultural emergency disaster assistance from this legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, under the order, how much time remains on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. About 14 minutes.

AMENDMENT NO. 707 WITHDRAWN

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Hagel amendment, No. 707, be withdrawn, as outlined under a previous order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I yield the remaining time to the Senator from Wisconsin.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

REGIONAL IMPACT OF DARFUR CRISIS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for yielding me the time. I don't think I will need to use all of it, but I appreciate it.

Time and time again, history has taught us that preventing a crisis is much less complicated and costly than ending and repairing the damage caused by a humanitarian tragedy. The clumsy and irresolute response to the current crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, however, shows we still have not learned this painful lesson. While the world's leaders condemn the atrocities but delay taking strong action, the vile hatred and unspeakable violence that has resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Darfur has now spread to actually infect nearby areas, destabilizing neighboring countries and fueling a downward spiral of conflict and insecurity throughout the region.

I am especially disturbed by evidence that the brutal tactics of Darfur—and their tragic consequences—have now, in part, been transferred across the distant western border into eastern Chad and the Central African Republic. Last week I held a hearing in the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs to examine the regional impact of the Darfur crisis. The overwhelming message from our distinguished witnesses was that the victims and perpetrators of the Darfur conflict are no longer simply confined within Sudanese borders, so both our humanitarian response and our strategy for peace need to incorporate these new regional dimensions.

Nearly a quarter of a million Darfur refugees have fled into eastern Chad, compounding an existing political and humanitarian crisis in that country. Lax security along Sudan's porous border has also allowed weapons and Darfur-based rebel groups to spread violence into Chad. Both the Chadian and Sudanese Governments accuse each other of supporting rebel factions seeking to overthrow the neighboring state. Last Saturday, the Chadian Government claimed Sudanese aircraft had shelled four Chadian towns. Ironically, the UNHCR has now begun moving Chadian refugees into Darfur for their safety.

Even before the recent outbreak of hostilities in the north, the Central African Republic was suffering extreme poverty and was deemed by the UN as ''the world's most silent crisis.'' Displacement—much of it the result of house-burning and other cruel tactics by Government forces—rose fourfold in the past year, with more than 200,000 unable to return to their homes. Since the displacement has been more gradual than in Darfur or eastern Chad, the growing humanitarian crisis has received little attention and the response of aid agencies has been slow and limited.

There is not yet a humanitarian emergency in the CAR, but if the fighting between the Government and rebel

forces continues and the UN doesn't begin to respond more effectively, conditions could worsen dramatically. Rather than allow another crisis to break out, we could help avert massive starvation and disease with a relatively minor intervention now. That is why I have proposed to include $10 million for the Central African Republic in the fiscal year 2007 supplemental so as to provide seeds and tools, basic shelter materials, and medicine now, a month or two before the rainy season, to reduce the risk of a widespread humanitarian disaster.

While U.S. attention to Darfur is essential, the expansion of this crisis now requires a more comprehensive approach that addresses the interrelated emergencies and underlying causes of instability in this volatile region. Conflicts in these countries will continue to simmer and spread unless the international community musters the political will and material resources to act upon the conviction so often expressed.

As the violence in Darfur worsens and spreads, we cannot pretend we did not see this coming. For nearly 3 years now, my colleagues and I have stood on this floor and called for an end to the genocide in Darfur. It makes me ill to think of how many lives have been lost and civilians displaced since then, but I become even more upset when I consider how much worse this crisis could still become. There is no excuse for the persistent reluctance of the U.S. Government and the international community to begin applying the economic and military leverage at their disposal to end the violence in Darfur and beyond.

I will continue to call for courageous U.S. leadership to defend these innocent people and demand accountability for the perpetrators of the atrocities that have been allowed to continue for far too long.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, may I ask how much time do we have on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Almost 9 minutes.

Mrs. MURRAY. I am happy to yield that time to the Senator from Minnesota.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized for 8 minutes 42 seconds.

AMENDMENT NO. 648

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition to amendment No. 648, offered by my colleague, the Senator from Oklahoma. The Senator from Colorado and my colleague from Minnesota have already spoken in opposition to the amendment. I wish to add one other perspective and that is the perspective as a former mayor of the city of Saint Paul.

I have in my hands a letter from the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, dated March 5, 2007, in which he says: After careful consideration, this letter is to advise you that the Republican National Convention, which will be held in St. Paul, MN in 2008, will be designated as an NSSE. That is a National Special Security Event.

As a result of being designated a National Special Security Event, done by Presidential directive which was established in 1998, you will have the Secret Service designated as the lead agency for design and implementation of the operational security plan, you will have the FBI designated as lead agency for crisis response, you will have FEMA designated as the lead agency for crisis or consequence management, working hand in hand with folks at the local level.

The bottom line is what we have here is designated a National Special Security Event. In effect, I view this almost as an unfunded mandate—very similar to that; that local agencies in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Denver will face the responsibility of dealing with the national security event, working hand in hand with the Secret Service, the FBI, and FEMA, who will be leading the way. They simply do not have the resources to deal with the magnitude of security that will have to accompany this convention.

In conventions in Boston and New York, I was looking at some of the data, you are looking at 165,000 people passing through magnetometers, almost 10,000 packages screened, dealing with demonstrations, 9,500 U.S. Secret Service credentials be issued to local law enforcement, 200 Members of Congress, 20 to 30 Governors, national delegates, and obviously Presidential candidates.

The bottom line is some have characterized this as booze rather than bullets. This is not about booze. This is about security at an event in which there will be 14,000 international media present, in which much of the leadership of each of our parties will be present across the board, Federal, State, local.

In the past in this post-9/11 world, it has become very clear that local communities do not have the capacity to deal with this, so this Congress acted wisely in providing resources to the city of New York, acted wisely providing resources to the city of Boston.

I have trouble with the underlying bill. I oppose the language calling for withdrawal. I hope, after the President vetoes this bill, that this bill then comes back to us and we can vote on it without that language in it.

But this is a security issue. This is something that has to be done in a timely fashion. You can't wait until next year to develop these security plans.

I am raising my voice in concert with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I am raising my voice in opposition to amendment No. 648, which seeks to strip out the funding for this National Special Security Event. As a former local elected official, I understand folks at the local level simply do not have the capacity for what would be imposed on them in many instances, with national law enforcement directives telling them you have to do this and you have to do that. That, as we said before, was what we used to call unfunded mandates. It is something locals cannot do. Every dollar will be focused on security. There will be an accounting process for it.

The beginning of that process dealing with the security issues has to be now. This is something that should be dealt with. I think it is appropriate to be in this supplemental. Again, I have problems with other parts of the supplemental, other language. I suspect we will have a chance to vote on it again. But in whatever form it leaves this body, this language should be there. It is the right thing to do if you care about national security.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter from the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Chertoff, declaring the Republican National Convention to be a National Special Security Event.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, March 5, 2007.

Hon. TIM PAWLENTY,
Governor of Minnesota,
Saint Paul, MN.

DEAR GOVERNOR PAWLENTY: On January 31, 2007, you requested that the Republican National Convention (RNC), occurring in the City of St. Paul, Minnesota, from September 1–5, 2008, be designated as a National Special Security Event (NSSE). After careful consideration, this letter is to advise you that the RNC will be designated as an NSSE.

The U.S. Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency serve as the Federal agencies with lead responsibilities for NSSEs. Those agencies will partner with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement and public safety organizations in the development of a comprehensive strategy addressing all security and incident management related aspects of the NSSE. Additionally, at the appropriate time prior to the convention, I will assign a Principal Federal Official.

I would like to commend you, your staff, and the event planners in the City of St. Paul for the detailed security planning that has been accomplished thus far.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL CHERTOFF,
Secretary.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time? The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, how much time is remaining to both sides?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington has 4 minutes; 5 minutes for the Senator from Oklahoma.

Mrs. MURRAY. I don't see the Senator from Oklahoma. He has some time. I assume he will be coming to the floor, since we will be going to a vote shortly.

I yield the remainder of our time to the Senator from Oregon.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague from Washington. When we go to the two amendments on the Secure Rural Schools Act under the order, I have a couple of minutes and the distinguished Senator from North Carolina, Senator BURR has a couple of minutes. But since there was this opportunity as a result of the graciousness of Senator MURRAY, I wish to mention a letter that came in from the sheriff of Douglas County, which is in southwestern Oregon. This is an area he is policing, the sheriff notes, that is slightly larger than Connecticut. In other words, his county is extraordinarily large.

If this money is not forthcoming, funds that would be made available under the county payments, this is what the sheriff says will take place:

There are no Troopers. We are running out of deputies. And, if we lose access to this Federal funding, the people will essentially be left to provide their own public safety. There is no fallback position for the citizens.

The sheriff goes on to say:

This is not a matter crying wolf or exaggerating our problems. This is quite simply the fork in the road where we make a choice. Does local government in rural Oregon cease to exist, or are we partially and temporarily spared in hopes of securing some means of providing for ourselves?

I think the comments from Chris Brown, the Douglas County sheriff, which just came in, say it all. What the legislation we are going to be voting on in a few minutes is all about is ensuring the Federal Government keep its obligation to rural communities, where the Federal Government owns most of the land. This is not welfare. I have tried to go into how this came about several times in the course of the debate over the last couple of days. The reality is that when the Federal Forest System was created more than 100 years ago and these rural communities were in a position where they could not maximize their revenues from these lands, the Federal Government struck an agreement. The Federal Government said: We will be there to at least partially offer funding for the essential services such as those that Chris Brown, the Douglas County sheriff, has written to us about.

The reality is, the distinguished Senator from Washington knows—and we are very pleased that she is a cosponsor with 18 other Senators in the bipartisan ''county amendments'' legislation—we have huge problems in our part of the world, with serious drugs, particularly methamphetamine. What Chris Brown is saying, this Douglas County sheriff, with respect to his area—which is, as he notes, as large as the State of Connecticut—is that he is going to be essentially defenseless in terms of protecting public safety for his folks in southwestern Oregon without this funding. He is not alone. The sheriff of Grants Pass told me recently that without this funding he is looking at the prospect of calling out the National Guard.

We will have our debate for 2 minutes each when we go to this amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I yield back all time on both sides.

AMENDMENT NO. 709

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time has been yielded back. There will now be 2 minutes equally divided prior to a vote in relation to the Wyden amendment.

The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I urge the Senate to support the bipartisan group of 19 Senators and vote for the Wyden amendment and reject the Burr amendment. In voting for the Wyden amendment and rejecting the Burr amendment, Senators will be standing with the National Association of Counties, the National Governors Association, the 1,500 member organizations of the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition and labor groups from across the land.

The Burr amendment purports to affect only the increase in funding but, as was pointed out in this morning's debate, the Burr amendment affects all funding, new and existing. As a result, the Burr amendment would stand in conflict with numerous State laws. The new formula in the bipartisan Wyden amendment is fair, fully paid for, and would ensure that America's rural communities can survive. I urge my colleagues to not walk away from the Federal Government's 100-year promise to rural America. Support the Wyden amendment and reject the Burr amendment.

I yield the remainder of my time to my friend and cosponsor, Senator CRAIG.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, the Senator from Oregon has spoken well to this issue. It is critical we vote now, that we vote for the amendment offered by the Senator from Oregon and reject the amendment of the Senator from North Carolina for micromanaging a decision that ought to be made at the local school district level when it comes to the allocation of these resources. The Federal Government and this Senate should not be telling the local school district in Nezperce, ID, or in a county such as Idaho County, ID: Here is how you are going to spend your money. We know better than the local school district or the local patrons of that district.

I hope you vote no on Burr and support the bipartisan amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time has expired. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The clerk will call roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 75, nays 22, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 118 Leg.]

YEAS—75

Akaka	Domenici	McConnell
Alexander	Dorgan	Menendez
Allard	Durbin	Mikulski
Baucus	Ensign	Murkowski
Bayh	Feingold	Murray
Bennett	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Biden	Graham	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Harkin	Obama
Boxer	Hatch	Pryor
Brown	Hutchison	Reed
Burr	Inouye	Reid
Byrd	Isakson	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Kennedy	Salazar
Cardin	Kerry	Sanders
Casey	Klobuchar	Schumer
Chambliss	Kohl	Smith
Clinton	Landrieu	Specter
Cochran	Lautenberg	Stabenow
Coleman	Leahy	Stevens
Conrad	Levin	Sununu
Corker	Lieberman	Tester
Craig	Lincoln	Warner
Crapo	Lott	Webb
Dodd	Lugar	Whitehouse
Dole	McCaskill	Wyden

NAYS—22

Bond	Grassley	Shelby
Brownback	Gregg	Snowe
Bunning	Hagel	Thomas
Carper	Inhofe	Thune
Coburn	Kyl	Vitter
Collins	Martinez	Voinovich
Cornyn	Roberts	
DeMint	Sessions	

NOT VOTING—3

Enzi	Johnson	McCain

The amendment (No. 709) was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 716

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. It is now in order to consider the

Burr amendment, with 1 minute of debate on each side.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in a moment, we are going to hear from Senator BURR and Senator WYDEN on this amendment. I would tell our colleagues that we have three more votes that will be limited to 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, let me ask my colleagues to listen because I think there are some misconceptions about what I am trying to do.

In 1908, we created this program. We reauthorized it in 2000. It was supposed to sunset a year ago. We have decided to continue the program. I supported the Wyden amendment.

There are three areas that receive funds from this amendment: Forest Service payments, BLM land, and the third fund is payments in lieu of taxes. I am only affecting one title of the first item, which is Forest Service payments. It is not doing anything to payments in lieu of taxes or BLM land.

Title 1, since 1908, has said the money could be used for schools or roads. That one title has 177 million new dollars in it. My amendment says 80 percent of the new dollars will go to education, to educate our children. It does not affect title 2, which is forest programs; it does not affect title 3, which is law enforcement, search and rescue. It is basically saying: At this time, our investment is going to go to our children.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I urge the Senate to vote against the Burr amendment because it significantly undermines what the Senate just voted for. The Burr amendment purports to affect only the increase in funds, but, as was pointed out in this morning's debate, the Burr amendment would affect all funding, new and existing, and as a result, the Burr amendment would stand in direct conflict with numerous State laws.

What the Burr amendment would do is disrupt funding decisions and local government operations around the country. In many localities, county governments and school districts operate separate and distinct budgets. Under the Burr amendment, local government decisions would, in effect, be overturned and we would go to a one-size-fits-all Federal mandate instead of local communities deciding about their future and their kids' education. Their hands would be tied in Washington, DC.

I urge the Senate to reject this bureaucratic straightjacket and vote no on the Burr amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the amendment of the Senator from North Carolina.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 8, nays 89, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 119 Leg.]

YEAS—8

Alexander	Coburn	Martinez
Bunning	Dole	McConnell
Burr	Gregg	

NAYS—89

Akaka	Durbin	Murray
Allard	Ensign	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Feinstein	Obama
Bennett	Graham	Pryor
Biden	Grassley	Reed
Bingaman	Hagel	Reid
Bond	Harkin	Roberts
Boxer	Hatch	Rockefeller
Brown	Hutchison	Salazar
Brownback	Inhofe	Sanders
Byrd	Inouye	Schumer
Cantwell	Isakson	Sessions
Cardin	Kennedy	Shelby
Carper	Kerry	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Snowe
Chambliss	Kohl	Specter
Clinton	Kyl	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Stevens
Coleman	Lautenberg	Sununu
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Conrad	Levin	Thomas
Corker	Lieberman	Thune
Cornyn	Lincoln	Vitter
Craig	Lott	Voinovich
Crapo	Lugar	Warner
DeMint	McCaskill	Webb
Dodd	Menendez	Whitehouse
Domenici	Mikulski	Wyden
Dorgan	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—3

Enzi	Johnson	McCain

The amendment (No. 716) was rejected.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 657

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes evenly divided on amendment No. 657.

The Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. COBURN, has 1 minute.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, the amendment we are considering says the agriculture supplemental we put forward is going to be paid for. The Agriculture Department is the sixth largest corporation in the United States, when you look at it. What it says is we ought to be able to use some of the $8 billion they have sitting in the pot now and we ought to be able to find a way to make them 3 percent more efficient so we can actually pay $4.1 billion to help in the agricultural emergency we have in this country.

It does not add it. We do not charge it to our grandchildren. We say we are going to be responsible, and we are going to take it out of the money that is in there now that is easily findable. We will actually pay for helping our farmers who need our help today.

It is the exact same language the appropriations bill has for both cattle producers and grain producers. It just says: Find it within the agency, pay for it, and we will do it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I hope the Senate will oppose this measure. The agricultural disaster program that was put in the supplemental bill is a bipartisan piece of legislation. Senator CONRAD, myself, Senator KIT BOND, Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN—many of us worked together to put this in the legislation.

It is very simple. It reaches out a helping hand to those farmers, in many cases who lost everything, to say: You are not alone. This country wants to help you during tough times.

We have always—we have always—provided disaster relief on an emergency basis, except for the last several years; it has been blocked. This is the opportunity, on a bipartisan basis, for us to say to family farmers: You matter to this country. We want to help you. When you have had a weather-related disaster, we are here to help.

I hope we will turn down the amendment offered by my colleague from Oklahoma.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 657.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) is necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 23, nays 74, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 120 Leg.]

YEAS—23

Alexander	Dole	McConnell
Bunning	Ensign	Sessions
Burr	Graham	Shelby
Carper	Gregg	Sununu
Coburn	Inhofe	Thomas
Corker	Kyl	Voinovich
Cornyn	Lugar	Warner
DeMint	Martinez	

NAYS—74

Akaka	Bennett	Boxer
Allard	Biden	Brown
Baucus	Bingaman	Brownback
Bayh	Bond	Byrd

Cantwell	Hutchison	Obama
Cardin	Inouye	Pryor
Casey	Isakson	Reed
Chambliss	Kennedy	Reid
Clinton	Kerry	Roberts
Cochran	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Coleman	Kohl	Salazar
Collins	Landrieu	Sanders
Conrad	Lautenberg	Schumer
Craig	Leahy	Smith
Crapo	Levin	Snowe
Dodd	Lieberman	Specter
Domenici	Lincoln	Stabenow
Dorgan	Lott	Stevens
Durbin	McCaskill	Tester
Feingold	Menendez	Thune
Feinstein	Mikulski	Vitter
Grassley	Murkowski	Webb
Hagel	Murray	Whitehouse
Harkin	Nelson (FL)	Wyden
Hatch	Nelson (NE)	

NOT VOTING—3

Enzi	Johnson	McCain

The amendment (No. 657) was rejected.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, on the previous vote, vote No. 120, I voted ''yea.'' I wish to change my vote to ''nay.'' I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

AMENDMENT NO. 648

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on amendment No. 648.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. COBURN. This is simple. It is not an emergency. Eighteen months from now we are going to have the Presidential nominating conventions. In Atlanta, during the Olympics, for a month the entire security was $10 million. If we triple that amount for a month, you have $30 million. This bill allows $100 million for conventions and for decisions that are already going to be made prior to that so that the political parties can have a good time. Yet we are going to ask our children to pay for it. You are going to vote to ask your grandchildren to pay for a party you aren't having now, when the President already has $15 million in his budget for Secret Service for both of these conventions, which they feel is adequate at this time.

The question is not whether we should do it. If we are going to do it, we should do it inside the confines of the budget. Two, it is not an emergency. We have 18 months. We have plenty of appropriations bills to pay for this.

Mrs. MURRAY. I yield a minute to the Senator from Minnesota and then a minute to the Senator from Colorado.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, the world has changed since Atlanta. Since 9/11, this type of funding was available to Boston and it was available to New York City. There is absolutely no flexibility in scheduling the security in these cities. This month, the Director of Homeland Security declared Minneapolis-St. Paul a National Special Security Event. Secret Service will be the lead agency for one part of it, the FBI will be the lead for another, and FEMA for another part.

I say to my conservative colleagues, this is an unfunded mandate. These cities don't have a choice. The Feds tell them what they have to do. There is no flexibility in scheduling. This money needs to be put into place. We know the uncertainty of the appropriations process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. SALAZAR. In a March 5 letter from Secretary Chertoff, he indicated the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, MN, will be designated a National Special Security Event. In a March 9 letter, Senators ALLARD, COLEMAN, KLOBUCHAR, and myself asked for this assistance in appropriations, and it was included in there.

We have to remember we are living in a post-9/11 world. We are going to have 100 Senators, 435 Members of Congress, the President of the United States, and the Vice President all in this place at that one time. It is important for us to make sure we are providing the kinds of security they need.

I urge my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). All time has expired.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The result was announced—yeas 45, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 121 Leg.]

YEAS—45

Alexander	Ensign	McCaskill
Bayh	Feingold	Murkowski
Bingaman	Graham	Obama
Brownback	Grassley	Roberts
Bunning	Gregg	Sessions
Burr	Hagel	Shelby
Chambliss	Harkin	Smith
Coburn	Hatch	Snowe
Collins	Hutchison	Sununu
Corker	Inhofe	Tester
Cornyn	Isakson	Thomas
Craig	Kyl	Thune
Crapo	Lincoln	Vitter
DeMint	Lugar	Voinovich
Dole	Martinez	Warner

NAYS—51

Akaka	Boxer	Casey
Allard	Brown	Clinton
Baucus	Byrd	Cochran
Bennett	Cantwell	Coleman
Biden	Cardin	Conrad
Bond	Carper	Dodd
Domenici	Leahy	Reid
Dorgan	Levin	Rockefeller
Durbin	Lieberman	Salazar
Feinstein	Lott	Sanders
Inouye	McConnell	Schumer
Kennedy	Menendez	Specter
Kerry	Mikulski	Stabenow
Klobuchar	Murray	Stevens
Kohl	Nelson (FL)	Webb
Landrieu	Pryor	Whitehouse
Lautenberg	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Enzi	McCain
Johnson	Nelson (NE)

The amendment (No. 648) was rejected.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Iowa be recognized for 10 minutes; that immediately following the Senator from Iowa, the Senator from South Carolina be recognized for 5 minutes, and then we immediately return to regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Durbin amendment is a perfect example of why authorizing on an appropriations bill ought to be discouraged. I know many Members are under extreme pressure from their hospitals to support the Durbin amendment, but I would encourage you to read the actual language and consider the consequences of what this amendment actually does.

This amendment will lead to anarchy in the Medicaid financial arrangements. As a result of the amendment, CMS will be prohibited from banning bad-actor States from reinstating the questionable schemes Congress has been trying to root out since 1991. This is because the Durbin amendment broadly—very broadly—prevents CMS from taking any action relating to this rule or any rule that would affect Medicaid or SCHIP in a similar manner.

For years, Medicaid was plagued by financial gamesmanship. States used so-called intergovernmental transfers to create scams that milked taxpayers out of millions, even billions of dollars. An example: A State bills the Federal Government for a $100 hospital charge. The hospital gets the $100 payment, and then the State would require the hospital to give $25 of it back to the State. In my view, that is a scam. What happens, then, to the $25? In the days before Congress and CMS cracked

down on the behavior, the money could go to roads or to stadium construction. That is right, Medicaid paid for roads and stadiums instead of health care for the very poor. Because of the way the Durbin amendment is written, States could return to the financial schemes where they used Medicaid funds for porkbarrel projects.

In 1991, 1997, and again in the year 2000, Congress took specific action to limit a State's ability to use payment schemes to avoid paying a State's share of Medicaid. The Durbin amendment blows all that away.

I would like to read from a letter from Leslie Norwalk, Acting Commissioner of CMS, released today:

> The Durbin amendment is so broadly drafted that it would seriously limit the agency's ability to do the normal program oversight to ensure program integrity. If enacted, it could prevent CMS from disapproving State plan amendments that violate, for example, the 1991 provisions on taxes and donations, the 1997 limitations on limiting Federal expenditures to the State plan, and the 2000 phase-down of upper payment limits.

She goes on to say:

> We are deeply concerned that if enacted, the Durbin amendment would reverse this progress and reopen the Federal Treasury to the abuses of the past.

Madam President, it is one thing to complain about the CMS rule; it is quite another thing entirely to overturn 16 years of congressional action with this amendment.

Let us talk for a moment about the rule in question. The core goal of the rule is to limit provider reimbursement to actual cost. What is wrong with just paying actual cost? I know some people consider this a radical idea, but I just don't understand why anyone thinks it is a good idea to have hospitals paid more than the cost so that they can be part of these scams which rob the taxpayers to fund State pork.

Restricting payments to cost is not exactly a new idea. In 1994, the Government Accountability Office recommended that payments to Government providers be limited to cost. This is a fundamental issue of program integrity.

What did the GAO find in their 1994 report leading to that conclusion? The State of Michigan used these questionable transfers to reduce its share of Medicaid programs from 68 percent, which is what it should have been, to 56 percent. The GAO found evidence that in October of 1993, the State of Michigan made a $489 million payment to the University of Michigan. Within hours, the entire $489 million was returned to the State. The report found that in fiscal year 1993, Michigan, Tennessee, and Texas were able to obtain $800 million in Federal matching funds without putting up the State's share.

Congress and CMS have spent the last 15 years combating this behavior. It makes no sense for Congress to roll back the clock and allow these crazy practices to come back.

Over the past 4 years, CMS has been working with States to try to limit these scams. These efforts have not been without their controversy. States have been very concerned about exactly what the new standards are. Senator BAUCUS and I wrote to the Government Accountability Office and asked them to look into what CMS has been up to. We have been concerned that there has not been enough transparency in what CMS has done.

CMS has now published a rule. It is out there in the—government for everybody to look at. The rule stops improper transfers. The rule limits providers to cost. The rule requires payments matched up to claim. Just good accounting.

Let me speak to that last one specifically—matched up to claim. Too often in Medicaid, States are allowed to bill for services without being able to document that an actual service occurred. We have a program which spends hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars. We have a rule which requires that the program better document where the money is spent.

What on Earth is going on that I have to come down to the floor to object to an amendment on an appropriations bill that tries to prevent a rule that protects the integrity of the Medicaid Program from going into effect, especially a responsible rule?

In 2005, the Finance Committee held a 2-day oversight hearing on the Medicaid Program. As a part of that hearing, we focused on continuing problems of States recycling funds. CMS has acted to stop that. If some people think CMS has gone too far, then we should review their actions in the Finance Committee. We should call CMS in, make them testify, and ask the tough questions to which we need answers. If we think there are things we should have done differently, then we should legislate. That is the way it ought to be done.

I want us to ask tough questions about the definition of ''Government provider.'' I want to make sure that requiring schools to file claims isn't going to impede access to care for kids. I would like to know if the rule overturns arrangements such as the one the State of Iowa has created to provide a lump-sum payment to the University of Iowa and Broadlawns Hospital in Des Moines to care for the Medicaid patients. That is the right way to operate. We should deal with it in the Finance Committee.

That is why I have, as a general rule, objected to moving legislation in our jurisdiction on appropriations bills. The issues here are extremely complex. They deserve thorough consideration so we can assure the right action. Instead, we are here with this amendment. No hearings have been held, no testimony submitted, nothing.

This amendment throws the baby out with the bathwater. Then the bathtub goes out, and then the bathroom—this is the whole house. It undoes 16 years of sound public policy.

My amendment allows CMS to move forward to protect the Medicaid Program from fraud, to protect Medicaid integrity, and to ensure payments are not made inappropriately. We should stop an amendment that gives CMS a 2-year holiday from stopping fraud. We should stop an amendment that gives CMS a 2-year holiday from protecting program integrity. We should stop an amendment that gives CMS a 2-year holiday from stopping inappropriate payments.

Members should vote on my amendment so that it forces us to sit down and take a serious look at what we are doing here before we make a serious mistake we will all regret.

Madam President, how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Forty-five seconds.

Mr. GRASSLEY. At this time, then, I would ask unanimous consent to set aside the amendment before the body and that we take up Grassley amendment No. 701 to the Durbin amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. MURRAY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I heard the objection. I can't believe anyone would object. So we are objecting to protecting Medicaid from fraud? We are objecting to protecting the integrity of the Medicaid Program? We are objecting to stopping inappropriate Medicaid payments?

We are making a mistake. I hope this gets fixed in conference, and I am going to work to do that. I regret the objection, but I understand why.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, this bill is moving along very fast, and I compliment the majority and minority leaders for allowing the process to move forward in a quick fashion, because we understand the outcome. The bill most likely will pass in its current form, maybe with some changes, but at the end of the day, it will be vetoed.

I was listening earlier in the day to Senators HAGEL and WEBB discuss an amendment they had proposed. I am not sure whether it is germane, but the two Senators, who do deserve the respect of everyone in this body because they have been in combat, they have been in harm's way, had an amendment talking about force structure, how you would change the rotations, and the concerns this war has placed on the military. Well, those concerns are real, and I understand what they are trying to achieve there.

The reason I wanted to speak before we went to final passage is I know why the veto is coming. There are two components to this bill that the President should veto the bill over: No. 1, the restrictions we are placing on our military, and the deadlines and the timelines and the benchmarks all add up to making it impossible for the new

strategy of General Petraeus to be successful, if it became law. This is a constitutional encroachment upon the power of the Commander in Chief which I believe is unprecedented. There is an honorable path for Congress to take; that is, just stop funding a war that you think is lost. But the combination of deadlines, benchmarks, timelines, and micromanaging troop rotations all adds up to Congress really taking over wartime activity in a way that was never envisioned before. I don't think any other commander is going to have to go through what General Petraeus would have to go through if we did pass this bill and it were not vetoed.

I have been a military lawyer for 20-some years. The combat folks in here have been in harm's way. As a military lawyer, I have had some clients who wanted to kill me, but that is about it. So my hat is off to the warfighters. I have been in a support role, and there are thousands of doctors and nurses and lawyers and other support personnel serving in Iraq, and they are very much needed. There is no front line in Iraq or Afghanistan, so my hat is off to all of them. But the warfighter's point of view is what we need to be thinking about.

From the commander's point of view, General Petraeus has been assigned to a mission. He has come up with a new doctrine. Even the worst critic cannot say it is not something new. It is clearly something new. Whether it works I can't promise, but I think it has a good chance and there are early signs of success. It is making up for past mistakes.

The President is going to veto this bill because Congress has come up with a constitutional construct that, if allowed to exist, I believe would create dangers for future Commanders in Chief and future wars that are just unnecessary. I know the political moment for Iraq is not popular. I know people are frustrated and upset and we have made tons of mistakes, but the biggest mistake would be to throw the constitutional balance we have enjoyed for 200 years out of kilter and try to take over this war in a way we are not built to take over as a Congress.

There is a way to cut off this funding. We just haven't chosen to go down that road, and I don't know why. If you think it is lost, then that is the road to go down.

The second part of the bill that has met with objection is the number of projects unrelated to the war—for lack of a better word, porkbarrel spending. And it may not be porkbarrel spending. Some of these projects are probably very worthy. I just don't believe this is the way to fund them.

The emergency supplemental appropriations process for the war is needed, but we shouldn't have an emergency appropriation. This war has been going on for 4 years, so hopefully next year we will not find ourselves in this spot. If we do not get the funds over to our commanders and into the DOD pipeline, then readiness is hurt, the ability to prosecute the war is compromised beginning April 15, and every month thereafter, it gets more difficult.

So the President is going to veto the bill for two sound reasons. The construct Congress has created is taking the Congress in an area we have never gone before that I believe would be devastating to future wars. It would undermine General Petraeus' ability to be successful in his mission. The spending practices this bill embraces is what has put Congress in such low standing with the American public.

Republicans lost for a reason. We didn't treat the process in a respectful way. Our Democratic friends, with some Republican help, are making the problem worse when it comes to fiscal matters. So I do hope that once the veto is rendered we can find a way to get the money to the troops who are desperately in need of it over time, and we can find a way to come together and give General Petraeus a decent opportunity to turn Iraq around.

I end on this note. What drives my thinking and what makes me disagree with Senator WEBB and Senator HAGEL—people who have experienced combat—is that I believe the outcome in Iraq is part of the overall war on terror. If we lose in Iraq—and I think this bill would ensure a loss if it ever became law—the ripple effect is catastrophic; the war gets bigger, not smaller. A failed state in Iraq is a huge loss in the war on terror. It compromises our national security for decades.

That is the way I see it, and I will take every vote in this body viewing Iraq as a central battlefront in the war on terror, one we cannot afford to lose.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Kentucky be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes on the underlying bill, and at the end of that time or yielding back of that time we return to the regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. BUNNING. Madam President, I rise today to voice my strong opposition to the emergency supplemental bill. The supplemental bill on the floor today is irresponsible. Since coming to the Congress 20-plus years ago, I have pushed for accountability and fiscal responsibility. When the Democrats took a page from the Republican playbook and said they would be responsible with the taxpayers' money, I wanted to believe them. I can see now that all the Democratic promises to the American people last fall were only empty words.

This bill is an insult to our men and women in uniform and every single American taxpayer. To me, this is not a political game. I came to the floor last year to oppose additional spending in the emergency supplemental bill. It had nondefense spending like $20 million for oyster fishermen in New England and $4 million for erosion control projects in California and Michigan, and that draft was put together by a Republican Congress.

The extra funds I opposed last year pale in comparison to what the Democrats have done this year. Unfortunately, it has become routine to see emergency spending bills on the Senate floor. I understand the pressing need for this legislation to defend America from terrorism and support our ongoing efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The purpose of the President's request is to protect and pay the men and women serving in our Armed Forces.

It also provides the funding needed to restore damaged military equipment and to purchase new state-of-the-art technology. This emergency supplemental is important to provide for American armed services the additional funds they need right now. However, this legislation goes far beyond necessary emergency defense spending. The majority is using budgetary gimmicks to pay for political handouts and entitlements on the backs of our fighting men and women. Mixed in the defense spending is a complicated list of earmark legislative language and program expansions.

Let me walk you through part of the bill. The hurricanes of 2005 were truly devastating, and I have supported the Government's rebuilding efforts in the region. But this bill before us today includes $1.45 billion in unrequested and unnecessary funding for the Corps of Engineers. It also eliminates a 10-percent local matching requirement for FEMA funds and eliminates the prohibition on forgiving community disaster loans.

These are two provisions Congress has supported in the past to ensure responsible spending. These provisions are not only inappropriate for a wartime supplemental, but they are also bad policy.

Another area of extra spending relates to agriculture. I have been a strong supporter of America's farms, but the programs in this bill are routinely funded through the regular process. I cannot justify supporting $3 million for Hawaiian sugar cane co-ops or $20 million for insect damage in Nevada on a wartime supplemental bill. This bill is about our troops, not our farmers.

There are even more glaring examples in this bill. There is $3.5 million for Capital Guide Services to provide service for tourism in this very building. It adds $100 million for dairy production losses; $13 million for a lamb replacement and retention program; $40 million for the tree assistance program; $6 million for flooded croplands in North Dakota; $25 million for asbestos abatement at the Capitol powerplant; $23 million for geothermal energy research. The list goes on and on.

I cannot support requests like these on the backs of our fighting men and

women. I will support every effort to strip all the nondefense funding out of this bill. It is time to show fiscal restraint and use emergency wartime spending legislation for precisely that purpose—to pay for the war and not for domestic pork projects.

Finally, I want to address the single most important issue in the supplemental, the shortsighted and political call for troop withdrawal. This bill includes similar language to that which was rejected by the Senate 2 weeks ago. It calls for the withdrawal of troops starting 120 days after passage of the bill and sets an arbitrary goal of full withdrawal from Iraq by March 31, 2008. I voted against this language 2 weeks ago, I voted against it yesterday, and I will continue to vote against it. As I have stated repeatedly, I do not support micromanaging the war. It is counterproductive and sends a detrimental message to our troops and emboldens our enemies.

I want my colleagues to understand that without the U.S. military, Iraq would become a vacuum that would threaten the stability of the entire Middle East. I share the desire to have the Iraqis defend themselves, and our military is providing them with important training. But that cannot happen based on an arbitrary deadline.

I want to warn the other side of the aisle, if you try to force the American military out of Iraq, you will be responsible for the chaos that will ensue. Without the United States, Iraq would emerge as a training ground for all al-Qaida and terrorist organizations. I believe the power vacuum would lead to genocide and murdering far worse than the terrorist attacks that are now occurring in Iraq.

Without the United States, there would be greater threat to Israel, and Iran would become the dominant country in the Middle East.

I want my colleagues to think about the path this troop withdrawal language takes us down. I stand for the men and women serving in Iraq by supporting their mission, but this bill does the opposite. It undermines the military's ability to act.

We need to listen to the commanders on the ground instead of pulling the rug out from under them. This supplemental is not a strategy for success. It is a recipe for defeat. Now is precisely the wrong time to send this message. I believe we may be turning the corner in Iraq. We may already see some success, based on recent reports from General Petraeus. Sectarian killing has been lowered in Baghdad over the last several weeks, and many Iraqi families have been returning to their homes. Some of my colleagues would rather ignore these small signs and the opportunities to succeed in Iraq by pursuing a partisan political agenda.

This bill should be a commitment to General Petraeus and our soldiers. It should be a mandate for them to secure democracy in Iraq and protect America from terrorism. I rise to ask my colleagues to join me in opposing this bill. This may be the most important legislation we address all year. It is an opportunity to tell General Petraeus and our fighting men and women in uniform that we support them. It is an opportunity to tell the people of Iraq that we will not cut and run and will not give in to political pressure, allowing us to affect our decisions on the floor of the Senate. It is an opportunity to defend America from terrorism.

This bill is a mistake that we cannot afford, and I urge my colleagues to vote against it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Nevada be given 10 minutes to speak, and after using his time or yielding back his time we revert to the regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nevada.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 752 AND 753

Mr. ENSIGN. Madam President, I appreciate the Senator allowing me to speak. There is an amendment being negotiated and, hopefully, we will be able to have a vote on what I believe is a very important amendment.

In this emergency bill there are some things that some might consider an emergency, and there are others that I would not classify as an emergency. But there are things in the country that truly are an emergency. My amendment attempts to address one of the most pressing issues happening in our country today.

My amendment provides additional funding for the Adam Walsh Act that we passed last year. As each Senator knows, the Adam Walsh bill provides law enforcement with the tools to go after child predators. It also gives parents the tools they need to protect their own children. My amendment provides funding for the Adam Walsh bill. Simply, my amendment provides $12.5 million in funding for U.S. Marshals to track down the estimated 100,000 convicted sex offenders who have failed to register as a sex offender. It provides $12.5 million in funding for the U.S. Attorneys Offices to prosecute child pornographers and people who exploit children.

This amendment does not include any new spending. This amendment is offset by eliminating the $25 million in funding in this bill for the Department of State's Educational and Culturing Exchange Program. While that might be a worthy program, certainly I do not believe it compares to the priority of locking up sexual predators and protecting the children of the United States. Earlier this year, just less than 2 months ago, we provided over $445 million for this same exchange program.

There are many true emergencies, but this Congress is required to make difficult decisions. We were elected to make sure that we spend money on what is most important. For a parent, protecting their child from harm is one of their top priorities. It certainly is for myself and my wife. Protecting children from an online predator has to be absolutely one of our nation's top priorities. That is why I believe my amendment is necessary.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, we know there are about 100,000 unregistered sex offenders in the United States.

The dangers these predators present to our children are very serious. Last year, I chaired a subcommittee hearing at the Commerce Committee about this very issue. What we discovered—what the testimony revealed was shocking. The average sexual predator who targets females will molest, on average, 130 young girls over the predator's lifetime. Let me say that again, on average one predator will victimize 130 young girls.

If the predator targets males, the predator will molest 180 young boys. I know that these statics sound so unbelievable that they could not possible be true, but sadly they are. That is why the dangers these predators present to our children is very real.

Giving law enforcement the tools to track down unregistered sex offenders, to give prosecutors the tools to prosecute people who exploit these children is critical.

I have heard from law enforcement agencies in my home State, that the Adam Walsh bill is making a real difference in our neighborhoods and communities.

Our children are safer for it. We need to continue to do everything in our power to eradicate child predators in our communities or as parents we won't be able to have a moment of peace. Too many families and children have been victimized by these predators who leave wounds that do not heal. That is why we must commit the resources necessary to protect our children. That is why I believe that funding the Adam Walsh bill is so important. I urge my colleagues to adopt this important amendment.

Now, I am sure that cultural exchange is important, but can we compare cultural exchange programs to the importance of protecting the American children? Madam President, I think not. I would urge my colleagues to adopt this amendment unanimously.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 675

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I have an amendment at the desk. My amendment deletes unrelated measures to the spending bill. It includes a number of things, as you know, that we have talked about some. It includes the Transportation Department backlog of $389 million; fisheries, $216 million; conservation security, $115 million; tree assistance, $40 million; asbestos abatement, $25 million; Presidential nominating conventions, $180 million; MILC programs, $31 million; LIHEAP, $640.

As you know, the purpose of this bill is an emergency spending bill. I came to the floor during the budget debate to express my displeasure about the process and specifically with emergency spending. The bill before us now is a prime example. It started out as $100 billion in emergency spending for ongoing combat, added another $18 billion of additional nonemergency spending and a host of other things.

So I simply wish to make it clear that these provisions—many of them have merit, no question about that but, unfortunately, this bill is not where they belong. It is the wrong vehicle. I have tried for a number of years to get drought relief in the normal course of funding and will continue to do that for agriculture. But it does not make it emergency spending.

So, in any event, in the beginning of the fiscal year, Members of the Senate have said they were going to get our financial house in order. We are hoping to do that. I think this is not the way to do that. The American public deserves to know whether Members of the Senate who have committed themselves to get their financial house in order will back up their words with action.

So these are extraneous provisions that have little or nothing to do with meeting the supplies needed by our troops. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment. I have amendment 675 at the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I am disappointed that the majority has not allowed me the chance to offer my amendment. We have a long tradition of Members debating and considering amendments. I have been denied the opportunity, and other Members have been denied the opportunity. I am very sorry for that.

I think it is fair to say the majority party in the Senate is attempting to turn the body into the House where the rights of the minority are ignored.

It is a sad day for the body. The American public wants Congress to debate these tough issues. In any event, after the election, the new majority indicated it will not be business as usual.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Colorado be recognized for 7 minutes and that upon the completion of his remarks or yielding back of his time we revert to the regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Washington for allowing me to speak and granting me the time right here in my schedule.

I rise today to reflect on the current emergency supplemental bill that is before us. I believe, as many do in this body, the current situation in Iraq is not sustainable but that it requires positive change, not defeatism. I think the worst thing we could do would be to give the terrorists of the world an opportunity to declare victory. In the long run, that would make it more difficult to assure Americans will be safe.

This bill includes conditions that do not support the commanders on the ground and sets artificial deadlines for troop withdrawal. I have consistently said we should give the President's plan time to work. There are signs it is.

I read today General McCaffrey's assessment. While not upbeat, he did find that ''the situation on the ground has clearly and measurably improved.'' He says we have ''little time left.'' I agree. But ''little time'' is not to set a deadline. Doing so changes the entire strategic picture. If you will forgive me some frivolity, it is the difference between the 2-minute warning and the ninth inning. We do not want to let the insurgents know they just have to let the clock run down. The insurgents might not be actually watching C–SPAN, but they do know what we do here, what we say here and can plan accordingly. This is not the time to micromanage the war from Washington and the Congress.

Outside this body, decisions have been made for a new direction in Iraq. The President has laid out his new strategy to the public. ADM William Fallon is in place as CENTCOM commander whose area of responsibility is Iraq. We have a new commander of our forces in Iraq, and that is GEN David Petraeus. Let me remind those who need to hear it that we sent him to Iraq by a vote of 81 to 0 to win, not to withdraw. Soon we will have a new diplomatic team on the ground in Baghdad as well.

This shift in strategies also includes something I believe is absolutely imperative to success: a real commitment from the Iraqi Prime Minister to get his Government to play a much stronger role in the destiny of Iraq. The President is confident we now have that commitment. I hope we can move on to more pressing issues in the Senate rather than repeating the same ones time and again.

One reason I do not support the withdrawal language is I believe it is based on an assumption that by leaving Iraq Americans will be safer. The terrorists have made it abundantly clear that Iraq is central to their war against the civilized world. They are committed to fighting there and will not stop unless we defeat them. If we have to fight, it is preferable not to fight on our own soil.

We are also facing a credible veto threat. This bill is going nowhere—at least nowhere beyond the President's desk, which means we are delaying the needed funds for our military. This is no surprise. The President has been very clear. When he has been this clear, he has not deviated from his described track that he will follow.

I hope we can get past this and move on to more pressing issues such as passing a bill that will provide our troops the money they need.

Finally, I will not support this bill because the last thing we need to do in Congress is hurt the morale or the mission of our men and women fighting in Iraq, especially when we have adopted the President's plan, which is a brandnew plan to succeed in Iraq. I believe it is the right course for our troops on the ground at this time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Idaho be allowed to speak for 5 minutes, that the Senator from Vermont be allowed to speak for 1 minute, and that the Senator from Illinois be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, first of all, I thank the manager of the bill, the Senator from Washington.

Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the dangers of congressional micromanagement of war and the dangers of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. Yesterday, the Senate cast a historic vote to withdrawal our troops from a field of combat. I believe that this vote was a mistake of enormous proportions. Now both the Senate and House have included language in an emergency supplemental funding bill to micromanage the war and take the authority from our commanding officers and our Commander in Chief. The President has rightly expressed his concern over this legislation, stated that he will veto this legislation, and I will vote to uphold his veto.

The commanding general in Iraq, General Petraeus, had a large part in drafting this new plan forward. Yet now, numerous Senators have called to override his expertise and pull out our troops before this plan has time to work. We are not a body of generals, but of policy makers, and therefore we should not be in the business of setting arbitrary deadlines for retreat, deadlines which are rejected by our military commanders and the Commander

in Chief. It is the responsibility of the civilian leadership to set the political goals of an engagement, but leave the strategy decisions to the experts, the military leadership. It is clear to me that the majority leadership in the House and Senate see fit to preempt our military experts and inject their own political ideals into our Nation's military strategy. I believe that such actions are a great disservice to our men and women fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I will continue to oppose their continued efforts to command our military tactics from the U.S. Capitol Building.

This bill contains critical funding for our military to ensure that our soldiers do receive the body armor, up-armored HMMWVs, and other necessary equipment to keep them safe in combat and allow them to seek out and destroy our enemies. The majority party is using this bill to play politics and score points with their base, delaying these necessary funds from reaching our troops. It is absolutely regrettable that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle voted to include this defeatist language on this critical funding bill for our soldiers.

I have heard a lot of my colleagues speak out against this war because of the duration of the war, that we have been in Iraq longer than in World War II, and that because of the duration of our efforts, we should simply retreat and come home. The fact is, we are not engaged against a standing Nazi German Army. While the United States continues to base large numbers of soldiers in Europe and on the DMZ in South Korea, we are told by some of our colleagues in the majority that we need to remove our footprint from Iraq completely and immediately, and allow these radical fundamentalists to butcher each other in our wake and create a new safe haven for terrorism in the Middle East.

Our soldiers in Iraq are fighting an insurgency that wears no uniform and fights with remote-controlled devices so they remain hidden on the battlefield making the job of our soldiers that much more difficult, but also making it that much more important that our Government continue to support their mission. No, this is not World War II. But the seriousness of this war is just as critical to the security of our country and the world.

I have stood on this floor several times this year talking not only about the implications to Iraq if we were to suddenly pull our troops out without a stable government and security forces in place, but about the implications to our own national security and the larger Middle East. If we were to pull our troops out tomorrow, the kind of humanitarian crisis we would see in Iraq, which would spill into neighboring countries in the form of violence and refugees, would be astronomical.

What then? Do we send more troops back in? Do we rely on an ineffective United Nations to send in corrupt officials and peacekeepers in an attempt to regain some sort of control? No, I do not believe that the United States should nor can afford to do that, and I will not cast a vote on this floor to allow that to happen.

Stability in Iraq, my colleagues say, is merely a pipe dream. However, we have already seen this new strategy start to work. Violence is down in Baghdad and the insurgence and terrorists are pulling out of the capital city and fleeing to the outskirts. Without a stable Baghdad, the Iraqi Government cannot rule. Our soldiers, aided by the reinforcements sent to Iraq by President Bush, are working very hard to provide the stability they so desperately need. Like every Member of this Chamber, I believe that we need a political solution to the situation in Iraq. However, a political situation cannot be met if there is not stability in the capital city of Baghdad. Some of my colleagues believe that if we pull our troops out of Iraq immediately, the violence will cease and the Government will stand up. It is my belief that the exact opposite will occur.

As I mentioned, our success in Iraq does not contain itself within the borders of Iraq. Our moderate allies in the Middle East are also counting on our success in the region to ensure that radical states, such as Iran, do not expand their powerbase to the entire Middle East. Without success in Iraq, and stability in the Middle East, our security and that of our allies will be in serious jeopardy.

We are already seeing what an instable leader of Iran is capable of doing. After defying U.N. resolution after resolution, the Iranian Government is moving forward with the enrichment of uranium; a move that could someday soon give them nuclear weapons. Can we trust the Iranian Government not to use those weapons against Israel, a country that their President has blatantly stated should be ''wiped off the map'', or Europe, or elsewhere around the world? No, I do not believe we can trust their Government to live peacefully with nuclear weapons. And our presence in the Middle East, along with success in Iraq, will go a long way to prevent that and keep the Iranian Government contained.

To those who contend that the United States does not have a very real interest in the Middle East and in a stable Iraq, I would say you are wrong. We have both security and economic interests in this part of the world and we cannot ignore that fact. I have been actively engaged in our Nation's energy debates to break our dependency on foreign oil. However, I recognize that this is not a problem that can be achieved over night. Our Nation has a real dependency on Middle Eastern oil, and a destabilized Iraq or a Middle East dominated by Iran would cause serious turmoil in the world's oil market and the economies of the United States and the world. I am working very hard to move our economy away from this dependency on foreign oil, and move towards more domestic production; but I also realize that if we leave Iraq before it can be stabilized and allow the Middle East to fall into the hands of radical fundamentalists, our economy will be in very real trouble.

We live in very serious times, a world where our enemies do not observe internationally recognized sovereign boundaries or governments, but instead choose to rule by terror and fear. If we allow these tactics to govern our way of life instead of standing up to them, we are essentially inviting the fight to our own backyard. We have the battleground established and we are taking the fight to our enemies; yet we are being pushed by the Democrats to pull back from the fight, come home to our shores, and hope that our enemies do not cross the oceans and follow us home. In our modern world, the vast Pacific and Atlantic Oceans are not the barriers they once were, and we need to ensure we do not end up fighting our enemies at home, when we could fight them abroad.

I would like to close by saying, again, unequivocally, that I believe the vote yesterday to retreat from Iraq was a serious mistake. Our enemies now look upon the United States as a country with no resolve, a country that will cut and run when things get tough. That, I firmly believe, is a very dangerous message for this country to be sending to our enemies and our friends. The Congress has a responsibility to conduct oversight over wars and to provide the necessary funding for our soldiers; but Congress does not have, nor should it have, the responsibility to dictate war strategies and tactical decisions. Those decisions should and must be left to the Commander in Chief and our expert military commanders. The President has made very clear that this bill will be vetoed, and I will vote to uphold that veto. The Senate cast a dangerous precedent yesterday with a vote to play general in war, and I hope that future Congresses choose not to go down this path.

AMENDMENT NO. 672

Mr. President, the senior Senator from Washington, the manager of the bill, and I have worked cooperatively together over the last several years for VA funding. But as to the VA funding that is in this bill, while I am not going to quibble with the amount, I am going to discuss with you for a moment what it does and how it does it.

Before I explain to my colleagues the amendment I was going to offer—amendment No. 672 that the majority will disagree with, and I will not offer that amendment—I wish to talk about the context of what is being offered. Does that sound technical? Well, it is, and it is not.

Under the current appropriations law, VA's health care system is funded through three separate accounts: the medical services, the medical administration, and the medical facilities accounts. That may sound simple

enough. However, similar to a lot of things in health care, it is not simple at all.

Consider paying a chief of radiology at a VA hospital. You might say: Well, he is a health care provider and, therefore, should be paid out of the medical services account. However, some of what a chief does—monitoring credentials, overseeing reviews, ordering equipment, et cetera—is administrative in character. So some portion of his salary is literally charged to that account.

That is not simple accounting. It is literally two financial transactions from two separate accounts—just to pay one person's salary.

VA has tens of thousands of employees just like this one who must be paid out of at least two accounts. How cumbersome is this three-account structure? Consider this: Prior to the enactment of the three-account structure that we currently operate under, about 5 years ago, VA averaged 25,000 financial transactions each year to run its health care system—25,000 transactions.

Since we enacted the three-account structure, VA is averaging 70,000 transactions per year in operating the same system. I know some of my colleagues believe that three accounts help Congress better track VA spending in certain areas. However, we can track spending very effectively through VA's budgeting process; we do so on a quarterly basis today, and we are doing it effectively. We do not need 70,000 financial transactions to do that.

When you are talking bureaucracy, folks, this has become one of the biggest bureaucracies of the Federal Government. What is being offered in this supplemental is simply going to make it more bureaucratic.

Unfortunately, the legislation before us would exacerbate the problems associated with the three-account structure. That is because the bill carves out more accounts for specific types of care or care to specific populations.

For example, while the bill provides $454 million for the medical services account, it requires that VA ''quarantine'' $202 million of that money for use only in treating veterans of OIF and OEF. Further, the bill requires that $100 million be fenced off and used only for mental health care, $30 million only for substance abuse treatment, and $20 million on readjustment counseling.

That all sounds great. But here is the problem: The problem is that as the money makes its way down to the VA facilities in all our States, be it in Spokane or Walla Walla or Boise, ID, all the States and local managers will be confronted with the task of trying to find out which account to charge when, for example, providing care to an OIF veteran for substance abuse treatment and anger management counseling.

Which account do I charge? If I charge the wrong account, I complicate the process. Does that visit get charged to an OIF or an OEF account? The mental health account? The substance abuse account? The readjustment counseling account? Who knows?

Under what is happening tonight, we are complicating that process dramatically, and the issue goes on and on.

I respect very much the right of Congress to give direction to the executive branch on how to spend the public's money. But I would respectfully suggest that specificity of this type in the operations of a health care system belongs more appropriately in report language, not in bill language.

I realize that this is a small amount of money in the larger scheme of a $36 billion VA budget. But, it sets a precedent for funding that I believe is wrong and we must stop. Unfortunately, Republicans have been complicit in this type of budgeting already—over my objections.

A few years ago, the House of Representatives sent the Senate an Appropriations bill that required at least $2.2 billion of VA's overall budget be spent on mental health treatment. In spite of my private objections to the Appropriations Committee at the time, that language was retained. Congress just had to show it cared about mental health treatment.

Well, here we are now carving out money not just for mental health care, but also substance abuse, blind rehabilitation, readjustment assistance, et cetera.

Where does it end? I think it should end here. If we do not stop this type of appropriating, we are very soon going to find ourselves inundated with special funding requests for ''politically popular'' types of health care. What we must remember is that VA clinicians provide comprehensive medical services to all of their patients—even the kind that isn't considered ''politically special care''.

We simply should not get in the business of feeding the politics of health care by carving out specific accounts for certain types of care. I realize it is good politics. But it is bad government and very bad medicine. And it creates even more complications with the actual financial operations of the VA health care system. We will soon approach 100,000 transactions to do the same job.

I urge my colleagues to stop this bad trend from continuing.

Mr. President, the reality is, I was not going to change the money; I was simply going to simplify the process. To be politically correct, we are making this process so complicated the question is: What account do I charge so I am not in violation of the law?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator from Idaho has expired.

The Senator from Vermont.

AMENDMENT NO. 649

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am sorry I even have to be on the floor, but I know the Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. COBURN, offered an amendment to strike a $2 million provision in the supplemental designated for the James M. Jeffords Institute. That is something, incidentally, that is already 100 percent paid for. It is not like the $1 trillion the Senator from Oklahoma supports for a needless war in Iraq.

The money, the $2 million identified to fund this center, is not designated as emergency or new. It is funded through a rescission to already existing dollars for the current fiscal year. It was going to be appropriated last year, but we never finished our appropriations bills and had to go to a continuing resolution.

These funds were included because Senator Jeffords championed policy initiatives and investments that focused on the long-term well-being and educational needs of all Americans. It was put in in a bipartisan way by Senators from both parties reflecting that.

Along with the leadership of the Appropriations Committee and the Senate, on both sides of the aisle, I felt this would be a fitting way to honor Senator Jeffords' service to our country while there is still time. Clearly, Senator COBURN does not feel that way. Sadly, that is not going to happen today. I think it is a disgrace.

Mr. President, as I said, I am disheartened that I need to come to the Senate floor to debate an amendment this afternoon that would strike a $2 million provision in the supplemental designated for the James M. Jeffords Institute that is 100 percent paid for already.

The U.S. Senate has many important issues to deal with right now. And this is just not one of them.

The Senator from Oklahoma has every right to offer this amendment. It is interesting, however, that he does not find it a priority to question the $1 trillion that our country has spent to fight the war in Iraq.

I can comfortably conclude, and this will be no surprise to the Senator from Oklahoma, that we share a different view about what the U.S. Senate should take time to debate on the floor.

The fiscal year 2007 supplemental appropriations bill includes $2 million to further the establishment of the James M. Jeffords Institute, a center for educational excellence at the University of Vermont. This is an effort to acknowledge the long and distinguished service to Vermont and our Nation of our former colleague and friend, Senator Jim Jeffords, in promoting educational and policy excellence in the fields of education, environment, health, and agriculture.

As a tribute to Senator Jeffords for his 32 years of service in both the House and Senate, $3 million was included in the fiscal year 2007 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill to support the UVM Education in Excellence program. However, because the fiscal year 2007 appropriations bills were left uncompleted by the last Congress, and

due to the need to wrap up the process with a continuing resolution, this program, which had been the work of Senator Jeffords, was not funded.

Senator Jeffords did not seek reelection last fall so he could spend more time with his family and to address ongoing health issues. I am sad to note that these health issues continue.

In light of these developments with his health, I have worked with the chairmen of the Appropriations Committee and Labor-HHS Subcommittee and Senate leadership to include funding for the Jeffords Institute in the bill we now consider.

I will note that the $2 million identified to fund the center is not designated emergency or new. The project is funded through a rescission to already existing dollars for the current fiscal year and therefore does not increase the overall spending level of this bill or existing fiscal year 2007 spending levels.

Throughout his life in public service, Senator Jeffords championed policy initiatives and investments that focus on and enhance the overall well-being and educational success of individuals from early childhood through later years.

He championed legislation to strengthen our Nation's education system and increase the opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In 1975, he entered the House of Representatives as a new Member wearing a neck brace—as Jim was fond of saying, he was the walking wounded from a tough election—and went on to coauthor what would later be known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA. That landmark legislation has provided equal access to education for millions of students with disabilities, students who otherwise would have been shunted aside and this country would not have had the value of their achievements. As chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee, he continued to work tirelessly on education, job training, and disability legislation.

The Jeffords Institute continues those efforts by identifying and developing research and best practices that inform educational and social policies on early childhood, literacy, and youth development. A major focus of the institute will include collaboration with and preparation of teachers, administrators, and policymakers in the development and implementation of programs, policies, and practices that lead to positive, demonstrable outcomes in education and policy practices. Beyond the initial focus, which Senator Jeffords has been instrumental in shaping, the institute will expand its efforts to address policy and practice in the fields of environmental, health, and agriculture and their interrelationship with one another, with education being the overarching mission.

Senator COBURN's amendment to strike this provision from the supplemental appropriations bill is ill-considered. I think my colleagues will agree that Senator Jim Jeffords served Vermont well and, just as importantly, he served the House, Senate, and our Nation well. Were circumstances different, I would say that we could wait and find regular appropriations vehicles through which to fund this project.

I, along with the leadership of the Appropriations Committee and the Senate, believe this would be a fitting way to honor Senator Jeffords' service to our country while there is still time. Clearly, Senator COBURN does not feel that way. Sadly, that will not happen today. But I expect that the Senate will in due time give proper recognition to Senator Jeffords who we are so proud of in Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, earlier today, when I was at a hearing, my friend and colleague from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, came to the floor to speak about a provision which I have added to this bill. I would like to address Senator GRASSLEY's remarks.

Senator GRASSLEY said that an amendment which I added in the Appropriations Committee, in his words, would ''lead to anarchy in the Medicaid financial arrangements.'' He said it would prevent CMS from taking any action relating to the rules related to Medicaid reimbursement and SCHIP reimbursement.

Senator GRASSLEY recounted a time not that long ago when there was abuse of the Medicaid Program; where, in fact, States had figured ways to receive Medicaid funds and multiply them through accounting methods and use them in many instances for other purposes. In fact, Senator GRASSLEY talked about the fact that under this behavior of the past, the money the States managed to multiply through accounting techniques could be used for roads or for stadium construction. That is true. I thought it was an outrage. As a result, there was a hue and cry on Capitol Hill for a change in the law or more enforcement and these abuses were rooted out. I am happy to say my State of Illinois did not participate in any of these scams. I am proud they did not. Other States did, and it stopped, as it should have.

Then there was a negotiation between the Federal Government and States about this Medicaid formula. It is extremely complex. I wish it were as easy as some would portray, but it is not. So many States had negotiated with the Federal Government to reduce the Medicaid payments or to adjust Medicaid payments to acceptable levels. Many provisions of Medicaid reimbursement that had been agreed to by the Federal Government were changed and amended. That happened. The Federal Government, through CMS, had the authority to do that, and they did.

There are still several States in negotiation about this reimbursement from the Federal Government. I am hoping that negotiation will end in a positive way, as others have in the past, and I think it will. In the meantime, the Department of Health and Human Services comes in with a rule, a proposed rule, and says: Well, we would like to change the law in terms of these Medicaid reimbursements. Unfortunately, this rule they proposed is so sweeping it would cut off in my State of Illinois some $600 million in reimbursement to Medicaid providers, primarily public hospitals serving poor people.

I want this negotiation to continue. Clearly the Federal Government has the authority to continue this negotiation. I will not stand and defend any misuse of Federal funds or fraud. My concern, and the reason I offered this amendment, was the rule is so sweeping it goes too far.

Senator GRASSLEY has made a point, and others have backed him up, that this is probably the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee of the Senate, not the Appropriations Committee that brings this bill to the floor. I will acknowledge that point, but I also want to make it clear, this isn't the first time we have talked about this issue. In fact, it has been 2 years now when Senator GRASSLEY was chairman of the Finance Committee that we appealed to him to have Congress take the initiative and work out this problem. Unfortunately, Senator GRASSLEY couldn't schedule it in his busy schedule on the Finance Committee, and nothing was done.

The purpose of this amendment is simply to declare a moratorium on the new rule until we can put together this new approach through the Finance Committee. That is it. I am not standing here to defend any fraudulent practices. I don't want to take away from our Government any powers to enforce the law to stop any waste of taxpayers' dollars, but I want to make one point clear as well. When our State of Illinois entered into an agreement with the Federal Government about Medicaid reimbursement, it wasn't so we could use some backhanded accounting approach to build a road or a stadium. No. What we tried to do was to use accounting methods which would increase our opportunity to provide medical services to poor people and uninsured people. Our money we are receiving through Medicaid is used for health care and health care exclusively. This is the way it should be. It is a Medicaid program for health care. What we have done in Illinois with these funds is extend the reach of health care to uninsured people and provide services that otherwise would not be provided, such as specialized services many poor people never have a chance to receive.

I am proud our State has used this opportunity to expand care to people who need it: neonatal care for children who were born too soon and need the absolute best care immediately, and specialized care for those in every stage of life that otherwise wouldn't be available to them.

I say to my colleagues first, Senator GRASSLEY is right, we should not tolerate fraud in any way in Medicaid. This amendment does not. Secondly, we should urge every State to negotiate their accounting standards so they are consistent with the Federal Government, and I think that is taking place and should continue. In addition, I think this rule needs to be stopped at this point in time. Let the Finance Committee step in. Let us come up with an approach that works. In the meantime, some States that could be affected by this rule are concerned. If there is a cutoff of funds from the Federal Government to treat poor people, we know what will happen. These people will fall between the cracks, they will come to an emergency room for charitable care if they are lucky, they won't have the preventive care they need to keep themselves and their families happy, and they will pay a price in their life in terms of the quality and length of their own lives that are at stake here.

I urge my colleagues: Let's keep this provision in this supplemental appropriations bill. I urge my colleague Senator GRASSLEY, whom I dearly respect as a real leader here in the Senate, to work with Senator BAUCUS and others. Let us address this issue, not with this sword hanging over our heads about a rule that could come down and cut off hundreds of millions of dollars worth of funds for health care for poor people, but in a rational way that gives to each State what it is entitled to, and no more.

Mr. President, I ask how much time I have remaining on the time allocated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 3 minutes remaining.

AMENDMENT NO. 784

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I also wish at this moment to mention an amendment I am going to offer to this supplemental appropriation to increase funding for international peacekeeping by $50 million. It is amendment No. 784, cosponsored by—I am not offering it at this time, but I will at a later time—Senators BIDEN, MENENDEZ, LEVIN, and others, to meet the urgent needs in Darfur, Sudan, and the surrounding region.

I believe these urgent peacekeeping needs constitute a true emergency by definition in this bill and should be funded. That was the amendment I originally filed and my colleagues joined in cosponsoring. I also recognize we are under severe budgetary pressure and I have been told I have to find an offset for the $50 million.

I do this with reluctance, but let me share with my colleagues a few numbers. The United States has spent $592 million in the construction of a gigantic Baghdad embassy—$592 million. For 2007 and 2008, the administration has requested $2.8 billion for mission operations in Iraq. To put this in perspective, the State Department's request for diplomatic and consular operations for the rest of the world for fiscal year 2008 is $5 billion. So $2.8 billion for Iraq, $5 billion for the world. This supplemental as passed out of the committee contains over $700 million for diplomatic and consular operations intended for Iraq.

This amendment, as I modified it, would shift $50 million from this sum to peacekeeping. Why do we need the peacekeeping? Because there are 7,000 African Union forces who are doing their best to protect hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of poor people in Darfur. I think this $50 million is not too much to ask. A slight trim, a little trim on the money that might be available for the $592 million Baghdad embassy, is not something that is unreasonable. They will have time to come back for more money if they need it.

At the appropriate moment I will offer this amendment. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, a few moments ago the Senator from Idaho came to the floor to talk about an amendment he had regarding the language in the underlying bill covering veterans and he described it as ''too prescriptive.'' I think it is imperative that we keep the language the way it is written.

For 4 years, the Bush administration has conducted this war with very little regard for the tremendous strain it is putting on the VA and it is putting on veterans and their families. Last month we saw this horrible reality exposed at Walter Reed. So today, in this supplemental bill, we are helping to put an end to that neglect. We are not going to wait for the President to fix these problems. We have waited too long. We are facing the cost of war in the supplemental, and we are putting the money where it is needed.

This supplemental does include $1.7 billion for veterans health funding. We put this money in because this administration has fallen short in meeting the needs of our returning veterans. The supplemental does direct the VA to prescriptively put in $50 million for new polytrauma centers, as we have learned of the traumatic brain injury impact to many soldiers and their families. It does direct $100 million for mental health care, because we know more than a third of our soldiers who are returning home are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome and too often are being turned away for care. It does include $201 million to treat these recently returning veterans, because we know they are waiting in line and cannot get their benefits, and too many of them today are ending up homeless simply because they can't get the check they need to be able to pay for basic costs for themselves.

It does include $30 million for research on the best prosthetics for amputees. We were at the VA hearing a few days ago and heard from a wonderful woman, Tammy Duckworth, talking about our veterans today who are coming back who need prosthetics, not just to be able to walk but to be able to ski or to be able to rock climb. Those are the kinds of prosthetics that take a great deal of training. We want to make sure those young men and women who are coming back today who have lost limbs have the best prosthetics available for what they need in their lives. It does include $870 million to fix those problems that were uncovered at the VA facilities across the country, not just at Walter Reed, but for tiles falling off ceilings, bats that haven't been eliminated in Oregon, facilities that have peeling paint at care facilities that would not be accepted by any of us in this country. It does include $46 million to hire new claims processors so our veterans don't have to wait for their benefits.

Why are we being so prescriptive? Well, we are here today because we have seen the VA not spend the dollars wisely, to move the dollars around in different accounts to cover the lack of funding they have needed, and we are going to make sure in this bill we take care of the needs we have heard so vividly about from so many men and women who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan and around the globe, and who are facing long lines, who aren't getting the mental health care they need, who need access to care for traumatic brain injuries, the signature injury of this war, and we are going to make sure we hold this administration accountable by finally being prescriptive so it is spent wisely.

I reject the Senator from Idaho's arguments on our amendment, and I think we have wisely held the administration and ourselves accountable to make sure the men and women who have served us so well are treated with respect when they come home.

Mr. President, we have a number of amendments we are going to go through at this time. I believe we are ready to accept them. I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 655

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 655 on behalf of Senator HUTCHISON and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mrs. HUTCHISON, proposes an amendment numbered 655.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To authorize the conveyance of a parcel of land for use for purposes of a prison in the State of Texas)

On page 28, between lines 18 and 19, insert the following:

SEC. 13___. (a)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (referred to in this section as the ''Secretary'') may convey to the State of Texas, without consideration, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the parcel of real property comprising the location of the Marlin, Texas, Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

(2) The property conveyed under paragraph (1) shall be used by the State of Texas for the purposes of a prison.

(b) In carrying out the conveyance under subsection (a), the Secretary—

(1) shall not be required to comply with, and shall not be held liable under, any Federal law (including a regulation) relating to the environment or historic preservation; but

(2) may, at the discretion of the Secretary, conduct environmental cleanup on the parcel to be conveyed, at a cost not to exceed $500,000, using amounts made available for environmental cleanup of sites under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this amendment has been cleared on both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 655) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 666

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 666 on behalf of Senator CLINTON.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mrs. CLINTON, proposes an amendment numbered 666.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To link award fees under Department of Homeland Security contacts to successful acquisition outcomes under such contracts)

At the end of chapter 5 of title I, add the following:

SEC. 1503. LINKING OF AWARD FEES UNDER DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY CONTRACTS TO SUCCESSFUL ACQUISITION OUTCOMES.

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall require that all contracts of the Department of Homeland Security that provide award fees link such fees to successful acquisition outcomes (which outcomes shall be specified in terms of cost, schedule, and performance).

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I believe this amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, what is this amendment?

Mrs. MURRAY. Amendment No. 666 on behalf of Senator CLINTON.

Mr. COCHRAN. We have no objection to this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 666) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 685, AS MODIFIED

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 685 on behalf of Senator KENNEDY, with a modification, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. KENNEDY, proposes an amendment numbered 685, as modified.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

On page 93, between lines 9 and 10.

SEC. ____. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, none of the funds in this or any other Act shall be used to reorganize or relocate the functions of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) until the Secretary of Defense has submitted, not later than December 31, 2007, a detailed plan and timetable for the proposed reorganization and relocation to the Committees on Appropriations and Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives. The plan shall take into consideration the recommendations of a study being prepared by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), provided that such study is available not later than 45 days before the date specified in this section, on the impact of dispersing selected functions of AFIP among several locations, and the possibility of consolidating those functions at one location. The plan shall include an analysis of the options for the location and operation of the Program Management Office for second opinion consults that are consistent with the recommendations of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, together with the rationale for the option selected by the Secretary.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. We have no objection to this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment, as modified.

The amendment (No. 685), as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 674

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 674 on behalf of Senator COCHRAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. COCHRAN, proposes an amendment numbered 674.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(Purpose: To require the reports on the progress of the Government of Iraq in meeting benchmarks to be submitted jointly by the Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, and the United States Ambassador to Iraq)

On page 28, beginning on line 14, strike ''the Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq shall submit'' and insert ''the Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq and the United States Ambassador to Iraq shall jointly submit''.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, there is certainly no objection to the Cochran amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 674) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 687, AS MODIFIED

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 687 on behalf of Senator KERRY and send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. KERRY, and Mr. HAGEL, proposes an amendment numbered 687, as modified.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 70, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

SEC. 2403. RESERVIST PROGRAMS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

(1) the term ''activated'' means receiving an order placing a Reservist on active duty;

(2) the term ''active duty'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code;

(3) the terms ''Administration'' and ''Administrator'' mean the Small Business Administration and the Administrator thereof, respectively;

(4) the term ''Reservist'' means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code;

(5) the term ''Service Corps of Retired Executives'' means the Service Corps of Retired Executives authorized by section 8(b)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(b)(1));

(6) the term ''small business concern'' has the meaning given that term in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632);

(7) the term ''small business development center'' means a small business development center described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648); and

(8) the term ''women's business center'' means a women's business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

(b) APPLICATION PERIOD.—Section 7(b)(3)(C) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(C)) is amended by striking ''90 days'' and inserting ''1 year''.

(c) PRE-CONSIDERATION PROCESS.—

(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ''eligible Reservist'' means a Reservist who—

(A) has not been ordered to active duty;

(B) expects to be ordered to active duty during a period of military conflict; and

(C) can reasonably demonstrate that the small business concern for which that Reservist is a key employee will suffer economic injury in the absence of that Reservist.

(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall establish a preconsideration process, under which the Administrator—

(A) may collect all relevant materials necessary for processing a loan to a small business concern under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) before an eligible Reservist employed by that small business concern is activated; and

(B) shall distribute funds for any loan approved under subparagraph (A) if that eligible Reservist is activated.

(d) OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense, shall develop a comprehensive outreach and technical assistance program (in this subsection referred to as the ''program'') to—

(A) market the loans available under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) to Reservists, and family members of Reservists, that are on active duty and that are not on active duty; and

(B) provide technical assistance to a small business concern applying for a loan under that section.

(2) COMPONENTS.—The program shall—

(A) incorporate appropriate websites maintained by the Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Defense; and

(B) require that information on the program is made available to small business concerns directly through—

(i) the district offices and resource partners of the Administration, including small business development centers, women's business centers, and the Service Corps of Retired Executives; and

(ii) other Federal agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

(3) REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 6 months thereafter until the date that is 30 months after such date of enactment, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include—

(i) for the 6-month period ending on the date of that report—

(I) the number of loans approved under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3));

(II) the number of loans disbursed under that section; and

(III) the total amount disbursed under that section; and

(ii) recommendations, if any, to make the program more effective in serving small business concerns that employ Reservists.

AMENDMENT NO. 687

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I wish to speak to an amendment that, if enacted, will serve to fix a program at the Small Business Administration, SBA, that was designed to help small businesses dependent on a military reservist who is called to active duty. Since 2002, fewer than 300 loans have been made to these businesses, despite seemingly ever-increasing numbers of reservists sent overseas. Reservists and their small businesses have been asked to sacrifice enough without having to incur the financial hardships associated with business failure, and we should be doing everything we can to help these businesses stay afloat.

According to a February 2007 report by the General Comptroller's Office, there are approximately 1.1 million reservists serving our country today, which represents about 44 percent of the Nation's entire military force. On March 1, 2007, the Independent Commission on the National Guard and Reserves issued an interim report stating that, since September 11, 2001, the deployments of U.S. military reservists have risen from approximately 12.7 million days of annual service to an estimated 63 million days in 2006.

Additionally, a recent Congressional Budget Office, CBO, analysis finds that only about 6 percent of businesses employ reservists. Smaller firms—those with fewer than 500 staff—employ 35 percent of all reservists. Eighteen percent of reservists work for firms with fewer than 100 employees. This report concluded that reservist activations are creating vacancies that firms would not otherwise have had, and, while larger businesses may absorb the loss of personnel at little cost, many small firms struggle to compensate for the absence of a key employee who has been called to active duty.

In an attempt to help reservists and businesses that incur economic hardships as a result of an essential employee or small firm owner being deployed, I authored legislation to create the Military Reservist Economic Injury Loan Program, MREIDL, in 1999. The program's goal is to assist reservist-dependent small businesses with the ordinary, day-to-day operating costs of running a business. The law provides these employees access to low interest loans from the SBA when they are called up to active duty.

Unfortunately, the intent of the law has not been put into action. Due to poor marketing of this program and the inability of a business to apply for a loan prior to a reservist's being called to active duty, as well as a very limited window of time in which a business can apply for a loan following a reservist's discharge, businesses are either reluctant to take on additional debt due to already declining revenues or are unaware of the program altogether.

My amendment serves to address these issues. First, my amendment extends the window of time for a reservist dependent business to apply for a loan from 90 days following the date of discharge to 1 full year. Reservists need ample time to return and get their feet underneath them. Often 90 days is not enough time to realize that the business is in need of assistance. This extension will allow a returning reservist to better understand the financial situation and to act accordingly in a reasonable amount of time.

Second, this amendment directs the SBA to create a preapproval process for reservist dependent businesses so that businesses can begin to draw down funds immediately upon the reservist being called to duty. Businesses that depend on reservists should not have to wait until they are failing in order to receive the financial assistance they require to stay afloat.

Third, this amendment establishes a coordinated, proactive marketing plan to be conducted by the SBA, the Veterans' Administration, and the Department of Defense to more effectively get information in the hands of reservists and their families. This program is of little help unless reservists and their families are aware of its benefits, and this provision addresses that simple fact.

Finally, the amendment directs the SBA to report back to the Small Business Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the status of this program, as well as additional steps that may be taken to improve the program for reservist-dependent small businesses.

Mr. President, this is a noncontroversial amendment that simply seeks to fix a program that is not serving its original intent. The provisions in this amendment, including the extension of the application period and the preapproval process, were created in response to testimony heard earlier this year during a hearing in the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, which I chaired and at which the administration testified. These are commonsense solutions for fixing this program and for helping our small business owners who have sacrificed the service of a key employee to military service. These small businesses are serving their country in a time of war. They should not be asked to sacrifice their livelihood as well. I would like to thank Senator HAGEL for his support of this important amendment. I ask my colleagues to support this amendment as well.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator SPECTER and I have joined together to offer amendment No. 755 the supplemental appropriations bill to authorize a cost-of-living adjustment, COLA, for the salaries of Justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2007.

I thank my friend, Senator SPECTER, for his leadership on this issue. I also thank the chairman of the Financial Services Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator DURBIN, and the chairman of the full Appropriations Committee, Senator BYRD, for working with us on the modifications made to this amendment.

This is a step I supported taking—and that we should have taken—in the last Congress. As the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I have worked diligently to preserve the independence of our Federal judiciary and to treat its members fairly.

At the beginning of this Congress, Senator SPECTER and I introduced legislation, S. 197, to authorize this COLA.

It passed the Senate by unanimous consent and now awaits consideration by the House. That bipartisan effort—designed to protect and strengthen the integrity and independence of our co-equal branch of government—is a modest step towards addressing the issues raised by Chief Justice Roberts in his ''Year End Report on the Federal Judiciary.''

In 1975, Congress enacted the Executive Salary Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, intended to give judges, Members of Congress and other high-ranking executive branch officials automatic COLAs as accorded other Federal employees unless specifically rejected by Congress. In 1981, Congress enacted section 140 of Public Law 97–92, mandating specific congressional action to give COLAs to judges. During the 21 years of section 140's existence, Congress has always accorded to the Federal judiciary co-equal respect by suspending section 140 whenever Congress has granted to itself and other Federal employees a COLA.

The modified bipartisan amendment offered by Senator SPECTER and I today authorizes a COLA for Federal judges consistent with the law and with fairness. The fiscal year 2007 joint funding resolution approved by Congress and signed into law by the President earlier this year increased the Judiciary budget by $250 million over fiscal year 2006 levels. It did not, however, suspend section 140, thus ensuring that no COLA would be provided for Federal judges during the current fiscal year unless other action is taken. Our amendment will rectify that situation.

I thank my colleagues for agreeing to this amendment to authorize the annual judicial COLA in fiscal year 2007. With it, we take another step toward preserving the judicial independence critical for upholding our system of government and protecting the rights of all Americans.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment also has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. It has been cleared on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 687), as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 727

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 727 on behalf of Senator STEVENS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. STEVENS, proposes an amendment numbered 727.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To make a technical correction regarding the availability of funds from the Iraq Freedom Fund)

At the end of chapter 3 of title I, add the following:

SEC. 1316. REDEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN IRAQ.

Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''IRAQ FREEDOM FUND'', up to $100,000,000 may be obligated and expended for purposes of the Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations in Iraq.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. We have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 727) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 732, AS MODIFIED

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 732 on behalf of Senators LANDRIEU, VITTER, and INHOFE and send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Ms. LANDRIEU, for herself, Mr. VITTER, and Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 732, as modified.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place in title II Chapter 3 General Provisions, insert the following:

Section __. The Chief of Engineers shall investigate the overall technical advantages, disadvantages and operational effectiveness of operating the new pumping stations at the mouths of the 17th Street, Orleans Avenue and London Avenue canals in the New Orleans area directed for construction in Public Law 109–234 concurrently or in series with existing pumping stations serving these canals and the advantages, disadvantages and technical operational effectiveness of removing the existing pumping stations and configuring the new pumping stations and associated canals to handle all needed discharges; and the advantages, disadvantages and technical operational effectiveness of replacing or improving the floodwalls and levees adjacent to the three outfall canals: Provided, That the analysis should be conducted at Federal expense: Provided further, that the analysis shall be completed and furnished to the Congress not later than three months after enactment of this Act.

SEC. __. Using funds made available in Chapter 3 under Title II of Public Law 109–234 (120 Stat. 453), under the heading ''Investigations'', the Secretary of the Army, in consultation with other agencies and the State of Louisiana shall accelerate completion as practicable the final report of the Chief of Engineers recommending a comprehensive plan to deauthorize deep draft navigation on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet: Provided, That the plan shall incorporate and build upon the Interim Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Deep-Draft De-Authorization Report submitted to Congress in December 2006 pursuant to Public Law 109–234.

SEC. __. (a) Section 111 of Public Law 108–137 [117 Stat. 1835] is amended by—

(1) adding the following language at the end of subsection (a):

'Such activities also may include the provision of financial assistance to facilitate the buy-out of properties located in areas identified by the State of Oklahoma as areas that are or will be at risk of damage caused by land subsidence and other necessary and closely associated properties otherwise identified by the State of Oklahoma; however, any buyout of such properties shall not be considered to be part of a Federally assisted program or project for purposes of 42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq., consistent with section 2301 of Public Law 109–234 [120 Stat. 455–456].'; and

(2) striking the first sentence of subsection (d) and inserting the following language in lieu thereof:

''(d) Non-Federal interests shall be responsible for operating and maintaining any restoration alternatives constructed or carried out pursuant to this section.' ''

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment is cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. I confirm that it has been cleared on this side of the aisle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 732), as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 755

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 755 on behalf of Senators LEAHY and SPECTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. LEAHY, for himself and Mr. SPECTER, proposes an amendment numbered 755.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide a cost of living adjustment for the Federal judiciary, and for other purpose)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

CHAPTER ___—THE JUDICIARY

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For an additional amount for ''SALARIES AND EXPENSES'' for the salaries of Justices of the Supreme Court, $27,000, *Provided*, That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For an additional amount for ''SALARIES AND EXPENSES'' for the salaries of the judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, $29,000, *Provided*, That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

UNITED STATES COURT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For an additional amount for ''SALARIES AND EXPENSES'' for the salaries of the judges of the United States Court of International

Trade, $18,000, *Provided,* That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

COURTS OF APPEALS, DISTRICT COURTS, AND OTHER JUDICIAL SERVICES

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For an additional amount for ''SALARIES AND EXPENSES'' for the salaries of the judges of the Courts of Appeals and District Courts, $5,279,000, *Provided,* That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

GENERAL PROVISIONS—THE JUDICIARY

SEC. _____. (a) Pursuant to section 140 of Public Law 97–92, justices and judges of the United States are authorized during fiscal year 2007 to receive a salary adjustment in accordance with section 461 of title 28, United States Code.

(b) This section shall be effective as of January 1, 2007, and shall apply only with respect to the salaries of justices and judges for whom appropriations are made available under this chapter, notwithstanding section 603 of title 28, United States Code, or similar provision of law.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. Yes, this amendment is cleared. We urge its adoption.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 755) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 772

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 772 on behalf of Senator SNOWE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Ms. SNOWE, proposes an amendment numbered 772.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To relieve burdens on small business concerns operating on Federal disaster projects and for other purposes)

On page 69, strike line 5 and all that follows through page 70, line 5, and insert the following:

(b) TERMINATION OF PROGRAM.—Section 711(c) of the Small Business Competitive Demonstration Program Act of 1988 (15 U.S.C. 644 note) is amended by inserting after ''January 1, 1989'' the following: '', and shall terminate on the date of enactment of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007''.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared.

Mr. COCHRAN. Yes, the amendment has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 772) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 776

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 776 on behalf of Senators LANDRIEU and COCHRAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Ms. LANDRIEU, for herself and Mr. COCHRAN, proposes an amendment numbered 776.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide funds to recruit and retain teachers, principals, and other school leaders to areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

HURRICANE EDUCATION RECOVERY

For carrying out activities authorized by subpart 1 of part D of title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, $30,000,000, to remain available until expended, for use by the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama primarily for recruiting, retaining, and compensating new and current teachers, principals, school leaders, and other educators for positions in public elementary and secondary schools located in an area with respect to which a major disaster was declared under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) by reason of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita, including through such mechanisms as paying salary premiums, performance bonuses, housing subsidies, and relocation costs, with priority given to teachers and school leaders who were displaced from, or lost employment in, Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama by reason of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita and who return to and are rehired by such State or local educational agency; *Provided*, That funds available under this heading to such States may also be used for 1 or more of the following activities: (1) to build the capacity of such public elementary and secondary schools to provide an effective education, including the design, adaptation, and implementation of high-quality formative assessments; (2) the establishment of partnerships with nonprofit entities with a demonstrated track record in recruiting and retaining outstanding teachers and other school leaders; and (3) paid release time for teachers and principals to identify and replicate successful practices from the fastest-improving and highest-performing schools: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Education shall allocate amounts available under this heading among such States that submit applications; that such allocation shall be based on the number of public elementary and secondary schools in each State that were closed for 19 days or more during the period beginning on August 29, 2005, and ending on December 31, 2005, due to Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita; and that such States shall in turn allocate funds, on a competitive basis, to local educational agencies, with priority given first to such agencies with the highest percentages of public elementary and secondary schools that are closed as a result of such hurricanes as of the date of enactment of this Act and then to such agencies with the highest percentages of public elementary and secondary schools with a student-teacher ratio of at least 25 to 1, and with any remaining amounts to be distributed to such agencies with demonstrated need, as determined by the State educational agency: *Provided further*, That, in the case of a State that chooses to use amounts available under this heading for performance bonuses, not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act and after consultation with, as applicable, local educational agencies, teachers' unions, local principals' organizations, local parents' organizations, local business organizations, and local charter schools organizations, such State shall establish and implement a rating system for such performance bonuses based on strong learning gains for students and growth in student achievement, based on classroom observation and feedback at least 4 times annually, conducted by multiple sources (including principals and master teachers), and evaluated against research-validated rubrics that use planning, instructional, and learning environment standards to measure teaching performance: *Provided further*, That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

HURRICANE EDUCATION RECOVERY

PROGRAMS TO RESTART SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Funds made available under section 102 of the Hurricane Education Recovery Act (title IV of division B of Public Law 109–148) may be used by the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, in addition to the uses of funds described in section 102(e) for the following costs: (1) recruiting, retaining and compensating new and current teachers, principals, school leaders, other school administrators, and other educators for positions in reopening public elementary and secondary schools impacted by Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita, including through such mechanisms as paying salary premiums, performance bonuses, housing subsidies and relocation costs; and (2) activities to build the capacity of reopening such public elementary and secondary schools to provide an effective education, including the design, adaptation, and implementation of high-quality formative assessments; the establishment of partnerships with nonprofit entities with a demonstrated track record in recruiting and retaining outstanding teachers and other school leaders; and paid release time for teachers and principals to identify and replicate successful practices from the fastest-improving and highest-performing schools: *Provided, further*, That in the case of a State that chooses to use amounts available under this heading for performance bonuses, not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and after consultation with, as applicable, local educational agencies, teachers' unions, local principals' organizations, local parents' organizations, local business organizations, and local charter schools organizations, such State shall establish and implement a rating system that shall be based on strong learning gains for students and growth in student achievement, based on classroom observation and feedback at least 4 times annually, conducted by multiple sources (including principals and master teachers), and evaluated against research-validated rubrics that use planning, instructional, and learning environment standards to measure teaching performance: *Provided further*, That the amount provided under this heading is designated as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress).

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared.

Mr. COCHRAN. Yes, this has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 776) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 793

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 793 on behalf of Senator KLOBUCHAR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Ms. KLOBUCHAR, proposes an amendment numbered 793.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide effective rural and small community assistance by the Environmental Protection Agency)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. In providing any grants for small and rural community technical and compliance assistance under the Fiscal Year 2007 Operating Plan of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall give priority to small systems and qualified (as determined by the Administrator) organizations that have the most need (or a majority of need) from small communities in each State.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. COCHRAN. Yes, it has been cleared on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 793) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 807

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 807 on behalf of Senator PRYOR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. PRYOR, proposes an amendment numbered 807.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To increase by $5,000,000 the amount available for the Department of Homeland Security for State and Local Programs and make the increase available for the Domestic Preparedness Equipment Technical Assistance Program and to provide an offset)

At the end of chapter 5 of title I, add the following:

SEC. 1503. DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS EQUIPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS.—The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS'' is hereby increased by $5,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS EQUIPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS'', as increased by subsection (a), $5,000,000 shall be available for the Domestic Preparedness Equipment Technical Assistance Program (DPETAP).

(c) OFFSET.—The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES'' is hereby reduced by $5,000,000.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has been cleared.

Mr. COCHRAN. This amendment is cleared on this side of the aisle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 807) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 835 TO AMENDMENT 700

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 835 on behalf of Senators COLEMAN, COCHRAN, and KLOBUCHAR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. COCHRAN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR, proposes an amendment numbered 835 to amendment No. 700.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for a hospital in Cass County, Minnesota and Kemper County, Mississippi)

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

(b) MEDICARE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL DESIGNATION.—Section 405(h) of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-173; 117 Stat. 2269) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) EXCEPTION.—

''(A) STATE OF MINNESOTA.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Minnesota on or after January 1, 2006, under section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (B) and is located in Cass County, Minnesota, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(B) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MINNESOTA.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) has been granted an exception by the State to an otherwise applicable statutory restriction on hospital construction or licensing prior to the date of enactment of this subparagraph; and

''(ii) is located on property which the State has approved for conveyance to a county within the State prior to such date of enactment.

''(C) STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Mississippi on or after April 1, 2007, under section 1820(c)(2)(b)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (D) and is located in Kemper County, Mississippi, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(D) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MISSISSIPPI.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) meets all other criteria for designation as a critical access hospital under section 1820(c)(2)(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B));

''(ii) has satisfied the requirement of the certificate of need laws and regulations of the State of Mississippi; and

''(iii) will be constructed on property that will be conveyed by the Kemper County Board of Supervisors within the State of Mississippi.''.

Mrs. MURRAY. This amendment has also been cleared.

Mr. COCHRAN. This amendment has been cleared on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 835) was agreed to.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I move that the votes by which the last 13 amendments were agreed to be reconsidered en bloc and that my motion be laid upon the table en bloc.

The motions to lay on the table were agreed to en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I now call for the regular order, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have been working for a little bit this afternoon—Senator MURRAY has been working all afternoon—trying to come to a conclusion on this legislation. Just a few moments ago, I spoke to the Republican Leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and we are very close to having an agreement on the universe of these amendments. We do not have it done yet, but we are close to doing that.

I think in fairness to everyone we should announce that there will be no more rollcall votes tonight. We are working on finishing this bill at a very early time tomorrow. Again, we do not have that done yet, but that should not prevent us from announcing that there will be no more rollcall votes tonight.

I appreciate very much Senator BYRD, and especially Senator PATTY MURRAY, working so hard on this all day. We have made great progress. We have a ways to go.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

AMENDMENT NO. 739

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

Mr. BIDEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. Madam President, I apologize for my formal dress. Like many here, including, I suspect, the two Senators from Washington, I am supposed to be attending the correspondents dinner tonight.

I am informed that my amendment will actually be called up tomorrow as part of a series of votes. I would like to speak tonight as I have been told there will not be adequate time tomorrow.

For my colleagues' information, the amendment I will be discussing is No. 739. I ask unanimous consent to add as cosponsors Senator BYRD of West Virginia, Senator BOND, Senator PRYOR, Senator KENNEDY, Senator DURBIN, and Senator KERRY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. Madam President, I wish to begin by stating very simply that this amendment is literally, not figuratively, a matter of life and death. I have been here for many years. I have never begun a discussion of an amendment—and I have sponsored some serious amendments and pieces of legislation—by saying something as graphic and drastic as this is literally a matter of life and death. But it is. This is not hyperbole. This is not an exaggeration.

What my amendment will do is allow the military to put 2,500 more mine resistant ambush protected vehicles—known in the military by its acronym, MRAP—in the field by the end of this year.

Now, let me explain what I am talking about. First, I want to point out that the committee acknowledged the need for these vehicles and included $2.5 billion in this bill. But what I propose in this amendment is forward-funding money from next year's 2008 budget into this supplemental. In that way, we can build more of these vehicles which have one purpose—the specific purpose of saving lives, American lives.

The fact is, as most of my colleagues know, 70 percent of American casualties in Iraq are caused by improvised explosive devices, or IEDs.

Many of my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, have been to Iraq. They have had the same experience I have in my seven trips—visiting field hospitals. There, you see amputees and people with serious head injuries who, because of the incredible skill and triage capability of our military doctors and nurses, are able to be kept alive. Most of those injured at Walter Reed and at Bethesda naval hospital are victims of these devices, sadly now familiar to all Americans from the nightly news. We have tried very hard—although this administration has done so belatedly—to better equip our troops to withstand IEDs. God forbid they find themselves victim of an IED attack, but if they do, we want them to be able to survive.

MRAP vehicles provide four to five times more protection to our troops than up-armored HMMWVs. That statement, that these MRAPs provide four to five times more protection than up-armored HMMWVs, is not my estimate. That is the judgment of our military leaders. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, GEN James Conway, with whom I spoke as recently as this afternoon, wrote on March 1 to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said:

> Multi-National Forces—West [that is, the Marines in Iraq] estimates that the use of the MRAP could reduce the casualties in vehicles due to IED attack by as much as 80 percent.

He went on further and said that even though the MRAP is not expeditionary:

> It is, however, the best available vehicle for force protection.

He concluded by saying:

> Getting the MRAP into the Al Anbar Province is my number one unfilled warfighting requirement at this time.

Let me repeat that:

> Getting the MRAP into the Al Anbar Province is my number one unfilled warfighting requirement at this time.

He went on to tell me today that although there is some disagreement in terms of priorities within this building, he was speaking to me from the Pentagon, he said, ''I believe this is a moral imperative.''

How many generals with four stars or three or two or one on their shoulders have you heard use that phrase? How often is something so fundamental it is called ''a moral imperative''? This is a man who is heading back out to Iraq soon. He is talking about protecting his kids, his troops.

On my last trip into Anbar Province last summer, I went to Fallujah. I met with the commanding Marine general and roughly 30 to 40 of his commanders and noncommissioned officers. I was taken outside a building to see what they were trying to do to diminish the casualty rate of American forces required to patrol Fallujah. They showed me what they called a rhino, a big vehicle, looks like a Caterpillar bulldozer with a great big proboscis on it, a great big arm that is used when an IED is identified, to disarm it. It was interesting. I observed for the first time—maybe others knew about it—the hull. The bottom of it looked like a ship out of water. It had a V-shaped bottom. A humvee, like your SUV or your automobile, has a flat bottom. In a humvee, even if it is reinforced, it is still flat. The rhino had a V-shaped bottom or floor. I asked why. They said it made them much more blast resistant and it could protect the troops inside. That is the first time I heard about this concept. They did not have MRAPs yet, but they had this rhino, a much bigger vehicle for a different purpose.

As I talked to them, I remember asking the question, why aren't we building more of these things? You know, the folks on the ground, these kids and many not so young women and men who are climbing into these coffins, know that even in an up-armored vehicle if they are struck, deadly force may be exerted, scrambling their brains or outright killing them. The number one requirement of the Commandant of the Marine Corps is to get more of these vehicles. I respectfully suggest to all who care—and every one of us cares about the fate of the troops—if there is any place we should not consider the cost—emphasize again, not consider the cost—it is when there is a consensus that what we are purchasing can save lives. We have made no sacrifice in this country to fight this war except for the families of those who have gone to the war. We should not hesitate to save the lives of those who are sacrificing because of cost.

A couple of my colleagues off the floor, none of whom are on the floor at this moment, have told me it might not be cost effective because the military is working on a new vehicle. Give me a break. Cost effective? I wonder how many people asked, when we were talking about the invasion of Normandy in World War II: You know, we better be careful. We may build too many landing craft. We might have some left over. What are we going to do with them after the war?

We have no higher obligation than to protect those we send into battle. We have received a pretty good dose of this administration's willingness to send people into battle not prepared. Rumsfeld's famous comment: You go with the Army you have, not the Army you like or need. That is paraphrasing him from a couple of years ago. When we find a way to protect people better in battle, then it seems to me we have an overwhelming obligation to act.

Let me explain the specifics of the MRAP. Each vehicle can hold 4 to 12 troops. Like the rhino, these vehicles have raised steel, V-shaped hulls and chassis. The raised hull is valuable because it gives the blast more time to expand, lessening the impact. The V-shape pushes the blast up the sides of the vehicle and away from the occupants. With an up-armored HMMWV or any humvee, the flat bottom sends the blast through the floor right into the occupants. In addition, the vehicles have side armor and bulletproof glass, and they also have tires that can be driven when flat.

Ever since the military began using MRAPs in Iraq, the requirement has grown, as commanders realize how much better they are at protecting their personnel. In May of last year the requirement was only 185. By July, it had risen to 1,185. By November, it had risen to 4,060. By February of this year, after the supplemental request was submitted, it rose to 6,738. One month later, the requirement went up again to the current level of 7,774. At this point every one in the military agrees, we need 7,774 MRAPs.

The Marines are the executive agents for this program, meaning they are

managing it for themselves and the other services. Every service has a need for the vehicle for explosive ordinance units as well as regular patrols. The Marines need 3,700 of them. The Army needs 2,500. The Air Force needs 697. The Navy needs 544, and the Special Operations Command needs 333. The cost of 7,774 MRAPs is $8.4 billion. This administration's current plan is to spend $2.3 billion this year and $6.1 billion next year. But I believe we can and must do much better, and so do the Marines. If we simply put more funds up front, spend them in the supplemental rather than allocate them a year later in the 2008 budget, the same money that we are going to spend anyway next year, if we move it up, we can accelerate production drastically.

Some have said the extra production capacity does not exist. Again, speaking to the Commandant of the Marine Corps today, he indicated that there are eight companies they are dealing with and he has confidence that they can build all they can purchase, all they can afford. That is also what the Chief of Staff of the Army thinks.

On March 14, General Peter Schoomaker told the Appropriations Committee that with the MRAPs, ''We can build what we get the funds to build. It is strictly an issue of money.''

Let's assume the Commandant of the Marine Corps and General Schoomaker are wrong. Let's assume they have made a mistake. Let's assume we can't build as many as the money we give them. So what. So what. We are not talking about building a highway on time. We are talking about an informed judgment by the United States military, to build not a new weapons system, but to build a new protection system for their forces.

I respectfully suggest, if we are going to err on one side or the other, for God's sake, for a change, let's err on the side of doing something that will protect American fighting women and men.

Quite frankly, if the Marines believe we can do it, then my money is on the Marines getting it right. If General Schoomaker says he needs it, and more money will get the vehicles, then I take him at his word. I would rather take a chance, and I believe the American people would also, to protect more Americans under fire than not.

What does this mean specifically? Well, by adding $1.5 billion, which my amendment does, to the supplemental today, the Marines will have $4 billion to work with. Based on their estimates, that will mean 2,500 vehicles get to the field 6 months sooner than under the current plan. You may say: What is 6 months? Ten of thousands of lives is what 6 months is. Figure it out: Four to twelve people in 2,500 more vehicles. Add up the numbers. That's 10,000 to 30,000 Americans. Look at the casualty rates that come from IEDs striking up-armored HMMWVs. Do the math, and tell me if their lives are not worth taking a financial risk to protect.

If we move this money forward, on October 1 of this year, instead of having only 2,000 MRAPs, we would have 4,500 in the field. On January 1, 2008, instead of 3,500 MRAPs, we would have 6,000 in the field. By February, we would fulfill the entire requirement, instead of waiting until next July. We are still going to spend $8.4 billion, but spending it faster will make a major difference.

If you want to be callous about this, it would also save the American taxpayers a whole lot of money because for every one of those injured soldiers who comes back—to put it in Machiavellian terms—who needs a lifetime of medical care, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars committed per casualty.

I can find no logical argument for delaying this.

Let me end where I began. This is a matter of life and death. Madam President, 2,500 more vehicles means literally that 10,000 to 30,000 more Americans will have a four to five times greater chance of surviving a hit with an IED while on patrol than exists today if we do not act. Madam President, 10,000 to 30,000 Americans will not be added to the casualty and death numbers if we move this money up.

To use the phrase of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, at 3 or 4 o'clock today, on the phone with me:

This is a moral imperative.

I agree. It is a moral imperative that we protect these troops as soon as possible.

So tomorrow, when I have my 1 or 2 minutes to speak to this issue before we vote, I will urge all my colleagues to vote for this amendment.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 808

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I would like to briefly discuss amendment No. 808 which will be voted upon tomorrow. This amendment deals with a very serious problem facing our country; that is, we have millions of low-income Americans who lack the resources to properly weatherize their homes.

I know, coming from a cold-weather State such as Vermont, this is a very serious problem. It gets cold in Vermont, sometimes 20 or 30 below zero. It is a real shame we have people who simply lack the financial resources to put in the proper insulation, roofing material, windows, doors to keep heat from literally disappearing. The result of that is low-income people are forced to pay a higher and higher heating bill, at a time when many of them do not have the funds to do that.

The other aspect to this issue, which is equally or even more important, is if the U.S. Congress and the American people are serious about dealing with the issue of global warming, then we have to make a major effort to retrofit homes all over this country so we are not wasting enormous amounts of energy.

We cannot come here and say we have a major global warming crisis and not be serious about energy efficiency and not be serious about making sure all our homes, especially those of lower income people, are properly weatherized.

As part of the continuing resolution, Congress level-funded the weatherization program at $242.2 million. Unfortunately, the administration's spending plan for fiscal year 2007, which came out about 2 weeks ago, reduced funding for the weatherization program by $38 million compared to what it received in fiscal year 2006.

In other words, despite the global warming crisis, despite the increase in poverty, despite the need to spend substantially more to weatherize homes throughout this country, the administration is actually lowering the funds available for weatherization. This makes no sense to me at all.

Tomorrow, I am going to be offering an amendment which is cosponsored—it is a bipartisan amendment—by Senators SUNUNU, BINGAMAN, JACK REED, MENENDEZ, KERRY, HARKIN, DODD, WYDEN, and CLINTON.

This amendment will add $25 million more to the weatherization program compared to last year's level. I hope we will have strong support for this effort. It will help us address global warming, and it will provide real assistance to many low-income families throughout this country.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 835 AND 755

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that action on amendment No. 835 be vitiated and the amendment be modified with the changes at the desk, the amendment, as modified, be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table; further, that action on amendment No. 755 be vitiated and the amendment be modified with the changes at the desk, and the amendment be agreed to, as modified, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments (Nos. 835 and 755), as modified, were agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 835, AS MODIFIED

On page 85, after line 7, insert:

(b) MEDICARE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL DESIGNATION.—Section 405(h) of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-173; 117 Stat. 2269) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) EXCEPTION.—

''(A) STATE OF MINNESOTA.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Minnesota on or after January 1, 2006, under section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (B) and is located in Cass County, Minnesota, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(B) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MINNESOTA.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) has been granted an exception by the State to an otherwise applicable statutory restriction on hospital construction or licensing prior to the date of enactment of this subparagraph; and

''(ii) is located on property which the State has approved for conveyance to a county within the State prior to such date of enactment.

''(C) STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Mississippi on or after April 1, 2007, under section 1820(c)(2)(b)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (D) and is located in Kemper County, Mississippi, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(D) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MISSISSIPPI.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) meets all other criteria for designation as a critical access hospital under section 1820(c)(2)(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B));

''(ii) has satisfied the requirement of the certificate of need laws and regulations of the State of Mississippi; and

''(iii) will be constructed on property that will be conveyed by the Kemper County Board of Supervisors within the State of Mississippi.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 755, AS MODIFIED

On page 105, insert between lines 2 and 3 the following:

SEC. ____. Pursuant to section 140 of Public Law 97–92, justices and judges of the United States are authorized during fiscal year 2007 to receive a salary adjustment in accordance with section 461 of title 28, United States Code.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes consideration of H.R. 1591 on Thursday, all time postcloture be considered expired; that the only amendments remaining in order to be the following, and that they may not be subject to second-degree amendment: The Ensign amendment, No. 752, to be modified; DeMint amendment No. 704; Coburn amendment No. 649; Sanders amendment No. 737, to be modified; Biden amendment No. 739; that the Reid second-degree amendment to the Lugar amendment No. 690 be withdrawn and the Lugar amendment be agreed to; that all other pending amendments be withdrawn, that there be 4 minutes equally divided and controlled in the usual form prior to each vote; that a manager's amendment be in order, provided it has been cleared by the managers and the two leaders; that upon disposition of the amendments, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the votes occur in the order of the amendments I just listed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I was unable to attend rollcall vote No. 121. Had I been present, I would have voted in the negative.

MINIMUM WAGE IN THE U.S. TERRITORIES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, as chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources which has jurisdiction regarding the insular areas of the United States, I am concerned about provisions in the House passed supplemental appropriations bill, H.R. 1591, that would alter the way minimum wage levels are set in the U.S. territories of American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, CNMI. Senators AKAKA and INOUYE share my concern and we would like to enter into a colloquy with the distinguished manager of the bill regarding our concerns.

Mr. BYRD. Yes, I would be pleased to enter into a colloquy.

Mr. BINGAMAN. As the Senator may know, in recognition of the special challenges that the territories face in promoting economic development, the Fair Labor Standards Act. FLSA, provides that the transition from the territories' historic subminmum wage levels up to the national minimum wage is managed by special industry committees. These committees convene ever 2 years, carefully analyze the islands economies, and recommend incremental increases toward the national minimum wage based upon those analyses.

Mr. BYRD. Yes, that is my understanding.

Mr. BINGAMAN. This process has worked well and has successfully raised the minimum wage in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands up to the national minimum wage. The process currently applies in American Samoa which continues to have regular increases in its minimum wage toward the national level. However, this Special Industry Committee process does not apply in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, CNMI, because the minimum wage provisions of the FLSA have never applied there. Section 503(c) of the Covenant to Establish the CNMI in Political Union with the United States—approved by P.L. 94–241—specifically authorized Congress to extend the national minimum wage to the CNMI and, in 1998 the Committee Energy and Natural Resources favorably reported legislation Senate Report 105–201 that would have extended the national minimum wage as authorized. That legislation would also have extended the FLSA's Special Industry Committee transition provisions to the CNMI just as they apply to American Samoa.

On March 1, 2006, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held an oversight hearing to examine economic conditions in the islands and we found the situation in both the CNMI and American Samoa very worrisome. More recently, I met with the Governor of American Samoa, Togiola Tulafono, and with a delegation from the CNMI headed by the resident representative, Pete Tenorio, and the Lieutenant Governor, Tim Villagomez, who expressed their concern about the House-passed minimum wage legislation that would increase their islands' minimum wages based on a fixed schedule, and without the periodic economic analyses conducted by the Special Industry Committees under the FLSA. These island leaders asked for my support in assuring that the FLSA's transition process will be used to assure a smooth transition from the local territorial minimum wage to the national minimum wage.

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the comments of my colleague from New Mexico. I have also met with the Governor of American Samoa regarding his concerns on proposed changes to the minimum wage law as it applies to American Samoa. In addition, I have met with the distinguished delegate from American Samoa, ENI FALEOMAVAEGA, who has been working with his colleagues in the House, Chairmen OBEY and MILLER, on this matter and he has their assurances that they will continue to work with him as this bill is considered in the conference committee. I have joined the delegate on a letter to the HELP Committee urging continuation of the current FLSA policy of having Special Industry Committees periodically determine the rate of increase in the territorial minimum wage.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I share the concerns of my colleagues. I have met with representatives of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, CNMI, on this matter and understand the risks that their economy is currently facing. We in Hawaii are particularly concerned that an inflexible approach to minimum wage increases in the CNMI and American Samoa could seriously disrupt those economies, cause unnecessary hardship, including the need for residents to emigrate to Hawaii or the mainland to find new job opportunities.

Mr. BINGAMAN. We share the concerns that these island leaders have brought to our attention and recognize that they have no representation here in the Senate. Accordingly, we ask the distinguished manager and chairman of the Appropriations Committee, as this legislation is reconciled with the House bill in conference committee, that he

seeks an agreement that the FLSA's Special Industry Committees will be used in these two territories, as they were used in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We believe that this is important to assuring a smooth transition to the national minimum wage in these islands, and to avoiding unnecessary economic disruption.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Senators and want to assure them that I understand their concern. Although I cannot commit to any particular outcome, I will work with them during the conference committee to address their concerns, and those of the American Samoa and the CNMI leadership, regarding their desire for Special Industry Committees under the FLSA to assure a smooth transition from the current local minimum wage to the national minimum wage.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I thank the distinguished manager and look forward to working with him to develop appropriate language as H.R. 1591 is considered in the conference committee.

Mr. INOUYE. I also thank the chairman and manager for his understanding and cooperation on this matter.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I too appreciate the willingness of the distinguished manager to consider our concerns, and his willingness to work with us during conference to find an acceptable solution.

AMENDMENT NO. 697

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, today Senator WARNER and I have introduced an important and potentially landmark bipartisan resolution. My good friend and colleague from Virginia has correctly highlighted what is one of the most critical issues before us as we debate our continued occupation of Iraq: the capacity of the Iraqi Government to take responsibility for the security of its own country. The President said in November 2005 that ''as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.'' But are the Iraqis standing up? If, in the President's formulation, our continued military occupation of Iraq is dependent on the readiness of the Iraqi security forces, is it not crucial that we know what kind of progress those Iraqi forces are making? The Warner-Byrd resolution will hopefully provide the Congress with the unvarnished truth about this issue, instead of more of the same rhetoric and obfuscation doled out to the Congress since the war began. Under Warner-Byrd, within 120 days of passage of this Act, a designated independent private sector entity will report to Congress on the readiness of the ISF to assume responsibility for maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying terrorists a safe haven, and bringing an end to sectarian violence. The report will also address whether continued support by U.S. troops is likely to contribute to the ISF's readiness to take on those missions in the coming months.

We have had 4 years now of rosy reports coming from the Pentagon and the White House about the steady progress being made in Iraq, but events on the ground regularly belie those sunny assessments. Our soldiers have been training and equipping Iraqi troops and police for several years, and the White House continues to tout the ''real progress'' made by the Iraqi security forces. However, an article in the February 5 edition of the New York Times noted that the Iraqi units arriving in Baghdad are showing up at 55 to 60 percent of their full strength. Even more problematic, the Iraqi police force is itself seen by many in Iraq as simply an extension of the sectarian militias, terrorizing the population with rape, extortion, and murder.

Considering the record to date of the Iraqi troops, will any amount of training produce a reliable and capable national army? If this is what we are waiting for—if we are truly planning to ''stand down'' once the ISF ''stands up''—I, for one, want to know when we can expect that to happen. And if it is not going to happen, we should know that as well. How long will we continue to spend American lives and treasure training Iraqi troops that can't be counted on? Six months? A year? Five years? If this is an ultimately hopeless endeavor, we should find out now, and change our strategy accordingly.

The situation in Iraq has devolved into a full-blown civil war, as sects which have been battling for centuries continue to attack each other—and us—in an ever-widening bloodbath. In the words of the President's own National Intelligence Estimate, the term '''civil war' accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict,'' which has become a ''self-sustaining intersectarian struggle between Shia and Sunnis.'' U.S. troops have no constructive role to play in fighting another country's civil war. Increasingly in Iraq, there is no clearly defined ''enemy'' for our soldiers to engage, only various indigenous groups that hate us almost as much as they hate each other. The President's plan calls for the Iraqi troops to assume responsibility for halting this death spiral, but the NIE again casts doubt on this strategy. It states that ''the Iraqi security forces—particularly the Iraqi police—will be hard-pressed in the next 12–18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities.''

I suspect that further training is not really the answer. We can train a soldier how to fire a weapon; we can give him communications equipment; we can teach him how to conduct a raid or defend a post. But we cannot give him a sense of national identity. We cannot provide him with allegiance to government and country that transcends ethnic or sectarian hatreds. The bottom line is that the violence in Iraq requires a political solution. Everyone—everyone—now acknowledges that. Only when the Iraqi people, through their government, are able to overcome the sectarian divisions that are splitting the country apart, will stability and peace be achieved. U.S. Central Command Commander Gen. John Abizaid said it himself in testimony before Congress on November 15, 2006: ''I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.''

The Warner-Byrd resolution seeks to address that issue head-on, with an unbiased, nonpartisan report on the likelihood that continued U.S. involvement will contribute to the capacity for the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. This report will provide us with a clear-eyed view of what is going on in Iraq, and whether the President's plan has any realistic hope of success.

AMENDMENT NO. 740

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, yesterday I filed amendment No. 740, which allows dairy farmers in Pennsylvania to receive a one-time emergency assistance payment of $2.50 for every hundredweight of milk they produced over the past 6 months. Because the Senate invoked cloture on this spending bill and we are quickly wrapping up our work to get funding to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, I will not have the opportunity to offer my amendment today. I will, however, continue to pursue this critical emergency funding for our dairy farmers.

Dairy farmers in my home State and other Northeastern States are at the end of their rope. They have cut corners and pared their operations down to the absolute necessities, but they simply cannot make ends meet. Prices for feed and fuel have more than doubled over the past year and a half, but the price farmers get for their milk has not kept pace. Consequently, dairy farmers in Pennsylvania are losing about $5 on every hundredweight of milk they produce. For a small dairy farmer with 75 or so cows, this could mean a loss of around $20,000 year.

During the last congressional recess, I toured two dairy farms in different regions of Pennsylvania and talked to dozens of farmers. I heard stories about draining savings accounts, trying to patch repair broken equipment, leaving bills unpaid, and selling cows just to keep the farm going. Our farmers are doing everything in their power to keep their businesses going. Unfortunately, many of them are now faced with their last option—to sell everything and shut down the farm. I want to be sure colleagues understand that this is happening right now, today. The prospect of mass closings of dairy farms is not something off in the distant future. Pennsylvania is losing 250 to 350 dairy farms every year. Today, dairy farmers in my home State are sitting down with their families and making tough decisions about the future of their farms. Many of them won't be able to stay in business while they wait for Congress to finish work on the new farm bill.

The result would be devastating. Dairy is Pennsylvania's top agricultural commodity, contributing $4.2 billion annually to the State economy

and employing 40,000 people. This is what we stand to lose if we stand by and watch as our dairy farmers close down. I am not willing to risk it.

I also want to point out that the impacts of the loss of Pennsylvania's dairy industry will be felt throughout rural communities. As farmers go out of business, feed stores, fertilizer stores, and milk haulers go out of business, feed stores, fertilizer stores, and milk haulers go out of business. Without the economic engine provided by dairy, people are left out of work and our rural towns and counties will crumble.

I will do everything in my power to prevent that from happening.

I am committed to finding short-term relief to keep Pennsylvania dairy farmers in business while we make long-term fixes in Federal dairy policy in the next farm bill. I hope that all of my colleagues will support our hard-working dairy farmers and work with me to find commonsense solutions to avert an impending crisis in rural America.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, last December, 10 of America's most distinguished senior statesmen and -women made public a blueprint for success in Iraq and in so doing opened up the possibility for the administration and the Congress to come together on a bipartisan basis to begin a new direction in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group, led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, presented our Nation with a fully bipartisan Iraq strategy—a strategy that all of America could get behind, with clearly defined benchmarks, realistic goals, and a sensible approach for protecting U.S. security interests.

Today, the U.S. Senate is finally considering legislation that would help take us in the direction outlined by the Iraq Study Group, over 3 months ago. Under the leadership of Senator BYRD, the Senate Appropriations Committee has presented this body with a chance to get the mission right, namely by beginning the phased redeployment of our combat units from Iraq.

Thanks to additional language spelling out a clearly defined benchmarks for Iraqi authorities to meet, from Senator BEN NELSON, Congress has finally put the Iraqi Government on notice that it is time for them to step up to their responsibilities. It is time for the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to start providing for Iraq's own security and making the difficult but necessary political compromises to bring all parties in Iraq to the table, thereby ending the untenable situation of American troops being forced to referee a civil war there. Iraqi compromises will only emerge through serious diplomatic engagement by the U.S. State Department, Iraqi politicians, and neighboring countries in the region.

But this isn't just my view. This is also the view of Iraq Study Group co-chair, Congressman Lee Hamilton. Before the Senate bill was made public in its entirety, Congressman Hamilton had an opportunity to comment on the House's version of the supplemental appropriations bill. In a Washington Post op-ed, he pointed out that ''The House Bill lays out the steps that the Iraqi Government must take . . . At issue is the conditionality of U.S. support. Time and again, Iraqis have missed deadlines. Time and again, deadlines have been extended, and U.S. political, economic and military support has continued and even increased. The House bill breaks that cycle.''

Most crucially, Congressman Hamilton went on to say that the House bill, ''by tying continued U.S. support—including the presence of U.S. troops—to benchmarks, uses the strongest possible leverage to press Iraqi leaders to meet their commitments.''

Clearly, in the view of Cochair Hamilton, the current majority in Congress is taking the necessary steps to address our national security needs, and doing so in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group.

Without such a strategy, U.S. Iraq policy amounts to little more than an open-ended commitment which has not translated to progress on the ground in Iraq; and is causing significant long-term costs to our military and to our national security.

We have already lost over 3,200 brave American servicemembers in Iraq, and regrettably, that number continues to grow.

We have spent over $400 billion since the war began, with an additional $121 billion in the underlying bill being debated today.

And our Armed Forces have been left so depleted of combat gear due to the war in Iraq, that vast segments of our military are reporting ''not ready'' for duty—including two-thirds of the Army in the United States and nearly 90 percent of our National Guard.

As these figures demonstrate, our Armed Forces and America's national security simply cannot afford the Bush administration's ''stay the course'' policy in Iraq any longer. It is quite literally breaking our military. And it is endangering our Armed Forces' ability to respond to future challenges to America's national security—whether on the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East, or elsewhere in the world.

As Army Chief of Staff GEN Peter Schoomaker testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee: ''We have a strategy right now that is outstripping the means to execute it.'' His deputy, GEN Richard Cody, further stated: ''The readiness continues to decline of our next-to-deploy forces.''

Yet, today, we find the administration still engaging in its smoke and mirror campaign to purposefully downplay the monetary and human costs of this war. They do it by forbidding the taking of photos of our honored fallen heroes coming back to Dover Air Force Base and by funding the war through emergency supplementals that are used to obscure the war's impact on our budget deficit. They do so by shamefully neglecting the needs of our returning heroes, too many of whom have come home broken in body or spirit.

Despite all of these efforts, the impact of the Iraq war has been so transparently damaging to America's security that it has been impossible even for this White House to keep the facts from the American people—particularly in terms of our military's combat readiness.

According to a March 19 Washington Post report, ''it will take years for the Army and Marine Corps to recover from what some officials privately have called a 'death spiral,' in which the ever increasing pace of war-zone rotations has consumed 40 percent of their total gear, wearied troops and left no time to train to fight anything other than the insurgencies now at hand.''

We are over 4 years into this war, and the administration is still decrying those of us trying to help address these serious concerns. And all the while, it is the administration who is still continuing to propose budgets, with too few resources for our deployed troops.

In fact, the President and the Vice President have continued their disingenuous claims that Democratic proposals would actually cut funding for our troops even while they are the ones proposing budgets with shortfalls in critical combat equipment, military hospital upkeep, and veterans health priorities.

It is time for Congress to finally say ''enough is enough.''

The Iraq Study Group was very clear on the need to restore our own military's combat readiness, as spelled out in recommendations 48 and 49 of its report. According to that report, ''the defense budget as a whole is in danger of disarray, as supplemental funding winds down and reset costs become clear. It will be a major challenge to meet ongoing requirements for other current and future security threats that need to be accommodated together with spending for operations and maintenance, reset, personnel, and benefits for active duty and retired personnel. Restoring the capability of our military forces should be a high priority for the United States at this time.''

I wholeheartedly agree with this statement.

As my colleagues know, since the war began in 2003, I have to come to the Senate floor time and again to offer amendments to spending bills to address shortfalls in the administration's proposed budget—largely over the objections of the White House and its congressional allies.

In 2003, I offered an amendment to the emergency supplemental appropriations bill to add $322 million for critical protective gear identified by

the Army that the Bush administration had failed to include in their budget. But it was blocked by the administration and their allies.

In 2004 and 2005, I authored legislation, signed into law, to reimburse troops for equipment that they had to purchase on their own because the Rumsfeld Pentagon failed to provide them with the body armor and other gear they needed to stay safe.

And last year, working with Senators INOUYE, REED, and STEVENS, I offered an amendment to help address a $17 billion budget shortfall to replace and repair thousands of war battered tanks, aircraft, and vehicles. Without these additional resources, the Army Chief of Staff claimed that U.S. Army readiness would deteriorate even further. This provision was approved unanimously and enacted in law. But much more remains to be done.

A recent report by the independent National Guard Commission says that 88 percent of our National Guard is reporting ''not ready'' for duty. To address this concern, I introduced S. 756 to provide the $38 billion over the next 5 years the National Guard says it needs to restock its depleted equipment inventories and restore its preparedness, for both wartime and homeland security missions. Doing so is critical to our national security, and we owe our country and our troops no less.

Thankfully, here again, Senator BYRD and the Appropriations Committee have demonstrated their leadership by adding $1 billion to address critical equipment shortfalls for our National Guard in 2007. This is a good first step as we work to ensure that America's citizen soldiers are fully prepared to fight our enemies abroad and respond to domestic emergencies here at home. I am joining my colleagues, Senators LEAHY and BOND, in offering an amendment to add another $1 billion to meet other immediate National Guard short-term needs. In addition, I intend to work throughout this year to ensure that we address all of the Guard's critical equipment needs.

In the meantime, this supplemental appropriations bill will begin to put us on the right track, to reverse 4 years of the administration's mismanagement of a war, and 6 years of its reckless battering of America's great Armed Forces. We should have no higher priority than the safety and well-being of our troops. Plain and simple.

But a great deal more remains to be done. We need to redeploy our combat forces out of Iraq's urban areas to Kurdistan, other rural areas of Iraq, and to bases in Kuwait and Qatar, where they can focus on counterterrorism operations, train and equip Iraqi security forces, and offer force protection to U.S. personnel and infrastructure which remain in Iraq after the redeployment of combat forces has been completed early next year.

But more than that, we need to stop allowing ourselves and our Nation to be cowed by the administration's fearmongering. We must embrace the many recommendations of the Iraq Study Group and engage in a ''New Diplomatic Offensive'' in Iraq and the wider region because, as the Iraq Study Group wisely concluded, only a political solution which the Iraqi people buy into can salvage Iraq.

Mr. President, the United States has a moral obligation to assist Iraqi and Afghan refugees and those internally displaced by violence. I commend the Appropriations Committee for beginning to effectively do so, by increasing such assistance by $50 million for Iraq, and $18 million for Afghanistan.

The Brookings Institution estimates that nearly one-quarter of all physicians have fled Iraq. There are nearly 2 million Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria. These refugees have placed a tremendous strain on the essential social services and infrastructure of those two countries, which have begun to close their border crossings. Emergency funding is necessary to provide these individuals with basic medical care, food, housing and to ensure that their children are able to attend school.

We cannot afford to miss another opportunity to change our course in Iraq and to support the men and women sacrificing their lives there—opportunities this administration has resisted at every step of the way. The new Democratic majority in Congress has already begun doing so. The passage of this bill will represent another step toward a stronger and safer America, and more secure and stable Iraq.

If President Bush is wise he will reconsider his threat to veto this measure and begin to embrace the call for change embodied in this legislation. If not, I will continue to do all that I can to keep the pressure on the administration. I know that the majority of the Members in this body will as well. That is our responsibility as the people's representatives.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, during the last election, the American people spoke loud and clear: they want a new direction in Iraq. In my own state of Maryland, I have heard from a strong grassroots movement—they want Congress to act now to end this war. I will vote for this emergency supplemental bill because it: fully funds the needs of our warfighters on the battlefield; adds $454 million to ensure veterans get the health care they need when they come home; requires the President to immediately change our mission in Iraq; and sets the goal of bringing our troops home by March 31, 2008.

This bill states clearly that Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect our troops. Our troops must understand that Congress will never abandon them: not while they are fighting on the battlefield and not when they come home. The best way to support our troops is to bring them home—swiftly and safely.

I am not new to this position. I never wanted to go to war in the first place. I was one of the 23 who voted against this war, 4 years ago, on October 11, 2002. I opposed giving the President unilateral authority to launch a preemptive attack. I said the United States had to exhaust our diplomatic options. I encouraged the administration to stick with the United Nations, U.N., to let the U.N. meet its responsibility to deal with the threat from Saddam. The day of the vote, I said, we don't know if we will be greeted with flowers or landmines. Well, now we know: when we got to Iraq, there were no weapons of mass destruction, but the destruction happened, and it happened fast.

The United States went to war with Iraq, but today we are at war within Iraq. Saddam is gone, but we are still there, mired in a civil war. No one could ask more of our troops. They are brave and courageous and have fought valiantly. And it is time to bring them home.

We need a way forward in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group gave us 79 recommendations as a way to go forward, but the President has completely ignored this report. Surely out of 79 recommendations, there are 50 we can agree on. The Iraq Study Group report calls for new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and a change in the primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq to enable the United States to begin to move our forces out of Iraq responsibly. It provides a direction for the U.S. and Iraqi governments to follow that could lead to withdrawal of American forces by first quarter of 2008.

This is exactly the approach called for by this supplemental bill, which will have most of our troops out of Iraq by March 31, 2008. What are we voting for? This bill contains a binding resolution that directs the President to promptly transition the mission of U.S. forces in Iraq and begin a phased redeployment within 120 days. It sets a goal of bringing U.S. combat forces home by March 31, 2008, except for a limited number of troops essential for force protection, training and equipping Iraqi troops, and targeted counterterror operations. It also requires the President to develop a comprehensive diplomatic, political and economic strategy for Iraq, including greater U.S. engagement with Iraq's neighbors and the international community to work together to bring stability to Iraq.

This resolution also says success in Iraq depends on the Iraqi Government's ability to meet important benchmarks, including: the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces so they can control the capital city of Baghdad; giving Iraqi military commanders the authority to conduct operations without political interference; disarming sectarian militias and ensuring that Iraqi security forces are loyal to Iraq's Government; drafting and implementing

legislation to ensure the equal division of Iraqi oil revenues; drafting and implementing legislation to reform the de-Ba'athification process; implementing a fair process for amending the Iraqi Constitution to ensure minority rights are protected; and implementing new rules to protect minority rights in the Iraqi Parliament.

I support this Iraq resolution. It says what the Iraq Study Group has already told us: the problems in Iraq cannot be solved by the U.S. military—they require a political solution by the Iraqis and diplomatic engagement with Iraq's neighbors. It says Congress and the American people will not only support the troops but continue to protect them as well.

I want to end this war, and the resolution in this bill will do just that. Yet in ending the war, it is my responsibility as a Senator to ensure that our troops are brought home not only swiftly but safely. I will not vote to end funding for the pay that supports military spouses and children; body armor and armored humvee's our troops need for survival; tourniquets and surgical hospitals on the battlefield; jet fuel for the airplanes that take injured troops from Baghdad to Germany and then home; or the medical care they need when they get here.

In the last few weeks, we have all been shocked and awed by the conditions facing our wounded warriors. We know that more than 22,000 Purple Hearts have been awarded in Iraq. Yet our troops are being twice wounded. We know that acute care for our injured troops has been astounding, with historic rates of survival from even the most brutal battlefield injuries. Yet while we have saved their lives, we are failing to give them their life back. Outpatient care, facilities, social work, case workers, disability benefits—the whole system is dysfunctional.

I thank Senator INOUYE and Senator BYRD for their leadership in providing funding in this bill for military and veterans' health care. This supplemental includes an additional $20 million to improve conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and an additional $100 million for research and treatment of traumatic brain injury, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other physical and mental trauma. It also adds $454 million for veterans health care, including $73 million for new polytrauma facilities and services and $100 million for mental health treatment.

We know this is only a downpayment for our troops and veterans. We need to overhaul the disability benefits system that is outdated and adversarial. We need a better system for transitioning our troops from active duty to the Veterans Administration to ensure they get the health care, job training, and educational benefits they deserve. We need to hear the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission on how to fix the problems in our military and veterans' hospitals. And I look forward to working with Senator MURRAY, Senator LEVIN, and Senator INOUYE on a comprehensive reform package that will ensure our troops have the medical care they will need for the rest of their lives.

This supplemental supports our troops, follows the will of the American people, and follows the advice of the Iraq Study Group. It is time to change our direction in Iraq and bring our forces home. Let's send in the diplomats and bring our troops home safely and soon.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE PARITY ACT

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, today the Senate Rules Committee reported S. 223, the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act. I am a cosponsor of this legislation, and I voted in favor of reporting the measure.

This bill would require Senate candidates to file election-related designations, statements, and reports in electronic form with the Secretary of the Senate. It also would require that the Secretary of the Senate forward a copy of those filings to the Federal Election Commission within 24 hours so that they can be made available to the public.

I note for the RECORD that the bill as introduced and reported would require that Senate candidates file directly with the Secretary of the Senate, and not the Federal Election Commission. I support continuing this policy, and ensuring that the Senate as an institution retains custody of these campaign-related filings. According to testimony before the Rules Committee last month, the office of the Secretary of the Senate is fully capable of implementing this requirement and ensuring that these documents are made available to the public expeditiously.

I support the efforts of the Rules Committee on this matter

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I regret that I was unable to vote the afternoon of March 27 on the confirmation of the nomination of George H. Wu, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California. I wish to address this confirmation so that the people of the great State of Kansas, who elected me to serve them as U.S. Senator, may know my position.

Regarding vote No. 115, I support the confirmation of George H. Wu. My vote would not have altered the outcome of this confirmation.

NSL INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I wish to speak today about the recent report by the inspector general of the Department of Justice on the FBI's use of national security letters. According to the inspector general's testimony before the Judiciary Committee, there was ''widespread and serious misuse of the FBI's national security letter authorities''—misuse that violated statutes, Attorney General guidelines, and internal FBI policies. I was deeply concerned by the findings in that report. Unfortunately, I was not surprised.

The national security letter, or NSL, authorities were dramatically expanded by Sections 358 and 505 of the PATRIOT Act. Unfortunately, in its haste to pass this flawed legislation, Congress essentially granted the FBI a blank check to obtain some very sensitive records about Americans, including people not under any suspicion of wrong doing, without judicial approval. So it is not surprising that the inspector general identified serious problems with the implementation of these broad authorities. Congress gave the FBI very few rules to follow. As a result, Congress shares some responsibility for the apparently lax attitude and in some cases serious misuse of these potentially very intrusive authorities by the FBI.

This inspector general report proves that ''trust us'' doesn't cut it when it comes to the Government's power to obtain Americans' sensitive business records without a court order and without any suspicion that they are tied to terrorism or espionage. It was a grave mistake for Congress to grant the Government broad authorities and just keep its fingers crossed that they wouldn't be misused. We have the responsibility to put appropriate limits on Government authorities—limits that allow agents to actively pursue criminals and terrorists but that also protect the privacy of innocent Americans.

But let me back up a few steps. What are NSLs, and why are they such a concern? I am going to spend a little time on this because it is important. I believe there should be a legislative response to this report, so I want my colleagues to understand what we are dealing with here.

National security letters are issued by the FBI to businesses to obtain certain types of records. So they are similar to the controversial section 215 business record orders but with one very critical difference. While section 215 involves an application to the FISA Court, the Government does not need to get any court approval whatsoever to issue NSLs. It doesn't have to go to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court or any other court and make even the most minimal showing. Under the PATRIOT Act, the FBI can simply

issue the order signed by the special agent in charge of a field office or some other supervisory official—although we now know that many NSLs were issued without even the signatures required by the PATRIOT Act.

Prior to the PATRIOT Act, the FBI had to certify specific and articulable facts giving reason to believe that the records sought with an NSL pertained to a terrorist or spy.

But the PATRIOT Act expanded the NSL authorities to allow the Government to use them to obtain records of people who are not suspected of being or even being connected to terrorists or spies. The Government need only certify that the documents are either ''sought for'' or ''relevant to'' an authorized intelligence investigation, a far-reaching standard that—even if followed closely, which we now know it was not—could be used to obtain all kinds of records about innocent Americans. Indeed, as the inspector general suggested, it could be used to ''access NSL information about parties two or three steps removed from their subjects without determining if these contacts reveal suspicious connections.'' And just as with section 215, the recipient is subject to an automatic, permanent gag rule.

NSLs can be used to obtain three categories of business records, while section 215 orders can be used to obtain ''any tangible things.'' But even the categories reachable by an NSL are quite broad, and the PATRIOT Act and subsequent legislation expanded them further.

Specifically, NSLs can be used to obtain the following: First, subscriber and transactional information related to Internet and phone usage, including information about the phone numbers and e-mail addresses that an individual is in communication with. Second, full credit reports. Prior to the PATRIOT Act, the FBI could not get a full credit report without obtaining a court order—it could only obtain what is called ''credit header'' information, which includes name, current and former addresses, current and former places of employment, and the names of financial institutions at which the individual has accounts. But the PATRIOT Act expanded that authority to include full credit reports, which generally include many personal details about loans, credit scores, and other aspects of individuals' financial situations. And the third category is financial records, a category that includes bank transactions but also was expanded in 2002 to include records from all kinds of everyday businesses like jewelers, car dealers, travel agents and even casinos.

Unfortunately, the PATRIOT Act reauthorization legislation that was enacted last year—over my opposition—did nothing to address the standard for issuing an NSL. It left in place the breathtakingly broad ''relevance'' or ''sought for'' standards. Not only that, but it left in place the automatic gag rule for NSL recipients, albeit with a new exception for notifying a lawyer.

What did the reauthorization legislation do with regard to NSLs? Well, primarily it created the illusion of judicial review, both for the letters themselves and for the accompanying gag rule. At a Judiciary Committee hearing this week, the FBI Director pointed to this after-the-fact judicial review provision as a privacy protection for NSLs. But if you look at the details, it was drafted in a way that makes that review virtually meaningless. With regard to the NSLs themselves, the reauthorization permits recipients to consult their lawyer and seek judicial review, but it also allows the Government to keep all of its submissions secret and not share them with the challenger, regardless of whether there are national security interests at stake.

The other significant problem with the judicial review provisions is the standard for getting the gag rule overturned. In order to prevail, the recipient has to prove that any certification by the Government that disclosure would harm national security or impair diplomatic relations was made in bad faith. This is a standard of review that is virtually impossible to meet.

Now, judicial review is not at issue in the IG's report, and indeed, the chances that a business receiving an NSL would seek judicial review rather than just comply are relatively slim, but I think it is important to point out that even on the one issue that the reauthorization legislation did address with regard to NSLs, judicial review, the result was entirely inadequate.

I want to make one additional point about national security letters. There is a crucial difference between obtaining records in national security investigations and in standard criminal investigations. As the General Counsel of the FBI testified before the House Judiciary Committee last week, actions in national security investigations ''are typically taken in secret and they don't have the transparency of the criminal justice system.'' She explained that in the criminal system, agents know that ''if they mess up during the course of an investigation, they're going to be cross-examined, they're going to have a federal district judge yelling at them.'' That means that more vigorous controls and compliance mechanisms are needed with respect to sensitive authorities like national security letters than their analogues in the criminal justice system—something I think the inspector general report demonstrates.

With that background, what did the inspector general find as a result of his audit of the use of NSLs from 2003 to 2005? He found that even the very limited protections in the existing statute were not being followed.

The inspector general found, based on FBI records, that the FBI's use of NSLs expanded exponentially after the PATRIOT Act, moving from approximately 8,500 requests in 2000, to 39,000 requests in 2003, 56,000 requests in 2004, and 47,000 requests in 2005. The total number of requests was 143,074 over the 3-year period.

But the inspector general also found that even those numbers are inaccurate because the FBI had no policies in place with respect to the retention or tracking of NSLs. In many cases, agents did not even keep copies of signed NSLs. As a result, the FBI significantly undercounted its NSL requests. In a sample of 77 case files that the IG looked at, the NSL requests were undercounted by roughly 22 percent.

Although it is hard to know how much can be extrapolated from that figure, if that figure holds throughout the Bureau, that could mean that there were roughly 30,000 more NSL requests issued that the FBI didn't keep track of. That is appalling—that the privacy rights of Americans would be treated so cavalierly that there are potentially tens of thousands of NSL requests out there that the FBI itself doesn't even have a record of. And it resulted in inaccurate information being reported to Congress about the use of NSLs, raising another grave concern.

What else did the inspector general find? He found that the use of NSL requests regarding U.S. persons—that is, citizens and legal permanent residents—shifted from 39 percent of all NSL requests in 2003 to 53 percent of all NSL requests in 2005, at least with respect to the NSL requests for which the FBI kept track of the U.S person status of the target. And, until 2006, the FBI did not keep track of how many NSL requests pertain to individuals who are not the subjects of authorized national security investigations. Obviously, if the FBI is using NSLs frequently to obtain information about people who are not the subjects of open investigations, that would present serious concerns about their use.

The inspector general also found that the FBI significantly underreported violations of the NSL statutes and internal guidelines from 2003 to 2005, with respect to notifying both the FBI's Office of General Counsel, or OGC, and the President's Intelligence Oversight Board, or IOB, as required by Executive order. FBI employees did report 26 violations to OGC, but the IG found examples of 22 more unreported violations in 17 investigative case files out of a sample of 77 investigative files in 4 field offices.

Some of these were significant violations, others less so. But that means that 22 percent of investigative files surveyed by the IG contained one or more violations not identified by the FBI or reported to the Intelligence Oversight Board, as required. According to the IG, ''we have no reason to believe that the number of NSL-related possible IOB violations we identified in the four field offices was skewed or disproportionate to the number of possible IOB violations that exist in other

offices.'' Thus, the IG's findings ''suggest that a significant number of NSL-related possible IOB violations through the FBI have not been identified or reported by FBI personnel.''

What else did the inspector general find? Perhaps the most disturbing revelation in his report, among many disturbing revelations, is that on more than 700 occasions, the FBI obtained telephone toll billing records or subscriber information from 3 telephone companies without first issuing NSLs or grand jury subpoenas. Instead, it relied on what it called ''exigent letters'' signed by personnel not authorized by statute to sign NSLs. Although the Electronic Communications Privacy Act does contain an emergency provision permitting the FBI to obtain certain communications records in emergencies where there is an immediate threat to a person's physical safety, many of these exigent letters were issued, admittedly, in nonemergency circumstances. Indeed, they were used as a matter of course by one headquarters unit. This violated both the statute and internal FBI policy.

The inspector general also found that FBI headquarters issued more than 300 NSLs without determining whether there was an authorized investigation in progress. Issuing an NSL without tying it an authorized investigation is a violation of the statute.

The inspector general also found that internal FBI guidance on how to properly use NSLs was woefully lacking, and that even to the degree there were FBI policies in place to govern the use of NSLs, those policies were not being followed. In 60 percent of the 77 case files that the IG examined in detail, there was some infraction of FBI guidance. Sixty percent. That is absolutely astounding.

But that is not all. Once information is obtained through an NSL, the Inspector general reported that the FBI retains it indefinitely and uploads it into databases like the ''Investigative Data Warehouse,'' where it is retrievable by the thousands of authorized personnel, both inside and outside the FBI, who have access to these types of FBI databases. The FBI has no process for removing that information from its databases depending on the results of the investigation. So if a person's full credit report is obtained with an NSL as part of a preliminary investigation and that preliminary investigation is closed because the FBI determines that the person has done nothing wrong, it doesn't matter—the FBI can keep it anyway.

Although the FBI keeps all the data it collects using NSLs, it does not tag or mark that information to indicate that it was derived through an NSL. So the FBI does not track whether information from NSLs ends up in intelligence analysis products or is passed on to prosecutors for criminal investigations. You would think that these would be key indicators of the usefulness and effectiveness of NSLs, but that information is not available, other than anecdotally.

That is what the inspector general's report told us. The report revealed that the FBI took a shockingly cavalier attitude toward the privacy of innocent Americans in its implementation of the PATRIOT Act NSL authorities.

Congress meant for the inspector general's report to help it in its oversight of the use of national security letters, which are issued and enforced entirely in secret, and there is no question it has done that. The inspector general deserves a great deal of credit for his thorough and careful report. As I have already mentioned, much of the reporting to Congress on the use of NSLs since the PATRIOT Act has been inaccurate or misleading due to FBI recordkeeping problems, so having the results of this independent audit is invaluable.

But the report also reveals that the Justice Department essentially tried to whitewash this issue over the past several years. When Congress was considering whether to make changes to the NSL authorities as part of the PATRIOT Act reauthorization debate, the Attorney General came to Congress and resisted any changes, touting the strength of the checks on its power to obtain NSLs and assuring us that the power was being used carefully.

On April 5, 2005, Attorney General Gonzales told the Senate Judiciary Committee, ''[T]he PATRIOT Act includes a lot of safeguards that critics of the Act choose to ignore.'' On November 23, 2005, the Justice Department wrote Senators Specter and Leahy a ten-page letter defending the FBI's use of National Security Letters, asserting that ''the use of NSLs is subject to significant internal oversight and checks,'' and that there are ''robust mechanisms for checking misuse,'' and that ''[t]he FBI must and does conduct its investigations within the bounds of our Constitution, statutes, strict internal guidelines, and Executive Orders.''

On December 14, 2005, the Washington Post quoted Attorney General Gonzales as saying, ''[T]he PATRIOT Act has already undergone extensive review and analysis by Congress, by the DOJ Inspector General, and by other bodies . . . This extensive review has uncovered not one verified example of abuse of any of the Act's provisions.''

It is now quite evident that the Attorney General must not have been looking very hard, and certainly not trying very hard to ensure the protection of Americans' privacy rights. There is a lot going on right now that suggests we should be skeptical of assurances from the Justice Department, but this report highlights just how overtly political, and how lacking in fact, were DOJ's representations regarding the implementation of the Patriot Act.

Indeed, as recently as November 2006, the Justice Department asserted—in response to an inspector general memo warning against the potential for abuse of national security letters—that the FBI is ''aggressively vigilant in guarding against any abuse,'' a claim we now know was simply false.

It is an understatement to say that the inspector general's report uncovered serious flaws in the use of national security letters. But these were flaws waiting to happen. It should not have taken this type of highly critical report to convince Congress to do something about such wide-ranging Government power.

In fact, a bipartisan group of Senators proposed changes to the NSL statutes years ago, in the Security and Freedom Enhancement Act, or SAFE, Act. I, along with Senators CRAIG, DURBIN, SUNUNU, MURKOWSKI, SALAZAR, and many others, pushed for changes to the NSL statutes to try to prevent precisely the types of abuses that have now come to light. For example, the SAFE Act would have required that agents demonstrate that the records pertain to a suspected terrorist or spy before the FBI can issue an NSL, rather than the extremely loose standard in the PATRIOT Act.

The SAFE Act also would have given the recipient of an NSL a meaningful right to challenge the letter and the nondisclosure requirement, and placed a time limit on the nondisclosure requirement, which could be extended by the court. As is the case for FISA authorities, the SAFE Act would have required notice to the target of an NSL if the Government sought to use the records obtained from the NSL in a subsequent proceeding and given the target an opportunity to challenge the use of those records.

So the idea that the NSL statutes need to be revised is not new. But the inspector general's report has now highlighted the need for legislation and suggested some problems with the statutes that had not previously been identified.

The time for changing the lax and unchecked system for issuing national security letters is now. The hearings the Judiciary Committee has held with the inspector general and the FBI Director have been immensely helpful.

But we must not stop there. Legislation is needed. During the reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act, we were unable to fix the NSL statutes. The administration and its supporters even refused to put a sunset on the NSL powers. So we need to act, and soon. I hope to work closely with the bipartisan group of Senators who cosponsored the SAFE Act. I plan to press for Senate action on sensible reforms to help prevent future abuses of national security letters.

Let me say, in conclusion, that this report shows beyond doubt that Congress made a grave mistake when it let this administration intimidate us into silence and inaction rather than protecting the rights and freedoms of the American people. The Justice Department's credibility concerning the powers contained in the PATRIOT Act is in

shreds. Congress needs to exercise extensive and searching oversight of those powers, and it must take corrective action. The inspector general's report has shown both that current safeguards are inadequate and that the Government cannot be trusted to exercise those powers lawfully. Congress must address these problems and fix the mistakes it made in passing and reauthorizing the flawed PATRIOT Act.

TRIBUTE TO HOWARD ARTHUR TIBBS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, it is my privilege to call to the attention of my colleagues a great Ohioan and distinguished Tuskegee Airman, Howard Arthur Tibbs, who this week will be posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

Much has been written about the valiant service and tremendous bravery of these African-American men during World War II. Collectively the Airmen flew over 15,000 sorties and 1,500 missions in their legendary P–51 Mustangs. They were awarded two Presidential Unit Citations, 744 Air Medals, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and numerous individual bronze and silver stars.

But this simple listing of their military accomplishments does not capture the true breadth of their commitment and sacrifice to this country. Not only did they greatly contribute to the Allies' defeat of the Axis Powers, but they did so within a highly segregated military. It has been stated that ''These airmen fought two wars—one against a military force overseas and the other against racism at home and abroad.''

Howard Arthur Tibbs exemplified the qualities for which the Tuskegee Airmen are so admired. At the age of 24, the Salem, OH native enlisted into the service of his country at Fort Hayes in Columbus, OH. He fought bravely and served honorably under tremendously challenging conditions. Our State and our Nation are indebted to him and his fellow airmen for their sacrifice.

A window into the character of Howard Arthur Tibbs is provided by the advice he gave his children. ''Give each day your best,'' he told them, ''and the best is bound to come back to you.'' Howard Tibbs certainly gave his best to this country, and this country is right to recognize his bravery and accomplishment.

I proudly celebrate the life and sacrifice of this great Ohioan on the occasion of his posthumous award of the Congressional Gold Medal.

NEW MEXICO'S TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to New Mexico's Tuskegee Airmen. With the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to John Allen, Robert Lawrence, and James Williams, we express our gratitude for their service, sacrifice, and leadership. Their military service in World War II helped pave the way for the future desegregation of our Armed Forces and country.

Each of these men distinguished themselves while serving our Nation. Robert Lawrence flew 33 separate combat missions over Italy, defending American bombers from the Luftwaffe. John Allen spent 20 years working for the Strategic Air Command following his World War II service. James Williams fought against segregationist policies at his base before becoming an accomplished surgeon. The Congressional Gold Medal, and invitation to the Capitol, shows how far we have come; many of the Tuskegee Airmen can recall when Black Americans were excluded from these hallowed hallways. However, I know it will take more than this award to eradicate the remaining vestiges of racism and prejudice these men have experienced. I pledge to continue working in that spirit and will keep these men in mind in the process.

The great State of New Mexico can be proud it is home to three such outstanding men. I hope that each of them knows how very much we value their contributions to our society in their efforts working for justice, our military for what the service they performed while in uniform, and our nation for teaching all Americans the importance of equality at any cost. I again thank them for all they have done.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, in 1821, the Greeks began their 8-year battle for independence against the Ottoman Empire after over 400 years of Turkish rule. The beginning of the Greek Revolution eventually led to Greece's recognition as an autonomous power in 1832, secured with the signing of the Treaty of Constantinople.

The United States and Greece are very fortunate to have always had strong ties. James Monroe, President during the beginning of the Greek Revolution, publicly expressed a ''strong hope'' for Greece, which led to increasing support for the Greek people. These interactions of the past significantly represent the current relationship between the United States and Greece.

Our two countries continue as allies today, sharing the common ideals of freedom and democracy. We fought side by side in both world wars and currently work together in the war on terrorism. Greece has been a strong contributor to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and in providing security at the Kabul International Airport in Afghanistan. The support that Greece has offered in the war on terrorism has proved to be invaluable.

The historic friendship between Greece and United States has been one of mutual respect and support. A Greek proverb says ''Take an old man's counsel and an experienced man's knowledge.'' The United States has been continuously influenced by the history, principles, and culture of Greece. I am proud to recognize March 25 as Greek Independence Day, including as an original cosponsor of a Senate resolution to so designate this day. I send all Greek-Americans in Rhode Island and throughout the world my best wishes as they celebrate their independence.

SOMALIA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, in recent weeks, we have seen a level of chaos and brutal violence in Mogadishu, Somalia, that is tragic and horrific, not to mention extremely dangerous to our national security interests. According to the U.N., 40,000 people fled Mogadishu in February, and conditions have only deteriorated this month. Humanitarian access is severely restricted. Ugandan troops serving in an African Union peacekeeping force have been attacked. Last week a cargo plane was shot down. The Transitional Federal Government has been overwhelmed by the violence, and appears unable or unwilling to work with rival clans and other opponents. A mere 3 months after the Ethiopian incursion, the TFG is isolated and a dangerous power vacuum is forming.

These are the conditions that permit terrorist organizations to operate in Somalia, as they have for years. Insecurity and lawlessness facilitated the rise of the Islamic courts in recent years and now circumstances are again conducive for extremist elements to regroup and return. In other words, without a consistent, comprehensive plan for fostering stability in Somalia, we could find ourselves faced with the same conditions that preceded the Ethiopian incursion against the courts and subsequent U.S. military operations.

The United States and the international community has approached Somalia, and continues to approach Somalia, sporadically, with policy made on the fly and with few resources directed toward long-term political and economic development. When required by Congress to provide a comprehensive plan for Somalia, the Administration has failed to do so. In February, when I asked the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs why this legally mandated report was overdue, she indicated that that the Department was busy responding to ''fast-moving events on the ground.'' But that is precisely the problem. Ad hoc approaches to Somalia have not worked; they have never worked. There was no comprehensive plan last year, when the Islamic courts took advantage of years of civil conflict to consolidate their power. There was no plan when Ethiopian troops entered Somalia, even though the international community had no ready peacekeeping capability to follow. There was no plan when the TFG was installed in Mogadishu with no effective international framework to ensure that it could govern. And there was no broader plan when U.S.

airstrikes pursued targets in a country that, unless policies change, will remain a terrorist safe haven for years to come.

None of what we are seeing in Somalia today should come as a surprise. Last fall, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles was loudly proclaiming his intention to go into Somalia. In my own meeting with Meles in early December, he told me exactly what he intended to do. He would enter Somalia, he would teach the Islamic courts a lesson, and he would withdraw. Ethiopia, he told me, had neither the capability nor the desire to engage in nation building. I asked him about the instability that might ensue and warned him against an invasion. The lessons from Iraq were perhaps inevitable and we discussed them. Yet Meles was committed to a strike against the Islamic courts, regardless of what would follow. In other words, quick military action was, from his perspective, in Ethiopia's national interests, even without an adequate international political framework or a robust peacekeeping capability.

That does not mean, however, that this was in America's national interests. I do not know if the Ethiopian incursion would have occurred if the United States had sought to stop it. I do know that the ruins left behind by this incursion were foreseeable and there was no excuse for the United States and the international community to have been caught so shamefully unprepared.

As I warned in January, even after the incursion there was a brief window of opportunity to bring some stability to Somalia. That window may have now closed. Still, we have no choice but to do what we should have been doing all along. It is in our interest to increase support for the peacekeepers who are currently being asked to police a state of chaos. It is in our interest to identify economic resources that could be used for development in Somalia and as an incentive for stability and representative government. And it is in our interest to promote a broad, international framework for stability in Somalia. It is not acceptable for the Transitional Federal Government to resist the tough political choices—including the inclusion of rival factions and clans—necessary to establish an effective national government that is seen as credible and legitimate by its own people as well as the international community. It is the Somalis who suffer when there is no representative government, and it is the terrorists who benefit. And it is irresponsible for other countries in the region to pursue their separate, conflicting agendas in Somalia rather than contribute to a sustainable compromise.

The stabilization and reconstruction of Somalia will not happen without a real commitment of attention and political capital from the United States. We must appoint a Special Envoy to work fulltime on Somalia and the Horn of Africa. The ambassadors in the region all have their own host countries to worry about every day. And it is not an option for the Secretary of State to be ''in the lead on our Somalia policy,'' as the Assistant Secretary stated in February. Such unfocused leadership results in precisely the kind of sporadic response to events in Somalia that has so utterly failed us.

Last week, the violence in Mogadishu took a grisly and familiar turn: the dragging and mutilating of bodies through the streets. It was these kinds of images that helped prompt the United States to turn away from Somalia 15 years ago. But, as we learned in Nairobi and Tanzania in 1998, when we turn away from Somalia, we invite disaster. That does not mean that there was a military solution in 1993—certainly, the poorly defined U.S. military mission in Somalia 14 years ago was not a solution. Nor does it mean that there is a military solution now. Airstrikes can never, by themselves, dry up a terrorist safe haven, nor can they bring to power a stable government with which we can work to pursue our mutual interests.

Yet all too often, military options are all we consider, all we plan for, and all we devote resources to. High-level diplomacy has been neglected. Economic investments have been shortchanged. And, worst of all, those who are supposed to be leaders on this issue have already gotten distracted.

We cannot afford to let history repeat itself. If we do not act, conditions will continue to deteriorate. Civilians will die. Extremists who offer the promise of a modicum of security will not only emerge, but will be welcomed by a population desperate for some peace. Terrorist networks will thrive. And plots against the United States will be hatched.

The longer we continue to neglect Somalia, the longer we potentially undermine our own national security.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

A TRIBUTE TO DOUG BYRNE

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the service and sacrifice of Officer Doug Byrne.

My wife Joan and I were deeply saddened to hear of the senseless death of Officer Doug Byrne while in the line of duty March 26, in Aurora, CO, responding to a man dying of a seizure.

It takes a person of great conviction and courage to become an officer of the law. It takes a commitment to community, hard work, and patience. Officer Doug Byrne possessed these very qualities. And unfortunately, Officer Doug Byrne paid the ultimate price.

Officer Doug Byrne was the 5th Aurora police officer to be killed in the line of duty. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, more than 17,500 officers have been killed nationwide since 1792, including 236 in Colorado.

Doug Byrne was the second Aurora officer to be killed in the past 6 months. Aurora Police Detective Mike Thomas made his ultimate sacrifice last September.

A native of Aurora at 37 years of age, Doug joined the Aurora Police Department in 2004, and was known for his dedication to his profession. He served as a field training officer for recruits new to the force. From 1998–2004, Doug served the City of Glendale, CO, Police Department. There he distinguished himself by receiving the medal of valor by rescuing distraught tenants in an apartment complex fire. Officer Doug Byrne is someone who knows what service to country is as well. Doug served his country as a U.S. Marine in the Persian Gulf War during the liberation of Kuwait. Doug was a graduate of Gateway High School in Aurora.

The City of Aurora will forever be grateful for Officer Doug Byrne's service and dedication to the safety and well-being of others, and his contributions will be remembered.

Officer Byrne is survived by his parents. Doug had many friends and will be deeply missed.

I extend my deepest sympathy to the family of Officer Doug Byrne. May his bravery and unwavering sense of duty serve as a role model for the future generation of law officers.

Thank you for your service, Officer Byrne. Rest in peace, Sir. End of watch: Monday, March 26, 2007.•

TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES WILLIAMS

• Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I wish to speak today on behalf of the Tuskegee Airmen; specifically, I would like to speak about Dr. James Williams, a Tuskegee Airman, renowned physician, and one of my Las Cruces constituents. He has lived a fascinating life and I think that the following story truly exemplifies why he is deserving of a Congressional Gold Medal.

As a World War II-era first lieutenant in the Army Air Corps, Dr. Williams was put into a terribly difficult situation when he refused a superior White officer's order to sign a base regulation. The effect of this regulation would have been to keep Black officers from entering the White officers' club, tennis courts, and pool. He rightly recognized that a segregated Army was not one that would be able to fight wars together. Because of this act of disobedience, he and 100 other Black officers were sent to Godman Field, KY, where they were met by 75 armed MPs. Held under house arrest at Godman, some there felt that they were being more closely watched than the German POWs being housed there.

Thankfully, the house arrest only lasted for 5 days before the Black officers were able to show that the White officers looking to keep the base facilities segregated were failing to follow Army regulations. They were quickly released and returned back to Freeman Field. However, a letter of reprimand

stayed in all of their files until 1995, when the Air Force officially vindicated them.

Though Dr. Williams's unit never saw action in the European theater, they did fight against racism and for equality while serving our Nation. His contributions to this fight did not end with his military career. As a surgeon and the president of the Cook County Physicians Association, he worked to end discrimination in Chicago area hospitals. He met with President Kennedy on the issue and also served as Dr. Martin Luther King's physician when he was in Chicago.

New Mexico is lucky to have such a great man as a constituent and I am pleased to see that he and his comrades have finally received their Congressional gold medals. It is late in coming, but I believe it demonstrates that our Nation recognizes his fight as our own. Using Dr. Williams's selfless example, I will continue working to ensure equality for all Americans and end discrimination of all kinds.●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a withdrawal of a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

(The nomination received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:43 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 477. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to strengthen education, prevention, and treatment programs relating to stroke, and for other purposes.

H.R. 727. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to add requirements regarding trauma care, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1132. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide waivers relating to grants for preventive health measures with respect breast and cervical cancers.

H.R. 1562. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and expand certain rules with respect to housing in the GO Zones.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The message also announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 494. An act to endorse further enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to facilitate the timely admission of new members to NATO, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The message further announced that pursuant to 15 US.C. 1024(a), and the order of the House of January 4,2007, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Joint Economic Committee: Mr. HINCHEY of New York, Mr. HILL of Indiana, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. CUMMINGS of Maryland, and Mr. DOGGETT of Texas.

The message also announced that pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 1024(a), and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Joint Economic Committee: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, and Mr. PAUL of Texas.

At 3:51 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 835. An act to reauthorize the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing assistance for Native Hawaiians.

H.R. 1401. An act to improve the security of railroads, public transportation, and over-the-road buses in the United States, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 477. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to strengthen education, prevention, and treatment programs relating to stroke, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

H.R. 802. To amend the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships to implement MARPOL Annex VI; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 835. An act to reauthorize the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing assistance for Native Hawaiians; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

H.R. 1132. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide waivers relating to grants for preventive health measures with respect to breast and cervical cancers; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 1401. An act to improve the security of railroads, public transportation, and over-the-road buses in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 1562. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend and expand certain rules with respect to housing in the GO Zones; to the Committee on Finance.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 997. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for human embryonic stem cell research.

S. 1001. A bill to restore Second Amendment rights in the District of Columbia.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–1176. A communication from the Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Disclosure of Children's Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk Eligibility Information in the Child Nutrition Programs'' (RIN0584–AC95) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1177. A communication from the Acting Secretary of the Army, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Nunn-McCurdy Unit Cost thresholds for certain programs; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1178. A communication from the Secretary of the Air Force, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard Bases affected by the 2005 round of Defense Base Closures and Realignment; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1179. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Installations and Environment), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the inclusion of two additional civilian positions to be included in a previously reported public-private competition; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1180. A communication from the Deputy Secretary, Division of Market Regulation, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Technical Amendments to Regulations S–T'' (Release No. 34–55502) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1181. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Withdrawal of Final Flood Elevation Determination for Lexington/Fayette County, KY and Incorporated Areas'' (FEMA–B–7465) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1182. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' (72 FR 10392) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1183. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations'' (72 FR 10382) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1184. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' (72 FR 10391) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1185. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting,

pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Regulatory Amendment To Amend the Regulations Regarding Procedures for Measuring Net Mesh Size'' (RIN0648–AU83) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1186. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Rule—Fisheries in the Western Pacific; Western Pacific Pelagic Fisheries; Hawaii Shallow-set Longline Fishery'' (RIN0648–AU99) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1187. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''2007 and 2008 Final Harvest Specifications for the Gulf of Alaska'' (I.D. No. 112006B) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1188. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''2007 and 2008 Final Harvest Specifications for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands'' (I.D. No. 112706B) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1189. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels 60 ft. LOA and Longer Using Hook-and-Line Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area'' (I.D. No. 022007D) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1190. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Temporary Rule; Inseason Summer Flounder Quota Transfer from NC to NJ'' (I.D. No. 013107C) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1191. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's report relative to the activities of its Chesapeake Bay Office during fiscal years 2005 and 2006; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1192. A communication from the Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the foreign aviation authorities to which the Administration provided support during fiscal year 2006; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1193. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Buckle Up America Campaign: The National Initiative for Increasing Safety Belt Use''; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1194. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting the report of a draft bill intended to provide the necessary authority to the Secretary for the establishment and implementation of a regulatory system for offshore aquaculture in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1195. A communication from the Administrator, Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Voluntary Reporting of Greenhouse Gases 2005 Summary''; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1196. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the proposed project to replace the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Bridge at Deep Creek, Chesapeake, Virginia; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1197. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Annual Report for fiscal year 2006; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1198. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Computer Software under Section 199(c)(5)(B)'' ((RIN1545–BF56) (TD 9317)) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1199. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fringe Benefits Aircraft Valuation Formula'' (Revenue Ruling 2007–17) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1200. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revenue Procedure on Disclosures with the SEC'' (Rev. Proc. 2007–25) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1201. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Certain Plan Deduction Limits Under the Pension Protection Act of 2006'' (Notice 2007–28) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1202. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revenue Procedure: Safe Harbors for Sections 143 and 25'' (Rev. Proc. 2007–26) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1203. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Summary Record of Assessment on Form 23C'' (Rev. Rul. 2007–21) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1204. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Corporate Reorganizations; Guidance on the Measurement of Continuity of Interest'' (TD 9316) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1205. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Dual Consolidated Loss Regulations'' ((RIN1545–BD10) (TD 9315)) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1206. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Applicable Federal Rates—April 2007'' (Rev. Rul. 2007–23) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1207. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's Annual Report on the Child Support Enforcement Program for fiscal year 2004; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1208. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the use and effectiveness of funds appropriated by the Deficit Reduction Act to the Department; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1209. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Notice: Clean Renewable Energy Bonds'' (Notice 2007–26) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1210. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''NRC Tier II Directive Super Completed Contract Method'' (LMSB–04–0207–012) received on March 22, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1211. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the steps taken to bring about an end to the Arab League boycott of Israel and to expand the process of normalization between Israel and the Arab League countries; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1212. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2007–41—2007–49); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1213. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to overseas surplus property; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1214. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''FEMA Acquisition Regulation System; Removal of Chapter 44'' (72 FR 9445) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1215. A communication from the Director, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting, the report of a legislative proposal intended to amend the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 to reauthorize the Office of Government Ethics; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1216. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, the report of a draft bill that would amend certain unworkable statutory investment provisions relating to the Department's investment of the Yankton Sioux and the Santee Sioux Tribes' Development Trust Funds; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

EC–1217. A communication from the Chairman, Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Best Efforts in Administrative Fines Challenges'' (Notice 2007–7) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

EC–1218. A communication from the Director, Financial Management and Assurance, Government Accountability Office, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the financial statements of the Capitol Preservation Fund for the fiscal years ended September 30, 2005, and 2004; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

EC–1219. A communication from the Director of Regulations Management, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Schedule for Rating Disabilities; Appendices A, B, and C'' (RIN2900–AM60) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–1220. A communication from the Director of Regulations Management, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Delegations of Authority; National Cemetery Administration'' (RIN2900–AM18) received on March 23, 2007; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN, from the Committee on Rules and Administration, with an amendment:

S. 223. A bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. LEVIN for the Committee on Armed Services.

*James R. Clapper, Jr., of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.

*S. Ward Casscells, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

*Claude M. Kicklighter, of Georgia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense.

*William Charles Ostendorff, of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration.

Navy nomination of Adm. Gary Roughead, 6126, to be Admiral.

Navy nomination of Adm. Robert F. Willard, 1564, to be Admiral.

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III, 1250, to be Vice Admiral.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Jeffrey A. Sorenson, 3510, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, 8600, to be Lieutenant General.

Marine Corps nomination of Brig. Gen. James L. Williams, 0353, to be Major General.

Army nomination of Col. James T. Cook, 4390, to be Brigadier General.

Marine Corps nomination of Lt. Gen. Richard S. Kramlich, 9829, to be Lieutenant General.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Brig. Gen. John R. Allen and ending with Brig. Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2007.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORD on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Air Force nominations beginning with Katherine J. Alguire and ending with Kristen M. Zebrowski, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 11, 2007.

Air Force nominations beginning with Robert J. Aalseth and ending with Mario F. Zuniga, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 11, 2007.

Air Force nomination of Mark A. Yuspa, 2284, to be Major.

Air Force nomination of Cheryl A. Udensi, 9460, to be Major.

Air Force nominations beginning with Keith A. Darlington and ending with Frank A. Yerkes, Jr., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Air Force nominations beginning with Kenneth A. Arnold and ending with Thomas F. Zimmerman, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Air Force nominations beginning with Glenn M. Frederick and ending with Julie L. Steele, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Air Force nominations beginning with Pio Vazquez Diaz and ending with Drew D. Schnyder, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Air Force nominations beginning with Karen D. Doherty and ending with Maureen G. Toomey, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Army nomination of Gerald J. Lukowski, Jr., 9096, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Charles W. Whittington, 7455, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Vasilios Lazos, 7832, to be Major.

Army nomination of Thomas G. McFarland, 4368, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Jeffrey R. Bavis and ending with Sorrel B. Cooper, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 12, 2007.

Army nomination of Kathleen S. Loper, 3463, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Michael A. White, 6264, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Anthony T. Roper, 0533, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Eric A. Hansen and ending with Peter J. Varljen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Army nominations beginning with Steven S. Gelbert and ending with Patrick R. Mcbrearty, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 19, 2007.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Peter W. Ahern and ending with Kevin T. Wooley, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on February 15, 2007.

Navy nomination of Arthur W. Stauff, 3198, to be Captain.

Navy nomination of Charles A. McLenithan, 2873, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nominations beginning with Jeffrey P. Bejma and ending with Jordan I. Ziegler, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 12, 2007.

By Mr. BIDEN for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

*Ford M. Fraker, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Nominee: Ford McKinstry Fraker.

Post: Ambassador.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, Amount, Date, and Donee:

1. Self: Ford M. Fraker, none.

2. Spouse: Linda M. Fraker, none.

3. Children and spouses, Antonia W.H. Fraker, none; Ford J.H. Fraker, none; Charles T.H. Fraker, none.

4. Parents: Harrison S. Fraker, none; Marjorie T. Fraker, deceased.

5. Grandparents: George Fraker, deceased; Agnes Fraker, deceased.

Brothers and spouses: Harrison S. and Molly Fraker, $100, 09/2006, Phil Angelides; $100, 9/2006, Peter Hutchinson; $100, 9/2004, John Kerry.

Howard H. Fraker, none.

Christopher P. and Deborah Fraker, none.

7. Sisters and spouses: Wenda W. Fraker, deceased.

Zalmay Khalilzad, of Maryland, to be the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Nominee: Zalmay M. Khalilzad.

Post: United Nations.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, Amount, Date, Donee:

1. Self, none.

2. Spouse: none.

4. Children and spouses: Cyeryl C. Benard; Alexander Khalilzad Benard; Maximillian Khalilzad Bernard.

Parents: Zahra Khalilzad, Khalilullah, Deceased.

5. Grandparents: Deceased.

6. Brothers and spouses: David Khalilzad, none; Vicky Khalilzad, none; Tory Khalilzad, none.

7. Sisters and Spouses: Aziza Monawar, none; Malika Monawar, none; Ashan Monawar, none; Basima Khalilzad, none.

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*Zalmay Khalilzad, of Maryland, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

*Douglas Menarchik, of Texas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

*Katherine Almquist, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

*Paul J. Bonicelli, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

*Curtis S. Chin, of New York, to be United States Director of the Asian Development Bank, with the rank of Ambassador.

*Eli Whitney Debevoise II, of Maryland, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years.

*Margrethe Lundsager, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of two years.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, for the Committee on Foreign Relations I report favorably the following nomination list which was printed in the RECORD on the date indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that this nomination lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Foreign Service nominations beginning with Natalie J. Freeman and ending with Deborah Ann McCarthy, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 10, 2007. (minus 2 nominees: Beth Pennock Dunford; Ross Marvin Hicks)

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself and Mr. SPECTER):

S. 1003. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to emergency medical services and the quality and efficiency of care furnished in emergency departments of hospitals and critical access hospitals by establishing a bipartisan commission to examine factors that affect the effective delivery of such services, by providing for additional payments for certain physician services furnished in such emergency departments, and by establishing a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Working Group, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. DORGAN):

S. 1004. A bill to make ineligible for Federal contract awards any expatriated corporations and any companies that do business with, or won foreign subsidiaries that do business with, state sponsors of terrorism or foreign terrorist organizations; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. KERRY (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. PRYOR, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 1005. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. KERRY:

S. 1006. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to deny qualified dividend income treatment to certain foreign dividends; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LUGAR:

S. 1007. A bill to direct the Secretary of State to work with the Government of Brazil and other foreign governments to develop partnerships that will strengthen diplomatic relations and energy security by accelerating the development of biofuels production, research, and infrastructure to alleviate poverty, create jobs, and increase income, while improving energy security and protecting the environment; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 1008. A bill to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to improve and strengthen the safety inspection process of nuclear facilities; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. MARTINEZ (for himself and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 1009. A bill to amend part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve supplemental educational services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SMITH (for himself, Mr. CONRAD, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. COLLINS, and Mrs. CLINTON):

S. 1010. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to encourage guaranteed lifetime income payments from annuities and similar payments of life insurance proceeds at dates later than death by excluding from income a portion of such payments; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. ENZI):

S. 1011. A bill to change the name of the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the National Institute on Diseases of Addiction and to change the name of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to the National Institute on Alcohol Disorders and Health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. LANDRIEU (for herself, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BOND, Mr. CRAIG, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. LOTT, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. VITTER, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. CHAMBLISS):

S. 1012. A bill to amend the Consumer Credit Protection Act to assure meaningful disclosures of the terms of rental-purchase agreements, including disclosures of all costs to consumers under such agreements, to provide certain substantive rights to consumers under such agreements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. HARKIN (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 1013. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to encourage States to provide pregnant woman enrolled in the Medicaid program with access to comprehensive tobacco cessation services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. MARTINEZ, and Mr. DEMINT):

S. 1014. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide parental choice for those students that attend schools that are in need of improvement and have been identified for restructuring; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Mr. ROCKEFELLER):

S. 1015. A bill to reauthorize the National Writing Project; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MENENDEZ:

S. 1016. A bill to amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to promote energy independence and self-sufficiency by providing for the use of net metering by certain small electric energy generation systems, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. THOMAS, and Mr. CONRAD)):

S. 1017. A bill to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, to prohibit the use of certain anti-competitive forward contracts; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1018. A bill to address security risks posed by global climate change and for other purposes; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

By Mr. COBURN (for himself, Mr. BURR, Mr. CHAMBLISS, and Mr. INHOFE):

S. 1019. A bill to provide comprehensive reform of the health care system of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. HUTCHISON (for herself, Mr. STEVENS, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. ALLARD, and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 1020. A bill to move toward energy independence through a coordinated development of renewable energy sources, including wave, solar, wind, geothermal, and biofuels production; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. STABENOW:

S. 1021. A bill to address the exchange-rate misalignment of the Japanese yen with respect to the United States dollar, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. THOMAS (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. DOMENICI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. HATCH):

S. Res. 130. A resolution designating July 28, 2007, as ''National Day of the American Cowboy''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mr. REID, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. TESTER):

S. Res. 131. A resolution designating the first week of April 2007 as ''National Asbestos Awareness Week''; to the Committee on the Judiciary .

By Mr. STEVENS (for himself, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. INHOFE):

S. Res. 132. A resolution recognizing the Civil Air Patrol for 65 years of service to the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. OBAMA (for himself, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mr. CORKER):

S. Res. 133. A resolution celebrating the life of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 147

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 147, a bill to empower women in Afghanistan, and for other purposes.

S. 223

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL), the Senator from Utah (Mr. BENNETT) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 223, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 254

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB) were added as cosponsors of S. 254, a bill to award posthumously a Congressional gold medal to Constantino Brumidi.

S. 261

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 261, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to strengthen prohibitions against animal fighting, and for other purposes.

S. 293

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 293, a bill to extend the period in which States may spend funds from the additional allotments provided to States under the Social Services Block Grant program for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricane Katrina and other hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico.

S. 294

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 294, a bill to reauthorize Amtrak, and for other purposes.

S. 368

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 368, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to enhance the COPS ON THE BEAT grant program, and for other purposes.

S. 382

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 382, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a State family support grant program to end the practice of parents giving legal custody of their seriously emotionally disturbed children to State agencies for the purpose of obtaining mental health services for those children.

S. 399

At the request of Mr. BUNNING, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. BENNETT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 399, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to include podiatrists as physicians for purposes of covering physicians services under the Medicaid program.

S. 439

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 439, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation.

S. 479

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 479, a bill to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. BENNETT) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 502, a bill to repeal the sunset on the reduction of capital gains rates for individuals and on the taxation of dividends of individuals at capital gains rates.

S. 543

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 543, a bill to improve Medicare beneficiary access by extending the 60 percent compliance threshold used to determine whether a hospital or unit of a hospital is an inpatient rehabilitation facility under the Medicare program.

S. 557

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 557, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the depreciation classification of motorsports entertainment complexes.

S. 576

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 576, a bill to provide for the effective prosecution of terrorists and guarantee due process rights.

S. 617

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 617, a bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans.

S. 624

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, his name and the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 624, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide waivers relating to grants for preventive health measures with respect to breast and cervical cancers.

S. 625

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 625, a bill to protect the public health by providing the Food and Drug Administration with certain authority to regulate tobacco products.

S. 634

At the request of Mr. DODD, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 634, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish grant programs to provide for education and outreach on newborn screening and coordinated followup care once newborn screening has been conducted, to reauthorize programs under part A of title XI of such Act, and for other purposes.

S. 667

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 667, a bill to expand programs of early childhood home visitation that increase school readiness, child abuse and neglect prevention, and early identification of developmental and health delays, including potential mental health concerns, and for other purposes.

S. 742

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) were added as cosponsors of S. 742, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to reduce the health risks posed by asbestos-containing products, and for other purposes.

S. 743

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 743, a bill to amend title 36, United States Code, to modify the individuals eligible for associate membership in the Military Order of the Purple Heart of the United States of America, Incorporated.

S. 773

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) were added as cosponsors of S. 773, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums.

S. 819

At the request of Mr. DORGAN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 819, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand tax-free distributions from individual retirement accounts for charitable purposes.

S. 828

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) was added as a cosponsor of S. 828, a bill to amend the Food Security

Act of 1985 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to make cost-share payments for on-farm energy production under the environmental quality incentives program.

S. 845

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, his name and the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 845, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to expand and intensify programs with respect to research and related activities concerning elder falls.

S. 883

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 883, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to extend loan forgiveness for certain loans to Head Start teachers.

S. 913

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 913, a bill to clarify that the revocation of an alien's visa or other documentation is not subject to judicial review.

S. 959

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 959, a bill to award a grant to enable Teach for America, Inc., to implement and expand its teaching program.

S. 962

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 962, a bill to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to reauthorize and improve the carbon capture and storage research, development, and demonstration program of the Department of Energy and for other purposes.

S. 970

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 970, a bill to impose sanctions on Iran and on other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 991

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 991, a bill to establish the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation under the authorities of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961.

S. 992

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 992, a bill to achieve emission reductions and cost savings through accelerated use of cost-effective lighting technologies in public buildings, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 30

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 30, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the need for the United States to address global climate change through the negotiation of fair and effective international commitments.

S. RES. 65

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 65, a resolution condemning the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights advocate Hrant Dink and urging the people of Turkey to honor his legacy of tolerance.

S. RES. 76

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 76, a resolution calling on the United States Government and the international community to promptly develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive regional strategy in Africa to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian operations, contain and reduce violence, and contribute to conditions for sustainable peace in eastern Chad, and Central African Republic, and Darfur, Sudan.

S. RES. 122

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 122, a resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

AMENDMENT NO. 661

At the request of Mr. KOHL, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 661 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 687

At the request of Mr. KERRY, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 687 proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 690

At the request of Mr. LUGAR, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 690 proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 697

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 697 proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 707

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 707 proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 707 proposed to H.R. 1591, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 709

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 709 proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 719

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. MARTINEZ) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 719 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 739

At the request of Mr. BIDEN, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 739 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 773

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 773 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 784

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Mr.

REID) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 784 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 785

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 785 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 787

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 787 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1591, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. KERRY (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. PRYOR, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 1005. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small business and entrepreneurship.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague Senator HAGEL, the Senator from Nebraska, to introduce the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007. There are currently 25 million veterans in America, including over one million who have left military service since September 11, 2001. As the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the number of veterans, including service disabled veterans, will increase and reservists will continue to carry more of the burden than ever before. As veterans and reservists reenter civilian life, the economic benefits and opportunities provided by the Federal Government will become even more critical, particularly in the field of entrepreneurship and business ownership. As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am serious about addressing the problems affecting veterans and reservists who wish or are already engaged in small business and this bill is another step forward in doing so.

As veterans, Senator HAGEL and I believe that the government has an obligation to help deployed reservists avoid economic hardship because of their service and to help veterans, particularly the service-disabled, return to civilian life when they retire. There are more veterans returning each day because of the war on terror—800,000 veterans were discharged between 2002 and 2005—and ensuring that these individuals have a secure financial future is not just a matter of fairness but of national security. The treatment of our troops affects the Nation's ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest. Veterans have told me that they feel that they are being forgotten and that the government is simply not living up to its past promises of helping veteran entrepreneurs succeed. This bill is one step in ensuring that the government is doing all it can to help those who have served and sacrificed on our behalf.

The Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007 reauthorizes the veteran programs in the Small Business Administration. Specifically, this legislation increases the funding authorization for the Office of Veteran Business Development from $2 million today to $2.5 million in three years. In light of the large numbers of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and increased responsibilities placed on this office by Executive Order 13360, it is high time that the Office of Veteran Business Development receive the funding levels that it needs.

In addition, this bill permanently extends the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. The committee was created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the SBA, the Congress, and the President. The veteran small business owners who serve on this committee provide a unique perspective which is sorely needed at this challenging time. Unfortunately, continuing uncertainty about the Committee's future has, at times, distracted the committee from focusing on its core function. Therefore, I have called for its permanent extension. It is clear to me that more needs to be done to address the issues facing veterans and reservists, and the role this committee plays will continue to be important.

Additionally, I have taken a number of steps to better serve the reservists who are serving their country abroad while their businesses are suffering at home. Over the past decade, the Department of Defense has increased its reliance on the National Guard and reserves. This has intensified since September 11 and increased deployments are expected to continue. The effect of this increase on reservists and small businesses continues to remain of concern. A 2003 GAO report indicated that 41 percent of reservists lost income when mobilized. This had a higher effect on self-employed reservists, 55 percent of whom lost income.

In 1999, I created the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan (MREIDL) program to provide loans to small businesses that incur economic injury as a result of an essential employee being called to active duty. However, since 2002, fewer than 300 of these loans have been approved by the SBA, despite record numbers of reservists being called to active duty. It is clear that changes need to be made, so that reservists are informed about the availability of the MREIDL program and that the program better meets their needs.

At a hearing of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship on January 31st, the first hearing we held in this Congress, we heard suggestions for a number of changes which would improve the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, and I have included those changes in this bill. They include increasing the application deadline for such a loan from 90 days to one year following the date of discharge; creating a pre-deployment loan approval process; and improved outreach and technical assistance.

This bill also creates a non-collaterized loan program. Reservist families have already sacrificed enough when a family member goes away to serve their country and when their business is harmed as a result. This loan program would allow reservist dependent businesses to access the capital they need to stay afloat without having to sacrifice beyond the service of the key employees. In order to give reservists time to repay the loans, the non-collaterized loan created in this bill would not accumulate interest or require payments for one year or until after the deployment ends, whichever is longer.

In addition, because loans aren't the answer for every business—additional debt could permanently cripple some businesses—I have also included a grant program for reservists. This program would allow up to $25,000 in grants for small businesses that can show economic injury because of deployment and prove that they have a viable business plan for the next three years. A grant program would help small businesses that cannot afford to take on a military reservist economic injury disaster loan or that were denied such a loan, but still are viable businesses and need assistance.

While addressing the funding needs of reservists is essential, I also want to make sure that reservists receive the technical and management assistance they need to succeed. For that reason, this bill also includes the establishment of the Reservists Enterprise Transition and Sustainability Task Force. This grant program would allow Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers and veteran centers to compete for grants to create programs that help small businesses prepare for and cope with the mobilization of reservist-employees and owners.

Veterans possess great technical skills and valuable leadership experience, but they require financial resources to turn that potential into a viable enterprise. A recent report by the Small Business Administration stated that 22 percent of veterans plan to start or are starting a business when they leave the military. For service-disabled veterans, this number rises to 28 percent. So the legislation I introduce today will create a new program, administered by the Small Business

Administration, to provide very-low-interest loans, up to $100,000, to help veterans start new small businesses.

Lastly, this bill calls for two reports from the Government Accountability Office. One report will look at the needs of service-disabled veterans who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs. As a result of the war on terror and improved medicine, we are seeing more service-disabled veterans than we have seen in decades. For some service-disabled veterans, entrepreneurship is the best or only way of achieving economic independence. Therefore, it is essential that we understand and take steps to address the needs of the service-disabled veteran entrepreneur or small business owner.

I am also calling for a study to investigate allegations that the changes the Department of Defense has made in regard to the use of reservists is harming the ability of reservists to find jobs and the ability of small business owners to continue hiring reservists. At the Committee's hearing on veteran small business issues, witnesses testified about reservists being turned down or not considered for jobs because they are reservists. I have heard reservists talk about being pressured to leave the reserves if they would like to continue to advance at work. I have also heard the concerns of small business owners who want to support servicemembers; however, they cannot do so if it means the survival of their business. Understanding more about this issue is important and essential to making sure that policymakers can continue to support citizen soldiers and the small businesses that employ them across the Nation.

One of the issues I am not addressing in my legislation today is Federal procurement. I heard clearly the concerns from veterans that they are not being treated fairly when it comes to selling goods and services to the Federal Government, and I am committed to making changes. However, to make real changes, changes that can pass the Senate and the House and become law, these changes must be part of a bigger package. Legislation that addresses not just the concerns of service-disabled veteran small business owners, but the concerns of all small business owners who want their fair share of Federal contracts. I am committed to taking the difficult steps necessary to address these issues and will do so.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1005

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''activated'' means receiving an order placing a Reservist on active duty;

(2) the term ''active duty'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code;

(3) the terms ''Administration'' and ''Administrator'' mean the Small Business Administration and the Administrator thereof, respectively;

(4) the term ''Reservist'' means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code;

(5) the term ''Service Corps of Retired Executives'' means the Service Corps of Retired Executives authorized by section 8(b)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(b)(1));

(6) the terms ''service-disabled veteran'' and ''small business concern'' have the meanings given those terms in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632);

(7) the term ''small business development center'' means a small business development center described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648); and

(8) the term ''women's business center'' means a women's business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

TITLE I—MILITARY RESERVIST LOANS

SEC. 101. GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR MILITARY RESERVISTS' SMALL BUSINESSES.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF GRANTS.—Section 7(b)(3)(B) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(B)) is amended by inserting ''or grants'' after ''or a deferred basis)''.

(b) GRANT SPECIFICATIONS.—Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) is amended by inserting after subparagraph (F) the following:

''(G) Grants made under subparagraph (B)—

''(i) may be awarded in addition to any loan made under subparagraph (B);

''(ii) shall not exceed $25,000; and

''(iii) shall be made only to a small business concern—

''(I) that provides a business plan demonstrating viability for not less than 3 years after the date of the application for that grant;

''(II) with 10 or fewer employees; and

''(III) that has not received a grant under subparagraph (B) during the 2-year period ending on the date of the application for that grant.''.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 20(e)(2) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 note) is amended by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following:

''(C) GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR MILITARY RESERVISTS' SMALL BUSINESSES.—There are authorized to be appropriated for grants under section 7(b)(3)(B)—

''(i) $5,000,000 for the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007; and

''(ii) $5,000,000 for each of the 2 fiscal years following the fiscal year described in clause (i).''.

SEC. 102. NONCOLLATERALIZED LOANS.

Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) is amended by inserting after subparagraph (G), as added by this Act, the following:

''(H)(i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator may make a loan under this paragraph of not more than $100,000 without collateral.

''(ii) The Administrator may defer payment of principal and interest on a loan described in clause (i) during the longer of—

''(I) the 1-year period beginning on the date of the initial disbursement of the loan; and

''(II) the period during which the relevant essential employee is on active duty.''.

SEC. 103. APPLICATION PERIOD.

Section 7(b)(3)(C) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(C)) is amended by striking ''90 days'' and inserting ''1 year''.

SEC. 104. PREAPPROVAL PROCESS.

(a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''eligible Reservist'' means a Reservist who—

(1) has not been ordered to active duty;

(2) expects to be ordered to active duty during a period of military conflict (as that term is defined in section 7(n)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(n)(1)); and

(3) can reasonably demonstrate that the small business concern for which that Reservist is a key employee will suffer economic injury in the absence of that Reservist.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall establish a preapproval process, under which—

(1) the Administrator may approve a loan or grant to a small business concern under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)), as amended by this Act, before an eligible Reservist employed by that small business concern is activated; and

(2) the Administrator shall distribute funds for any loan or grant approved under paragraph (1) if that eligible Reservist is activated.

SEC. 105. OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense, shall develop a comprehensive outreach and technical assistance program (in this section referred to as the ''program'') to—

(1) market the loans and grants available under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)), as amended by this Act, to Reservists, and family members of Reservists, that are on active duty and that are not on active duty; and

(2) provide technical assistance to a small business concern applying for a loan or grant under that section.

(b) COMPONENTS.—The program shall—

(1) incorporate appropriate websites maintained by the Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Defense; and

(2) require that information on the program is made available to small business concerns directly through—

(A) the district offices and resource partners of the Administration, including small business development centers, women's business centers, and the Service Corps of Retired Executives; and

(B) other Federal agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

(c) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 6 months thereafter until the date that is 30 months after such date of enactment, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) for the 6-month period before the date of that report—

(i) the number of loans and grants approved under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)), as amended by this Act;

(ii) the number of loans and grants disbursed under that section; and

(iii) the total amount disbursed under that section; and

(B) recommendations, if any, to make the program more effective in serving small business concerns that employ Reservists.

TITLE II—NATIONAL RESERVIST ENTERPRISE TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''National Reservist Enterprise Transition and Sustainability Act of 2007''.

SEC. 202. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this title is to establish a program to—

(1) provide managerial, financial, planning, development, technical, and regulatory assistance to small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(2) provide managerial, financial, planning, development, technical, and regulatory assistance to the temporary heads of small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(3) create a partnership between the Small Business Administration, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(4) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to expand the access of small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists to programs providing business management, development, financial, procurement, technical, regulatory, and marketing assistance;

(5) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to quickly respond to an activation of Reservists that own and operate small business concerns; and

(6) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to assist Reservists that own and operate small business concerns in preparing for future military activations.

SEC. 203. NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE BUSINESS ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 21(a)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(1)) is amended by inserting ''any small business development center, women's business center, Veterans Business Outreach Center, or center operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation providing enterprise transition and sustainability assistance to Reservists under section 37,'' after ''any women's business center operating pursuant to section 29,''.

(b) PROGRAM.—The Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating section 37 (15 U.S.C. 631 note) as section 38; and

(2) by inserting after section 36 the following:

''SEC. 37. RESERVIST ENTERPRISE TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a program to provide business planning assistance to small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists.

''(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the terms 'activated' and 'activation' mean having received an order placing a Reservists on active duty, as defined by section 101(1) of title 10, United States Code;

''(2) the term 'Administrator' means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, acting through the Associate Administrator for Small Business Development Centers;

''(3) the term 'Association' means the association established under section 21(a)(3)(A);

''(4) the term 'eligible applicant' means—

''(A) a small business development center that is accredited under section 21(k);

''(B) a women's business center;

''(C) a Veterans Business Outreach Center that receives funds from the Office of Veterans Business Development; or

''(D) an information and assistance center operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation under section 33;

''(5) the term 'enterprise transition and sustainability assistance' means assistance provided by an eligible applicant to a small business concern owned and operated by a Reservist, who has been activated or is likely to be activated in the next 12 months, to develop and implement a business strategy for the period while the owner is on active duty and 6 months after the date of the return of the owner;

''(6) the term 'Reservists' means any person who is—

''(A) a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as defined by section 10101 of title 10, United States Code; and

''(B) on active status, as defined by section 101(d)(4) of title 10, United States Code;

''(7) the term 'small business development center' means a small business development center as described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648);

''(8) the term 'State' means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam; and

''(9) the term 'women's business center' means a women's business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

''(c) AUTHORITY.—The Administrator may award grants, in accordance with the regulations developed under subsection (d), to eligible applicants to assist small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists by—

''(1) providing management, development, financing, procurement, technical, regulatory, and marketing assistance;

''(2) providing access to information and resources, including Federal and State business assistance programs;

''(3) distributing contact information provided by the Department of Defense regarding activated Reservists to corresponding State directors;

''(4) offering free, one-on-one, in-depth counseling regarding management, development, financing, procurement, regulations, and marketing;

''(5) assisting in developing a long-term plan for possible future activation; and

''(6) providing enterprise transition and sustainability assistance.

''(d) RULEMAKING.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, in consultation with the Association and after notice and an opportunity for comment, shall promulgate regulations to carry out this section.

''(2) DEADLINE.—The Administrator shall promulgate final regulations not later than 180 days of the date of enactment of the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007.

''(3) CONTENTS.—The regulations developed by the Administrator under this subsection shall establish—

''(A) procedures for identifying, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, States that have had a recent activation of Reservists;

''(B) priorities for the types of assistance to be provided under the program authorized by this section;

''(C) standards relating to educational, technical, and support services to be provided by a grantee;

''(D) standards relating to any national service delivery and support function to be provided by a grantee;

''(E) standards relating to any work plan that the Administrator may require a grantee to develop; and

''(F) standards relating to the educational, technical, and professional competency of any expert or other assistance provider to whom a small business concern may be referred for assistance by a grantee.

''(e) APPLICATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible applicant desiring a grant under this section shall submit an application to the Administrator at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Administrator may reasonably require.

''(2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall describe—

''(A) the activities for which the applicant seeks assistance under this section; and

''(B) how the applicant plans to allocate funds within its network.

''(3) MATCHING NOT REQUIRED.—Subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 21(a)(4), requiring matching funds, shall not apply to grants awarded under this section.

''(f) AWARD OF GRANTS.—

''(1) DEADLINE.—The Administrator shall award grants not later than 60 days after the promulgation of final rules and regulations under subsection (d).

''(2) AMOUNT.—Each eligible applicant awarded a grant under this section shall receive a grant in an amount—

''(A) not less than $150,000 per fiscal year; and

''(B) not greater than $500,000 per fiscal year.

''(g) REPORT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall—

''(A) initiate an evaluation of the program not later than 30 months after the disbursement of the first grant under this section; and

''(B) submit a report not later than 6 months after the initiation of the evaluation under paragraph (1) to—

''(i) the Administrator;

''(ii) the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

''(iii) the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

''(2) CONTENTS.—The report under paragraph (1) shall—

''(A) address the results of the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1); and

''(B) recommend changes to law, if any, that it believes would be necessary or advisable to achieve the goals of this section.

''(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section—

''(A) $5,000,000 for the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007; and

''(B) $5,000,000 for each of the 3 fiscal years following the fiscal year described in subparagraph (A).

''(2) LIMITATION ON USE OF OTHER FUNDS.—The Administrator may carry out the program authorized by this section only with amounts appropriated in advance specifically to carry out this section.''.

TITLE III—VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR LOANS

SEC. 301. AUTHORIZATION.

The first sentence of section 7(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636) is amended by inserting ''new veteran entrepreneurs under paragraph (32) and'' and after ''loans to any qualified small business concern, including''.

SEC. 302. SPECIFICATIONS.

Section 7(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(a)) is amended by adding after paragraph (31) the following:

''(32) VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR LOANS.—Each loan to a new veteran entrepreneur under this subsection shall—

''(A) be made directly to the new veteran entrepreneur;

''(B) not exceed $100,000; and

''(C) be made at the same interest rate as loans made under the second proviso of the unnumbered paragraph of subsection (b).''.

SEC. 303. DEFINITIONS.

Section 3(q) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(q)) is amended by adding after paragraph (4) the following:

''(5) NEW VETERAN ENTREPRENEUR.—The term 'new veteran entrepreneur' means a person who—

''(A) is a veteran;

''(B) is establishing a new small business concern or established a new small business concern during the 6-month period ending on the date of the request for a loan; and

''(C) does not own or control any other business.''.

TITLE IV—OTHER PROVISIONS

SEC. 401. INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Office of Veterans Business Development of the Administration, to remain available until expended—

(1) $2,100,000 for fiscal year 2008;

(2) $2,300,000 for fiscal year 2009; and

(3) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2010.

SEC. 402. PERMANENT EXTENSION OF SBA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS BUSINESS AFFAIRS.

(a) ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES.—Section 33 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657c) is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (h); and

(2) by redesignating subsections (i) through (k) as subsections (h) through (j), respectively.

(b) PERMANENT EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY.—Section 203 of the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (15 U.S.C. 657b note) is amended by striking subsection (h).

SEC. 403. RESERVISTS STUDY.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report regarding whether there has been a reduction in the hiring of Reservists by business concerns because of—

(1) any increase in the use of Reservists after September 11, 2001; or

(2) any change in any policy of the Department of Defense relating to Reservists after September 11, 2001.

SEC. 404. SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report describing—

(1) the types of assistance needed by service-disabled veterans who wish to become entrepreneurs; and

(2) any resources that would assist such service-disabled veterans.

By Mr. KERRY:

S. 1006. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to deny qualified dividend income treatment to certain foreign dividends; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation that will clarify which dividends are eligible for a lower rate of 15 percent for upper-income taxpayers or a 5 percent rate for lower-income taxpayers. I am concerned that some foreign companies have a tax advantage over their American competitors.

Since dividend rates were lowered in 2003, some banks have promoted hybrid debt instruments from foreign corporations that may qualify for the lower rate. These hybrid arrangements are treated as debt in the host foreign country and the entity takes a deduction. In the United States, these instruments are classified as equity and thus treated as dividends eligible for the lower rate.

This was not the intention of Congress, and this abuse needs to stop. There should not be preferences in our tax code which make it easier for foreign corporations to raise capital at the expense of American companies. I believe that changes need to be made to our tax system to ensure that U.S companies can compete fairly in a global market place.

The legislation that I am introducing today is the same legislation introduced by Ways and Means Subcommittee on Select Revenue Chairman NEAL. This legislation amends Section 1 of the Internal Revenue Code to disallow the preferential dividends rate for payments from foreign entities not subject to tax in the foreign country, for payments that are deductible in the foreign country, or payments with respect to an instrument not treated as stock in the foreign country. In addition, the bill does not allow dividends from an entity not subject to or exempt from corporate tax in a foreign country to be eligible for the lower rate. If the entity is a passive foreign investment company (PFIC), the dividend would not be eligible for the lower rate even if the entity is also classified as a controlled foreign corporation.

This legislation builds upon a bill that Senator BAUCUS and I introduced last Congress, S. 1363, which prevents dividends received from corporations in a tax haven from receiving the lower rate. This legislation was introduced in the 109th Congress out of concern that the definition of qualifying foreign corporations is overly broad and includes companies in tax haven countries with little or no tax system.

The legislation that I am introducing today includes the provisions of S. 1363 which require that only dividends from foreign companies which are located in countries with a comprehensive income tax and are traded on a U.S. stock exchange may qualify for the preferential rate. In total, this legislation carries out the intent of the 2003 rate deduction on dividends.

The initial proposal to address dividends taxation was designed to eliminate the double taxation of corporate earnings. Eventually, this proposal was modified to lower the tax rate on dividends. I believe that it was never the original intent of Congress to provide the lower rates to dividends which are not subject to double taxation.

I urge my colleagues to support these common sense changes. I ask for unanimous consent that the text of the legislation be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1006

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CERTAIN FOREIGN DIVIDENDS NOT TREATED AS QUALIFIED DIVIDEND INCOME.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Clause (ii) of section 1(h)(11)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to certain dividends excluded) is amended by striking ''and'' at the end of subclause (II), by striking the period at the end of subclause (III) and inserting '', and'', and by adding at the end the following new subclause:

''(IV) any nonqualified dividend from a foreign corporation.''.

(b) NONQUALIFIED DIVIDEND FROM A FOREIGN CORPORATION.—Paragraph (11) of section 1(h) of such Code (relating to dividends taxed as net capital gain) is amended by redesignating subparagraph (D) as subparagraph (E) and by inserting after subparagraph (C) the following new subparagraph:

''(D) NONQUALIFIED DIVIDEND FROM A FOREIGN CORPORATION.—For purposes of subparagraph (B)(ii)(IV), the term 'nonqualified dividend from a foreign corporation' means any dividend from a foreign corporation if—

''(i) any amount is allowable as a deduction to any person at any time under the taxation law of any foreign country (or any amount is otherwise creditable against the tax imposed under such law) with respect to such dividend,

''(ii) for the taxable year of the corporation in which the distribution is made, or the preceding taxable year—

''(I) such corporation is not treated as a corporation for purposes of the taxation laws of any foreign country to which it would be subject to tax if it were treated as a corporation,

''(II) such corporation is exempt from tax under the taxation laws of any foreign country to which (but for such exemption) it would otherwise be subject to tax (except for exemption on the basis of nonresidence, nondomicile, or similar criteria), or

''(III) such corporation is a passive foreign investment company (as defined in section 1297 (without regard to subsection (e) thereof)), or

''(iii) such dividend is paid with respect to an instrument which is treated as other than stock (or a similar equity interest) under the taxation laws of any foreign country with respect to which the payment is taken into account.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Subparagraph (C) of section 1(h)(11) of such Code is amended by striking clause (iii) and by redesignating clause (iv) as clause (iii).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to dividends received after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION TO THE DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED FOREIGN CORPORATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Clause (ii) of section 1(h)(11)(C) of the Internal Revenue Code of

1986 (relating to dividends on stock readily tradable on United States securities market) is amended by striking ''by such corporation if the stock'' and all that follows and inserting ''by such corporation if—

''(I) the stock with respect to which such dividend is paid is readily tradable on an established securities market in the United States, and

''(II) such corporation is created or organized under the laws of a foreign country which has a comprehensive income tax system which the Secretary determines is satisfactory for the purposes of this paragraph.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to dividends received after the date of the enactment of this Act.

By Mr. LUGAR:

S. 1007. A bill to direct the Secretary of State to work with the Government of Brazil and other foreign governments to develop partnerships that will strengthen diplomatic relations and energy security by accelerating the development of biofuels production, research, and infrastructure to alleviate poverty, create jobs, and increase income, while improving energy security and protecting the environment; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise to introduce the ''United States Brazil Energy Cooperation Pact.'' This bill would direct the Secretary of State to work with the Government of Brazil and other foreign governments to develop partnerships that will strengthen diplomatic relations and energy security, including through accelerated development of biofuels production, research and infrastructure. This will help to alleviate poverty, create jobs, and increase income, while improving energy security and protecting the environment..

Earlier this month President Bush and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva agreed in Sao Paulo to cooperate to promote ethanol in the Americas as an alternative to oil. The agreement aims to increase cooperation on biofuels technology and to develop international biofuels standards. President Bush is following up by hosting President da Silva at Camp David this Saturday, March 31.

President Bush intended his trip to rebuild bridges to Latin America. Many Latin Americans are critical, even hostile, over what they see as the administration's neglect of the region. Strained relationships often are repaired in small steps. The ethanol accord promises mutual benefits for the United States and Brazil, Latin America, and potentially, the rest of the world. If executed in a spirit of partnership and funded generously, it could have a significant regional and global impact on the development of ethanol markets, climate change and the ability of many poor countries to endure oil price shocks.

Although the agreement is overall a win-win-win deal for Brazil, the United States and the region, it has been criticized. Some opponents are simply trying to thwart better U.S.-Brazilian cooperation. But others have raised concerns about the dislocations and unintended consequences of promoting biofuel crops.

Only by addressing such worries and quelling the doubts can the Brazil-U.S. pact fully meet its promise to be a launching pad for what I envision as a transformational Americas-wide energy program that will radically improve the hemisphere's strategic and economic posture. Today I introduce the United States-Brazil Energy Cooperation Pact to capitalize on the opportunity it presents to reestablish strong U.S. relations with our neighbors while also building a more secure energy future.

The bill calls on Brazil and the United States to help fund feasibility studies to assess each Latin American country's biofuel needs and biomass production potential, with special attention to food security and the environment. By encouraging cellulosic ethanol that does not rely on grains, it should help assuage fears, shared by American and Latin American livestock producers alike, that excessive reliance on corn for ethanol will further drive up animal feed costs and thus prices of beef, pork and chicken. For Mexico, where skyrocketing tortilla prices have been blamed on the diversion of corn for ethanol, the bill calls for special efforts to find non-corn sources of biofuels.

The legislation envisions a special hemispheric carbon trading system to encourage preservation of tropical rain forests in the face of growing demand for energy crops, and it calls on the regional development banks, as well as U.S. foreign assistance, to support biofuel infrastructure projects.

The bill contains special provisions to help our closest and poorest neighbors in the Caribbean and Central America revive their moribund sugar cane industries so they can produce their own ethanol. Currently nearly all the ethanol they sell is processed product from Brazil.

And while biofuels are a key element of energy security, better utilization of conventional resources also plays a role. The bill seeks ways to help optimize Mexican oil output, which is lagging to the detriment of both countries, and encourages South America to exploit fully its natural gas supplies with new pipelines and liquefied natural gas facilities.

Giving the United States easy access to foreign ethanol supplies, even as we increase domestic production, is an essential component to meet President Bush's target of 35 billion gallons of renewable fuels use by 2017, which cannot be met by U.S. corn ethanol alone. U.S. corn ethanol production will peak around 14 billion gallons in 2010, experts estimate. Reducing dependence on oil imported from unstable and often hostile regions is a paramount foreign policy imperative.

The U.S. doesn't tax imported oil, but currently levies a 54-cents-per-gallon tariff on imported ethanol to protect U.S. producers from cheaper Brazilian ethanol. It is clear that this barrier to trade in Americas-grown fuel is inconsistent with our political goals in the region, and with our long-term energy security.

Altering the import tax would affect a number of industries and interests. Therefore, the bill calls for a comprehensive study on the current political and economic impacts of the tariff and the potential costs and benefits of repealing it or modifying it.

In this way, I believe that passage of this bill would encourage Administration officials to rethink old policies in order to improve energy cooperation, and encourage other Governments in the region to do likewise. With this legislation, Congress can demonstrate to citizens of the Americas that the U.S. is ready to embark on an equal partnership for progress.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with each of my colleagues to ensure the energy security of our country and the region.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 1008. A bill to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to improve and strengthen the safety inspection process of nuclear facilities; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, today I am introducing legislation that would provide greater assurance to the citizens of our Nation that their elected officials will do everything within their power to provide the highest levels of safety at nuclear facilities. The bill does this by allowing certain State officials to request that the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) conduct an independent safety assessment at key times in the life of a reactor. I ask that the full text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

Too often we have found that the NRC has been uninterested in the legitimate concerns of national and State legislators who have requested greater safety oversight, especially at problem-plagued nuclear plants. In some instances, safety violations of the highest level have been allowed to continue, undetected, for years before discovery. Citizens deserve to have some greater assurance that when a plant has reached what was the intended end of its useful life and has applied for a license extension—another few decades of operating life—or when a plant seeks an ''uprate''—an increase in power output from what it was permitted previously—or when there have been significant safety problems, that a facility will get a thorough review to protect the public safety. Without this bill, the public will continue to worry.

Under the legislation I am introducing, State officials would be able to request that a special Independent Safety Assessment Team be assembled to thoroughly review the safety of plants that meet the criteria listed in

this bill. The team would be composed of individuals selected by the NRC and the requesting Governor or State public utilities commission to insure greater balance and independence on the Team. The Team's report would make recommendations on safety features that should be improved before additional licensing requests and other operational matters are favorably acted upon.

My legislation offers a simple and fair solution to a technical problem faced by citizens across the Nation and I encourage my colleagues to join me to ensure greater safety at our nuclear facilities.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1008

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. INDEPENDENT SAFETY ASSESSMENTS.

Section 103 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2133) is amended by inserting after subsection d. the following:

''e. INDEPENDENT SAFETY ASSESSMENTS.—

''(1) DEVELOPMENT OF PROCEDURE.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (referred to in this subsection as the 'Commission') shall develop an independent safety assessment procedure.

''(2) CONDUCT OF ASSESSMENT.—

''(A) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE REQUESTOR.—In this paragraph, the term 'eligible requestor' means—

''(i) a Governor of a State in which a facility of a licensee is located;

''(ii) a public utility commission of a State in which a facility of a licensee is located; and

''(iii) a Governor of a State that—

''(I) because of dangers to the public relating to potential ingestion of water or foods that have been contaminated with radiation from a commercial nuclear power plant, is located in an emergency planning zone, as defined in section 350.2 of title 44, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation); and

''(II) is not the same State in which the facility of the licensee is located.

''(B) REQUEST OF ASSESSMENT.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—At the request of an eligible requestor, the Commission shall conduct an independent safety assessment in accordance with the independent safety assessment procedure developed under paragraph (1) if the licensee has—

''(I) applied to the Commission for—

''(aa) an extension of the operating license of the licensee; or

''(bb) approval of an extended power uprate for the licensee; or

''(II) during any 5-year period, received, under the reactor oversight process of the Commission, 2 or more greater-than-green inspection findings.

''(ii) CONDUCT OF ASSESSMENT.—The Commission shall conduct an assessment requested by an eligible requestor under clause (i) not later than 18 months after the date on which the eligible requestor requested the assessment.

''(3) INSPECTION OF FACILITY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—In conducting an independent safety assessment under paragraph (2)(B), the Commission shall inspect the design, construction, maintenance, and operational safety performance of the facility of the licensee.

''(B) SCOPE OF INSPECTION.—An inspection of a facility of a licensee conducted under subparagraph (A) shall—

''(i) be at least equal in scope, depth, and breadth to the independent safety assessment conducted in 1996 by the Commission of the Maine Yankee Nuclear Power Plant, located in Wiscasset, Maine; and

''(ii) include an examination of the systems of the facility of the licensee, including—

''(I) the reactor containment systems;

''(II) the reactor emergency core cooling systems;

''(III) the control room and containment ventilation systems;

''(IV) the electrical system (including testing of relevant transients);

''(V) the condensate and feedwater systems;

''(VI) the spent fuel storage systems;

''(VII) any other system requested by the Governor of the State, or a public utility commission of the State, in which the facility of the licensee is located; and

''(VIII) any other system identified by a majority of the members of an inspection team described in paragraph (4).

''(4) INSPECTION TEAMS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—An independent safety assessment conducted under paragraph (2)(B) shall be conducted by an inspection team.

''(B) COMPOSITION.—An inspection team shall be composed of not less than 25 members, of whom—

''(i) not less than 16 members shall be—

''(I) employees of the Commission; and

''(II) unaffiliated with the regional office of the Commission in the region in which the facility of the licensee is located;

''(ii) not less than 6 members shall be independent contractors who have not worked for, or at—

''(I) the facility of the licensee; or

''(II) any other nuclear power plant owned or operated by the owner or operator of the facility of the licensee; and

''(iii) not less than 3 members shall be appointed by the eligible requestor.

''(5) REPORT.—

''(A) PREPARATION OF PRELIMINARY REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which an inspection team completes an independent safety assessment of a facility of a licensee under paragraph (2)(B), the inspection team shall prepare a preliminary report describing the findings and recommendations of the inspection team.

''(B) AVAILABILITY OF PRELIMINARY REPORT.—For a period of 90 days beginning on the date on which the inspection team completes a preliminary report prepared under subparagraph (A), the inspection team shall make available for review and comment by the public a copy of the preliminary report.

''(C) CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS.—In preparing a final version of a preliminary report developed under subparagraph (A), the inspection team shall take into consideration any comments received from the public that are appropriate, as determined by the inspection team.

''(D) SUBMISSION OF FINAL VERSION.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the period of review and public comment ends under subparagraph (B), the inspection team shall submit to the Commission a final version of the preliminary report developed under subparagraph (A).

''(6) AFFECT ON LICENSING ACTIONS.—A final decision by the Commission of whether to extend an operating license, approve an extended power uprate, or continue to operate under a license at a facility of a licensee assessed under paragraph (2)(B) shall not be made until the later of the date on which—

''(A) the Commission has completed the independent safety assessment of the facility of the licensee; and

''(B) the licensee has fully accepted and implemented each finding and recommendation of the report approved by the Commission relating to the independent safety assessment of the facility of the licensee submitted under paragraph (5)(D).

''(7) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection $10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, to remain available until expended.''.

By Mr. MARTINEZ (for himself and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 1009. A bill to amend part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve supplemental educational services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I am here to discuss a topic of great meaning to American families: educating our children. We all want what is best for our children, and to provide them with the tools they need to succeed in tomorrow's workforce.

Today, I want to concentrate on one particular program that can play a key role in ensuring our children are meeting their educational goals.

I rise, along with Senator JOHN CORNYN of Texas, to once again introduce the Raising Achievement Through Improving Supplemental Education Act, or the RAISE Act for short.

The RAISE Act seeks to improve the Supplemental Educational Services program—a tutoring program under No Child Left Behind—to help it become well-known, widely available, and easily accessible to eligible students. It seeks to broaden eligibility requirements and prioritization of the program to target all low-performing students regardless of income status. The Supplemental Educational Services program—also known as SES—was implemented as part of No Child Left Behind and designed to be an innovative tool to help meet the academic needs of low-income students attending continuously failing schools.

Under the program, low-income parents can elect to have free private after-school tutoring for their children. To pay the providers of this tutoring service, school districts would need only to use a required 20 percent allocation of their Federal funds.

By providing direct tutoring after school, the SES program can help those students who are behind catch up with their peers. This, in turn, also improves the overall performance of the school. But, due to the lack of strong implementation, there have been numerous shortfalls nationwide. This is a troubling development that the RAISE Act seeks to correct.

For example, in the 2005–2006 school year, just 20 percent of the eligible 2½ million students participated in SES programs. That translates into hundreds of thousands of eligible children not being provided with tutoring help. The funding has already been set aside—there are children across the

Nation who could benefit from this after-school tutoring program—but they have to know about it to benefit from it.

Parents and State agencies are reporting that poor communication, delayed notification, and lack of transportation have become barriers to their children participating in the program. Also, there were some conflicts with other, better established after-school programs.

In Florida, we have already implemented SES improvements. As a result, Florida is seeing stronger guidelines, better State oversight, and consequently, higher SES program participation rate.

Many of the provisions of the RAISE Act are modeled after the successes already occurring in my home State. And it is notable that States such as Maryland and Indiana—where similar guidelines have been in place longer—they are seeing a remarkable 64 to 68 percent participation rate in their SES programs.

In our school districts where SES programs are thriving, good communication with both parents and providers has been emphasized, as well as access to on-site tutoring at school facilities.

Another important component of the RAISE Act is eligibility for SES. Currently, SES targets low-income, low-performing students. I think we should be targeting all low-performing students, regardless of income status. By overlooking many middle-class families who do not have the money to put their children into private tutoring or after-school programs, many of those children are falling through the cracks.

How can we ensure that no child is being left behind unless we specifically focus programs on those students who need the most help?

The RAISE Act was developed in consultation with school administrators, State education officials, and non-profit and research groups. This is a nationwide imperative and I urge my colleagues to support this innovative set of reforms.

The RAISE Act aims to help every child in the schoolyard have an equal opportunity for scholastic growth and achievement—this also happens to be the fundamental purpose of No Child Left Behind.

Together, all of us in this Chamber can make the RAISE Act a reality, and improve the academic lives of countless American schoolchildren in need.

By Mr. BIDEN (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. ENZI):

S. 1011. A bill to change the name of the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the National Institute on Diseases of Addiction and to change the name of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to the National Institute on Alcohol Disorders and Health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, for nearly 35 years I've been working on this floor to address the all too real public health and safety issues associated with drug and alcohol addiction. Stiff prosecution of trafficking and possession of illegal drugs is important; but just as critical is an intense focus on prevention and treatment. To this end, if we are to be successful in this fight, we—you, me, all of us—must understand that addiction is a neurobiological disease, not a lifestyle choice. The frank and constructive approach to help those struggling with the disease of addiction, and to protect society from the crime and violence that sometimes accompany drug trafficking and use, is through treatment. We must continually work hard to resist the counterproductive social stigma that too often brands addicts and thereby encourages them to slip into seclusion rather than seek treatment. As such, we must begin to change the nature of public discourse about addiction by more appropriately naming our own research institutes to reflect this reality: Addition is a preventable and treatable disease.

Today, I rise to introduce legislation recognizing this reality that addiction is a disease and not a chronic, stigmatizing life-sentence. The Recognizing Addiction as a Disease Act of 2007 changes the names of two institutes at the National Institutes of Health: the National Institute on Drug Abuse will become the National Institute on Diseases of Addiction, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism will become the National Institute on Alcohol Disorders and Health.

These name changes accomplish two important objectives. First, they remove the pejorative term ''abuse'' from the institutes' names and properly help to distance that notion from the disease of addiction. Second, the new names more clearly link the concepts of addiction and disease, a connection that scientific study clearly supports. Identifying addiction as a neurobiological disease will diminish the social stigma, discrimination, and the personal shame that is often a barrier to seeking treatment, and it will further a common understanding of diseases of addiction.

The 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported that addiction affects 23.2 million Americans in our country, of whom only about 10 percent are receiving the treatment they need. Many are deterred from seeking such treatment because of the social stigma associated with admitting to a drug or alcohol dependency. This bill is a small but important step towards remedying this problem, fighting drug use, and successfully treating addiction.

Addiction is now understood to be a disease because scientific research has shown that alcohol and other drugs can change the brain's structure and function. Advances in brain imaging science now make it possible to see inside an addict's brain and pinpoint the parts of the brain affected by drugs or alcohol. These insights will enable the development of new approaches to prevention and treatment. In fact, we now have data indicating that excessive alcohol use and alcohol dependence (alcoholism) are not separate diagnostic categories, but exist along a single continuum of alcohol-disorders associated with increased frequency of a harmful drinking pattern.

Today's introduction of this legislation is timely. Two weeks ago HBO premiered an important new documentary movie, Addiction, which presents an encouraging look at addiction as a treatable disease and the film chronicles the major scientific advances that have helped us better understand and treat addiction. The Institutes collaborated with HBO to create this eye-opening documentary that seeks to help Americans understand addiction. HBO's Addiction Project will acquaint viewers with available evidence-based medical and behavioral treatments. This is especially important for disorders like addiction that for many years were treated outside the medical mainstream. From emergency rooms to living rooms to research laboratories, the documentary follows the trail of an illness that affects one in four families in the United States.

The facts surrounding addiction are self-evident. With nearly 1 in 10 Americans over the age of 12 suffering from some form of substance dependency, addiction takes an emotional, psychological, and social toll on the country. The economic costs of substance dependency and addiction alone are estimated to exceed a half trillion dollars annually in the United States due to health care expenditures, lost productivity, and crime.

I am proud to say that my friends and very distinguished colleagues Senators KENNEDY and ENZI, chairman and ranking member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, respectively, are cosponsors of this important bill.

Today, the Recognizing Addiction as a Disease Act of 2007 takes a small but important stride towards helping those struggling with diseases of addiction.

By Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Mr. ROCKEFELLER):

S. 1015. A bill to reauthorize the National Writing Project; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, today I am joined by my distinguished colleague and friend from West Virginia, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, in introducing the National Writing Project Act of 2007. The National Writing Project remains the only Federal program to improve the teaching of writing in America's classrooms.

Writing is complex, challenging and it is a basic component of literacy. And, literacy is essential for success in life. A Belden Russonello & Stewart poll announced yesterday that overwhelmingly, Americans want writing taught throughout school curriculum.

Research shows that students taught by Writing Project demonstrate more improvement and higher overall writing performance than their peers.

Writing is not confined to thesis papers, college essays, and book reports. Writing skills for employment in the 21st Century require not only the grammar, construction and analytical thought of traditional writing, but the skills needed to communicate effectively using new technology. Effective instruction in writing requires teachers with high ability, who continuously develop their teaching skills.

A United States Department of Education program since 1991 and nearly 200 nation-wide, university based sites, the National Writing Project annually serves over 140,000 educators through more than 7,000 programs. It is based on a model of teachers teaching teachers: experienced teachers who share and develop the latest and most successful instruction techniques who in turn lead similar local workshops and training sessions for their colleagues.

National Writing Project teachers will be here this week to tell their personal stories and provide other information about what the College Board's National Commission on Writing calls ''arguably the most successful teacher network in the United States.'' I hope all Senators will have the opportunity to visit with teachers from their State and I invite all Senators to join Mr. ROCKEFELLER and me in sponsoring this bill.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1015

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''National Writing Project Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The United States is facing a continuing crisis in writing in schools and in the workplace.

(2) The writing problem has been magnified by the rapidly changing student population, the growing number of English language learners, the increasing numbers of adolescents who are low-achieving writers, the shortage of adequately trained teachers, and the specialized knowledge required of teachers to teach students with special needs who are now part of mainstream classrooms.

(3) Nationwide reports show that nearly one-third of high school graduates are not ready for college-level English composition courses.

(4) Writing is a threshold skill for both employment and promotion. Deficiencies in writing skills have resulted in annual private sector costs for providing writing training that are as high as $3,100,000,000.

(5) Writing is a central feature in State and school district education standards in all disciplines.

(6) Since 1973, the only national program to address the writing problem in the Nation's schools has been the National Writing Project, a network of collaborative university-school programs.

(7) Evaluations of the National Writing Project document significant gains in student performance in writing and effective classroom practices.

(8) The National Writing Project has become a model for programs to improve teaching in such other fields as mathematics, science, history, civics and government, geography, reading and literature, technology, performing arts, and foreign languages.

(9) Each year, more than 135,000 teachers directly benefit from National Writing Project programs in nearly 200 sites located in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT.

Subpart 2 of part C of title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6701 et seq.) is amended to read as follows:

''Subpart 2—National Writing Project

''SEC. 2331. PURPOSES.

''The purposes of this subpart are—

''(1) to support and promote the expansion of the National Writing Project network of sites so that teachers in every region of the United States will have access to a National Writing Project program;

''(2) to ensure the consistent high quality of the sites through ongoing review, evaluation, and technical assistance;

''(3) to support and promote the establishment of programs to disseminate effective practices and research findings about the teaching of writing; and

''(4) to coordinate activities assisted under this subpart with activities assisted under this Act.

''SEC. 2332. NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT.

''(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to the National Writing Project, a nonprofit educational organization that has as its primary purpose the improvement of the quality of student writing and learning (hereafter in this section referred to as the 'grantee') to improve the teaching of writing and the use of writing as a part of the learning process in our Nation's classrooms.

''(b) REQUIREMENTS OF GRANT.—The grant shall provide that—

''(1) the grantee will enter into contracts with institutions of higher education or other nonprofit educational providers (hereafter in this section referred to as 'contractors') under which the contractors will agree to establish, operate, and provide the non-Federal share of the cost of teacher training programs in effective approaches and processes for the teaching of writing;

''(2) funds made available by the Secretary to the grantee pursuant to any contract entered into under this section will be used to pay the Federal share of the cost of establishing and operating teacher training programs as provided in paragraph (1); and

''(3) the grantee will meet such other conditions and standards as the Secretary determines to be necessary to assure compliance with the provisions of this section and will provide such technical assistance as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

''(c) TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS.—The teacher training programs described in subsection (b) shall—

''(1) be conducted during the school year and during the summer months;

''(2) train teachers who teach grades kindergarten through college;

''(3) select teachers to become members of a National Writing Project teacher network whose members will conduct writing workshops for other teachers in the area served by each National Writing Project site; and

''(4) encourage teachers from all disciplines to participate in such teacher training programs.

''(d) FEDERAL SHARE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2) or (3) and for purposes of subsection (b), the term Federal share' means, with respect to the costs of teacher training programs described in subsection (b), 50 percent of such costs to the contractor.

''(2) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive the provisions of paragraph (1) on a case-by-case basis if the National Advisory Board described in subsection (e) determines, on the basis of financial need, that such waiver is necessary.

''(3) MAXIMUM.—The Federal share of the costs of teacher training programs conducted pursuant to subsection (b) may not exceed $150,000 for any one contractor, or $300,000 for a statewide program administered by any one contractor in at least five sites throughout the State.

''(e) NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD.—

''(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The National Writing Project shall establish and operate a National Advisory Board.

''(2) COMPOSITION.—The National Advisory Board established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall consist of—

''(A) national educational leaders;

''(B) leaders in the field of writing; and

''(C) such other individuals as the National Writing Project determines necessary.

''(3) DUTIES.—The National Advisory Board established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall—

''(A) advise the National Writing Project on national issues related to student writing and the teaching of writing;

''(B) review the activities and programs of the National Writing Project; and

''(C) support the continued development of the National Writing Project.

''(f) EVALUATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct an independent evaluation by grant or contract of the teacher training programs administered pursuant to this subpart. Such evaluation shall specify the amount of funds expended by the National Writing Project and each contractor receiving assistance under this section for administrative costs. The results of such evaluation shall be made available to the appropriate committees of Congress.

''(2) FUNDING LIMITATION.—The Secretary shall reserve not more than $150,000 from the total amount appropriated pursuant to the authority of subsection (h) for fiscal year 2008 and each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years to conduct the evaluation described in paragraph (1).

''(g) APPLICATION REVIEW.—

''(1) REVIEW BOARD.—The National Writing Project shall establish and operate a National Review Board that shall consist of—

''(A) leaders in the field of research in writing; and

''(B) such other individuals as the National Writing Project determines necessary.

''(2) DUTIES.—The National Review Board shall—

''(A) review all applications for assistance under this subsection; and

''(B) recommend applications for assistance under this subsection for funding by the National Writing Project.

''(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subpart $30,000,000 for fiscal year 2008 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years.''.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to join my distinguished colleague, Senator THAD COCHRAN, in

sponsoring the reauthorization of the National Writing Project. We have worked together for many years on the wonderful program that supports teachers and quality writing. Senator COCHRAN has long been one of this body's strongest advocates for not only the NWP, but for education in general. His leadership is quiet and effective, and truly inspiring.

The National Writing Project, NWP, provides our teachers with professional development to enhance their skills and in turn those teachers bring new skills and new enthusiasm to their classrooms and their students. Over 141,000 educators annually go through the NWP and become invaluable resources to millions of children nationwide. The NWP is at the forefront in the efforts to improve our schools for teachers and students.

The NWP is not only a great idea in theory but it has a record of success by consistently delivering results that can be seen in our classrooms. Students in NWP classrooms have shown demonstrably improved ability to organize and develop ideas in writing. A study published in January 2006 concluded that students whose teachers underwent NWP training uniformly demonstrated positive results.

Every State participates in the program. West Virginia has benefited tremendously from this program. The three sites in my State are Central West Virginia Writing Project, Marshall University Graduate College in South Charleston, the Marshall University Writing Project in Huntington, and the National Writing Project at West Virginia University in Morgantown. I am particularly proud of the leadership at Marshall University on its Technology Project to explore ways to better integrate technology into writing and classroom education. During the 2005–2006 school year the NWP conducted more than 140 programs serving over 3,000 teachers.

The NWP is a perfect example of how the public and the private sector should work in partnership to improve our society. The NWP operating budget comes not only from the Federal Government but from in kind contribution from colleges and universities.

Programs like the NWP are an essential part strengthening our education system, and it deserves our continued support.

By Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. THOMAS, and Mr. CONRAD)):

S. 1017. A bill to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, to prohibit the use of certain anti-competitive forward contracts; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, Wyoming's late, great country music star Chris LeDoux has a song Some Things Never Change. I wish that were the case for Wyoming's hardworking livestock producers. As production agriculture has evolved and improved in the United States, producers in Wyoming continue to be held hostage to a regulatory nightmare and bound by the chains of unfair and manipulative marketing contracts. It is this regulatory nightmare that must be addressed. That is why I am reintroducing legislation today to break the chains and require livestock contracts to contain a fixed base price and be traded in open, public markets.

From Kaycee to Kansas City, captive supply is destroying the health of our family ranches. Many of these small businesses have operated for generations. Unfortunately, a handshake and an honest day's labor cannot compete with deceptive business practices. Captive supply is a business practice not well known to those outside of the industry, but a practice that has had a tremendous impact on the ranchers of the West.

I go back to Wyoming almost every weekend. Because Wyoming is such a large State, my travels take me to a different section of the State on each trip. Throughout Wyoming I hear the same concerns from my constituents. They are all clamoring for attention and relief so they can continue the work that so many in their families have done for so many years. These concerns are not unique to Wyoming. Captive supply is an industry-wide problem.

So what is captive supply—and how is it harming our Nation's ranchers to such an extent? Simply put, captive supply refers to the ownership by meat packers of cattle or the contracts they issue to purchase livestock. It is done to ensure that packers will always have a consistent supply of livestock on the kill floor which keeps slaughterhouses in perpetual operation.

The original goal of captive supply makes good business sense. All businesses want to maintain a steady supply of animals to ensure a constant stream of production and control costs.

But captive supply allows packers to go beyond good organization and business performance—to market manipulation—and this is where the problem lies.

The packing industry is highly concentrated. Using captive supply and the market power of concentration, packers can purposefully drive down the prices by refusing to buy in the open market. This deflates all livestock prices and limits the market access of producers that have not aligned with specific packers.

We made an attempt to address the problem of captive supply on the Senate floor during the 2002 Farm Bill debate, but the amendment to ban packer ownership of livestock more than 14 days before slaughter did not survive the conference committee deliberation. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the reauthorization of the Farm Bill this year. I will press this issue during the drafting of the Competition Title of the Farm Bill with my congressional colleagues.

The problems caused by captive supply are alive and well, just as Wyoming producers have testified to me in the phone calls, letters, faxes and emails I receive from them. Although I supported the packer ban and have cosponsored it again this Congress, I do not think that banning packer ownership of livestock will solve the entire captive supply problem. Packers are using numerous methods beyond direct ownership to control cattle and other livestock.

Currently, packers maintain captive supply through various means including direct ownership, forward contracts, and marketing agreements. The difference between the three is subtle, so let me take a moment to describe how they differ. Direct ownership refers to livestock owned by the packer. In forward contracts, producers agree to the delivery of cattle one week or more before slaughter with the price determined before slaughter. Forward contracts are typically fixed, meaning the base price is set.

As with forward contracts, marketing agreements also call for the delivery of livestock more than one week before slaughter, but the price is determined at or after slaughter. A formula pricing method is commonly used for cattle sold under marketing agreements. In formula pricing, instead of a fixed base price, an external reference price, such as the average price paid for cattle at a certain packing plant during one week, is used to determine the base price of the cattle. I find this very disturbing because the packer has the ability to manipulate the weekly average at a packing plant by refusing to buy in the open market. Unfortunately, marketing agreements and formula pricing are much more common than forward contracts.

Livestock producers have the same questions when they lose to the market pressures applied by captive supply. Captive supply gives packers the ability to discriminate against some producers. And those producers pay for it with their bottom line. At the same time, packers use contracts and marketing agreements to give privileged access and premiums to other producers regardless of the quality of their product. These uses of captive supply should be illegal. In fact, they are.

Section 202 of the Packers and Stockyards Act states in (3) (a) and (b):

''It shall be unlawful for any packer with respect to livestock . . . to:

''(a) Engage in or use any unfair, unjustly discriminatory, or deceptive practice or device; or

''(b) Make or give any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person or locality in any respect, or subject any particular person or locality to any undue or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage in any respect.''

Packers that practice price discrimination toward some producers and provide undue preferences to other producers are clearly in violation of the

law. But this law is not being enforced. So what we are left with are unenforced laws or no laws at all to protect the independent producer. The Packers and Stockyards Act is not being enforced and the cost of enforcing the law on a case-by-case basis in the courts is expensive and time-consuming.

A law is not worth the paper it is printed on if it is not enforced. The posted speed limit is not a suggestion. Our law enforcement officers enforce the law when motorists fail to heed the posted sign. This section of the Packers and Stockyards Act is like a sign on the road of commerce that no one is paying attention to because the police are busy doing something else. The bill I am introducing today is not just another sign on the road. It is a speed bump. It does not just warn cars to go slower; it makes it much more difficult for them to speed.

My bill does two things to create the speed bump. It requires that livestock producers have a fixed base price in their contracts. It also puts these contracts up for bid in the open market where they belong.

Under this bill, forward contracts and marketing agreements must contain a fixed base price on the day the contract is signed. This prevents packers from manipulating the base price after the point of sale. You may hear allegations that this bill ends quality-driven production, but it does not prevent adjustments to the base price after slaughter for quality, grade or other factors outside packer control. It prevents packers from changing the base price based on factors that they do control. Contracts that are based on the futures market are also exempted from the bill's requirements.

In an open market, buyers and sellers would have the opportunity to bid against each other for contracts and could witness bids that are made and accepted. Whether they take the opportunity to bid or not is their choice, the key here is that they have access to do so.

My bill also limits the size of contracts to the rough equivalent of a load of livestock, meaning 40 cattle or 30 swine. It does not limit the number of contracts that can be offered by an individual. This key portion prevents small and medium-sized livestock producers, like those found in Wyoming, from being shut out of deals that contain thousands of livestock per contract.

Requiring a firm base price and an open and transparent market ends the potential for price discrimination, price manipulation and undue preferences. These are not the only benefits of my bill. It also preserves the very useful risk management tool that contracts provide to livestock producers. Contracts help producers plan and prepare for the future. My bill makes contracts and marketing agreements an even better risk management tool because it solidifies the base price for the producer. Once the agreement is made, a producer can have confidence on shipping day in his ability to feed his family during the next year because he will know in advance how much he can expect to receive for his livestock.

This bill also encourages electronic trading. An open and public market would function much like the stock market, where insider trading is prohibited. The stock market provides a solid example of how electronic livestock trading can work to the benefit of everyone involved. For example, price discovery in an open and electronic market is automatic.

Captive supply is still weighing on the minds and hurting the pocketbooks of ranchers in Wyoming and across the United States. Wyoming ranchers encourage me to keep up the good fight on this issue on every trip I make to my home state. The economic soul of Wyoming is built on the foundation of small towns and small businesses. All livestock producers, even small and medium-sized ones, should have a fair chance to compete that allows them to get the best price possible for their product. We must do everything we can to keep our small producers in business.

My bill removes one of the largest obstructions preventing livestock producers from competing—formula-priced contracts. I ask my colleagues to assist me in giving their constituents and mine the chance to perform on a level playing field.

While Some Things Never Change, it is time for a sea change in the area of captive supply.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1018. A bill to address security risks posed by global climate change and for other purposes; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, Senator HAGEL and I introduced the bipartisan Global Climate Change Security Oversight Act. We were joined by Senator FEINSTEIN. Our bill states that the consequences of global climate change represent a clear and present danger to the security of the United States.

For years, many of us have examined global warming as an environmental or economic issue. We also need to consider it as a security concern. Our bill begins this process by requiring a National Intelligence Estimate to assess the strategic challenges presented by the world's changing climate.

The National Security Strategy of 2006 stated that the United States now faces new security challenges, including ''environmental destruction, whether caused by human behavior or cataclysmic mega-disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, or tsunamis. Problems of this scope may overwhelm the capacity of local authorities to respond, and may even overtax national militaries, requiring a larger international response. These challenges are not traditional national security concerns, such as the conflict of arms or ideologies. But if left unaddressed they can threaten national security.''

Global climate change represents one of the new environmental challenges outlined in the National Security Strategy that poses a threat to our national security. Failing to recognize and plan for the geopolitical challenges of global warming would represent a serious mistake.

A National Intelligence Estimate is a comprehensive review of a potential security threat that combines, correlates and evaluates intelligence from all of the relevant U.S. intelligence agencies. Various intelligence agencies—the CIA, NSA, the Pentagon, FBI, etc. must pool data, share perspectives and work together to assemble an accurate picture of threats to U.S. security.

Without an NIE, the various agencies may never have an opportunity to examine each other's data, and any differences or similarities between the reports could provide important information for policymakers.

In this legislation, we ask for the intelligence community to provide a strategic estimate of the risks posed by global climate change for countries or regions that are of particular economic or military significance to the United States or that are at serious risk of humanitarian suffering. This NIE will assess the political, social, agricultural, and economic challenges for countries and their likely impact.

Every region will be affected differently by global warming and it is critical that our intelligence and military communities are prepared to handle the situations most likely to arise.

For example, rising sea levels will have a profound impact on low lying coastal areas, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. This region is home to 58 percent of the world's population and 57 percent of the world's poorest population. More than 5 million people live in major cities that are in low lying coastal areas.

People in the Asia-Pacific region already endure coastal natural disasters, such as tsunamis, and inland flooding. Between 2001 and 2005, 62,273 people were killed annually by water related disasters in this region. This number is only going to increase as the world warms.

Africa is a place where changes in precipitation patterns will be particularly devastating. Many areas are already under enormous stress from drought and hunger. In 2005, 30 million people in 34 countries confronted food shortages as a result of drought. It is estimated that the droughts will become more severe and impact more people if the temperature continues to rise.

Environmental changes caused by global warming represent a potential threat multiplier for instability around the world. Scarce water, for example, may exacerbate conflict along economic, ethnic, or sectarian divisions.

Water shortages, food insecurity, or flooding all of which may occur as a result of rising global temperatures could also displace people, forcing them to migrate. Many of the most severe effects of global warming are expected in regions where fragile governments are least capable of responding to them.

This NIE will examine these questions and more. It will also do something that we don't do often enough here in Congress: it will look beyond the near horizon of the next election or the next few years and require the intelligence community to think about these issues in the context of the next 30 years.

The bill we introduced today will also fund additional research by the Department of Defense in order to examine the impact of climate change on military operations.

Rising temperatures are altering the international environment. We need to be prepared for this new world.

We hope that our colleagues will join us in this bipartisan effort to assess the strategic implications of climate change. The scientific community has demonstrated that the earth is growing warmer. We are asking the intelligence community to analyze the geopolitical implications of these changes.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1018

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Global Climate Change Security Oversight Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in 2007 the average annual temperature in the United States and around the global is approximately 1.0 degree Fahrenheit warmer than at the start of the 20th century, and the rate of warming has accelerated during the past 30 years, increasing globally since the mid-1970s. The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted that the Earth will warm 0.72 degrees Fahrenheit during the next 2 decades with current emission trends.

(2) The annual national security strategy report submitted pursuant to section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 404a) for 2006 states that the United States faces new security challenges, including ''environmental destruction, whether caused by human behavior or cataclysmic mega-disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, or tsunamis. Problems of this scope may overwhelm the capacity of local authorities to respond, and may even overtax national militaries, requiring a larger international response. These challenges are not traditional national security concerns, such as the conflict of arms or ideologies. But if left unaddressed they can threaten national security.''.

(3) According to the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, average temperature increases of between 2 and 4 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels are projected to cause the sea level to rise by between 2 and 4 meters by 2100 due to melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets.

(4) In 2007, more than 200,000,000 people live in coastal floodplains around the world and 2,000,000 square kilometers of land and an estimated $1,000,000,000,000 worth of assets are less than a 1-meter elevation above sea level.

(5) An estimated 1,700,000,000 people in the world live in areas where water is scarce and in 25 years that population is projected to increase to 5,400,000,000. Climate change will impact the hydrological cycle and change the location, time of year, and intensity of water availability.

(6) The report of the World Health Organization entitled ''The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks and Promoting Healthy Life'' states that ''Effects of climate change on human health can be expected to be mediated through complex interactions of physical, ecological, and social factors. These effects will undoubtedly have a greater impact on societies or individuals with scarce resources, where technologies are lacking, and where infrastructure and institutions (such as the health sector) are least able to adapt.''.

(7) Environmental changes relating to global climate change represent a potentially significant threat multiplier for instability around the world as changing precipitation patterns may exacerbate competition and conflict over agricultural, vegetative, and water resources and displace people, thus increasing hunger and poverty and causing increased pressure on fragile countries.

(8) The strategic, social, political, and economic consequences of global climate change are likely to have a greater adverse effect on less developed countries with fewer resources and infrastructures that are less able to adjust to new economic and social pressures, and where the margin for governance and survival is thin.

(9) The consequences of global climate change represent a clear and present danger to the security and economy of the United States.

(10) A failure to recognize, plan for, and mitigate the strategic, social, political, and economic effects of a changing climate will have an adverse impact on the national security interests of the United States.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of National Intelligence shall submit to Congress a National Intelligence Estimate on the anticipated geopolitical effects of global climate change and the implications of such effects on the national security of the United States.

(2) NOTICE REGARDING SUBMITTAL.—If the Director of National Intelligence determines that the National Intelligence Estimate required by paragraph (1) cannot be submitted by the date set out in that paragraph, the Director shall notify Congress and provide—

(A) the reasons that the National Intelligence Estimate cannot be submitted by such date; and

(B) an estimated date for the submittal of the National Intelligence Estimate.

(b) CONTENT.—The Director of National Intelligence shall prepare the National Intelligence Estimate required by this section using the mid-range projections of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—

(1) to assess the political, social, agricultural, and economic risks during the 30-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act posed by global climate change for countries or regions that are—

(A) of strategic economic or military importance to the United States and at risk of significant impact due to global climate change; or

(B) at significant risk of large-scale humanitarian suffering with cross-border implications as predicted on the basis of the assessments;

(2) to assess other risks posed by global climate change, including increased conflict over resources or between ethnic groups, within countries or transnationally, increased displacement or forced migrations of vulnerable populations due to inundation or other causes, increased food insecurity, and increased risks to human health from infectious disease;

(3) to assess the capabilities of the countries or regions described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1) to respond to adverse impacts caused by global climate change;

(4) to assess the strategic challenges and opportunities posed to the United States by the risks described in paragraph (1);

(5) to assess the security implications and opportunities for the United States economy of engaging, or failing to engage successfully, with other leading and emerging major contributors of greenhouse gas emissions in efforts to reduce emissions; and

(6) to make recommendations for further assessments of security consequences of global climate change that would improve national security planning.

(c) COORDINATION.—In preparing the National Intelligence Estimate under this section, the Director of National Intelligence shall consult with representatives of the scientific community, including atmospheric and climate studies, security studies, conflict studies, economic assessments, and environmental security studies, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Secretary of Energy, and the Secretary of Agriculture, and, if appropriate, multilateral institutions and allies of the United States that have conducted significant research on global climate change.

(d) FORM.—The National Intelligence Estimate required by this section shall be submitted in unclassified form, to the extent consistent with the protection of intelligence sources and methods, and include unclassified key judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate. Such National Intelligence Estimate may include a classified annex.

SEC. 4. RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE.

(a) REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—Not later than 270 days after the date that the National Intelligence Estimate required by section 3 is submitted to Congress, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Armed Services, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Armed Services, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives a report on—

(1) the projected impact on the military installations and capabilities of the United States of the effects of global climate change as assessed in the National Intelligence Estimate;

(2) the projected impact on United States military operations of the effects of global climate change described in the National Intelligence Estimate; and

(3) recommended research and analysis needed to further assess the impacts on the military of global climate change.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE NEXT QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should address the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate required by section 3 regarding the impact of global climate change and potential implications of such impact on the Armed Forces and for the size, composition, and capabilities of Armed Forces in the next Quadrennial Defense Review.

(c) REPORT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE.—Not later than 270 days after the date that the National Intelligence Estimate required by section 3 is submitted to Congress, the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives a report that addresses—

(1) the potential for large migration flows in countries of strategic interest or humanitarian concern as a response to changes in climate and the implications for United States security interests; and

(2) the potential for diplomatic opportunities and challenges facing United States policy makers as a result of social, economic, or political responses of groups or nations to global changing climate.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF RESEARCH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense is authorized to carry out research on the impacts of global climate change on military operations, doctrine, organization, training, material, logistics, personnel, and facilities and the actions needed to address those impacts. Such research may include—

(1) the use of war gaming and other analytical exercises;

(2) analysis of the implications for United States defense capabilities of large-scale Arctic sea-ice melt and broader changes in Arctic climate;

(3) analysis of the implications for United States defense capabilities of abrupt climate change;

(4) analysis of the implications of the findings derived from the National Intelligence Estimate required in section 3 Act for United States defense capabilities;

(5) analysis of the strategic implications for United States defense capabilities of direct physical threats to the United States posed by extreme weather events such as hurricanes; and

(6) analysis of the existing policies of the Department of Defense to assess the adequacy of the Department's protections against climate risks to United States capabilities and military interests in foreign countries.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date that the National Intelligence Estimate required by section 3 is submitted to Congress, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the research, war games, and other activities carried out pursuant to subsection (a).

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President. I rise today to join Senator DURBIN in introducing the Global Climate Change Security Oversight Act.

Global climate change has implications beyond economic, environmental and energy policies. It has the potential to affect every aspect of our daily lives. It is because of the possible broad impact on U.S. interests at home and abroad that I have agreed to be the lead Republican co-sponsor on the Global Climate Change Security Oversight Act.

Senator DURBIN and I differ on policy initiatives designed to reduce the impact of climate change. We do agree, however, on the need to assess potential impacts of the changing climate on U.S. national security interests so that our Nation can develop responsible, forward-thinking policies that ensure the continued safety and prosperity of the American people.

There will always be uncertainties and incomplete information in climate science. This is the nature of scientific discovery; it is constantly evolving, constantly gaining new insights and explanations of our natural world. National policy must be crafted based on what is known, but also must be able to incorporate the uncertainties of what is yet to be learned.

Our bill provides a foundation for future policy options. It instructs the Director of National Intelligence to conduct a National Intelligence Estimate to assess the potential geopolitical effects of global climate change and the implications for U.S. national security. It asks for a risk assessment of a broad array of impacts based on current scientific understanding. This bill is intended to gather information about the national security implications of projected climate change, so that in the future, Congress can develop policies that protect U.S. interests around the world.

I have said that the debate is not about whether we should take action, but rather what kind of action we should take. It would be irresponsible to attempt to develop a response to the physical effects of climate change without knowing what the potential consequences are. Our actions should always be based on a comprehensive base of scientific information and knowledge. Without this kind of information, we cannot effectively determine what the risks to U.S. national security will be. We cannot realistically design policies that mitigate these risks without this information. General Charles F. ''Chuck'' Wald, USAF, ret., former Deputy Commander, Headquarters U.S. European Command, has stated, ''This bipartisan legislation takes on an important emerging policy issue—the impact of climate change and national security. I support its call for a national intelligence estimate of the topic and authorizing the Secretary of Defense to conduct further research on the military impact of climate change.''

As I have said for many years, the way forward is to responsibly address the issue of climate change with a national strategy that incorporates economic, environmental and energy priorities. These issues are inextricably linked and changes to one will effect the other two. These priorities are also an integral part of U.S. national security. Risk assessment is essential to putting our national resources in the places where they will be most effective. This is even more important when assessing risk to national security. This legislation will provide information we need to continue to help make our country secure in the years to come.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 130—DESIGNATING JULY 28, 2007, AS ''NATIONAL DAY OF THE AMERICAN COWBOY''

Mr. THOMAS (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. DOMENICI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. HATCH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 130

Whereas pioneering men and women, recognized as cowboys, helped establish the American West;

Whereas that cowboy spirit continues to infuse the Nation with its solid character, sound family values, and good common sense;

Whereas the cowboy embodies honesty, integrity, courage, compassion, respect, a strong work ethic, and patriotism;

Whereas the cowboy loves, lives off of, and depends on the land and its creatures, and is an excellent steward, protecting and enhancing the environment;

Whereas the cowboy continues to play a significant role in the culture and economy of the United States;

Whereas approximately 800,000 ranchers in all 50 States are conducting business and contributing to the economic well-being of nearly every county in the Nation;

Whereas rodeo is the sixth most-watched sport in the United States;

Whereas membership in rodeo and other organizations encompassing the livelihood of a cowboy transcends race and sex and spans every generation;

Whereas the cowboy is an American icon;

Whereas to recognize the American cowboy is to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of the United States to an esteemed and enduring code of conduct; and

Whereas the ongoing contributions made by cowboys to their communities should be recognized and encouraged: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates July 28, 2007, as ''National Day of the American Cowboy''; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 131—DESIGNATING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL 2007 AS ''NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK''

Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mr. REID, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr.

TESTER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 131

Whereas dangerous asbestos fibers are invisible and cannot be smelled or tasted;

Whereas the inhalation of airborne asbestos fibers can cause significant damage;

Whereas these fibers can cause mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other health problems;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases can take 10 to 50 years to present themselves;

Whereas the expected survival time for those diagnosed with mesothelioma is between 6 and 24 months;

Whereas generally little is known about late stage treatment and there is no cure for asbestos-related diseases;

Whereas early detection of asbestos-related diseases may give some patients increased treatment options and might improve their prognosis;

Whereas the United States has substantially reduced its consumption of asbestos yet continues to consume almost 7,000 metric tons of the fibrous mineral for use in certain products throughout the Nation;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases have killed thousands of people in the United States;

Whereas asbestos exposures continue and safety and prevention will reduce and has reduced significantly asbestos exposure and asbestos-related diseases;

Whereas asbestos has been a cause of occupational cancer;

Whereas thousands of workers in the United States face significant asbestos exposure;

Whereas thousands of people in the United States die from asbestos-related diseases every year;

Whereas a significant percentage of all asbestos-related disease victims were exposed to asbestos on naval ships and in shipyards;

Whereas asbestos was used in the construction of a significant number of office buildings and public facilities built before 1975;

Whereas people in the small community of Libby, Montana have asbestos-related diseases at a significantly higher rate than the national average and suffer from mesothelioma at a significantly higher rate than the national average; and

Whereas the establishment of a ''National Asbestos Awareness Week'' would raise public awareness about the prevalence of asbestos-related diseases and the dangers of asbestos exposure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the first week of April 2007 as ''National Asbestos Awareness Week'';

(2) urges the Surgeon General, as a public health issue, to warn and educate people that asbestos exposure may be hazardous to their health; and

(3) respectfully requests the Secretary of the Senate to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Surgeon General.

SENATE RESOLUTION 132—RECOGNIZING THE CIVIL AIR PATROL FOR 65 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES

Mr. STEVENS (for himself, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 132

Whereas the Civil Air Patrol was established on December 1, 1941, in the Office of Civilian Defense;

Whereas during World War II the volunteer units of the Civil Air Patrol conducted search and rescue missions, provided air transportation for military personnel and cargo, towed targets for the training of Army Air Corps gunners, and patrolled the coasts of the United States searching for enemy submarines;

Whereas by the end of World War II the Civil Air Patrol had flown more than 500,000 hours, sunk 2 German U-boats, and saved hundreds of crash victims;

Whereas on July 1, 1946, the Civil Air Patrol was chartered by the United States as a nonprofit, benevolent corporation;

Whereas on May 26, 1948, the Civil Air Patrol was permanently established as a volunteer auxiliary of the United States Air Force;

Whereas since 1942 the cadet programs of the Civil Air Patrol have trained more than 750,000 youth, providing them with leadership and life skills;

Whereas since 1942 the Civil Air Patrol has flown more than 1,000,000 hours of search and rescue missions, saving several thousand lives; and

Whereas since 1951 the aerospace education programs of the Civil Air Patrol have provided training and educational materials to more than 300,000 teachers, who have educated more than 8,000,000 students about aerospace: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes the Civil Air Patrol for 65 years of service to the United States.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, last December, the Civil Air Patrol completed its 65th year of distinguished service to our Nation. I've come to the floor today to pay tribute to the brave men and women who helped this important organization reach this milestone.

In the late 1930s, Gill Robb Wilson, General Henry ''Hap'' Arnold, and other American aviation leaders recognized the need for a civilian group which could complement air operations undertaken by our military. Their vision led to the establishment of the Civil Air Patrol on December 1, 1941.

Less than a week later, Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States was drawn into World War II. The newly formed Civil Air Patrol played a vital role in keeping America safe during this dark period in our history. CAP members kept watch for enemy submarines, assisted the Army Air Corps with training exercises, and helped transport military personnel and cargo. They rescued hundreds of crash survivors and helped force the Nazis to withdraw U-boat operations from our East Coast. In total, thousands of CAP volunteers flew more than 500,000 hours and 24 million miles during the war.

The tremendous accomplishments and potential of this organization did not go unnoticed. After World War II, President Truman signed a law designating the Civil Air Patrol as a nonprofit, benevolent corporation and an ''instrumentality of the United States.'' Two years later, Congress passed legislation establishing CAP as a volunteer auxiliary of the United States Air Force.

Today, the three principal missions of the Civil Air Patrol are to administer cadet training programs, provide aerospace education, and perform operations related to homeland security and emergency services. This organization has exceeded all expectations in each of these areas.

Approximately 750,000 American children have learned important life and leadership lessons from CAP's cadet programs. More than 300,000 teachers—and some eight million students—have received training and instructional materials through CAP's aerospace education program. CAP volunteers have now flown more than one million hours of search and rescue operations, and thousands of lives have been saved as a result. As an Alaskan, I am particularly appreciative of these efforts—since 2004, the Civil Air Patrol has saved at least 57 lives in our State. And, I served as a Legal Officer for the Civil Air Patrol in Fairbanks, AK, in the 1950s.

Today, the Civil Air Patrol is a nationwide organization of nearly 57,000 volunteers. CAP wings can be found in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The organization's members—all volunteers—fly approximately 120,000 hours each year as they assist with border patrol, terrorism preparedness, the War on Drugs, and natural disaster responses.

The Civil Air Patrol also submits an annual report to Congress. In 2005, this report was titled ''Everyday Heroes . . . The Faces of the Civil Air Patrol.'' In part, the word ''hero'' is defined as ''a person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life.''

Mr. President, I can think of no title more fitting for the members of the Civil Air Patrol. The men and women of this organization have volunteered their time and resources in the service of others for the past 65 years. Each is truly an ''everyday hero'' and worthy of our Nation's deepest gratitude.

In honor of the Civil Air Patrol's 65th anniversary, Senators INOUYE, DOMENICI, CRAPO, MURKOWSKI, WYDEN, SANDERS, SNOWE, COLLINS, WARNER, INHOFE, and I have introduced S. Res. XX. I encourage each Member of the Senate to support this resolution.

SENATE RESOLUTION 133—CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BISHOP GILBERT EARL PATTERSON

Mr. OBAMA (for himself, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. ALEXANDER, and Mr. CORKER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 133

Whereas Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson was born in 1939 to Bishop W.A. and Mrs. Mary Patterson, Sr., in Humboldt, Tennessee;

Whereas Bishop Patterson was reared in Memphis, Tennessee, and Detroit, Michigan, and ordained as an elder in the Church of God in Christ in 1958 by Bishop J.S. Bailey;

Whereas Bishop Patterson grew in wisdom at the Detroit Bible Institute and LeMoyne Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee;

Whereas, in 1962, Bishop Patterson became co-pastor with his father of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee;

Whereas, in 1975, Bishop Patterson founded Temple of Deliverance, the Cathedral of the Bountiful Blessings;

Whereas Temple of Deliverance is now a shining star of both the Church of God in Christ and all of the Nation's communities of faith;

Whereas Temple of Deliverance, under Bishop Patterson's wise leadership, continues to touch the entire Nation through its Bountiful Blessings Ministry;

Whereas Bishop Patterson reached millions across the globe with his direct and spirit-filled messages, encouraging the world to ''be healed, be delivered, and be set free'';

Whereas Bishop Patterson served as the international leader of the Church of God in Christ since November 2000, ably leading this denomination of over 6,000,000 members;

Whereas Bishop Patterson passed away on Tuesday, March 20, 2007, in Memphis, Tennessee, surrounded by his wife, Mrs. Louise Patterson, and his family;

Whereas Bishop Patterson will be celebrated as an invigorating spiritual leader; and

Whereas the family of Bishop Patterson, the Temple of Deliverance congregation, the Church of God in Christ, and indeed the entire Nation are deeply saddened by the loss of this great man: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses the condolences of the Nation to the family of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, the Temple of Deliverance Congregation, and the Church of God in Christ; and

(2) recognizes the life and accomplishments of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, who guided a church, led a denomination, and influenced a nation.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 807. Mr. PRYOR submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

SA 808. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 737 submitted by Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mr. SUNUNU) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 809. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 810. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 811. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 690 proposed by Mr. COCHRAN (for Mr. LUGAR) to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 812. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 664 submitted by Mr. OBAMA (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. KERRY, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. LEAHY) to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 813. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 745 submitted by Mr. PRYOR and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 814. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 815. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 757 submitted by Mr. BYRD (for himself and Mr. INOUYE) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 816. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 648 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 817. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 649 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 818. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 656 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 819. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 657 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 820. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 717 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 821. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 718 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 822. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 670 submitted by Mr. LUGAR and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 823. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 690 proposed by Mr. COCHRAN (for Mr. LUGAR) to the bill H .R. 1591, supra.

SA 824. Mr. THOMAS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 718 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 825. Mr. STEVENS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 656 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 826. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 827. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 828. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 829. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 700 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 830. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 701 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 831. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 832. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 833. Mr. LAUTENBERG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 778 submitted by Ms. COLLINS and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 834. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 784 submitted by Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr . MENENDEZ, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. CARDIN) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 835. Mrs. MURRAY (for Mr. COLEMAN (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR)) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by Mrs. MURRAY to the bill H.R. 1591, supra.

SA 836. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 700 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 837. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 701 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 838. Mr. COLEMAN (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 839. Ms. KLOBUCHAR submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1591, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 807. Mr. PRYOR submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of chapter 5 of title I, add the following:

SEC. 1503. DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS EQUIPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS.—The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS'' is hereby increased by $5,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS EQUIPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS'', as increased by subsection (a), $5,000,000 shall be available for the Domestic Preparedness Equipment Technical Assistance Program (DPETAP).

(c) OFFSET.—The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES'' is hereby reduced by $5,000,000.

SA 808. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 737 submitted by Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mrs.

CLINTON, and Mr. SUNUNU) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1, line 2, of the amendment, strike ''$242,200,000'' and insert ''$229,500,000''.

SA 809. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. ___. ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM FOR ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATED PERSONNEL.

The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'' is hereby increased by $58,000,000, with the amount of the increase to be available for additional caseworkers at military medical treatment facilities and other military facilities housing patients to participate in, enhance, and assist the Physical Disability Evaluation System (PDES) process, and for additional mental health and mental crisis counselors at military medical treatment facilities and other military facilities housing patients for services for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

SEC. ___. ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM FOR WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'' is hereby increased by $15,000,000, with the amount of the increase to be available for mental health services for women members of the Armed Forces, including services and treatment for women who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and services and treatment for women who have experienced sexual assault or abuse, which services shall include the hiring and training of additional sexual abuse crisis counselors for members of the Armed Forces who have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

SA 810. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. ___. ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATED PERSONNEL.

Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'', $58,000,000 shall be available for additional caseworkers at military medical treatment facilities and other military facilities housing patients to participate in, enhance, and assist the Physical Disability Evaluation System (PDES) process, and for additional mental health and mental crisis counselors at military medical treatment facilities and other military facilities housing patients for services for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

SEC. ___. WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'', $15,000,000 shall be available for mental health services for women members of the Armed Forces, including services and treatment for women who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and services and treatment for women who have experienced sexual assault or abuse, which services shall include the hiring and training of additional sexual abuse crisis counselors for members of the Armed Forces who have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

SA 811. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 690 proposed by Mr. COCHRAN (for Mr. LUGAR) to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Attorneys'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Marshals Service'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008: *Provided*, That of the amounts made available in this Act for ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', $25,000,000 is rescinded.

SA 812. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 664 submitted by Mr. OBAMA (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. KERRY, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. LEAHY) to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Attorneys'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Marshals Service'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008: *Provided*, That of the amounts made available in this Act for ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', $25,000,000 is rescinded.

SA 813. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 745 submitted by Mr. PRYOR and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Attorneys'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Marshals Service'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008: *Provided*, That of the amounts made available in this Act for ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', $25,000,000 is rescinded.

SA 814. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Attorneys'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Marshals Service'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008: *Provided*, That of the amounts made available in this Act for ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', $25,000,000 is rescinded.

SA 815. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 757 submitted by Mr. BYRD (for himself and Mr. INOUYE) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Attorneys'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE

For an additional amount for ''Salaries and Expenses, United States Marshals Service'', $12,500,000, to remain available until September 30, 2008: *Provided*, That of the amounts made available in this Act for ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', $25,000,000 is rescinded.

SA 816. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 648 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes;

which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 817. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 649 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 818. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 656 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 819. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 657 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 820. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 717 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 821. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 718 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30,2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—A State shall not use amounts provided for the purpose of additional allotments to remaining SCHIP shortfall states for providing child health assistance or other health benefits coverage for any non-pregnant adult.

SA 822. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 670 submitted by Mr. LUGAR and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end add the following:

This section shall become effective 2 days after enactment.

SA 823. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 690 proposed by Mr. COCHRAN (for Mr. LUGAR) to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of the amendment add the following:

The provisions in this section shall become effective 2 days after enactment.

SA 824. Mr. THOMAS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 718 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

SEC. ___. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the following amounts provided in this Act are rescinded and shall be null and void:

(1) $24,000,000 for funding sugar beets.

(2) $3,000,000 for funding for sugar cane.

(3) $20,000,000 for insect infestation damage reimbursements in Nevada, Idaho, and Utah.

(4) $2,100,000,000 for crop production losses.

(5) $1,500,000,000 for livestock production losses.

(6) $100,000,000 for Dairy Production losses.

(7) $13,000,000 for Ewe Lamb Replacement and Retention program.

(8) $32,000,000 for Livestock Indemnity program.

(9) $40,000,000 for the Tree Assistance program.

(10) $100,000,000 million for Small Agricultural Dependent Businesses.

(11) $6,000,000 for North Dakota flooded crop land.

(12) $35,000,000 for emergency conservation program.

(13) $50,000,000 for the emergency watershed program.

(14) $115,000,000 for the conservation security program.

(15) $18,000,000 for drought assistance in upper Great Plains/South West.

(16) Provisions that extend the availability by a year $3,500,000 in funding for guided tours of the Capitol. Also a provision allows transfer of funds from holiday ornament sales in the Senate gift shop.

(17) $165,900,000 for fisheries disaster relief, funded through NOAA.

(18) $12,000,000 for forest service money (requested by the President in the non-emergency fiscal year 2008 budget).

(19) $425,000,000 for education grants for rural areas-(Secure Rural Schools program).

(20) $640,000,000 for LIHEAP.

(21) $25,000,000 for asbestos abatement at the Capitol Power Plant.

(22) $388,900,000 for funding for backlog of old Department of Transportation projects.

(23) $22,800,000 for geothermal research and development.

(24) $500,000,000 for wildland fire management.

(25) $13,000,000 for mine safety technology research.

(26) $31,000,000 for 1 month extension of Milk Income Loss Contract program (MILC).

(27) $50,000,000 for fisheries disaster mitigation fund.

(28) Subsections (a) and (b) of section 1315 (Iraq withdraw).

(29) Any provision relating to Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Wilma, or Hurricane Dennis emergency assistance.

(30) $100,000,000 for the 2008 Presidential Candidate Nominating Conventions.

(31) $660,000,000 for Aviation Security for procurement and installation related to baggage systems and air cargo security.

(32) $850,000,000 for State and Local Programs for regional grants and technical assistance.

(33) $15,000,000 for Research, Development, Acquisition, and Operations for air cargo research.

(34) $39,000,000 for Research, Development, and Operations for non-container, rail, aviation and intermodal radiation detection activities.

(35) $820,000,000 for Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund for influenza pandemic.

(36) $170,000,000 for State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance for discretionary grants.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the following provisions of this Act shall be null and void:

(1) Any provision relating to the Federal minimum wage and any related changes to the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(2) Sections 2704, 2705, and 2706, relating to SCHIP funding.

SA 825. Mr. STEVENS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 656 submitted by Mr. COBURN to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 2, line 1, insert ''(other than section 1313 of title I)'' after ''of this Act''.

SA 826. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in the amendment, insert the following: '': *Provided further*, That no funds shall be made available

by this Act to carry out subtitle C of title IV, and that subtitle shall have no force or effect''.

SA 827. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in the amendment, insert the following: '': *Provided further*, That no funds made available under this Act shall be used to make payments to growers and first handlers, as defined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, of fresh spinach that were unable to market spinach crops as a result of the Food and Drug Administration Public Health Advisory issued on September 14, 2006''.

SA 828. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in the amendment, insert the following: '': *Provided further*, That no funds shall be made available by this Act to carry out section 413 (relating to the milk income loss contract program), and that section shall have no force or effect''.

SA 829. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 700 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Beginning on page 1, line 5, of the amendment, strike ''from'' and all that follows through page 2, line 7, and insert ''from enforcing any anti-fraud provisions of law in effect as of the date of enactment of this Act with respect to the Medicaid program or the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or developing new proposals during such period to eliminate fraud in such programs, without harming beneficiaries' access to health care under such programs.''.

SA 830. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 701 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1 of the amendment, beginning on line 5, strike ''from'' and all that follows through line 9, and insert ''from enforcing any anti-fraud provisions of law in effect as of the date of enactment of this Act with respect to the Medicaid program or the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or developing new proposals during such period to eliminate fraud in such programs, without harming beneficiaries' access to health care under such programs.''.

SA 831. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

After the section heading, strike all and insert the following:

(b) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM.—The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'' is hereby increased by $10,000,000, with the amount of the increase to be available to provide for the following:

(1) The development of a field-deployable system which would mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injury, such as deployable ice water immersion cooling system.

(2) The development of an ice water immersion cooling system to treat traumatic brain injuries, suitable for use in a stationary medical treatment facility.

SA 832. Ms. LANDRIEU submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 756 submitted by Ms. LANDRIEU and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

After the section heading, strike all and insert the following:

(b) AVAILABILITY OF AMOUNT FOR ACTIVITIES RELATING TO TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.—Amounts appropriated or otherwise made available by this chapter under the heading ''DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM'' shall be available for the following:

(1) The development of a field-deployable system which would mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injury, such as deployable ice water immersion cooling system.

(2) The development of an ice water immersion cooling system to treat traumatic brain injuries, suitable for use in a stationary medical treatment facility.

SA 833. Mr. LAUTENBERG submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 778 submitted by Ms. COLLINS and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1, strike line 9 and all that follows through page 2, line 4.

SA 834. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 784 submitted by Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. CARDIN) and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1, line 4, of the amendment, strike ''$373,000,000'' and insert ''$373,000,000 (which is partially offset by reducing by $50,000,000 the amount appropriated by this chapter under the heading 'DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PROGRAMS')''.

SA 835. Mrs. MURRAY (for Mr. COLEMAN (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR)) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by Mrs. MURRAY to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

(b) MEDICARE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL DESIGNATION.—Section 405(h) of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-173; 117 Stat. 2269) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) EXCEPTION.—

''(A) STATE OF MINNESOTA.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Minnesota on or after January 1, 2006, under section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (B) and is located in Cass County, Minnesota, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(B) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MINNESOTA.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) has been granted an exception by the State to an otherwise applicable statutory restriction on hospital construction or licensing prior to the date of enactment of this subparagraph; and

''(ii) is located on property which the State has approved for conveyance to a county within the State prior to such date of enactment.

''(C) STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Mississippi on or after April 1, 2007, under section 1820(c)(2)(b)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (D) and is located in Kemper County, Mississippi, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(D) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MISSISSIPPI.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) meets all other criteria for designation as a critical access hospital under section 1820(c)(2)(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B));

''(ii) has satisfied the requirement of the certificate of need laws and regulations of the State of Mississippi; and

''(iii) will be constructed on property that will be conveyed by the Kemper County Board of Supervisors within the State of Mississippi.''.

SA 836. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 700 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

(b) BROKER REPORTING OF CUSTOMER'S BASIS IN SECURITIES TRANSACTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6045 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to returns of brokers) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED IN THE CASE OF SECURITIES TRANSACTIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If a broker is otherwise required to make a return under subsection (a) with respect to any applicable security, the broker shall include in such return the information described in paragraph (2).

''(2) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The information required under paragraph (1) to be shown on a return with respect to an applicable security of a customer shall include for each reported applicable security the customer's adjusted basis in such security.

''(B) EXEMPTION FROM REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall issue such regulations or guidance as necessary concerning the application of the requirement under subparagraph (A) in cases in which a broker in making a return does not have sufficient information to meet such requirement with respect to the reported applicable security. Such regulations or guidance may—

''(i) require such other information related to such adjusted basis as the Secretary may prescribe, and

''(ii) exempt classes of cases in which the broker does not have sufficient information to meet either the requirement under subparagraph (A) or the requirement under clause (i).

''(3) INFORMATION TRANSFERS.—To the extent provided in regulations, there shall be such exchanges of information between brokers as such regulations may require for purposes of enabling such brokers to meet the requirements of this subsection.

''(4) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'applicable security' means any—

''(A) security described in subparagraph (A) or (C) of section 475(c)(2),

''(B) interest in a regulated investment company (as defined in section 851), or

''(C) other financial instrument designated in regulations prescribed by the Secretary.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply to returns the due date for which (determined without regard to extensions) is after December 31, 2009, with respect to securities acquired after December 31, 2008.

(c) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of the Treasury may promulgate regulations requiring information reporting on all non-wage payments by Federal, State, and local governments to procure property and services.

(d) REPEAL OF INCREASE IN BASIC REBATE FOR SINGLE SOURCE DRUGS AND INNOVATOR MULTIPLE SOURCE DRUGS.—The amendments made by this section to section 1927(c)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r–8(c)(1)(B)) shall have no force and effect.

SA 837. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 701 submitted by Mr. GRASSLEY and intended to be proposed to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

(b) BROKER REPORTING OF CUSTOMER'S BASIS IN SECURITIES TRANSACTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6045 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to returns of brokers) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED IN THE CASE OF SECURITIES TRANSACTIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—If a broker is otherwise required to make a return under subsection (a) with respect to any applicable security, the broker shall include in such return the information described in paragraph (2).

''(2) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The information required under paragraph (1) to be shown on a return with respect to an applicable security of a customer shall include for each reported applicable security the customer's adjusted basis in such security.

''(B) EXEMPTION FROM REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall issue such regulations or guidance as necessary concerning the application of the requirement under subparagraph (A) in cases in which a broker in making a return does not have sufficient information to meet such requirement with respect to the reported applicable security. Such regulations or guidance may—

''(i) require such other information related to such adjusted basis as the Secretary may prescribe, and

''(ii) exempt classes of cases in which the broker does not have sufficient information to meet either the requirement under subparagraph (A) or the requirement under clause (i).

''(3) INFORMATION TRANSFERS.—To the extent provided in regulations, there shall be such exchanges of information between brokers as such regulations may require for purposes of enabling such brokers to meet the requirements of this subsection.

''(4) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'applicable security' means any—

''(A) security described in subparagraph (A) or (C) of section 475(c)(2),

''(B) interest in a regulated investment company (as defined in section 851), or

''(C) other financial instrument designated in regulations prescribed by the Secretary.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply to returns the due date for which (determined without regard to extensions) is after December 31, 2009, with respect to securities acquired after December 31, 2008.

(c) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of the Treasury may promulgate regulations requiring information reporting on all non-wage payments by Federal, State, and local governments to procure property and services.

(d) REPEAL OF INCREASE IN BASIC REBATE FOR SINGLE SOURCE DRUGS AND INNOVATOR MULTIPLE SOURCE DRUGS.—The amendments made by this section to section 1927(c)(1)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396r–8(c)(1)(B)) shall have no force and effect.

SA 838. Mr. COLEMAN (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 85, between lines 21 and 22, insert the following:

(c) MEDICARE CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL DESIGNATION.—Section 405(h) of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-173; 117 Stat. 2269) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) EXCEPTION.—

''(A) STATE OF MINNESOTA.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Minnesota on or after January 1, 2006, under section 1820(c)(2)(B)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (B) and is located in Cass County, Minnesota, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(B) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MINNESOTA.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) has been granted an exception by the State to an otherwise applicable statutory restriction on hospital construction or licensing prior to the date of enactment of this subparagraph; and

''(ii) is located on property which the State has approved for conveyance to a county within the State prior to such date of enactment.

''(C) STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall not apply to the certification by the State of Mississippi on or after January 1, 2006, and before December 31, 2007, under section 1820(c)(2)(b)(i)(II) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B)(i)(II)) of one hospital that meets the criteria described in subparagraph (D) and is located in Kemper County, Mississippi, as a necessary provider of health care services to residents in the area of the hospital.

''(D) CRITERIA DESCRIBED FOR HOSPITAL IN MISSISSIPPI.—A hospital meets the criteria described in this subparagraph if the hospital—

''(i) meets all other criteria for designation as a critical access hospital under section 1820(c)(2)(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i–4(c)(2)(B));

''(ii) has satisfied the requirement of the certificate of need laws and regulations of the State of Mississippi; and

''(iii) will be constructed on property that will be conveyed by the Kemper County Board of Supervisors within the State of Mississippi.''.

SA 839. Ms. KLOBUCHAR submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. In providing any grants for small and rural community technical and compliance assistance, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall give priority to small systems and qualified (as determined by the Administrator) organizations that have the most need (or a majority of support) from small communities in each State.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce Science, and Transportation be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 10 a.m., in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the future of the Coast Guard dive program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and

Transportation be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 2:30 p.m., in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss transitioning to a Next Generation Human Space Flight System.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007.

The agenda to be considered:

Reducing Government Building Operational Costs through Innovation and Efficiency: Legislative Solutions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 10 a.m., in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building, to hear testimony on ''Risks and Reform: The Role of Currency in the U.S.-China Relationship.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 11:45 a.m. to hold a business meeting.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to hold a hearing on the No Child Left Behind reauthorization during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 3 p.m. in SD–430.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 10 a.m., to conduct a markup on S. 223, the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Joint Economic Committee be authorized to conduct a hearing in Room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building, Wednesday, March 28, 2007, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet Wednesday, March 28, 2007, from 10:15 a.m. to 12 p.m. in Dirksen 562 for the purpose of conducting a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Personnel be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 3:30 p.m., to receive testimony on active component, reserve component, and civilian personnel programs in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years defense program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces be authorized to meet in open and closed sessions during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, at 9:30 a.m., to receive testimony on strategic forces programs in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years defense program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

On Friday, March 23, 2007, the Senate passed S. Con. Res. 21, as follows:

S. CON. RES. 21

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008.

(a) DECLARATION.—The Congress declares that this resolution is the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008 and that the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2007 and 2009 through 2012 are set forth.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this concurrent resolution is as follows:

Sec. 1. Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008.

TITLE I—RECOMMENDED LEVELS AND AMOUNTS

Sec. 101. Recommended levels and amounts.
Sec. 102. Social Security.
Sec. 103. Major functional categories.

TITLE II—BUDGET PROCESS

Sec. 201. Pay-as-you-go point of order in the Senate.
Sec. 202. Point of order against reconciliation legislation that would increase the deficit or reduce a surplus.
Sec. 203. Point of order against legislation increasing long-term deficits.
Sec. 204. Emergency legislation.
Sec. 205. Extension of enforcement of budgetary points of order.
Sec. 206. Point of order against advance appropriations.
Sec. 207. Discretionary spending limits.
Sec. 208. Application of previous allocations in the Senate.
Sec. 209. Point of order to Save Social Security First.
Sec. 210. Point of order against legislation that raises income tax rates.
Sec. 211. Circuit breaker to protect Social Security.
Sec. 212. Point of order—20% limit on new direct spending in reconciliation legislation.
Sec. 213. Point of order against legislation that raises income tax rates for small businesses, family farms, or family ranches.
Sec. 214. Point of order against provisions of appropriations legislation that constitutes changes in mandatory programs with net costs.
Sec. 215. Disclosure of interest costs.

TITLE III—RESERVE FUNDS AND ADJUSTMENTS

Sec. 301. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for SCHIP legislation.
Sec. 302. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for care of wounded service members.
Sec. 303. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax relief.
Sec. 304. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for comparative effectiveness research.
Sec. 305. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for higher education.
Sec. 306. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for the Farm Bill.
Sec. 307. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for energy legislation.
Sec. 308. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for Medicare.
Sec. 309. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for small business health insurance.
Sec. 310. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for county payments for Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 reauthorization.
Sec. 311. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for terrorism risk insurance reauthorization.
Sec. 312. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for affordable housing.
Sec. 313. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for receipts from Bonneville Power Administration.
Sec. 314. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for Indian claims settlement.
Sec. 315. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for Food and Drug Administration.
Sec. 316. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for health care reform.
Sec. 317. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for enhancement of veterans' benefits.
Sec. 318. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for long-term care.
Sec. 319. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for health information technology.
Sec. 320. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for child care.
Sec. 321. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for comprehensive immigration reform.
Sec. 322. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for mental health parity.
Sec. 323. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for preschool opportunities.
Sec. 324. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for the safe importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs.
Sec. 325. Application and effect of changes in allocations and aggregates.
Sec. 326. Adjustments to reflect changes in concepts and definitions.

Sec. 327. Exercise of rulemaking powers.
Sec. 328. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for expansion of above-the-line deduction for teacher classroom supplies.
Sec. 329. Adjustment for Smithsonian Institution salaries and expenses.
Sec. 330. Deficit-reduction reserve fund for reduction of improper payments.
Sec. 331. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for extension of the deduction for State and local sales taxes.
Sec. 332. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for extension of certain energy tax incentives.
Sec. 333. Reserve fund to provide additional training for physicians and attract more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians in training.
Sec. 334. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for repeal of the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security Benefits.
Sec. 335. Sense of Congress on the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.
Sec. 336. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for eliminating military retirement and disability offset.
Sec. 337. Deficit-neutral reserve for asbestos reform legislation.
Sec. 338. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for manufacturing initiatives.
Sec. 339. Deficit-reduction reserve fund for increased use of recovery audits.
Sec. 340. Deficit-neutral reserve fund for a delay in the implementation of a proposed rule relating to the Federal-State Financial Partnerships under Medicaid and SCHIP.
Sec. 341. Reserve fund to improve the health care system.
Sec. 342. Reserve fund to improve Medicare hospital payment accuracy.
Sec. 343. Deficit-neutral reserve fund to improve health insurance.

TITLE I—RECOMMENDED LEVELS AND AMOUNTS

SEC. 101. RECOMMENDED LEVELS AND AMOUNTS.

The following budgetary levels are appropriate for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2012:

(1) FEDERAL REVENUES.—For purposes of the enforcement of this resolution:

(A) The recommended levels of Federal revenues are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $1,900,706,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $2,008,975,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $2,122,544,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,221,229,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,357,776,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $2,426,691,000,000.

(B) The amounts by which the aggregate levels of Federal revenues should be changed are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: –$4,000,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: –$41,821,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $15,618,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $57,508,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: –$36,774,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: –$170,405,000,000.

(2) NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY.—For purposes of the enforcement of this resolution, the appropriate levels of total new budget authority are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $2,364,566,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $2,490,185,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $2,506,314,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,555,623,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,669,264,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $2,696,288,000,000.

(3) BUDGET OUTLAYS.—For purposes of the enforcement of this resolution, the appropriate levels of total budget outlays are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $2,298,846,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $2,460,251,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $2,555,575,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $2,587,173,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $2,675,133,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $2,682,375,000,000.

(4) DEFICITS.—For purposes of the enforcement of this resolution, the amounts of the deficits are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $398,140,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $451,276,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $433,031,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $365,944,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $317,357,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $255,684,000,000.

(5) PUBLIC DEBT.—The appropriate levels of the public debt are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $8,960,830,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $9,529,811,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $10,079,488,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $10,562,973,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $10,993,669,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $11,375,583,000,000.

(6) DEBT HELD BY THE PUBLIC.—The appropriate levels of debt held by the public are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $5,045,226,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $5,308,213,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $5,537,687,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $5,686,479,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $5,769,579,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $5,779,399,000,000.

SEC. 102. SOCIAL SECURITY.

(a) SOCIAL SECURITY REVENUES.—The amounts of revenues of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $637,586,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $668,998,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $702,851,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $737,589,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $772,605,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $807,928,000,000.

(b) SOCIAL SECURITY OUTLAYS.—The amounts of outlays of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007: $441,676,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008: $460,224,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009: $478,578,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010: $499,655,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011: $520,743,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012: $546,082,000,000.

(c) SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—In the Senate, the amounts of new budget authority and budget outlays of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund for administrative expenses are as follows:

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $4,692,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $4,727,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $5,130,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $5,105,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $5,284,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $5,244,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $5,444,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $5,417,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $5,612,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $5,583,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $5,783,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $5,753,000,000.

SEC. 103. MAJOR FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES.

The Congress determines and declares that the appropriate levels of new budget authority and outlays for fiscal years 2007 through 2012 for each major functional category are:

(1) National Defense (050):

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $619,363,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $560,462,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $648,820,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $617,842,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $584,775,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $626,962,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $545,251,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $572,856,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $551,054,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $558,381,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $559,899,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $551,763,000,000.

(2) International Affairs (150):

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $34,790,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $32,015,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $39,214,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $36,944,400,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $34,555,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $35,101,600,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $34,859,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $33,497,400,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $35,432,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $33,376,600,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $35,984,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $33,335,000,000.

(3) General Science, Space, and Technology (250):

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $25,079,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $24,516,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $27,583,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $26,353,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $26,925,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $27,529,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $27,289,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $27,651,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $27,654,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $27,267,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $28,020,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $27,593,000,000.

(4) Energy (270):

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $2,958,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,384,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $3,662,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,256,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $3,142,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,659,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $3,198,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,778,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $3,258,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,766,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $3,306,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $2,032,000,000.

(5) Natural Resources and Environment (300):

Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $31,332,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $32,905,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $32,933,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $34,927,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $33,331,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $35,250,000,000.

Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $33,999,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $35,264,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $34,365,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $35,337,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $35,098,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $35,624,000,000.
(6) Agriculture (350):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $26,207,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $22,580,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $20,481,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $21,497,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $20,984,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,108,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $21,137,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,118,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $21,099,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,390,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $21,288,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,763,000,000.
(7) Commerce and Housing Credit (370):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $5,515,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$3,522,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $8,915,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $1,882,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $8,602,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $159,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $8,566,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $178,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $8,591,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$27,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $8,772,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $507,000,000.
(8) Transportation (400):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $81,282,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $74,739,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $83,872,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $81,383,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $75,700,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $84,032,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $76,253,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $85,893,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $76,887,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $86,307,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $77,476,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $87,721,000,000.
(9) Community and Regional Development (450):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $19,117,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $28,281,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $15,415,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $22,461,500,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $13,561,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $21,264,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $13,742,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,059,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $13,921,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $18,076,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $14,098,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $15,084,000,000.
(10) Education, Training, Employment, and Social Services (500):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $92,780,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $92,224,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $93,889,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $90,399,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $97,592,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $93,948,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $99,366,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $96,896,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $99,650,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $98,473,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $100,104,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $98,307,000,000.
(11) Health (550):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $268,340,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $268,645,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $291,266,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $290,234,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $310,068,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $308,329,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $333,219,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $333,355,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $356,057,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $355,356,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $379,814,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $379,151,000,000.
(12) Medicare (570):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $365,152,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $370,180,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $389,969,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $390,035,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $414,779,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $414,440,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $439,862,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $440,092,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $484,792,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $484,811,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $481,008,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $480,632,000,000.
(13) Income Security (600):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $360,365,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $364,204,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $379,759,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $383,609,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $390,801,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $393,118,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $400,706,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $401,774,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $415,851,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $415,874,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $401,275,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $400,684,000,000.
(14) Social Security (650):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $19,089,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,089,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $19,644,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,644,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $21,518,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $21,518,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $23,701,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $23,701,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $27,009,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $27,009,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $29,898,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $29,898,000,000.
(15) Veterans Benefits and Services (700):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $73,896,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $72,342,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $85,262,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $84,424,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $87,372,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $87,943,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $89,559,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $89,210,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $94,707,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $94,314,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $91,513,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $90,957,000,000.
(16) Administration of Justice (750):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $45,559,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $44,709,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $48,796,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $47,090,500,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $47,333,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $48,622,900,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $48,106,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $48,669,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $48,895,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $48,976,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $49,686,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $49,583,000,000.
(17) General Government (800):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $18,196,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $18,577,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $18,758,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,118,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $19,214,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,313,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $19,657,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,573,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $20,222,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $19,987,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $20,725,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $20,606,000,000.
(18) Net Interest (900):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $344,475,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $344,475,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, $370,425,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $370,425,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, $390,393,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $390,393,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, $412,002,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $412,002,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, $427,476,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $427,476,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, $438,455,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $438,455,000,000.
(19) Allowances (920):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, $785,000,000.
(B) Outlays, $755,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:

(A) New budget authority, –$16,724,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$7,519,400,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, –$7,296,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$7,068,500,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, –$7,390,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$7,935,400,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, –$7,481,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$7,823,600,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, –$7,574,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$7,761,000,000.
(20) Undistributed Offsetting Receipts (950):
Fiscal year 2007:
(A) New budget authority, –$69,714,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$69,714,000,000.
Fiscal year 2008:
(A) New budget authority, –$71,754,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$71,754,000,000.
Fiscal year 2009:
(A) New budget authority, –$67,035,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$67,044,000,000.
Fiscal year 2010:
(A) New budget authority, –$67,458,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$67,458,000,000.
Fiscal year 2011:
(A) New budget authority, –$70,175,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$70,195,000,000.
Fiscal year 2012:
(A) New budget authority, –$72,557,000,000.
(B) Outlays, –$72,560,000,000.

TITLE II—BUDGET PROCESS

SEC. 201. PAY-AS-YOU-GO POINT OF ORDER IN THE SENATE.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—
(1) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any direct spending or revenue legislation that would increase the on-budget deficit or cause an on-budget deficit for any 1 of 4 applicable time periods as measured in paragraphs (5) and (6).
(2) APPLICABLE TIME PERIODS.—For purposes of this subsection, the term ''applicable time period'' means any 1 of the 4 following periods:
(A) The current fiscal year.
(B) The budget year.
(C) The period of the 5 fiscal years following the current fiscal year.
(D) The period of the 5 fiscal years following the 5 fiscal years referred to in subparagraph (C).
(3) DIRECT SPENDING LEGISLATION.—For purposes of this subsection and except as provided in paragraph (4), the term ''direct spending legislation'' means any bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that affects direct spending as that term is defined by, and interpreted for purposes of, the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.
(4) EXCLUSION.—For purposes of this subsection, the terms ''direct spending legislation'' and ''revenue legislation'' do not include—
(A) any concurrent resolution on the budget; or
(B) any provision of legislation that affects the full funding of, and continuation of, the deposit insurance guarantee commitment in effect on the date of enactment of the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990.
(5) BASELINE.—Estimates prepared pursuant to this subsection shall—
(A) use the baseline surplus or deficit used for the most recently adopted concurrent resolution on the budget; and
(B) be calculated under the requirements of subsections (b) through (d) of section 257 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 for fiscal years beyond those covered by that concurrent resolution on the budget.
(6) PRIOR SURPLUS.—If direct spending or revenue legislation increases the on-budget deficit or causes an on-budget deficit when taken individually, it must also increase the on-budget deficit or cause an on-budget deficit when taken together with all direct spending and revenue legislation enacted since the beginning of the calendar year not accounted for in the baseline under paragraph (5)(A), except that direct spending or revenue effects resulting in net deficit reduction enacted in any bill pursuant to a reconciliation instruction since the beginning of that same calendar year shall never be made available on the pay-as-you-go ledger and shall be dedicated only for deficit reduction.
(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEALS.—
(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by the affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.
(2) APPEALS.—Appeals in the Senate from the decisions of the Chair relating to any provision of this section shall be limited to 1 hour, to be equally divided between, and controlled by, the appellant and the manager of the bill or joint resolution, as the case may be. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.
(c) DETERMINATION OF BUDGET LEVELS.—For purposes of this section, the levels of new budget authority, outlays, and revenues for a fiscal year shall be determined on the basis of estimates made by the Senate Committee on the Budget.
(d) SUNSET.—This section shall expire on September 30, 2017.
(e) REPEAL.—In the Senate, section 505 of H. Con. Res. 95 (108th Congress), the fiscal year 2004 concurrent resolution on the budget, shall no longer apply.

SEC. 202. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION THAT WOULD INCREASE THE DEFICIT OR REDUCE A SURPLUS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any reconciliation bill, resolution, amendment, amendment between Houses, motion, or conference report pursuant to section 310 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 that would cause or increase a deficit or reduce a surplus in the current fiscal year, the budget year, the period of the first 5 fiscal years following the current fiscal year, or the period of the second 5 fiscal years following the current fiscal year.
(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—
(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.
(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required in the Senate to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

SEC. 203. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION INCREASING LONG-TERM DEFICITS.

(a) CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ANALYSIS OF PROPOSALS.—The Director of the Congressional Budget Office shall, to the extent practicable, prepare for each bill and joint resolution reported from committee (except measures within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Appropriations), and amendments thereto and conference reports thereon, an estimate of whether the measure would cause, relative to current law, a net increase in deficits in excess of $5,000,000,000 in any of the four 10-year periods beginning in fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2057.
(b) POINT OF ORDER.—In the Senate, it shall not be in order to consider any bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would cause a net increase in deficits in excess of $5,000,000,000 in any of the four 10-year periods beginning in 2018 through 2057.
(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—
(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended only by the affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.
(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.
(d) DETERMINATIONS OF BUDGET LEVELS.—For purposes of this section, the levels of net deficit increases shall be determined on the basis of estimates provided by the Committee on the Budget of the Senate.
(e) REPEAL.—In the Senate, section 407 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006, shall no longer apply.
(f) SUNSET.—This section shall expire on September 30, 2017.

SEC. 204. EMERGENCY LEGISLATION.

(a) AUTHORITY TO DESIGNATE.—With respect to a provision of direct spending or receipts legislation or appropriations for discretionary accounts that the Congress designates as an emergency requirement in such measure, the amounts of new budget authority, outlays, and receipts in all fiscal years resulting from that provision shall be treated as an emergency requirement for the purpose of this section, except that the authority to designate shall not apply to funding for spinach producers on a supplemental appropriations bill pursuant to subsection (f)(1) that is designated to supplement funding for ongoing combat operations.
(b) EXEMPTION OF EMERGENCY PROVISIONS.—Any new budget authority, outlays, and receipts resulting from any provision designated as an emergency requirement, pursuant to this section, in any bill, joint resolution, amendment, or conference report shall not count for purposes of sections 302 and 311 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and sections 201 and 207 of this resolution (relating to pay-as-you-go in the Senate and discretionary spending limits).
(c) DESIGNATIONS.—If a provision of legislation is designated as an emergency requirement under this section, the committee report and any statement of managers accompanying that legislation shall include an explanation of the manner in which the provision meets the criteria in subsection (f).
(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms ''direct spending'', ''receipts'', and ''appropriations for discretionary accounts'' means any provision of a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that affects direct spending, receipts, or appropriations as those terms have been defined and interpreted for purposes of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.
(e) POINT OF ORDER.—
(1) IN GENERAL.—When the Senate is considering a bill, resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report, if a point of order is made by a Senator against an emergency designation in that measure, that provision

making such a designation shall be stricken from the measure and may not be offered as an amendment from the floor.

(2) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEALS.—

(A) WAIVER.—Paragraph (1) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(B) APPEALS.—Appeals in the Senate from the decisions of the Chair relating to any provision of this subsection shall be limited to 1 hour, to be equally divided between, and controlled by, the appellant and the manager of the bill or joint resolution, as the case may be. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this subsection.

(3) DEFINITION OF AN EMERGENCY DESIGNATION.—For purposes of paragraph (1), a provision shall be considered an emergency designation if it designates any item as an emergency requirement pursuant to this subsection.

(4) FORM OF THE POINT OF ORDER.—A point of order under paragraph (1) may be raised by a Senator as provided in section 313(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(5) CONFERENCE REPORTS.—When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.

(f) CRITERIA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this section, any provision is an emergency requirement if the situation addressed by such provision is—

(A) necessary, essential, or vital (not merely useful or beneficial);

(B) sudden, quickly coming into being, and not building up over time;

(C) an urgent, pressing, and compelling need requiring immediate action;

(D) subject to paragraph (2), unforeseen, unpredictable, and unanticipated; and

(E) not permanent, temporary in nature.

(2) UNFORESEEN.—An emergency that is part of an aggregate level of anticipated emergencies, particularly when normally estimated in advance, is not unforeseen.

(g) REPEAL.—In the Senate, section 402 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006, shall no longer apply.

SEC. 205. EXTENSION OF ENFORCEMENT OF BUDGETARY POINTS OF ORDER.

Notwithstanding any provision of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and section 403 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006, subsections (c)(2) and (d)(3) of section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and section 403 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress) shall remain in effect for purposes of Senate enforcement through September 30, 2017.

SEC. 206. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST ADVANCE APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) POINT OF ORDER.—Except as provided in subsection (b), it shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would provide an advance appropriation.

(2) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''advance appropriation'' means any new budget authority provided in a bill or joint resolution making general appropriations or continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2008 that first becomes available for any fiscal year after 2008, or any new budget authority provided in a bill or joint resolution making general appropriations or continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2009, that first becomes available for any fiscal year after 2009.

(b) EXCEPTIONS.—Advance appropriations may be provided—

(1) for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 for programs, projects, activities, or accounts identified in the joint explanatory statement of managers accompanying this resolution under the heading ''Accounts Identified for Advance Appropriations'' in an aggregate amount not to exceed $25,158,000,000 in new budget authority in each year; and

(2) for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—In the Senate, subsection (a) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under paragraph (a).

(d) FORM OF POINT OF ORDER.—A point of order under subsection (a) may be raised by a Senator as provided in section 313(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(e) CONFERENCE REPORTS.—When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion in the Senate shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.

(f) REPEAL.—In the Senate, section 401 of H. Con. Res. 95 (109th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006, shall no longer apply.

SEC. 207. DISCRETIONARY SPENDING LIMITS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this section, it shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill or joint resolution (or amendment, motion, or conference report on that bill or joint resolution) that would cause the discretionary spending limits in this section to be exceeded.

(2) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEALS.—

(A) WAIVER.—This subsection may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by the affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(B) APPEALS.—Appeals in the Senate from the decisions of the Chair relating to any provision of this subsection shall be limited to 1 hour, to be equally divided between, and controlled by, the appellant and the manager of the bill or joint resolution. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this subsection.

(b) DISCRETIONARY SPENDING LIMITS.—In the Senate and as used in this section, the term ''discretionary spending limit'' means—

(1) for fiscal year 2007, $951,140,000,000 in new budget authority and $1,029,456,000,000 in outlays; and

(2) for fiscal year 2008, $942,295,000,000 in new budget authority and $1,021,392,000,000 in outlays;

as adjusted in conformance with the adjustment procedures in subsection (c).

(c) ADJUSTMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—After the reporting of a bill or joint resolution relating to any matter described in paragraph (2), or the offering of an amendment thereto or the submission of a conference report thereon—

(A) the chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may adjust the discretionary spending limits, budgetary aggregates, and allocations pursuant to section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, by the amount of new budget authority in that measure for that purpose and the outlays flowing therefrom; and

(B) following any adjustment under subparagraph (A), the Senate Committee on Appropriations may report appropriately revised suballocations pursuant to section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to carry out this subsection.

(2) MATTERS DESCRIBED.—Matters referred to in paragraph (1) are as follows:

(A) CONTINUING DISABILITY REVIEWS AND SSI REDETERMINATIONS.—If a bill or joint resolution is reported making appropriations for fiscal year 2008 that appropriates $264,000,000 for continuing disability reviews and Supplemental Security Income redeterminations for the Social Security Administration, and provides an additional appropriation of up to $213,000,000 for continuing disability reviews and Supplemental Security Income redeterminations for the Social Security Administration, then the discretionary spending limits, allocation to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and aggregates may be adjusted by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, but not to exceed $213,000,000 in budget authority and outlays flowing therefrom for fiscal year 2008.

(B) INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE TAX ENFORCEMENT.—If a bill or joint resolution is reported making appropriations for fiscal year 2008 that appropriates $6,822,000,000 for the Internal Revenue Service for enhanced tax enforcement to address the Federal tax gap (taxes owed but not paid) and provides an additional appropriation of up to $406,000,000 for the Internal Revenue Service for enhanced tax enforcement to address the Federal tax gap, then the discretionary spending limits, allocation to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and aggregates may be adjusted by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, but not to exceed $406,000,000 in budget authority and outlays flowing therefrom for fiscal year 2008.

(C) HEALTH CARE FRAUD AND ABUSE CONTROL.—If a bill or joint resolution is reported making appropriations for fiscal year 2008 that appropriates up to $383,000,000 to the health care fraud and abuse control program at the Department of Health and Human Services, then the discretionary spending

limits, allocation to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and aggregates may be adjusted by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, but not to exceed $383,000,000 in budget authority and outlays flowing therefrom for fiscal year 2008.

(D) UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IMPROPER PAYMENTS REVIEWS.—If a bill or joint resolution is reported making appropriations for fiscal year 2008 that appropriates $10,000,000 for unemployment insurance improper payments reviews for the Department of Labor, and provides an additional appropriation of up to $40,000,000 for unemployment insurance improper payments reviews for the Department of Labor, then the discretionary spending limits, allocation to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and aggregates may be adjusted by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, but not to exceed $40,000,000 in budget authority and outlays flowing therefrom for fiscal year 2008.

(E) WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION.—

(i) DEFINITION.—For this subparagraph, the term ''base amount'' refers to the average of the obligations of the preceding 10 years for wildfire suppression in the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, calculated as of the date of the applicable year's budget request is submitted by the President to Congress.

(ii) ADJUSTMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008.—If the amount appropriated for Wildland Fire Suppression in fiscal year 2008 is not less than the base amount, then the chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may adjust the appropriate allocations, aggregates, discretionary spending limits, and other budgetary levels in this resolution for any bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides additional funding for wildland fire suppression, by the amounts provided in such legislation for such purpose, but not to exceed the following amounts in budget authority and the outlays flowing therefrom:

(I) for the Forest Service, for fiscal year 2008, $400,000,000; and

(II) for the Department of the Interior, for fiscal year 2008, $100,000,000.

(F) COSTS OF GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR.—The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and discretionary spending limits for one or more bills, joint resolutions, motions, amendments, or conference reports that make discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2008 or 2009 in excess of the levels assumed in this resolution for expenses related to the global war on terror, but not to exceed the following amounts:

(i) For fiscal year 2008, $145,162,000,000 in budget authority and the outlays flowing therefrom.

(ii) For fiscal year 2009, $50,000,000,000 in budget authority and the outlays flowing therefrom.

(G) ADJUSTMENT FOR UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM.—The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and discretionary spending limits for one or more bills, joint resolutions, motions, amendments, or conference reports that make discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for an amount appropriated, but not to exceed $5,000,000,000 in budgetary authority and outlays flowing therefrom, to—

(i) address training, equipment, force protection, logistics, or other matters necessary for the protection of United States forces; or

(ii) address deficiencies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other facilities within the military medical system providing treatment to service members injured while performing their duties in the Global War on Terrorism.

SEC. 208. APPLICATION OF PREVIOUS ALLOCATIONS IN THE SENATE.

Section 7035 of Public Law 109–234 shall no longer apply in the Senate.

SEC. 209. POINT OF ORDER TO SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY FIRST.

(a) POINT OF ORDER IN THE SENATE.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any legislation that would increase the on-budget deficit in any fiscal year until the President submits legislation to Congress and Congress enacts legislation which would restore 75-year solvency to the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Trust Funds as certified by the Social Security Administration actuaries.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required in the Senate to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

SEC. 210. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT RAISES INCOME TAX RATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, resolution, amendment, amendment between Houses, motion, or conference report that includes a Federal income tax rate increase. In this subsection, the term ''Federal income tax rate increase'' means any amendment to subsection (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) of section 1, or to section 11(b) or 55(b), of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, that imposes a new percentage as a rate of tax and thereby increases the amount of tax imposed by any such section.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required in the Senate to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

SEC. 211. CIRCUIT BREAKER TO PROTECT SOCIAL SECURITY.

(a) CIRCUIT BREAKER.—If in any year the Congressional Budget Office, in its report pursuant to section 202(e)(1) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 projects an on-budget deficit (excluding Social Security) for the budget year or any subsequent fiscal year covered by those projections, then the concurrent resolution on the budget for the budget year shall reduce on-budget deficits relative to the projections of Congressional Budget Office and put the budget on a path to achieve on-budget balance within 5 years, and shall include such provisions as are necessary to protect Social Security and facilitate deficit reduction, except it shall not contain any reduction in Social Security benefits.

(b) POINT OF ORDER.—If in any year the Congressional Budget Office, in its report pursuant to section 202(e)(1) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 projects an on-budget deficit for the budget year or any subsequent fiscal year covered by those projections, it shall not be in order in the Senate to consider a concurrent resolution on the budget for the budget year or any conference report thereon that fails to reduce on-budget deficits relative to the projections of Congressional Budget Office and put the budget on a path to achieve on-budget balance within 5 years.

(c) AMENDMENTS TO BUDGET RESOLUTION.—If in any year the Congressional Budget Office, in its report pursuant to section 202(e)(1) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 projects an on-budget deficit for the budget year or any subsequent fiscal year covered by those projections, it shall not be in order in the Senate to consider an amendment to a concurrent resolution on the budget that would increase on-budget deficits relative to the concurrent resolution on the budget in any fiscal year covered by that concurrent resolution on the budget or cause the budget to fail to achieve on-budget balance within 5 years.

(d) SUSPENSION OF REQUIREMENT DURING WAR OR LOW ECONOMIC GROWTH.—

(1) LOW GROWTH.—If the most recent of the Department of Commerce's advance, preliminary, or final reports of actual real economic growth indicate that the rate of real economic growth (as measured by real GDP) for each of the most recently reported quarter and the immediately preceding quarter is less than 1 percent, this section is suspended.

(2) WAR.—If a declaration of war is in effect, this section is suspended.

(e) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEALS.—

(1) WAIVER.—Subsections (b) and (c) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEALS.—Appeals in the Senate from the decisions of the Chair relating to any provision of this subsection shall be limited to 1 hour, to be equally divided between, and controlled by, the appellant and the manager of the bill or joint resolution, as the case may be. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this subsection.

(f) BUDGET YEAR.—In this section, the term ''budget year'' shall have the same meaning as in section 250(c)(12) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

SEC. 212. POINT OF ORDER—20% LIMIT ON NEW DIRECT SPENDING IN RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION.

(1) IN THE SENATE.—It shall not be in order to consider any reconciliation bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or any conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to a reconciliation bill pursuant to section 310 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 that produces an increase in outlays, if—

(A) the effect of all the provisions in the jurisdiction of any committee is to create gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee; or

(B) the effect of the adoption of an amendment would result in gross new direct spending that exceeds 20% of the total savings instruction to the committee.

(2)(A) A point of order under paragraph (1) may be raised by a Senator as provided in section 313(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

(B) Paragraph (1) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under paragraph (1).

(C) If a point of order is sustained under paragraph (1) against a conference report in the Senate, the report shall be disposed of as provided in section 313(d) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

SEC. 213. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT RAISES INCOME TAX RATES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, FAMILY FARMS, OR FAMILY RANCHES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, resolution,

amendment, amendment between Houses, motion, or conference report that includes a Federal income tax rate increase on incomes generated by small businesses (within the meaning of section 474(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) or family farms or family ranches (within the meaning of section 2032A of such Code) (regardless of the manner by which such businesses, farms and ranches are organized). In this subsection, the term ''Federal income tax rate increase'' means any amendment to subsection (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) of section 1, or to section 11(b) or 55(b), of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, that imposes a new percentage as a rate of tax and thereby increases the amount of tax imposed by any such section.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required in the Senate to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

SEC. 214. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST PROVISIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS LEGISLATION THAT CONSTITUTES CHANGES IN MANDATORY PROGRAMS WITH NET COSTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any appropriations legislation, including any amendment thereto, motion in relation thereto, or conference report thereon, which includes one or more provisions that would have been estimated as affecting direct spending or receipts under section 252 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (as in effect prior to September 30, 2002) were they included in legislation other than appropriations legislation, if such provision has a net cost over the total of the period of the current year, the budget year, and all fiscal years covered under the most recently adopted concurrent resolution on the budget.

(b) DETERMINATION.—For purposes of this section, the determination of whether a provision violates paragraph (a) shall be made by the Committee on the Budget of the Senate.

(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—This section may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under this section.

(d) GENERAL POINT OF ORDER.—It shall be in order for a Senator to raise a single point of order that several provisions of a bill, resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report violate this section. The Presiding Officer may sustain the point of order as to some or all of the provisions against which the Senator raised the point of order. If the Presiding Officer so sustains the point of order as to some of the provisions (including provisions of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Senator raised the point of order, then only those provisions (including provision of an amendment, motion, or conference report) against which the Presiding Officer sustains the point of order shall be deemed stricken pursuant to this section. Before the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may move to waive such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions against which the point of order was raised. Such a motion to waive is amendable in accordance with rules and precedents of the Senate. After the Presiding Officer rules on such a point of order, any Senator may appeal the ruling of the Presiding Officer on such a point of order as it applies to some or all of the provisions on which the Presiding Officer ruled.

(e) FORM OF THE POINT OF ORDER.—When the Senate is considering a conference report on, or an amendment between the Houses in relation to, a bill, upon a point of order being made by any Senator pursuant to this section, and such point of order being sustained, such material contained in such conference report or amendment shall be deemed stricken, and the Senate shall proceed to consider the question of whether the Senate shall recede from its amendment and concur with a further amendment, or concur in the House amendment with a further amendment, as the case may be, which further amendment shall consist of only that portion of the conference report or House amendment, as the case may be, not so stricken. Any such motion shall be debatable. In any case in which such point of order is sustained against a conference report (or Senate amendment derived from such conference report by operation of this subsection), no further amendment shall be in order.

SEC. 215. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST COSTS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any direct spending or revenue legislation that is required to contain the statement described in section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, unless such statement contains a projection by the Congressional Budget Office of the cost of the debt servicing that would be caused by such legislation for such fiscal year (or fiscal years) and each of the 4 ensuing fiscal years.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—In the Senate, subsection (a) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

TITLE III—RESERVE FUNDS AND ADJUSTMENTS

SEC. 301. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR SCHIP LEGISLATION.

(a) PRIORITY.—The Senate establishes the following priorities and makes the following findings:

(1) The Senate shall make the enactment of legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) a top priority for the remainder of fiscal year 2007, during the first session of the 110th Congress.

(2) Extending health care coverage to the Nation's vulnerable uninsured children is an urgent priority for the Senate.

(3) SCHIP has proven itself a successful program for covering previously uninsured children.

(4) More than 6 million children are enrolled in this landmark program, which has enjoyed broad bipartisan support in Congress, among our Nation's governors, and within state and local governments.

(5) SCHIP reduces the percentage of children with unmet health care needs.

(6) Since SCHIP was created, enormous progress has been made in reducing disparities in children's coverage rates.

(7) Uninsured children who gain coverage through SCHIP receive more preventive care and their parents report better access to providers and improved communications with their children's doctors.

(8) Congress has a responsibility to reauthorize SCHIP before the expiration of its current authorization.

(b) RESERVE FUND.—The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides up to $50,000,000,000 for reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), if such legislation maintains coverage for those currently enrolled in SCHIP, continues efforts to reach uninsured children who are already eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid but are not enrolled, and supports States in their efforts to move forward in covering more children, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes up to $20,000,000,000 over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012. Among the policy changes that could be considered to achieve offsets to the cost of reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program and expanding coverage for children is an increase in the tobacco products user fee rate with all revenue generated by such increase dedicated to such reauthorization and expansion.

SEC. 302. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR CARE OF WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report which improves the medical care of or disability benefits for wounded or disabled military personnel or veterans (including the elimination of the offset between Survivor Benefit Plan annuities and veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation) or improves the disability evaluations of military personnel or veterans to expedite the claims process, by the amounts provided in that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 303. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR TAX RELIEF.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, motions, or conference reports that would provide tax relief, including extensions of expiring tax relief, such as enhanced charitable giving from individual retirement accounts, and refundable tax relief and including the reauthorization of the new markets tax credit under section 45D of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for an additional 5 years, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 304. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that establishes a new federal or public-private initiative for comparative effectiveness research, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 305. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this

resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report, including tax legislation, that would make higher education more accessible and more affordable, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 306. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR THE FARM BILL.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that—

(1) reauthorizes the Food Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002;

(2) strengthens our agriculture and rural economies and critical nutrition programs;

(3) provides agriculture-related tax relief;

(4) improves our environment by reducing our Nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy through expanded production and use of alternative fuels; or

(5) combines any of the purposes provided in paragraphs (1) through (4);

by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes up to $15,000,000,000 over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 307. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ENERGY LEGISLATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, motions, or conference reports, including tax legislation, that would reduce our Nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy, expand production and use of alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles, promote renewable energy development, improve electricity transmission, encourage responsible development of domestic oil and natural gas resources, or reward conservation and efficiency, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 308. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR MEDICARE.

(a) PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.—The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that repeals the prohibition in section 1860D–11(i)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w–111(i)(1)) while preserving access to prescription drugs and price competition without requiring a particular formulary or instituting a price structure for reimbursement of covered Part D drugs, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012 and provided further that any savings from the measure are to be used either to improve the Medicare Part D benefit or for deficit reduction.

(b) PHYSICIAN PAYMENTS.—The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that increases the reimbursement rate for physician services under section 1848(d) of the Social Security Act and that includes financial incentives for physicians to improve the quality and efficiency of items and services furnished to Medicare beneficiaries through the use of consensus-based quality measures, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

(c) IMPROVEMENTS TO MEDICARE PART D.—The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that makes improvements to the prescription drug benefit under Medicare Part D, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose up to $5,000,000,000, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 309. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH INSURANCE.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that makes health insurance coverage more affordable or available to small businesses and their employees without weakening rating rules or reducing covered benefits, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 310. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COUNTY PAYMENTS FOR SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000 REAUTHORIZATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides for the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106–393), by the amounts provided by that legislation for that purpose, but not to exceed $440,000,000 in new budget authority for fiscal year 2008 and the outlays flowing from that budget authority and $2,240,000,000 in new budget authority for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 and the outlays flowing from that budget authority, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 311. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE REAUTHORIZATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that provides for a continued Federal role in ensuring the availability of terrorism insurance after the expiration of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Extension Act, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation is deficit-neutral over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 312. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would establish an affordable housing fund financed by the housing government-sponsored enterprises, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation is deficit-neutral over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 313. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR RECEIPTS FROM BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may adjust the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that prohibits the Bonneville Power Administration from making early payments on its Federal Bond Debt to the United States Treasury, by the amounts provided by that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 314. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR INDIAN CLAIMS SETTLEMENT.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that—

(1) creates an Indian claims settlement fund for trust accounting and management deficiencies related to Individual Indian Moneys and assets; and

(2) extinguishes all claims arising before the date of enactment for losses resulting from accounting errors, mismanagement of assets, or interest owed in connection with Individual Indian Moneys accounts;

by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes up to $8,000,000,000, provided that such legislation does not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 315. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that authorizes the Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco products and assess user fees on tobacco manufacturers and importers to cover the cost of the Food and Drug Administration's regulatory activities, by the amounts provided in that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation is deficit-neutral over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 316. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM.

If an SCHIP reauthorization bill is enacted, then the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report to improve health care, and provide quality health insurance for the uninsured and underinsured, and protect individuals with current health coverage, by the amounts provided in that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 317. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ENHANCEMENT OF VETERANS' BENEFITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would enhance benefits for veterans, including services for low-vision and blinded veterans, including GI educational benefits, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation is deficit-neutral over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 318. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR LONG-TERM CARE.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would improve long-term care, enhance the safety and dignity of patients, encourage appropriate use

of institutional and non-institutional care, promote quality care, and provide for the cost-effective use of public resources, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 319. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

(a) The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides incentives or other support for adoption of modern information technology to improve quality and protect privacy in health care, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

(b) The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides for payments that are based on adherence to accepted clinical protocols identified as best practices, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 320. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR CHILD CARE.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides up to $5,000,000,000 for the child care entitlement to States, by the amounts provided by such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 321. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion or conference report that—

(1) provides for comprehensive immigration reform;

(2) provides for increased interior enforcement, through an effective electronic employment verification system which accurately establishes the employment authorization of individuals; and

(3) provides for increased border security and enhanced information technology systems;

provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the fiscal year 2008 and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SEC. 322. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR MENTAL HEALTH PARITY.

If the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions reports a bill or joint resolution, or an amendment is offered thereto, or a conference report is submitted thereon, that provides parity between health insurance coverage of mental health benefits and benefits for medical and surgical services, the chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may make the appropriate adjustments in allocations and aggregates to the extent that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008 and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SEC. 323. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR PRESCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES.

If the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, reports a bill or a joint resolution, or an amendment is offered in the Senate to such a bill or joint resolution, or a conference report is submitted to the Senate on a such a bill or joint resolution, that augments or establishes a Federal program that provides assistance to States that offer or expand preschool to children of low-income families, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revisit the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution by amounts provided in such measure for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 324. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR THE SAFE IMPORTATION OF FDA-APPROVED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that permits the safe importation of prescription drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration from a specified list of countries, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 325. APPLICATION AND EFFECT OF CHANGES IN ALLOCATIONS AND AGGREGATES.

(a) APPLICATION.—Any adjustments of allocations and aggregates made pursuant to this resolution shall—

(1) apply while that measure is under consideration;

(2) take effect upon the enactment of that measure; and

(3) be published in the Congressional Record as soon as practicable.

(b) EFFECT OF CHANGED ALLOCATIONS AND AGGREGATES.—Revised allocations and aggregates resulting from these adjustments shall be considered for the purposes of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 as allocations and aggregates contained in this resolution.

(c) BUDGET COMMITTEE DETERMINATIONS.—For purposes of this resolution the levels of new budget authority, outlays, direct spending, new entitlement authority, revenues, deficits, and surpluses for a fiscal year or period of fiscal years shall be determined on the basis of estimates made by the Senate Committee on the Budget.

SEC. 326. ADJUSTMENTS TO REFLECT CHANGES IN CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS.

Upon the enactment of a bill or joint resolution providing for a change in concepts or definitions, the chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may make adjustments to the levels and allocations in this resolution in accordance with section 251(b) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (as in effect prior to September 30, 2002).

SEC. 327. EXERCISE OF RULEMAKING POWERS.

Congress adopts the provisions of this title—

(1) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of the Senate, and as such they shall be considered as part of the rules of the Senate and such rules shall supersede other rules only to the extent that they are inconsistent with such other rules; and

(2) with full recognition of the constitutional right of the Senate to change those rules (so far as they relate to that house) at any time, in the same manner, and to the same extent as is the case of any other rule of the Senate.

SEC. 328. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR EXPANSION OF ABOVE-THE-LINE DEDUCTION FOR TEACHER CLASSROOM SUPPLIES.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution by the amounts provided by a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would permanently extend and increase to $400 the above-the-line deduction for teacher classroom supplies and expand such deduction to include qualified professional development expenses, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 329. ADJUSTMENT FOR SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION SALARIES AND EXPENSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and discretionary spending limits for one or more bills, joint resolutions, motions, amendments, or conference reports that make discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for an amount appropriated, but not to exceed $17,000,000 in budgetary authority and outlays flowing therefrom, once the Comptroller General of the United States has submitted a certification to Congress that since April 1, 2007—

(1) the Smithsonian Institution does not provide total annual compensation for any officer or employee of the Smithsonian Institution greater than the total annual compensation of the President of the United States;

(2) the Smithsonian Institution does not provide deferred compensation for any such officer or employee greater than the deferred compensation of the President of the United States;

(3) all Smithsonian Institution travel expenditures conform with Federal Government guidelines and limitations applicable to the Smithsonian Institution; and,

(4) all Smithsonian Institution officers and employees are subject to ethics rules similar to the ethics rules widely applicable to Federal Government employees.

(b) CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION.—In making the certification described in subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States should take into account the following:

(1) The Smithsonian Institution is a premier educational, historical, artistic, research, and cultural organization for the American people.

(2) The Inspector General for the Smithsonian Institution recently issued a report regarding an investigation of unauthorized and excessive authorized compensation, benefits, and expenditures by the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

(3) The Inspector General's findings indicate that the actions of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution are not in keeping with the public trust of the office of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

(4) Priority should be given to funding for necessary repairs to maintain and repair Smithsonian Institution buildings and infrastructure and protect America's treasures.

(5) Priority should be given to full funding for the Office of the Inspector General for the Smithsonian Institution so that the American people and Congress have renewed confidence that tax-preferred donations and Federal funds are being spent appropriately and in keeping with the best practices of the charitable sector.

SEC. 330. DEFICIT-REDUCTION RESERVE FUND FOR REDUCTION OF IMPROPER PAYMENTS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, functional totals, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution upon enactment of legislation that achieves savings by eliminating or reducing improper payments made by agencies reporting improper payments estimates under the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 and uses such savings to reduce the deficit, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 331. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR EXTENSION OF THE DEDUCTION FOR STATE AND LOCAL SALES TAXES.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would provide for extension of the deduction for State and local sales taxes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 332. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR EXTENSION OF CERTAIN ENERGY TAX INCENTIVES.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that would extend through 2015 energy tax incentives, including the production tax credit for electricity produced from renewable resources, the Clean Renewable Energy Bond program, and the provisions to encourage energy efficient buildings, products and power plants, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 333. RESERVE FUND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR PHYSICIANS AND ATTRACT MORE PHYSICIANS IN STATES THAT FACE A SHORTAGE OF PHYSICIANS IN TRAINING.

The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides additional training for physicians and attracts more physicians in States that face a shortage of physicians in training, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 334. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR REPEAL OF THE 1993 INCREASE IN THE INCOME TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution by the amounts provided by a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would repeal the 1993 increase in the income tax on Social Security benefits, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 335. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE STATE CRIMINAL ALIEN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Control of illegal immigration is a Federal responsibility.

(2) The State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (referred to in this section as ''SCAAP'') carried out pursuant to section 241(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1231(i)) provides critical funding to States and localities for reimbursement of costs incurred as a result of housing undocumented criminal aliens.

(3) Congress appropriated $300,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2004.

(4) Congress appropriated $305,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2005.

(5) Congress appropriated $405,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2006.

(6) Congress appropriated $399,000,000 for SCAAP to reimburse State and local governments for those costs in fiscal year 2007.

(7) Congress has authorized to be appropriated $950,000,000 to carry out SCAAP for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2011.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the budgetary totals in this resolution assume that $950,000,000 should be made available for SCAAP for fiscal year 2008.

SEC. 336. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ELIMINATING MILITARY RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY OFFSET.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that would expand eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation to permit additional disabled retirees to receive both disability compensation and retired pay, by the amounts provided by such legislation for that purpose, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 337. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FOR ASBESTOS REFORM LEGISLATION.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report regarding asbestos reform, that—

(i) either provides monetary compensation to impaired victims of mesothelioma or provides monetary compensation to impaired victims of asbestos-related disease who can establish that asbestos exposure is a substantial contributing factor in causing their condition,

(ii) does not provide monetary compensation to unimpaired claimants or those suffering from a disease who cannot establish that asbestos exposure was a substantial contributing factor in causing their condition, and

(iii) is estimated to remain funded from nontaxpayer sources for the life of the fund, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2057.

SEC. 338. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR MANUFACTURING INITIATIVES.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, motions, or conference reports, including tax legislation, that would revitalize the United States domestic manufacturing sector by increasing Federal research and development, by expanding the scope and effectiveness of manufacturing programs across the Federal government, by increasing support for development of alternative fuels and leap-ahead automotive and energy technologies, and by establishing tax incentives to encourage the continued production in the United States of advanced technologies and the infrastructure to support such technologies, by the amounts provided in that legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 339. DEFICIT-REDUCTION RESERVE FUND FOR INCREASED USE OF RECOVERY AUDITS.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the aggregates, allocations, functional totals, and other appropriate levels and limits in this resolution upon enactment of legislation that achieves savings by requiring that agencies increase their use of the recovery audits authorized by the Erroneous Payments Recovery Act of 2001 (section 831 of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2002) and uses such savings to reduce the deficit, provided that the legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 340. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR A DELAY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROPOSED RULE RELATING TO THE FEDERAL-STATE FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS UNDER MEDICAID AND SCHIP.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for a bill, joint resolution, amendment, motion, or conference report that provides for a delay in the implementation of the proposed rule published on January 18, 2007, on pages 2236 through 2248 of volume 72, Federal Register (relating to parts 433, 447, and 457 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations) or any other rule that would affect the Medicaid program and SCHIP in a similar manner, by the amounts provided in that legislation for that purpose, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

SEC. 341. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) creates a framework and parameters for the use of Medicare data for the purpose of conducting research, public reporting, and other activities to evaluate health care safety, effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and resource utilization in Federal programs and the private health care system; and

(B) includes provisions to protect beneficiary privacy and to prevent disclosure of proprietary or trade secret information with respect to the transfer and use of such data; and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for fiscal year 2008, and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SEC. 342. RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE MEDICARE HOSPITAL PAYMENT ACCURACY.

If the Senate Committee on Finance—

(1) reports a bill, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that—

(A) addresses the wide and inequitable disparity in the reimbursement of hospitals under the Medicare program;

(B) includes provisions to reform the area wage index used to adjust payments to hospitals under the Medicare hospital inpatient prospective payment system under section 1886(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395ww(d)); and

(C) includes a transition to the reform described in subparagraph (B); and

(2) is within its allocation as provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974,

the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Budget may revise allocations of new budget authority and outlays, the revenue aggregates, and other appropriate measures to reflect such legislation provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

SEC. 343. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE HEALTH INSURANCE.

If a Senate committee reports a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, reduces growth in the number of uninsured Americans, improves access to affordable and meaningful health insurance coverage, improves health care quality, or reduces growth in the cost of private health insurance by facilitating market-based pooling, including across State lines, and a bill or joint resolution, or if an amendment is offered thereto, or if a conference report is submitted thereon, that, with appropriate protections for consumers, provides funding for State high risk pools or financial assistance, whether directly, or through grants to States to enhance the effectiveness of such pooling or to provide other assistance to small businesses or individuals, including financial assistance, for the purchase of private insurance coverage, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may make appropriate adjustments in allocations and aggregates for fiscal year 2007 and for the period of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the total of the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 43, the nomination of Vanessa Lynne Bryant, to be a U.S. district judge for the District of Connecticut; that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, the President be notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then return to legislative session; that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nomination considered and confirmed is as follows:

THE JUDICIARY

Vanessa Lynne Bryant, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate resumes legislative session.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS IN PENNSYLVANIA AND THROUGHOUT THE NATION ON THE OCCASION OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Agriculture Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 114 and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection it is so ordered. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 114) recognizing the contributions of agricultural producers in Pennsylvania and throughout the Nation on the occasion of National Agriculture Day.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 114) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 114

Whereas National Agriculture Day is an annual celebration during which government agencies, community members, and agricultural groups work with agricultural producers to honor the importance of the agriculture industry;

Whereas agriculture is a pillar of the economy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and many other States across the country;

Whereas agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania and has contributed more than $45,000,000,000 to the economy of the Commonwealth;

Whereas agricultural producers in Pennsylvania export a considerable amount of food and agricultural and forest products, earning more than $1,500,000,000 annually in profits;

Whereas dairy cattle from Pennsylvania are used as breeding stock in a number of countries around the world;

Whereas Pennsylvania is the home of over 58,000 farms, covering more than 7,700,000 acres of land;

Whereas Pennsylvania is a leading producer of mushrooms, eggs, pumpkins, apples, grapes, freestone peaches, ice cream, milk cows, chickens, and other agricultural products and livestock;

Whereas each agricultural producer in the United States feeds more than 144 people and Pennsylvania's agricultural producers are responsible for feeding more than 8,000,000 mouths worldwide;

Whereas agricultural producers in Pennsylvania and throughout the Nation provide the people of the United States with food, clothes, and many other staples; and

Whereas the contribution of agricultural producers in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States should be honored with highest praise and respect: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes—

(A) that agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania;

(B) the outstanding contribution of Pennsylvania's agricultural producers to the economy of the Commonwealth and the Nation; and

(C) that agriculture in Pennsylvania is diverse and provides important nutrition to the people of the United States; and

(2) pays tribute to agriculture and agricultural producers in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States on the occasion of National Agriculture Day.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BISHOP GILBERT EARL PATTERSON

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 133, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 133) celebrating the life of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table and that any statements relating thereto be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 133) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 133

Whereas Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson was born in 1939 to Bishop W.A. and Mrs. Mary Patterson, Sr., in Humboldt, Tennessee;

Whereas Bishop Patterson was reared in Memphis, Tennessee, and Detroit, Michigan, and ordained as an elder in the Church of God in Christ in 1958 by Bishop J.S. Bailey;

Whereas Bishop Patterson grew in wisdom at the Detroit Bible Institute and LeMoyne Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee;

Whereas, in 1962, Bishop Patterson became co-pastor with his father of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee;

Whereas, in 1975, Bishop Patterson founded Temple of Deliverance, the Cathedral of the Bountiful Blessings;

Whereas Temple of Deliverance is now a shining star of both the Church of God in Christ and all of the Nation's communities of faith;

Whereas Temple of Deliverance, under Bishop Patterson's wise leadership, continues to touch the entire Nation through its Bountiful Blessings Ministry;

Whereas Bishop Patterson reached millions across the globe with his direct and spirit-filled messages, encouraging the world to ''be healed, be delivered, and be set free'';

Whereas Bishop Patterson served as the international leader of the Church of God in Christ since November 2000, ably leading this denomination of over 6,000,000 members;

Whereas Bishop Patterson passed away on Tuesday, March 20, 2007, in Memphis, Tennessee, surrounded by his wife, Mrs. Louise Patterson, and his family;

Whereas Bishop Patterson will be celebrated as an invigorating spiritual leader; and

Whereas the family of Bishop Patterson, the Temple of Deliverance congregation, the

Church of God in Christ, and indeed the entire Nation are deeply saddened by the loss of this great man: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses the condolences of the Nation to the family of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, the Temple of Deliverance Congregation, and the Church of God in Christ; and

(2) recognizes the life and accomplishments of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, who guided a church, led a denomination, and influenced a nation.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2007

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9 a.m., Thursday, March 29; that on Thursday, following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that the Senate then resume consideration of H.R. 1591, as provided for under a previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9 A.M. TOMORROW

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:44 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 29, 2007, at 9:00 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate Wednesday, March 28, 2007:

THE JUDICIARY

VANESSA LYNNE BRYANT, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on March 28, 2007 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

SAM FOX, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO BELGIUM, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JANUARY 9, 2007.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING WAR BRIDES

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a group of women who played a profound but under-appreciated role in America's stand against the Axis Powers during the Second World War. Known as War Brides, these women met our soldiers during the war while they were stationed overseas, eventually coming to the United States after the war as their wives. Women such as Sylvia Harris, a constituent of mine, boosted the wartime morale of our bravest men during that dark period in human history.

While we are all familiar with the stories of the Greatest Generation, less often told are the stories of those women who came to this country as War Brides. These extraordinary individuals left their families and cultures behind to follow the men they fell in love with. They adopted the United Sates of America as their home, raising children and supporting their husbands. They embodied the notion and reality of the Greatest Generation by pledging their allegiance to the United States and to the soldiers who bravely fought for freedom around the world.

War Brides overcame not only physical barriers, often traveling months by train and boat to rejoin their husbands, but also xenophobia in many cases, making the transition to their newly-adopted country all the more difficult. They are a testament to the evolution of social and cultural equality in this country, bringing with them the traditions of countless cultures that make America the wonderful melting pot that it is.

Madam Speaker, I am proud that on this, the 61st anniversary of the emigration of thousands of War Brides into the United States of America, Mrs. Harris brought to my attention the invaluable contribution of these remarkable women to our country.

Madam Speaker, love and the union of marriage are extraordinarily powerful; they have been known to save lives, spurring soldiers to persevere with purpose for the sake of loved ones. Just as we remember those who kept the home fires burning here in the United States during the Second World War, we should pay tribute to those women who formed bonds with and inspired our soldiers abroad during that conflict. Whether coming from Europe, Africa, Asia, or Australia, these women hold an important place in the history and free democracy of the United States, and I urge all my colleagues to join me in saluting their bravery and resilience.

HONORING WILLIAM DELMONT, LACKAWANNA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, tomorrow, Wednesday, March 28, 2007, the Chamber of Commerce of the great City of Lackawanna, New York will name its annual Citizen of the Year. While many great Western New Yorkers have been so honored by the Chamber over the years, in 2007 the Chamber will bestow this honor upon one of the greats in the city's history—the founder, publisher and editor of the Front Page newspaper, William Delmont.

As publisher of the weekly publications Front Page and South Buffalo News, Bill has been a journalistic icon in Western New York. Long the official publication for numerous local governments and school districts, Bill's newspapers maintain a hometown flavor that is rarely seen in this day and age.

Most of all, however, Bill Delmont is one of Lackawanna's many treasures. A longtime business owner, entrepreneur and civic leader, Bill Delmont's dedication to his hometown is inspirational indeed. Bill has long been a fighter for Lackawanna and for its citizens, and has consistently strived to provide opportunities to those citizens, be it in public service or in the private sector.

Bill has been honored many times over for his commitment to Lackawanna, as an honoree of the Lake Erie Italian Club, the Lackawanna Area Historical Association, the Our Lady of Victory Hospital, and the Matthew Glab Post 1477, and was recently named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

One of Bill's most significant accomplishments has been his decades-long leadership of the Erie County Conservative Party. Bill is perhaps the wisest political sage in Western New York, and I suspect that not one serious candidate for high political office in Western New York failed to call upon Bill for advice and counsel over the years. Since my first run for public office in 1987, Bill Delmont has stood with me as a trusted adviser and friend whose support I have been proud to receive. It would be impossible for me to adequately recount or repay his many kindnesses and courtesies to me, both personally as well as professionally, but it is very fitting, Madam Speaker, that I ask you and all of our colleagues here join me in offering our most sincere congratulations to Lackawanna, New York's favorite son, Bill Delmont, upon his receipt of this prestigious honor.

HONORING MR. JOHN DAU

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Mr. John Dau of Syracuse, New York.

Mr. Dau has dedicated his life to helping others in his native country of Sudan to get a chance at a better life. He has done amazing humanitarian work for his fellow Sudanese people, including raising money for the building of a clinic in his home village and raising awareness about the plight of the Sudanese in general.

National Geographic has recently named Mr. Dau one of the eight emerging explorers of 2007. Those given this title are adventurers, scientists, photographers, and storytellers that are said to be making a difference in their prospective fields. The National Geographic executive vice president for mission programs has referred to Mr. Dau as a ''visionary individual'' and asserted that he was precisely the sort of individual National Geographic was looking for when choosing emerging explorers.

With the money from this award, Mr. Dau is going to send other ''Lost Boys'', or Sudanese who spent their adolescence fleeing war, famine, and slavery, to school in Kenya and Uganda. Mr. Dau is an accomplished humanitarian, and it is for this reason that I rise today to recognize his great work.

HONORING MOUNTAIN FIFES AND DRUMS FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP AND SKILL IN YOUTH MUSIC

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand today in recognition of the Mountain Fifes and Drums, a volunteer music program located in Lake Arrowhead, California, that specializes in providing unique instruction, history, and leadership skills to 60 young people.

I am delighted to report that on May 12, members of the Mountain Fifes and Drums will be leading the processional march at the America's 400th anniversary celebration in Jamestown, Virginia. This celebration will be chaired by Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner, and is expected to feature guest appearances by Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh. Is it an honor to be recognized at a historical event of such a high caliber, and I congratulate the Mountain Fifes and Drums for representing California at this national celebration.

Founded in 2001 by Lake Arrowhead residents Cindy Olson and Kevin Garland, the Mountain Fifes and Drums has become one of

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

the premiere living history music groups in my district. The repertoire focuses on 18th and 19th century martial music, and the corps has excelled at presenting their music as accurately and authentically as possible. The group also provides character-building lessons in responsibility and discipline. There is no fee for the program and no prior musical knowledge is required, which encourages students of all levels to join.

Like many privately organized musical groups in my district, the Mountain Fifes and Drums offers instruction in music technique, theory, and history. But the group also fosters character development of each member of the corps. By providing incentives for achieving higher ranks in music, and offering a point system for disciplined behavior, members are encouraged to engage in healthy competition and to consistently perfect their music techniques.

Students are taught lessons in self-sufficiency, by engaging in fundraising activities in order to pay for trips around the United States. These fundraising projects help the performers hone their skills and teach invaluable lessons about hard work and responsibility. At the same time, they create ties to many community groups that encourage youth to stay active in local organizations.

Most of the members of the Mountain Fifes and Drums are home schooled, and their participation provides friendships that extend beyond the rehearsal hall. Group members come from a number of mountain communities, including Lake Arrowhead, Crestline, Running Springs, and Twin Peaks. I am pleased to see that residents in each of these areas have provided generous contributions to the Mountain Fifes and Drums.

Madam Speaker, I look forward with pride to watching these talented and dedicated young people take part in our national Jamestown celebration. I ask my colleagues to join with me in wishing them success and thanking Cindy Olson and Kevin Garland for creating and fostering such a unique group.

IN HONOR OF ANDREW SAAVEDRA

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I come to the House floor today in honor of Andrew Saavedra, who was recently named Orange County Catholic Man of the Year.

Andrew Saavedra has tirelessly devoted his life to helping the poor, the homeless, and disadvantaged in Santa Ana and throughout Orange County.

The recent recognition is the culmination of a lifetime of service. Andrew Saavedra was a founding member of Santa Ana's Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen 21 years ago. The soup kitchen now serves meals to 500 homeless men and women each week.

Currently, Andrew Saavedra is president of the Orange County Council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a spokesman for the Second Harvest food bank, an active member of the Peace and Justice Committee of St. Joseph's church, and a board member of the Orange County Congregation Community Organization.

After retiring from his job last May as a salesman for a food-service company, Andrew Saavedra decided to dedicate more of his time to volunteer activities.

I do not know many people who choose to pursue a 40-hour workweek upon retiring, but Andrew Saavedra has a calling to help people, and he does just that.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SPECIALTY CROP EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES ACT

HON. DEVIN NUNES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. NUNES. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of the U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act. As the Representative of our Nation's most diverse, productive, and highly valued crop base, this legislation is of great importance to my constituents. It is also of great national significance, as the United States seeks to increase competitiveness in the global marketplace.

As many of my colleagues representing rural America know, our farmers are faced with enormous challenges. These challenges not only relate to the production of wholesome food and fiber, but are also a direct result of regulatory burdens, environmental laws, and, increasingly, global trade practices. For this reason, problems associated with foreign market access can be highly destructive to American farmers.

I introduced the U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act today because I believe Congress needs to take a fresh look at how we fund and structure our efforts in support of American agriculture. As we examine U.S. farm policies, Congress should support changes that increase our Government's emphasis on foreign market access and development. In addition, we need to be certain that we have the resources in place to meet the heavy demands associated with fighting unfair trade practices. Absent such a commitment, our balance of agriculture trade will continue to erode and our Nation's farmers will suffer.

Madam Speaker, we owe our farmers and rural communities the benefit of aggressive advocacy around the world. Unfortunately, our current governmental organization does not lend itself to this kind of advocacy. By way of example, there is no statutory responsibility on the part of the United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, concerning agricultural exports. Furthermore, current resource allocation suggests we have strayed from the focus needed to effectively promote U.S. agricultural interests around the world. The Foreign Agriculture Service employs 11 full-time equivalent analysts who are solely responsible for trade compliance monitoring. This is of great concern to me, given the number of agreements we have signed and the aggressive nature of our global trade agenda. As part of the U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act, we require the USDA to answer tough questions about resource allocation and the Agency's ability to do the job we all expect.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately our World Trade Organization, WTO, agreements and numerous Free Trade Agreements are not guarantees of free and open trade. Each agreement requires a process of implementation and compliance monitoring. Absent these follow-up actions, our Nation fails to witness the full benefit of our trade policy.

Since my election to Congress, I have received many complaints from frustrated exporters of perishable agricultural commodities. They believe that large commodities and other sectors of our economy are receiving the bulk of our national resources when it comes to trade dispute resolution. The U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act will help to alleviate this frustration. The bill establishes a statutory obligation on the part of USDA for exports. It also requires the Secretary to take a number of steps to improve the export process, including: coordination of market analysis between the private sector and FAS; Agency explanation of sanitary and phytosanitary issues associated with each pending export petition; and public availability of information concerning the import requirements of foreign countries. These changes will increase process transparency and provide American farmers information they need to fight trade barriers.

In addition, the U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act establishes an export credit guarantee program for fruits and vegetables. These perishable commodities would greatly benefit from the cash flow management tool provided by a short-term export credit. The USDA operates export credit guarantee programs today, but their design is not based on the unique circumstances associated with trade in fruits and vegetables. Congress needs to address this shortcoming.

Madam Speaker, in addition to giving our exporters more information and providing them with appropriate cash management tools, we need to examine options that will provide additional security against unfair trade practices. One possibility is the establishment of a perishable commodity export indemnification program. This would allow U.S. agriculture exporters to insure against the possibility of unforeseen trade barriers. The U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act takes the first step in the establishment of such a program.

When our exporters experience unfair trade barriers, they need to know that the U.S. Government will provide the technical and diplomatic support necessary to eliminate those barriers. Indeed, for our farmers to enjoy the full benefits of any agreement, our Government must be in a position to provide agriculture exporters the help they need in a timely manner. Perishable commodities cannot wait in ports for an eventual resolution to unfair sanitary or phytosanitary barriers. Such delays make the risk of trade unacceptable and drive U.S. farmers out of the export business.

Madam Speaker, there is clear evidence that we have already paid a significant price for what I believe are poorly coordinated efforts on behalf of American agriculture. Specifically, I am dismayed to report that we have witnessed a trade surplus in fruits and vegetables turn into a significant trade deficit. Over a period of 12 years and following the much heralded World Trade Organization (WTO) General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, GATT, we have witnessed a transition from $608,442,000 in surplus trade of fruits and vegetables to a $2,295,426,000 deficit. In short, our farmers are not seeing the full benefits of trade liberalization resulting from the GATT.

In closing, I think it is important to point out that many of the farmers facing challenges with trade are conducting their business independent of Government support. Fruit and vegetable farmers are not subsidized. They compete on the global market based on quality and efficiency. For this reason, our Nation's position in WTO trade negotiations should be to eliminate the Peace Clause for Chapters 7 and 8 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule. This will allow the U.S. to initiate dispute resolution proceedings in the WTO when trading partners use distorting subsidies.

Madam Speaker, when provided a level playing field, U.S. agricultural products are well received by consumers around the world. However, our farmers do not have the resources to fight unfair trade barriers alone. The U.S. Specialty Crop Export Opportunities Act is vital if we are to renew our commitment for free and fair trade on behalf of American agriculture.

TRIBUTE TO ARMY SERGEANT WAYNE CORNELL

HON. ADRIAN SMITH

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to Army SGT Wayne Cornell, a Nebraska native who lost his life last week. Cornell and another soldier were killed when a roadside bomb exploded near their vehicle in Baghdad. They were soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Wayne was on his first tour of duty in Iraq, and during 4 years with the Nebraska Army National Guard, had served twice in Bosnia and once in Afghanistan.

According to his family, Wayne was a strong man—both physically and emotionally. He was a black belt in taekwondo and a loving husband and father.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Wayne's wife, Patricia, who is expecting their third child this July. It is heartbreaking that a man who is often described as someone who ''lived for his wife and kids,'' will not be able to see his children grow and succeed in his footsteps.

We all owe Sergeant Cornell a debt of gratitude we can never repay. His courage, love of family, and strength should set the benchmark for us all.

ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 26, 2007

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 137, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2007. I want to thank my colleagues Representative GALLEGLY and Representative BLUMENAUER for their hard work on this issue.

This important legislation will make it illegal to transport an animal across State or international borders for the purpose of fighting, prohibits use of the mail system to promote animal fighting, and criminalizes interstate buying, selling, or transportation of knives or gaffs used for animal fighting.

Animal fighting is a deplorable activity with a purely negative impact on society. In cockfights, when two birds fight with blades or gaffs attached to their feet, at least one, and sometimes both of the birds are killed. Dogs who are made to fight often sustain severe injuries such as deep wounds and broken bones. Subsequent to fights, many dogs die of blood loss, exhaustion, or shock. Fighting animals are usually subject to inhumane living conditions intended to make them more aggressive, sometimes denied adequate nutrition, and made to exercise until they are physically exhausted.

In addition to the inexcusable harm inflicted on the animals, the fights also have negative effects on humans. Illegal gambling and drug trafficking are often closely tied to animal fighting operations. Also, animals bred to fight are abnormally aggressive, and pose a danger to the communities they live in if they were to get loose.

I applaud the passage of this bill, which will end an inhumane practice that is an embarrassment to our country. I am proud that this democratic majority has made animal welfare a priority in the 110th Congress.

ON URGING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OBSERVATION OF A LEGAL PUBLIC HOLIDAY IN HONOR OF CÉSAR E. CHÁVEZ

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. REYES. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 76, urging the establishment and observation of a legal public holiday in honor of César E. Chávez.

César Chávez is an iconic figure of the Civil Rights Era, a man Robert F. Kennedy noted as ''one of the heroic figures of our time.'' César Chávez was born on March 31, 1927, in Yuma, AZ. He spent most of his youth working on farms throughout the Southwest and California, and it was there that César Chávez came to understand the uniquely arduous conditions agricultural workers face in the U.S.

For more than 3 decades, César Chávez worked as a community organizer, labor leader and civil rights activist. Influenced by figures such as Mahatma Ghandi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he embraced strategies of nonviolence in working to improve the conditions of America's agricultural working poor. He cofounded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW) of America. As a labor leader, César Chávez employed peaceful tactics such as fasts, boycotts, strikes, and pilgrimages toward achieving fair wages, medical coverage, pension benefits and humane living conditions for thousands of workers everywhere. These efforts resulted in the first industry-wide labor contracts in the history of American agriculture, and led to the passage of the 1975 California Agricultural Relations Act, a bill designed to serve California's farm workers.

César Chávez died on April 23, 1993, and in 1994, President Clinton posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to him, the highest civilian honor in the U.S. Now, 5 States, including Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, celebrate César Chávez's birthday as a State holiday. I ask my colleagues in Congress to join me in supporting H. Res. 76, urging and establishing César Chávez's birthday, March 31st, as a national holiday, and commemorating the legacy of one of the most heroic figures of our time.

INTRODUCTION OF LENNOX LEGISLATION

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. HARMAN. Madam Speaker, today, Senator FEINSTEIN in the Senate and I are introducing legislation permitting a simple administrative fix that will improve education outcomes for thousands of students in my congressional district.

Imagine, Madam Speaker, sitting at a desk, attempting to memorize a verse or tackle a tough math problem as jet planes roar overhead every few minutes. Every hour. Every day.

That is the situation for the children of Lennox, a mostly working class community that lies just east of LAX, in the airport's flight path. Lennox was added to my district in 2000, and I have worked hard to help the children there get a quality education.

In 1980, Lennox School District and the city of Los Angeles settled a lawsuit concerning aircraft movements over Lennox schools. Lennox gave the city an easement that allowed planes carrying up to 40 million passengers per year to fly overhead, and the city paid Lennox approximately $2.5 million.

In the years since, air traffic over Lennox schools has significantly increased. As a result, many of the schools are now like bunkers, half underground with no windows. Others have all their windows boarded up.

In February of 2005, Lennox and Los Angeles World Airports, LAWA, settled a second lawsuit, to which Inglewood School District was also a party. Under this settlement, LAWA agreed to provide Lennox and Inglewood with more than $110 million in noise mitigation funds over 10 years.

However, the FAA has interpreted the 1980 agreement and Federal law to prevent payment of the funds under the 2005 agreement. A legislative solution is the only way that these funds can be released.

Our bill is narrowly tailored to allow LAWA to release the funds it promised to Lennox and Inglewood in the 2005 agreement. The bill is identical to legislation that I introduced in the last Congress, H.R. 6285, which was drafted with the assistance of the FAA, Lennox School District, and LAWA. Importantly, the funds in question are airport funds, not Federal tax dollars, and our bill would not require new Federal spending.

These children deserve a quality education, and this bill will ensure that they get one. I urge its swift passage.

ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 26, 2007

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I, along with Mr. BLUMENAUER and Mr. BARTLETT, have been trying to federally criminalize the brutal, inhumane practice of animal fighting for the past several Congresses.

A few years ago, Congress enacted legislation to tighten Federal laws with regard to animal fighting; however, this law created some loopholes that allowed the barbaric practices of animal fighting to thrive nationwide, in spite of bans in virtually every State. We left in place weak penalties that have proven ineffective. Misdemeanor penalties simply don't provide a meaningful deterrent. We've heard from U.S. Attorneys that they are reluctant to pursue animal fighting cases with just a misdemeanor penalty. Those involved in animal fighting ventures consider misdemeanor penalties a ''slap on the wrist'' or merely a ''cost of doing business.''

In recent years, we've seen a marked rise in the frequency of animal fighting busts in communities across the country. Local police and sheriffs are increasingly concerned about animal fighting, not only because of the animal cruelty involved, but also because of the other crimes that often go hand-in-hand, including illegal gambling, drug trafficking, and acts of human violence. In the last 6 months, every reported bust of an animal fight also led to additional arrests for at least one of these criminal activities.

Furthermore, there is an inherent danger for the children of animal fighters to be close to these animals. Children are often brought to these gruesome spectacles. Some dog fighters steal pets to use as bait for training their dogs; some allow trained fighting dogs to roam neighborhoods and endanger the public.

There is the additional concern that cockfighters spread diseases that jeopardize poultry flocks and even public health. We in California experienced this first-hand, when cockfighters spread exotic Newcastle disease, which was so devastating to many of our poultry producers in 2002 and 2003. That outbreak cost U.S. taxpayers nearly $200 million to eradicate, and cost the U.S. poultry industry many millions more in lost export markets.

Cockfighting has been identified as the major contributor of the spread of avian flu throughout Thailand and other parts of Asia, where the strain originated. At least nine people who contracted avian flu and died from it reportedly contracted it from fighting birds. Among those who are reported to have died from avian influenza as a result of exposure through cockfighting, include 4-year-old, 6-year-old, and 18-year-old boys in Thailand and a 6-year-old girl in Vietnam. Fortunately, bird flu has not yet jumped the species barrier in this country, but we ought to do all we can to minimize the risk.

Opponents of H.R. 137 have said this bill should be blocked because it will drive them underground, increasing the public health risks. That's a ludicrous argument. They're already underground (it's illegal in 49 States and various localities in the remaining State, Louisiana). They're coaching each other, as documented in chat rooms and other communications that have been intercepted, to hide their birds to avoid detection in the event of an outbreak. We're not talking about stellar citizens who are planning to contact health officials to ''do their part'' in stemming a pandemic. We'll be much better off cracking down on illegal cockfighting than allowing this high-risk industry to continue thriving and hoping they'll work with the government cooperatively to stem the threat of disease.

We need to help State and local law enforcement officials who have requested this strengthening of Federal laws to rid animal fighting from communities that do not want it. This legislation makes violations of federal animal fighting law a felony punishable by up to 3 years in prison, makes it a felony to transport an animal across State or international borders for the purpose of animal fighting, and prohibits the interstate and foreign commerce in knives and gaffs designed for use in cockfighting.

This bill simply promotes meaningful enforcement of current Federal law that bars interstate and foreign movement of animals for fighting purposes, including both dog fighting and cockfighting, by upgrading current misdemeanor penalties to a felony level. The bill is explicitly limited to interstate and foreign commerce, so it protects States' rights in the 2 States where cockfighting is allowed, yet further protects States' rights in the other 48 States where weak Federal law compromises the ability to keep animal fighting outside their borders.

I also wanted to clarify for the RECORD that subsection (c) of section 26 of the Animal Welfare Act, which is about interstate instrumentalities and commercial speech, prohibits the websites and the magazines where fighting animals are advertised for sale. These publications are commercial speech, and also clearly promote animal fighting. They advertise fighting animals and weapons for sale in interstate commerce. For example, over the last 12 months, there have been over 1,600 pages worth of advertisements for illegal interstate commercial transactions in the two main cockfighting magazines.

Subsection (d) is meant to limit subsection (c) with respect to the magazines and other commercial speech promoting cockfights in States where that is legal. It acts as a limitation upon subsection (c), but, as under current law, only if the effect of that promotion is limited to cockfights in the one State where cockfighting is still legal. So as a practical matter, (d) does not limit enforcement of (c) against the cockfighting magazines and website advertisements, because these materials promote animal fights in every State—they are sent to or read by buyers in many States, who buy the fighting animals and implements and then use them in animal fights in States where cockfighting is illegal.

Finally, I also want to say that these provisions in current law, which are mirrored in H.R. 137, pose no problem in terms of the First Amendment. Animal fighting magazines and websites aren't protected by the First Amendment. The Supreme Court has been clear on this score—there is no First Amendment protection for commercial speech where the underlying commercial transaction is lawfully prohibited, as is the case here. Subsection (c) is clearly constitutional. It is narrowly tailored with this in mind. First Amendment consideration is built right into the language. It only prohibits ''commercial speech''—like the cockfighting magazines with all of their advertisements for contraband. These animal fighting magazines are not political speech, they are basically just catalogs, with hundreds of advertisements per issue for illegal transactions. The sellers are just soliciting the buyers to commit criminal acts. They can't cloak it in the First Amendment just by throwing a little bit of non-commercial speech in there either, and the Supreme Court has been clear on that as well.

This is the perfect example of a bipartisan bill. The bill I cosponsored in the last Congress, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Act of 2006, had 324 cosponsors and was passed through the Senate by unanimous consent. Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BARTLETT, and I rounded up 300 Democrat and Republican co-sponsors in just a few weeks.

I want to express my sincere thanks to Mr. BLUMENAUER and Mr. BARTLETT for their work on this legislation. We have all been working on this legislation for quite some time. I also want to commend Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SMITH, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. FORBES for recognizing the importance of this issue and thank them for moving H.R. 137 through the Judiciary Committee so quickly. I also want to thank Mr. PETERSON of the Agriculture Committee for his assistance on this matter. Finally, I want to thank my 300+ colleagues who cosponsored H.R. 137. Without your help, we would not have been able to show the amount of support this Congress has for ending this deplorable practice and all of the destructive behavior associated with it.

IN RECOGNITION OF DEPAUW WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. BRAD ELLSWORTH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the DePauw University Women's Basketball Team for winning its first NCAA Division III National Championship. Not only is this the first championship for Coach Kris Huffman, it's the first national championship, in any sport, in the school's history.

The DePauw Tigers defeated the Washington University, St. Louis, Bears by a score of 55–52. The Tigers built a 15-point lead at one point, but the Bears rallied back to cut the deficit to 3 in the closing moments of the game. The Tigers blocked a last second 3-point shot attempt to earn their first title. The win caps a successful DePauw season with a record of 31–3.

Senior Cassie Pruzin led the way for the Tigers scoring 12 points in the game. Fellow seniors Liz Bondi and Suzy Doughty and junior Kalei Lowes each contributed 9 points. Bondi, who also had 9 rebounds and 3 assists in the game, was named most valuable player of the tournament and, along with Doughty, was selected for the All-Tournament team.

Congratulations to Coach Huffman and the DePauw Women's Basketball Team for an outstanding season.

Go Tigers.

HONORING MELISSA JONES

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Melissa Jones of the Legacy High School girls' basketball team. On March 22, 2007, Melissa was selected as the All-Colorado Player of the Year by the Rocky Mountain News staff with input from coaches statewide.

This was Melissa Jones' senior season playing for the Legacy High School Lightning. During prior seasons Melissa demonstrated her superb abilities and proved to be a standout player. Preceding her senior season, neither major Colorado newspaper ranked the Legacy Lightning in the top ten. Yet that ranking quickly changed as Melissa and her teammates beat, for the first time, their Front Range League rival Horizon High School.

The Lightning, led by Melissa Jones, won a share of the league title and then went on to knock off Regis High School in the Class 5A semifinals. Regis was 21–0 and was the tournament's No. 1 overall seed. Melissa skillfully led the team to the title game clearly showing that the pre-season rankings underestimated her determination. Melissa's skills and abilities, along with her outstanding teammates, carried the Legacy Lightning into the title game. Melissa and the Lightning's success have served as an inspiration and a source of pride for athletes of all stripes in Colorado.

Melissa Jones' statistics for the season included an average of 22.1 points, 8.1 rebounds and 5.1 steals. During the tournament she averaged 29 points and recorded four 30-point performances during the final eight contests.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Melissa Jones for her storybook season and well-deserved selection as the Rocky Mountain News' All-Colorado Player of the Year. Her talent, vision and leadership are undeniable, and she is a source of pride for women's basketball, for Legacy High School and for all of Colorado. I wish her continued success in the future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, on March 21, 2007, I was unavoidably detained during a vote on H.R. 327, the Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

BICENTENNIAL OF THE BRITISH ABOLITION OF THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the bicentennial of the British abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

On March 25, 1807, the British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Acknowledging this day 200 years later is extremely important because it represents a key event to the abolishment of slavery in Great Britain and the United States. Great Britain will begin to participate in various commemorative activities. Today, here in the United States, the United Nations is also observing the bicentennial by convening a special General Assembly session where speakers from around the globe will discuss their viewpoints about slavery. Rex Nettleford, a historian, will deliver the keynote. I applaud and thank the United Nations and Great Britain for recognizing the historic importance of the passage of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.

There is a need for people in the United States and around the world to remember and be reminded of the institution of slavery and its impact on the world during times other than Black History Month. The immeasurable sacrifices endured by enslaved people are too significant to be forgotten. I appreciate the work done by so many people and organizations that provide education on slavery and events that led to freedom of slaves in the United States and other countries. Educating people about slavery and the struggle for freedom provides an excellent opportunity to improve race relations, cultural understanding, and diversity.

I have introduced a resolution commemorating the British Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution. One year from now, the United States will participate in activities related to the abolishment of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. I look forward to those activities next year.

YOUTH ACTIVISM ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

HON. RON KLEIN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a special group of young people in Ft. Lauderdale, FL who are raising awareness about the important and urgent issue of human trafficking.

As you may know, human trafficking and forced labor is one of the most prolific areas of international criminal activity and is of significant concern to the United States and the international community. The overwhelming majority of those trafficked are women and children.

According to the most recent Department of State estimates, between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across borders each year. If trafficking within countries and forced labor are included in the total world figures, estimates rise to 4 to 27 million people.

Human trafficking is now considered a leading source of profits for organized crime generating billions of dollars. Trafficking in persons affects virtually every country in the world. Traffickers exploit poverty, war, natural or man-made disasters, and ignorance.

The students at the Ft. Lauderdale Prep School are raising money to combat global human trafficking and they have created a large mural to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Sale, which occurred on Friday, March 25th. I commend these students on their efforts to raise awareness on this issue. The passion and motivation of these students are worthy of emulation.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE PEACE PROCESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reiterate support for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and the St. Andrews Agreement of 2006, and to commend the tireless efforts of all involved in the peace process.

On April 10, 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed in Belfast, ending 3 decades of violence known as The Troubles. However, this landmark agreement was unable to deliver a lasting government to Northern Ireland, and in 2002 the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Executive were suspended.

In October of 2006, the process was restored with the St. Andrew's Agreement, which established timetables for the restoration of the government of Northern Ireland and breathed life back into the process. This timetable required that both sides make some serious concessions to establish a peaceful and lasting government.

Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein and Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party sat together for the first time ever on Monday, March 26, to announce that they had come to an agreement and that a provincial government will be established on May 8th of this year. I would like to commend them for working to establish this government, and urge the rest of my colleagues to join me in congratulating them for their great diplomatic work.

TRIBUTE TO THE EAST AURORA HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, East Aurora, New York took center stage last week, as the East Aurora High School Girls varsity basketball team earned the distinction of the New York State Class B championship, following a successful 44–41 overtime victory on Saturday, March 17th in Troy, NY.

The East Aurora Blue Devils' team slogan for the 2006–2007 season was "ONE: One Mission, One Goal, One TEAM" and the mission of this very talented team was to reach their goal of making it to the state tournament. Not only did they reach the tournament, they fought their way to the championship game, and to the title itself.

This game marked the first appearance made by the East Aurora Blue Devils in a state final. Additionally, their victory marked the end of a hard fought, record breaking season for the East Aurora Blue Devils who finished the season with a strong record of 24 wins and only 4 losses.

The Blue Devils consist of 16 talented young women, outstanding student athletes one and all, including: Maggie Croft, Ashley Gallagher, Haley Keller, Kelsi Maciejewski, Brogan McCabe, Julia Murak, Natasha Peterson, Lauren Schwarzenholzer, Brooke Schutrum, Emily Smith, Sarah Soroka, Sam Stanley, Alicia Sweet, Sarah and Jessie Tarantino, and Meghan Wolff.

Throughout the season the players met various challenges and each time they stepped up to contribute their talents both as a team and individually. In addition to the starting lineup, the bench players provided inspiration throughout the entire season and stepped in and responded positively on the court whenever they were called upon.

Also, I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the invaluable leadership demonstrated by Head Coach Chris Koselny and Assistant Coach Matt Brown during practices, games and championship tournaments alike. I also want to acknowledge the support of school administrators, Superintendent James Bodziak, and Principal Dr. James Hoagland and Athletic Director Fred Thornley and for the additional guidance and support they received from parents, teachers and the entire community throughout the year.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to join me in congratulating the great success of the East Aurora High School Lady Blue Devils Basketball team on a hard fought season that led them to victory in the New York State Championship Tournament at Hudson Valley Community College and a record breaking season. It is a pleasure to honor the team and their coaches here today.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JUANITA HAUGEN

HON. JERRY McNERNEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. MCNERNEY. Madam Speaker, today I ask my Colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Juanita Haugen, who passed away peacefully at age 69 on March 5, 2007 after a courageous battle against lung cancer.

Juanita Haugen was an extraordinary woman whose passion for education and commitment to students enriched the lives of so many. Her efforts and unwavering dedication to public service leave a legacy that will continue to benefit the students of Pleasanton, the state of California and our great Nation for generations to come.

Juanita Haugen and her family moved to Pleasanton in 1970. Juanita became involved in the Pleasanton school system after leaving her job as a probation officer to care for her children at home. She was elected to the Amador Valley Joint Union High School District Board in 1979 and was among the first trustees elected to the Pleasanton Unified School District (USD) following the 1988 reorganization that led to the District's creation. Juanita Haugen remained a member of the Pleasanton USD until her passing, and was the longest-serving trustee in the history of the local schools.

Juanita Haugen strongly believed that children need not only a quality academic education, but also a solid ethical foundation on which to build strong character. She led the effort in the Pleasanton USD to establish a program that teaches and reinforces positive character traits in all public school students, from kindergarteners to high school seniors. This program continues to benefit students by focusing on the way in which they live and treat one another.

In addition to her involvement with the Pleasanton schools, Juanita Haugen's passion for improving public education for all children inspired her to serve on both state and national school board associations. By sharing ideas about education that she learned from her state and national colleagues, Juanita kept Pleasanton's schools on the cutting edge. She always worked for the common good. In the words on one of her fellow school board members, ''You must make decisions for the entire school district, not just for your own child or school. Juanita always (said) it has to be right for everybody.''

Although Juanita Haugen's efforts won her many awards, her true measure as a leader is how her passion for education inspired others, including her family, Pleasanton's students and her community. From reading to young students to encouraging others to become involved in public service, Juanita Haugen was a valued and respected leader who touched the lives of many and improved the quality of life in Pleasanton for decades to come. It is for these reasons that I ask my Colleagues to join me in honoring the memory of Juanita Haugen and sending our thoughts and prayers to her beloved family and friends.

TRIBUTE TO JUSTIN DAHMER

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young leader in my district, Justin Dahmer, who was recently awarded the rank of Eagle Scout. Justin is the 17-year-old son of Roger and Pam Dahmer of Franklin, West Virginia, where he attends Pendleton County High School.

Justin is truly representative of the Scout Oath; to do duty to God and country, help others, and maintain physical and mental strength. He is a member of Boy Scout Troop 162 and the Boy Scout honor society, Order of the Arrows. Justin's final project to qualify for Eagle Scout Rank was refinishing a portable water tank for the Pendleton County Emergency Services Department. Thanks to Justin's hard work, respondents will now have additional equipment that would otherwise have been unusable.

Justin's contributions are not limited to his scouting activities; the high school junior is a stand out member of the Pendleton County High School football team and last fall was named all conference offensive lineman. In the off season, Justin throws shot put for the Cougars' track team. He is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and is an usher at Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church.

I am pleased to recognize this young man who truly exhibits service to God and country and thank his parents for raising such a fine citizen. It is an honor to recognize the future community leaders like Justin Dahmer.

IN HONOR OF THE CHAMPION UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS CHESS TEAM

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate the students of the University of Texas at Dallas for their victory at the 2007 Final Four of Chess held in Dallas/Fort Worth this weekend. With this win, the team earned the title of the top collegiate chess team in the Western Hemisphere.

The University of Texas at Dallas chess team won the President's Cup trophy after defeating the University of Maryland at Baltimore County, Duke University and Miami Dade College. The team's five and a half point margin of victory was the largest in the tournament's seven year history.

Team members Alejandro Ramirez, Magesh Chandran Panchanathan, Marko Zivanic, Drasko Boskovic, Dmitri Shneider and Davorin Kuljasevic were guided by their coach, Rade Milovanic. The team credits their victory to a thoughtful strategy and a rigorous practice regimen before the tournament. Drasko Boskovic, a junior business administration major, was selected as the tournament's Most Valuable Player. He outscored all other competitors and had a perfect 3–0 record.

The University of Texas at Dallas is an outstanding school of high academics; the freshman class typically boasts above average SAT scores. Located at the convergence of Plano, Richardson and Dallas, the school enrolls more than 14,500 well-rounded and ambitious students. The university offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctoral degree programs. I am proud to represent the University of Texas at Dallas in the 32nd Congressional district of Texas.

I congratulate these students for their success in collegiate chess, a true indicator of intelligence, and wish them the best of luck in their future academic and chess endeavors.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

HON. BRIAN P. BILBRAY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, as we enter the fourth year of the conflict in Iraq, we have before us today a supplemental appropriations bill that should serve one purpose and one purpose only—to provide funding for the safety, security and well-being of our troops. Time and time again, both Democrats and Republicans have pledged to provide our brave Armed Forces with the resources they need to do the job they have been sent to do. Today represents a moment in time when that rhetoric can be supported with bold and definitive action.

That is why it is all the more disappointing that at a time when we should be voting on legislation to provide the necessary supplies, armor, and technology needed to be successful, the Democrats have decided to politicize

this process. Led by Speaker NANCY PELOSI, the majority party has taken this opportunity to add non-military provisions such as $74 million for peanut storage costs, $5 million for tropical fish and billions of dollars worth of special-interest pork projects. I have to ask, why would this extraneous non-emergency material be included in a war spending bill when it has nothing to do with war spending?

At what point are we going to stop playing politics with the safety and well being of our troops? I don't think there is anyone in this Chamber who doesn't believe we need to do all we can to support our brave men and women in uniform. However, I find it sad that the bill before us today is being used to satisfy the whims of lawmakers with an appetite for special interest pork projects. Such an effort amounts to nothing more than institutionalizing bribery.

In addition to the more than $21 billion in pork spending, H.R. 1591 plays politics in a completely different way by setting a timetable for the redeployment of our troops from Iraq.

I believe that the President made a good decision by appointing General Petraeus to command all U.S. Forces in Iraq. The fact that every Democrat in the United States Senate voted to confirm the general reinforces the belief that his new plan and vision for the war on terror is the right one. Implementing a ''slow-bleed'' strategy will deny the general the opportunity to implement his plan and change the tide in Iraq.

Overseeing the greatest military on Earth while trying to initiate great tactical change is a monumental task, but I feel we owe it to General Petraeus to give him the necessary tools to defeat the terrorists and bring our troops home. In no way can General Petraeus, or any of our military leaders for that matter, be successful in Iraq if a timeline for redeployment becomes law.

The same restrictions should not be placed on our President. My colleagues and I were elected under Article I of the United States Constitution, an article that does not give us the authority to be Commander in Chief. Article II clearly cedes that authority to the President of the United States, whoever he or she is, and from whatever party he or she belongs to. Now, it's no secret that almost every member of the Senate harbors ambitions to one day be President, but until now, I didn't realize that everyone in the House felt the same way. This ''slow-bleed'' scheme represents an unconstitutional infringement upon the authority of the President as Commander in Chief.

The point is that politicians in Washington should stop trying to micromanage this war and allow the President and his generals to have the troops, equipment, and supplies to complete the goals that have been set. Our troops are not a bargaining chip to be used by congressional Democrats to leverage more excessive and unnecessary pork spending.

Rather than support a bill that provides $25 million for spinach replenishment, I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 1591, so that we can get back to work and pass a clean bill free of any extraneous spending and disastrous military timelines.

RESOLUTION IN HONOR OF BISHOP GILBERT EARL PATTERSON—''BE HEALED, BE DELIVERED AND BE SET FREE''

HON. CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. KILPATRICK. Madam Speaker, such are the favorite words of proclamation that characterized the ministry thrust of presiding Bishop, Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, whom our Heavenly Father has seen fit to release from the cares of this life, and move from labor to reward. We must, in humble submission, yield to the infinite wisdom and divine will of God who does all things well.

Whereas, Bishop G.E. Patterson was born of humble means in Humboldt, Tennessee to Bishop W.A. and Mrs. Mary Patterson on September 22, 1939. He grew up in Memphis, Tennessee before moving to Detroit, Michigan with his family in 1952 and preached his first sermon at age 17 and was ordained an Elder in the Church of God in Christ by Bishop John Seth Bailey in Detroit in 1958. Bishop Patterson moved back to Memphis in 1961 to assist his father at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ and subsequently established a new congregation in 1975 named Temple of Deliverance, the Cathedral of Bountiful Blessings, in Memphis, Tennessee, and . . .

Whereas, Bishop G.E. Patterson led Temple of Deliverance to outgrow its first church location within three years and built a new $1.2 million 1,200-seat sanctuary to become the first church in Memphis, Tennessee to be built by black workers that cost more than a million dollars. Additionally, in 1999 Bishop Patterson's visionary leadership moved Temple of Deliverance to purchase a $13 million campus that featured a 5,000 seat worship center which now houses a membership of 13,000 members, and . . .

Whereas, Bishop G.E. Patterson rose to international prominence as the charismatic leader, Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle of the Church of God in Christ and was instrumental in increasing the denomination membership ranks to more than 6.5 million members in 58 countries, as well as overseeing a global media empire that included television, radio, internet, recording, and publishing divisions; time will not remove the treasures carried in so many hearts, nor dim the shining thoughts and memories that linger as a result of Bishop G.E. Patterson's humble spirit, sage counsel, visionary leadership, anointed preaching, and spirited worshipper of God, and . . .

Whereas, we the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus extend our deepest expression of sympathy to the entire COGIC Denomination, may God's uplifting power carry each of you through your hour of bereavement.

Therefore, be it resolved, that we Celebrate, Rejoice, Praise and Thank God for the example of Bishop Patterson's devoted and faithful life of ministry to humankind, his unselfish dedication as a world-wide spiritual leader to the saints everywhere, and especially within the Church of God in Christ.

Be it further resolved that the Patterson family will remain in our thoughts and prayers with the reminder that Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, understands all that transpires in our frail, human lives.

Be it finally resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the family and a copy be placed in the records of the Church.

SAFETEA–LU TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 26, 2007

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend my colleagues for their work on the SAFETEA–LU technical corrections bill. After extensive conversations with the local transportation authority in New York City, it has become apparent that several changes are necessary in order for very important transportation infrastructure improvements to be implemented in New York City. Included in this bill are a number of projects that will enhance transportation throughout New York City and in my district in particular.

At my urging, the technical corrections bill includes: $1,100,000 for the New York City Department of Transportation to design and rehabilitate roads commonly known as step streets, which connect streets on steep grades, in Bronx County in coordination with my colleagues Mr. ENGEL, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. SERRANO; $2,500,000 to design and construct school safety projects in New York City to be used as part of the recently launched Safe Routes to Schools project, spearheaded by the New York City Department of Transportation; $1,300,000 for the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority to install security cameras at the Steinway Street, Broadway, 30th Avenue, and Astoria Boulevard subway stations in Astoria, New York, at the suggestion and urging of New York Assemblyman Michael Gianaris; $100,000 to provide for an independent study of the Newtown Creek oil spill in coordination with my colleague Ms. VELÁZQUEZ; $500,000 for the New York City Department of Transportation to study and implement transportation improvements in the Breezy Point neighborhood of Queens County; $500,000 for the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority's interagency task force on fencing to fence exposed track along the Long Island Railroad.

These high priority projects will make a considerable contribution to the lives of New York City residents.

Chairman OBERSTAR, Mr. MICA, Chairman DEFAZIO, and Mr. DUNCAN deserve the thanks and appreciation of every Member of this House for their tireless efforts to improve America's transportation system.

I also could not have secured these and other programs within TEA–LU without the help and counsel of individuals here in Washington, and New York City. I would like to thank Joshua Fay-Hurvitz of my staff. I would also like to thank both the Democratic and Republican staff of the Transportation Committee. In particular, I would like to thank Jackie Schmitz and Ward McCarragher of Mr. OBERSTAR's staff. I would also like to thank Commissioner Iris Weinshall, David Woloch, and Andra Horsch at the New York City Department of Transportation. Additionally, I'd

like to thank Derrick Douglas with the State of New York, and Judy Chesser and Bill Daly with the City of New York. Finally I'd like to thank Lee Sander and Chris Boylan with the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority, Mike Weiss at the Federal Highway Administration, and Jessie Torres at the Department of Transportation.

HONORING NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of National Peace Corps Week, which took place from February 26th until March 1st, 2007.

The Peace Corps was founded in the early 1960s, and has grown to a force of 7,749 volunteers in 73 overseas countries. The Peace Corps has done great work all over the world in numerous fields, including improving agriculture, business development, improving information technology, bettering education, improving healthcare, and protecting the environment.

The Peace Corps provides those who join with extensive training in language skills as well as skills in numerous other fields that give them the foundation to eventually work in any field they choose, much like how I ended up serving my constituents here in Washington after I had spent time in the Peace Corps serving in Nepal.

Today I would especially like to thank Catherine Bukowski, Terry Callan, Katie Clifford, Laurence Dessein, Patrick Gannon, Kerry Goessling, Lisa Jackson, Chetou Lamare, Ryan McCarthy, Samuel Tassone, and Patrick Wayne; all constituents of mine selflessly serving overseas in the Peace Corps. All of these men and women should be commended for their tireless effort, and that is I why I stand today to recognize them and all those serving in the Peace Corps.

HONORING COACH TERRY BUCKLES

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise to publicly congratulate Terry Buckles for achieving his 500th career win as Head Coach of the Central Hardin High School Women's Basketball Team.

Throughout his 22 year career, Coach Buckles has epitomized the qualities that make Kentucky hold its basketball heroes in high regard. His steady leadership and the lifelong lessons imparted on his players have made his teams a model of teamwork and good sportsmanship. His success is evident through his players, 26 who have continued their student-athlete careers at the collegiate level.

In addition to his remarkable record of wins, Coach Buckles has coached his teams to six Kentucky High School Athletic Association Regional Championships. In 1996, he took the Central Hardin Lady Bruins to the state finals and later coached his team to a Kentucky AAU State Championship victory. His success has continued this season, leading the Lady Bruins to a 23–6 record, ranking fourth in the state. With his 500th win, Coach Buckles has joined only seven other coaches who have reached this milestone. He currently stands as the all time leader in wins in the Fifth region and ranks in the top ten for career wins for women's coaches in state history.

Coach Buckles hard work and success at Central Hardin High School has been recognized throughout the Commonwealth. He has received numerous ''Coach of the Year'' awards; is an inductee of the Fifth Region Hall of Fame; and was honored last year with induction into the Kentucky Association of Basketball Coaches ''Court of Honor,'' the highest tribute a basketball coach in Kentucky can receive.

I would like to recognize Terry Buckles today before the entire U.S. House of Representatives for his recent coaching milestone. His contributions to education and athletics make him a remarkable citizen worthy of our appreciation and respect.

HONORING RON BOONE

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Ron Boone, a remarkable public servant and friend from my home state of Kentucky. Mr. Boone, a long-time radio news broadcaster in Elizabethtown, passed away unexpectedly in February, 2004. He will be posthumously inducted into the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame early next month.

Ron Boone was a legend in Central Kentucky, broadcasting on radio stations WIEL, WASE, WSAC, WRZI and WKMO throughout his 31 year career. He was affectionately known among his colleagues as ''The Dean of Newscasters'', and was universally praised by listeners and interview subjects for his unbiased reporting.

I have fond memories of Ron Boone dating back to my first days as a candidate in the spring of 1994. Ron reported extensively on my election that year, subsequent elections, and on countless votes and official events that occurred over the course of my first six terms in Congress. I always enjoyed my conversations with Ron, particularly his thoughtful and well-informed observations on our community and Kentucky politics. Indeed, he was very good at what he did.

In addition to his upcoming induction into the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame, Ron has also been recipient to the Kentucky Associated Press Broadcasters Association Distinguished Service Award, the Kentucky Mic Award from the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, and was inducted into the Elizabethtown-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame.

Despite many deserved professional accolades, Ron Boone's most enduring legacy was his love of family and his unwavering dedication to his friends, neighbors and community. Though the years were too few, his was a life very well lived.

It is my great privilege to honor the memory of Ron Boone today, before the entire U.S. House of Representatives, and to send our collective congratulations to his wife Judy who will accept the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame Award on his behalf.

IN HONOR OF PRIVATE CLARENCE SPENCER, UNITED STATES ARMY

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. GRANGER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor one of the bravest and most dedicated young heroes of North Texas and of our Nation.

Army Private Clarence Spencer was killed in Blad, Iraq while fighting against enemy forces in one of the most important conflicts our Nation has ever engaged in.

Clarence Spencer gallantly and selflessly gave his life for his country while fighting alongside his fellow soldiers of the First Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

Private Spencer is survived by his mother, son and loving wife, Army Private Charlotte Spencer, who has also devoted herself to our Nation's noble military profession.

Clarence Spencer served three tours in Iraq, two of which were as a marine. Wounded in Iraq on a previous tour, he demonstrated tremendous courage by deploying into harm's way once again.

Private Clarence Spencer is gone, but he will never be forgotten. His memory lives on in our hearts and America is eternally grateful for his spirit and dedication.

As Clarence's Dunbar High School football coach said about him, ''I've coached faster, stronger and more talented students, but I've never coached anyone that I was more proud of.''

That is precisely the way that the Fort Worth community and our Nation feel about soldiers such as Private Clarence Spencer—a true American hero.

TRIBUTE TO DR. KEN GIBSON, PRESIDENT OF DONNELLY COLLEGE

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Ken Gibson, who recently announced his retirement, effective June 30th, following nine very successful years as president of Donnelly College of Kansas City, Kansas.

Donnelly College is an important part of the Kansas City, Kansas, community, and offers more than just an education to students. As Dr. Gibson reflected in a recent article in the Kansas City Kansan, ''Donnelly College is essentially about hope. If you are not satisfied, you can change it and you can achieve what you are capable of. We have some really good students and I think we give them a great education.''

The recipient of a master's degree from the University of Kentucky and a Ph.D. from

Southern Illinois University, Dr. Gibson began his career with Kentucky's Henderson Community College, where he later served as dean of instruction. Prior to returning to Henderson Community College, he was affiliated with John A. Logan College, of Illinois. In 1981, Dr. Gibson moved to Kansas, where he served as Hutchinson Community College's dean of instruction; he later took the same position at Johnson County Community College, located in my congressional district, where he worked until becoming president of Donnelly College in 1998.

Under Dr. Gibson's leadership, Donnelly College reversed a significant drop in enrollment and received over $12 million in donations and grants, including awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Among the programs offered by Donnelly, the Henry W. Bloch Scholarship offers full tuition to students and is transferable to Rockhurst University or the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Donnelly also participates in Kansas Bridges to the Future, a transferable scholarship to Kansas State University.

Additionally, during Dr. Gibson's tenure, Donnelly College introduced a bachelor's degree program, began development of a licensed practical nurse joint program with Johnson County Community College, and implemented a college extension program at the Lansing Correctional Facility, establishing an opportunity for inmates to earn an associate's degree. As Dr. Gibson noted in the Kansas City Kansan, ''It makes a difference for inmates' lives. Of 66 students (involved with the program), only one has gone back to prison.''

Madam Speaker, Dr. Ken Gibson has been a distinguished educational leader in the Kansas City community, which is a better place due to his enlightened leadership. He has been a trusted advisor to me on matters of education policy and other concerns involving the Third Congressional District of Kansas. I commend him for his successful tenure with Donnelly College and wish him and his family many happy returns upon his well-deserved retirement.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN WALTERSHAUSEN

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Mr. John Waltershausen of Littleton, CO.

Mr. Waltershausen was born in Chicago, IL, and served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II from 1944–1946. During his military service, he played a heroic role in an incredibly significant moment in history, what many historians now believe to be the end of World War II. I believe his story is most worthy of being preserved in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Five days after the bombing of Nagasaki, copilot John Waltershausen and the other nine crew members of the B–29B Super Fortress *Boomerang* flew, along with 142 other bombers, in what is now known as the ''Last Mission.''

Awaiting word of surrender from Japan, John and his crew were ordered on one last assignment, to bomb an oil refinery in Akita, Japan. The Japanese did not think that the U.S. could reach Akita from Guam and, as such, did not build strong defenses there.

Even though the crew of the *Boomerang* knew they might not have enough fuel to get back, the crew proceeded in the mission to take out 67 percent of Japan's remaining oil refining capacity, as well as causing an air raid blackout alert.

Unbeknownst to them, a group of Japanese officers attempted to prolong the war by staging a coup d'état in seizing Japan's Imperial Palace and with it Emperor Hirohito. Upon the takeover of the Imperial Palace, the rebel leader Hatanaka learned that Emperor Hirohito had left the palace. Knowing that Hirohito had recorded a message of surrender that had not yet been broadcast on Japanese radio, the rebel officers hoped to sway the Japanese military into continuing the war with the U.S. However, because of the blackout caused by the U.S. bombing mission that included John Waltershausen's B–29B *Boomerang*, the rebel officers were unable to find the emperor's recording or to broadcast their own message to the Japanese people and soon lost their control of the situation. The message of surrender from Emperor Hirohito was broadcast the next morning.

The ''Last Mission'' was 3,800 miles and the longest mission flown up to that time. By a bizarre twist of fate, it also marked the end of World War II.

After the war, John married Sally Erwin and they had two daughters, Karen and Karoline. Today, they have 4 grandsons—Gregory, Benjamin, Jacob, and Samuel. John spent the last 45 years of his life in Colorado, with his happiest days being in the beautiful Colorado mountains.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for Mr. Waltershausen's selfless service to our Nation. His story should be preserved for posterity. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing a man worthy of our honor, Mr. John Waltershausen.

TRIBUTE TO FRED LEE HARRIS

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, with a heavy heart, I rise to pay tribute to the life of Richmond icon and youth football coach Fred Lee Harris who died on March 16, 2007. For 27 seasons, Fred Harris dedicated his life to the Richmond Steelers football organization, providing coaching and moral leadership to hundreds of young players who have been a part of this community institution. As Head Coach of the program, Coach Harris was honored as a valuable role model in the community, establishing a consistent winning tradition and a healthy, positive environment for youth both on and off the field.

Freddie Lee Harris, as he was known to his family, was born to the proud parents of Charles and Helen Harris on February 21, 1945, in Monroe, LA. At an early age, Fred moved with his family to Richmond, CA, and soon became the oldest of seven children. He attended school in the Richmond Unified School District and graduated from Harry Ells High School in 1963. Mr. Harris was a successful electrician for over 35 years, and became involved with the Richmond Steelers when his own son went out for the team.

Despite raising four children and having a full-time career, Fred managed to volunteer 25 hours a week from July to December in order to coach the Steelers' most advanced team, the Midgets. Up until 2005, the Midgets won six consecutive league championships. Moreover, he was the coach and equipment coordinator for the entire program and attended as many as four football clinics a year to make sure the Steelers kept current with the latest coaching and equipment innovations. Fred's natural leadership abilities extended beyond his passion for football and coaching, and he envisioned his position as a chance to nurture life lessons and good values in his players.

The Richmond Steelers organization is not just a refuge for the youth in Richmond. The five teams, which consist of players from the ages of 6 to 14, are a valuable resource for parents who disapprove of Richmond's violent street life. Many have said that under Coach Harris' guidance, the Steelers is one of the most effective violence prevention programs in Richmond. As a coach and adviser, Fred instilled the type of pride in his players that comes from discipline, hard work, and team work, the type of pride that lasts for generations.

Fred Harris was not just a coach, but an effective mentor. Fred saw the athletic and individual potential in each child with whom he worked, and he was dedicated to helping his players reach that potential through constructive means. Many sons of Richmond would have been lost without this resource.

To Coach Harris' wife, Etta Harris, and his children: Andre, Fredda, Felicia, and Maryhelen, I extend my heartfelt condolences. His loss is shared not only by those who knew Fred personally but also by all those in Richmond who benefited from his direction and hard work over the years. We will be forever grateful for the integrity, passion and unwavering commitment with which he sought to make the legendary Richmond Steelers a safe place to foster hope.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF PEARL RICHTER

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure and honor that I congratulate Mrs. Pearl Marcus Richter of Toledo, Ohio, on the occasion of her forthcoming 90th birthday. Pearl will be celebrating this milestone event with family members, including two grandchildren, who will be gathering this weekend in the Washington, DC area where Pearl's daughter and son have each settled.

Pearl was born on April 6, 1917, in Indianapolis, Indiana, to immigrant parents (like so many other fine Americans) on that momentous day in history during which Congress declared war against Germany and the U.S. entered the conflict in Europe that became World War I. Her mother was ill during most of her childhood and Pearl was always a great help in the home. Pearl graduated from Shortridge

High School in Indianapolis in 1934 at the age of 17. By then, her mother had passed away, leaving Pearl to be the female head of a household that included her father and one older and one younger brother. In 1940, life changed dramatically for Pearl. She met Morris A. Richter in February, it was love at first sight and in May they married and moved to Terre Haute, Indiana, where Morris worked.

For nearly 15 months, December 1944–February 1946, Pearl was at home alone to care for a daughter, born in 1940, and a son, born in 1944, while Morris served in the American Area Campaign of the U.S. Navy. Both children share the same birthday, July 18, and Pearl always jokes that it was because her husband was an accountant. In the summer of 1958, the Richter family moved to Toledo, Ohio, where Morris had taken a job with the federal government, and into a house on Cheltenham Road in the Old Orchard district. Daughter Ceceile Kay graduated from the University of Toledo in 1963 and son Sheldon Jay graduated from Ohio State University in 1967. Pearl was at both graduations but unfortunately Morris was not; he had died of a heart attack in October 1961, just weeks after his 46th birthday. Pearl went to work soon afterwards as a sales clerk with Petrie Stores and had worked her way up to assistant manager before she retired.

Pearl has always been active in her synagogues and taught Sunday School in both Terre Haute and Toledo. In Toledo, she is a member of B'nai Israel Synagogue and its Sisterhood and its Synagogue Organized Afternoon Program. She is also an active member and was an officer for several years in the Friendship Club, one of many activities she enjoys through the Jewish Family Services Senior Adult Center. Pearl lived in Kenwood Gardens for over 35 years and since late 2001 has enjoyed living at Carriage House East where she is a regular caller at monthly bingo and a semi-regular in an informal poker club in which she is one of the youngest members. Pearl's favorite activity besides working crossword puzzles is Mah Jongg, and she plays as frequently as she can. She is a member of the National Mah Jongg League, having joined soon after its inception in 1937, and she is always the first in her groups to learn the rules' changes each year.

Even more so than any of the above, her family and friends know Pearl as a favorite baker. Pearl used to bake almost every day and most of this she would give away. Now she has cut her baking back to a few times a month. A visitor to her home is always served a cup of steaming hot coffee or, perhaps, fresh-squeezed lemon or lime ade, and a baked dessert. If something fresh is not on the counter, her visitors need not worry. There are always tins of baked goods in her freezer. Her family has been wishing for some time that Pearl would move to the Washington, DC area where one of the pleasures, besides her company, will be the ritual of opening her freezer to see what baked goods are inside. Pearl has always been generous about sharing her recipes. Family members and close friend Bea Goldman have now sent copies of these recipes to Pearl's daughter, who will be combining them with recipes in her collection and from her memory into a recipe book to be provided to guests after the dinner in honor of Pearl's birthday.

I join with Pearl's family and friends in wishing her a most joyous birthday, spent looking back in fond recollection and looking forward to future years. Congratulations and best wishes!

INTRODUCTION OF THE BRIGHT ENERGY SAVINGS ACT

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Bulb Replacement In Government with high-efficiency Technology Energy Savings Act, otherwise known as the BRIGHT energy savings act.

Today Americans are rightly concerned about the impact of foreign energy dependence on our national security and the effect of global climate change on the future of our planet. The BRIGHT Energy Savings Act will help us to address both of these issues by cutting down significantly on energy use by the Federal government, and at the same time it will save millions of taxpayer dollars. It's a win for the environment, a win for national security, and a win for American taxpayers.

This bill directs the GSA to replace commonly used low efficiency light bulbs with high efficiency bulbs whenever a new bulb is installed in a GSA-owned federal building.

The impact of the BRIGHT Energy Savings Act could be significant. The GSA owns approximately 1,800 facilities with about 174 million square feet of space. At least 3 million lights throughout the Federal government could be upgraded to high efficiency bulbs.

One type of high efficiency bulb that could be used is the Energy Star-certified Compact Fluorescent Light bulb, also known as a CFL. CFLs use approximately 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs to provide the same amount of light and they last approximately 8–10 times longer. Replacing an ordinary bulb with a comparable CFL saves up to $74 in energy costs over the bulb's lifetime. It's easy to see that hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars can be saved by implementing this bill.

As an engineer by training, I am fascinated by the promise of new and emerging technologies and what they mean for our future. In addition to CFLs, new halogen technologies are expected to become commercially available later this year. Further down the road, LEDs (light-emitting diodes) will revolutionize the lighting industry, leading to vastly more efficient lighting and the prospect of bulbs that do not burn out. Much of this technology represents American ingenuity and innovation, and provides hope for a brighter future. And with the Federal government purchasing large quantities of these high efficiency bulbs, this next generation of technology will be less costly to put in American homes.

Reduced energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and saved taxpayer dollars. It's a common sense, practical measure that is simply the right thing to do. A bipartisan group of more than 35 members have already joined us on the BRIGHT Energy Savings Act; clearly, the future is bright.

INTRODUCING THE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION FREEDOM ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Agriculture Education Freedom Act. This bill addresses a great injustice being perpetrated by the Federal Government on those youngsters who participate in programs such as 4–H or the Future Farmers of America. Under current tax law, children are forced to pay federal income tax when they sell livestock they have raised as part of an agricultural education program.

Think about this for a moment. These kids are trying to better themselves, earn some money, save some money and what does Congress do? We pick on these kids by taxing them. It is truly amazing that with all the handwringing in Congress over the alleged need to further restrict liberty and grow the size of govemment "for the children" we would continue to tax young people who are trying to lead responsible lives and prepare for the future. Even if the serious social problems today's youth face could be solved by new federal bureaucracies and programs, it is still unfair to pick on those kids who are trying to do the right thing.

These children are not even old enough to vote, yet we are forcing them to pay taxes! What ever happened to no taxation without representation? No wonder young people are so cynical about govemment!

It is time we stopped taxing youngsters who are trying to earn money to go to college by selling livestock they have raised through their participation in programs such as 4–H or Future Farmers of America. Therefore, I call on my colleagues to join me in supporting the Agriculture Education Freedom Act.

IN HONOR OF SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ALLEN MOSTEIRO, UNITED STATES ARMY

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. GRANGER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the courage of one of the bravest and most dedicated heroes of the Fort Worth community and of our Nation.

Sergeant First Class Allen Mosteiro was an 18-year veteran of the Army who was assigned as a scout leader in the first cavalry division based at Fort Hood, Texas.

He gallantly and selflessly gave his life for his Country as a result of wounds he received during a firefight in Taji, Iraq on February 13, 2007.

Sergeant Mosteiro is survived by his wife, son, parents, one brother and three sisters.

As a career soldier and senior non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Mosteiro's leadership was instrumental in developing younger soldiers and he did not take this responsibility lightly.

Sergeant First Class Mosteiro is gone, but he will never be forgotten. His memory lives on through the family he left behind and in the soldiers that he so ably led.

Our community and Nation honor Sergeant First Class Mosteiro's memory and we are grateful for his 18 years of faithful and distinguished service to America.

TRIBUTE TO NASA ASTRONAUT STEVE HAWLEY

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished, courageous Kansan, NASA astronaut Steve Hawley, who will be inducted into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame on May 5th.

Steve Hawley, age 55, flew aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* during its maiden voyage in 1984 and is a veteran of four other shuttle missions. An accomplished astronomer, he helped deploy two of NASA's four Great Observatories, spacecraft that have shed unprecedented light on the origins and evolution of the universe. He flew aboard *Columbia* on a mission that landed just 10 days before the January 1986 *Challenger* accident. He helped deploy the Hubble Space Telescope during a 1990 *Discovery* mission and then serviced NASA's flagship observatory during a 1997 *Discovery* flight. His final shuttle mission was a 1999 *Columbia* flight during which the Chandra X-Ray Observatory was deployed. He now serves as director of NASA's Astromaterials Research and Exploration Science Directorate at the Johnson Space Center.

Bom in Ottawa, Kansas, Dr. Hawley considers Salina, Kansas, to be his home town. He received a B.A. in physics and astronomy (with highest distinction) from the University of Kansas in 1973 and a Ph.D. in astronomy and astrophysics from the University of Califomia in 1977. His research involved spectrophotometry of gaseous nebulae and emission-like galaxies with particular emphasis on chemical abundance determinations for these objects. He was selected as a NASA astronaut in 1978.

A veteran of five space flights, Dr. Hawley has logged a total of 32 days in space. Closer to home, he has visited with student groups and community organizations in the Third Congressional District of Kansas on six occasions: in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. I look forward to his retum to my congressional district next month, on April 11th. On behalf of the people of Kansas' Third Congressional District, I commend Steve Hawley on his upcoming induction into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame, congratulate him on his five successful space shuttle missions, and thank him for the many hours he has spent making space exploration and space technology come alive for his audiences in my congressional district.

TRIBUTE TO ANNETTE KLANG SMAIL

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my friend Annette Klang Smail who passed away March 10, 2007, in Marin County, California, after a lifetime of activism. Annette Smail's feisty grassroots approach worked on both the local and national levels, as she advocated nonstop for causes she believed in.

Annette was born in Napa County in 1920 and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1943 with a degree in English. She moved to Chicago where she met famed community organizer Saul Alinsky. She was a council delegate in his ''Back of the Yards'' neighborhood social movement, worked as a reporter and editor for its journal, and traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for meat packers.

In 1949, Annette married Air Force serviceman Donald Smail, and moved to Novato, California, with him in 1966. Upon their divorce in 1971, she discovered that she was no longer eligible for military medical benefits. And thus began a national crusade to secure these rights for former spouses of military personnel.

She felt the regulations left many women vulnerable and, in 1977, persuaded then-Congressman John Burton to introduce a bill to grant medical benefits to ex-spouses who had been married at least 20 years. The bill passed in 1984. Many women have benefited from her effort, especially older women whom she felt were often dependent upon their husbands after years of marriage.

Annette founded the Older Women's Caucus of National Women's Political Caucus, was a delegate to a White House Conference on Aging, and, in Marin County, co-founded the Novato Human Needs Center. In 1991, she was inducted into the Marin Women's Hall of Fame. Her commitment to ordinary people and her boundless energy inspired admiring reactions from her friends and family, and Rep. Burton called her ''the grande dame of the women's movement in Marin.''

Madam Speaker, we will miss Annette Smail's grassroots activism and her tireless efforts for a good cause. Her example has motivated many others to fight for their rights and not give up. And she paved the way for women like me to become involved and seek leadership positions. I am pleased to honor her today for all she has meant to so many.

TRIBUTE TO DR. KARL CARSON

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Dr. Karl Carson of Fort Collins, Colorado. Dr. Carson was quoted in 2005 saying he lived by a simple pledge: ''I hope, when I leave this place, I contributed to making it a better place.'' His legacy in Fort Collins was indeed a life of community service and devotion to family.

Karl was born on September 27, 1915, in Wichita, Kansas, to Daniel and Clara Helfrick Carson. He was raised on the family dairy farm and every day before he went to school he milked cows and bottled milk. In high school, he met his lifelong sweetheart Wilma Schull and they married August 23, 1936. To this union five children were born: Allen, James, Daniel, Thomas and LuAnn. The Carsons also have eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Karl Carson attended Fort Hays State University in Kansas a music scholarship. He paid his way through college by singing at weddings and parties. He served in the U.S. Navy Reserve during World War II. Mr. Carson was a communications officer on the U.S.S. *Strive*, a mine sweeper.

Following his military service, Mr. Carson attended the University of Nebraska and received his doctor of dental surgery degree in 1951. The Carson family moved to Fort Collins where Dr. Carson started his dental practice in 1954. His practice thrived and continued until his retirement in 1994. For 30 of those 43 years he practiced dentistry with his son, Tom. In 1991, the Colorado Dental Association gave him its Distinguished Service award.

Dr. Carson was a member of the Fort Collins City Council from 1965 to 1973. He held the city's top post, mayor, for five terms from 1968 to 1973 at a time when City Council elected the mayor. He considered his support of adding fluoride to Fort Collins water supply among his greatest achievements. During his tenure, he started a program called Designing Tomorrow Today, which led to the construction of the Lincoln Center, city hall, and the downtown library.

Dr. Carson's community service is legendary. He was the director of downtown Fort Collins development, president of Colorado Municipal League, and the Colorado League of Cities. He was also a member of Kiwanis since 1938. Continuing his love of music and youth, he lent his expertise to participants in the Kiwanis annual Stars of Tomorrow Talent Show.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Karl Carson indeed fulfilled his legacy of leaving this world a better place. The citizens of Fort Collins, Colorado will never forget him. He was a man of love and commitment to his family and community. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing Dr. Karl Carson.

PRIORITIZING COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER RESEARCH

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the ''Pollinator Protection Act.'' This legislation reflects my deep concern for the future of agriculture in this country by authorizing funding to confront the drastic decline of North American pollinators.

Madam Speaker, an alarming number of honey bee colonies have experienced irregular die offs throughout the United States in recent years. This phenomenon has been recently termed ''Colony Collapse Disorder'' because of its lack of recognizable underlying cause. This legislation that I introduce today will prioritize addressing Colony Collapse Disorder to protect the viability of American farmers.

This legislation is crucial because the security of food production is in jeopardy when there is a threat to the lives of honey bees. These little pollinators are a keystone species in their responsibility for the pollination of one-third of the crops that we consume. More specifically, pollination by honey bees promotes

healthy growth and adds over $15 billion annually to the value of U.S. crops.

Madam Speaker, the number of honey bee colonies throughout North America has gradually declined in recent decades due to parasites, pathogens, toxins and a host of other environmental factors. However, this rate of decline has increased significantly with the emergence of Colony Collapse Disorder. If the current rate of decline continues, the United States will be forced to rely more heavily on imported foods. This destabilization of American food security would have adverse effects on the availability, price, and quality of the many fruits, vegetables, and other products that depend on animal pollination.

I am proud of the vibrant variety of produce and citrus my district contributes to our Nation's food supply. However, this is an issue that not only impacts Floridians, but all citizens throughout this Nation. This is why I am honored that the Florida Department of Agriculture has contributed significantly to addressing Colony Collapse Disorder through the work of Jerry Hayes, Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Plant and Apiary Inspection. Mr. Hayes has contributed significantly to the Colony Collapse Disorder Working Group and I commend his effort along with those of his colleagues at the Pennsylvania State University, the United States Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Research Service, Bee Alert Technology, Inc., North Carolina State University, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Madam Speaker, it is necessary to provide funding to sustain the vital research of the Colony Collapse Disorder Working Group and the United States Department of Agriculture. As a former member of the Committee on Science and a graduate of Fisk University with an undergraduate degree in Zoology, I understand the value of their critical research. More specifically, this legislation will authorize immediate funding for laboratories conducting agricultural research at United States Department of Agriculture facilities as well as a reserve of $10,000,000 for cooperative state research, education, and extension service grants to conduct relevant research to protect American agriculture. This legislation also authorizes $5,250,000 over five years to conduct research specifically on Colony Collapse Disorder in the many affected States.

Madam Speaker, it is vital that this Congress takes on the task of supporting the work of the Colony Collapse Disorder Working Group. I would like to commend my colleague Chairman CARDOZA of the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture for taking up this charge by calling for a hearing on ''Honey Bee Decline'' this upcoming Thursday, March 29, 2007. I hope that the Pollinator Protection Act that I introduce today will aid in this cause and urge this Congress to prioritize this effort. I look forward to working with Chairman CARDOZA on this issue and offer my utmost support for restoring stability to honey bee pollinated agriculture in this great Nation.

HONORING THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Tuskegee Airmen on receiving the Congressional Gold Medal. ''Tuskegee Airmen'' refers to all who were involved in the so-called ''Tuskegee Experiment,'' the Army Air Corps program to train African Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air and bravely served our Nation during World War II.

In July 1941, 13 men started the first aviation cadet class at Tuskegee Army Field in Tuskegee, Alabama. After 9 months of vigorous flight training, 5 men successfully completed the program and graduated from the Tuskegee Flying School. These 5 airmen included CPT Lemuel R. Custis of my home State of Connecticut, who went on to become one of the first members of the 99th Fighter Squadron. The United States sent the 99th Fighter Squadron to North Africa and later Europe, where the Tuskegee Airmen proved to be valuable to the Allied Forces. In total, the Tuskegee Airmen of the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons distinguished themselves with 1,578 missions. Also, the 332nd earned a Presidential Unit Citation for ''outstanding courage, aggressiveness, and combat technique'' while escorting heavy bombers over Germany, The next generation of these outstanding individuals featured another constituent of mine, Flight Officer Connie Nappier, Jr., of Hartford, Connecticut. Nappier strived to excel at his work and passed every navigation exercise. Despite his accomplishments, he and others were constantly accused of cheating or denied credit for their outstanding achievements, which went directly to the white instructors. Connie Nappier and 100 other men were even thrown in prison for attempting to use the segregated Officer's Club at Freeman Field in Indiana, only to be released at the order of President Truman. The brave efforts of men like Connie Nappier, Jr., paved the way for African American aviators in the military.

Finally, these outstanding individuals will officially receive the award and credit that they have long deserved. Unfortunately, my constituent, Lemuel Custis passed away in February of 2005 at the age of 89, and will not have the opportunity to receive the honor he long deserved for his brave service to our Nation. Custis himself recognized in his own words that the Tuskegee Airmen ''were fighting a war on two fronts. They were fighting the enemy in Europe and Africa and they fought a Jim Crow society at home.'' Lemuel Custis was a hero and a true patriot, but is widely remembered to be a ''humble man who loved his country.'' Lemuel Custis, Connie Nappier, Jr., and the rest of the Tuskegee Airmen bravely rose above the obstacles set by the rampant discrimination of the period, and courageously defended a democracy that had not yet embraced them as true citizens.

Madam Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to join me today in honoring the Tuskegee Airmen for their outstanding service to our Nation. I feel privileged to assist in honoring heroes like Lemuel Custis and Connie Nappier, Jr. who stood up to defend our Nation in the midst of World War II, and helped to break down the racial barriers of the United States military. We all owe them our appreciation and respect for their valiant contribution to this county.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF ENSIGN JESSE L. BROWN, USN

HON. GENE TAYLOR

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, I rise today in tribute to the life and service of ENS Jesse LeRoy Brown, United States Navy. Ensign Brown was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on 13 October 1926. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1946 and was appointed a Midshipman, USN, the following year. After attending Navy pre-flight school and flight training, he was designated a Naval Aviator in October 1948, the first African-American to achieve this status. Midshipman Brown was then assigned to Fighter Squadron 32. He received his commission as an Ensign in April 1949.

During the Korean War, he operated from USS *Leyte*, flying F4U–4 Corsair fighter aircraft in support of United Nations forces. On December 4, 1950, while on a close air support mission near the Chosin Reservoir, Ensign Brown's plane was hit by enemy fire and crashed. Despite heroic efforts by other aviators, he could not be rescued and died in his aircraft. ENS Jesse L. Brown was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his Korean War combat service.

In honor of his service, the Secretary of the Navy named the 38th ship in the Knox-class of frigates the USS *Jesse L. Brown.*

Madam Speaker, I know my colleagues will join me in honoring Jesse's memory, and celebrating the addition of a plaque in his memory to the Naval Aviation Monument Park in Virginia Beach, to be presented May 5, 2007. Ensign Brown was both a pioneer and a model of service to country, who gave his life that we might enjoy our freedom.

DR. RABBI PAUL B. SILTON

HON. MICHAEL R. McNULTY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. McNULTY. Madam Speaker, this morning I had the honor of introducing our guest chaplain for today, my very dear friend and teacher, Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton of Temple Israel in Albany, New York.

In order for House Members to have a greater understanding of Rabbi Silton's extraordinary accomplishments, I submit a more detailed description of his impressive background:

Dr. Rabbi Paul Silton, Rabbi of Temple Israel, the largest conservative synagogue in northeast New York, received his B.A. in Philosophy from Boston University, an M.A. in Hebrew Literature and Rabbinical Ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1970, and a Doctor of Divinity in 1996. At his graduation from the Jewish Theological Seminary, he was awarded the top prize in Pastoral Counseling. While at the Seminary, he studied at the Meir Yeshiva in Brooklyn and taught at religious schools in Fort Lee, New Jersey; Hartford, Connecticut; and Rumson, New Jersey. He also served as Gabbai of the Seminary Synagogue under the

supervision of Dr. Rabbi Saul Lieberman and Dr. Rabbi Louis Finkelstein. Prior to his move to Albany, New York, Rabbi Silton spent 6 years as a teacher and Education Director at Camps Ramah in Glen Spey, New York and in Palmer, Massachusetts. Rabbi Silton arrived in Albany after serving as Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, Massachusetts. While in North Adams, Rabbi Silton taught at Williams College and served as prison chaplain.

Already in 1974, the pattern of Rabbi Silton's Rabbinate began to diverge from that of his colleagues. Here at Temple Israel, he began his career as Educational Director for students N–12, including the Communal High School, Camp Givah Director and assistant to Rabbi Kieval. In each of those areas, he actively fostered growth and change. Gradually the nursery school expanded into a full Early Childhood Center, servicing day care needs of pre-kindergarten youngsters and their parents. It now includes Baby and Me, Mommy (or Daddy) and Me toddler programs, and morning and afternoon nursery. The Religious School extended to 7 hours a week and featured a school-wide Israeli Dance Program, which eventually grew to present dance performances in Albany, Boston, and New York City. On Shabbatot and High Holidays, preprimary and primary children in addition to ''Juniors'' could now attend services especially designed for them. As they grew older, students could tour and study in Israel with double the amount of scholarship aid from generous member endowments and community sources. Adults could now attend class 5 days a week and occasionally participate in Hebrew Reading Marathons; Professor Stephen Berk's lecture series became a most successful Adult Education program.

At Camp Givah, Rabbi Silton founded the Kibbutz Program, inspired the building of Yam Sarah (Givah's lake), the arts and crafts center, and the early childhood shelter. He introduced and developed programs in boating, gymnastics, computers, horseback riding, and Red Cross Boating Certification. For younger children who literally could not wait until next summer's Givah excitement, he originated and organized Camp Horef Katan, a winter camp.

As Rabbi Silton's responsibilities increased, so his avid interest in many other areas continued to expand. He founded Holocaust Survivors and Friends in Pursuit of Justice and he hosted the first major 3-day national Holocaust conference for 1500 participants in April 1984 at Temple Israel. Since then he has organized a multitude of services for the community Kristalnacht and Holocaust Memorial commemorations, featuring international figures such as Beate Klarsfeld. He visited Germany several times in support of those testifying at war crimes trials, to officiate at an interfaith service in Passau, Germany, and at other events that united survivors and liberators.

Silton's most passionate efforts, however, have focused on Temple and community. In addition to attending to traditional Rabbinical duties at Temple Israel, he greatly expanded the Bar and Bat Mitzvah roles of boys and girls, initiated full reading of the scrolls by women on various holidays, a women's prayer group, Rosh Chodesh benching, P'Sukei D'Zimra, and regular Torah reading; he introduced Birkat Kohanim on an ongoing basis, a hashkamah (early) minyan and a learners' minyan. He also began a daily study program of Jewish text which takes place every morning. This study program has continued for the past 10 years. In addition, he strengthened the daily minyanim, instituted Yom Kippur dialogues with inspiring international figures, initiated holiday dinners and workshops, organized Hassidic Song Festivals, Cantorial concerts and innumerable Kallot featuring international performers and scholars. Through the efforts of Rabbi Silton, Temple Israel has received numerous awards from United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism including those for: Israel Affairs, Camp Givah, Performing Arts, Community Relations and Israel/Masorti Affairs as well as Education Awards for Programming, High School Education and the Framework for Excellence Synagogue School Program Award. He assisted in the founding of HADAR, the award-winning Judaic Art and Book Center at Temple Israel. Rabbi Silton has also been featured in four books including The Outraged Conscience by Rochelle G. Saidel, 1984; Against the Stream: Growing Up Where Hitler Used to Live by Anna Rosmus, 2002; Out of Passau: Leaving a City Hitler Called Home by Anna Rosmus, 2004; and in a soon to be published book about the Sabbath by Christopher Ringwald.

All of the above mentioned activities attracted the community to Temple Israel but Silton directly involved himself in countless community events as well. For nearly 20 years he directed the Communal High School and taught at the Bet Shraga Capital District Hebrew Academy. When Soviet Jewish immigration was at its height, he supervised the ritual circumcisions of nearly all Soviet immigrants' male children, arranged and officiated at the first Russian Jewish wedding and Bar Mitzvah of these newly settled immigrants in the Capital District. In addition to serving on a host of community boards and committees including the Police Review Board under Mayor Gerald Jennings, he initiated the first Jewish-Latino Seder, hosted the third annual Black-Jewish Seder, assisted the Aviva chapter of B'nai B'rith with the first Seder for the developmentally disabled, discussed Judaism with hundreds of church groups and taught basic Judaism classes and has lectured at area colleges including College of St. Rose, Maria College, Siena College, and SUNY Albany. He also worked with Mayor Jennings on the observance of Yom HaShoah to honor the late Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese ''Oskar Schindler''. In 1994, Silton built the first mikveh owned by Temple Israel to serve the congregation and the entire Capital district community. The building of the mikveh has been an inspiration to other conservative congregations throughout the country. An article about it will be coming out in the very near future of United Synagogue Review.

On an ongoing basis, Rabbi Silton teaches in the Temple Israel Educational Center: junior high, high school, and adult education departments. Following the Six Day War, Rabbi Silton spent a year of study in Israel with his wife, Faye. While studying at the Hebrew University and the Rav Kook Yeshiva in Jerusalem, he learned to become a Mohel. Ordained in 1968 by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, he has officiated at thousands of B'ritol Milah from Syracuse to the Catskills to Western Massachusetts. Rabbi Silton and his wife, Faye, are the parents of Elana (Dr. Ari) Moskowitz, Michal (David, Esq.) Kahan, Dr. Akiva (Dr. Sharon) Silton, Tamar, Esq. (Jeremy) Epstein, Aviva (Ami) Robinson, Nava Silton and Shira Silton. They currently have 15 grandchildren.

COMMENDING THE ADELPHI NEW YORK STATEWIDE BREAST CANCER HOTLINE & SUPPORT PROGRAM

HON. CAROLYN McCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the Adelphi New York Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program (''the Program''). The Program, established 27 years ago at the Adelphi University School of Social Work, was one of the first breast cancer programs in the country. This highly respected and valued program has developed important services that have been replicated throughout the U.S., and volunteers have been crucial to the services provided. On April 19, 2007, the Program volunteers who have given women a place to turn when faced with breast cancer will be recognized.

The dedicated volunteers and staff of the Program offer crucial information and emotional support to people throughout New York who are coping with breast cancer. Almost all the 100 volunteers have had breast cancer. They know the fear and confusion that comes with the discovery of a breast lump or the diagnosis of breast cancer. Because they have ''been there,'' they immediately provide hope and much more to callers. These highly trained and well-supervised volunteers direct callers to the latest information, sending pamphlets and other resources when needed. They let them know what services are available in their communities. And they are a ''shoulder to lean on'' for callers. They are there to listen and to help and get people through difficult times.

My office has used the program many times when constituents have come to me looking for help for themselves or their family members. I have been able to refer them to the Adelphi Program knowing that they will be handled with care and concern and given the best possible assistance. In the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, of which I am the Chairwoman, we have explored the need for volunteers and I understand how critical volunteerism is to this Nation. I thank the Program and its volunteers for their work.

TRIBUTE TO MINNIE BELLE MCINTOSH

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of my constituents, Minnie Belle McIntosh, who celebrates her 100th birthday on March 30, 2007.

Minnie Belle McIntosh has led an extraordinary life. When she was only 4 years old, her mother died of tuberculosis, leaving her and her sister Anne as orphans to be shuttled

between relatives in Mississippi and Texas. Despite this early hardship, the bright and lively Minnie Belle graduated from the Blue Mountain College boarding school and attended college at the Mississippi State College for Women, where she majored in math and physics. Her senior thesis on ''The Talking Machines'' included correspondence with Thomas Edison.

After college, Minnie Belle took up the only occupation available to an educated woman in that region and became a schoolteacher. The drop in crop prices following World War I hit Mississippi particularly hard, but Roosevelt's New Deal legislation opened up new opportunities for its residents. Minnie Belle became an extension officer; her job was to inform rural families of the best ways to provide their children with good nutrition. Because of her gender, her employment was never stable, and she traveled from Minneapolis to California to Texas to Mississippi to perform her job, but her ''people skills'' made her an excellent social worker.

During World War II Minnie Belle, like many other women, went to work in Washington, DC. She was employed by the Department of Agriculture, from which she retired in 1972.

Her volunteer work in Maryland in recent years has been exemplary. The Shepherd's Table and The Clothes Closet were founded to feed and clothe the homeless, and Minnie Belle marshaled the efforts of some 50 volunteers. Confronted with a mountain of donated clothes, she used the size measurements from a Sears catalogue to mark trousers and dresses, and she guided the clients with good humor and common sense. The success of The Shepherd's Table in Maryland and Montgomery County owes much to Minnie Belle McIntosh's involvement.

At 85, Minnie Belle moved into a retirement community, Bedford Court in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she turned her attention to recycling. She quickly whipped the residents into shape, creating an army of recyclers, who dutifully washed out bottles and cans, separated paper trash from garbage, and happily signed up to be floor recycling monitors. She and Bedford Court are recipients of more than a half dozen awards recognizing their efforts.

Her greatest asset, however, besides her persistence, is her interest in people and kindness to all. Even now, as she reaches 100 years, she knows everyone's name and story.

On this special occasion, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring Minnie Belle McIntosh on her 100th birthday and in recognizing her as a woman of great perseverance, kindness, and accomplishment. I am delighted to wish her a year of good health and happiness and to thank her for her wonderful contributions to our community.

HONORING JOHN HEIBEL

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to honor John Heibel, who serves as a Storekeeper Second Class Petty Officer in the United States Coast Guard. Recently, Mr. Heibel was awarded Baltimore Area Coast Guard Enlisted Person of the Year.

The Coast Guard requires the recipient of this award to demonstrate pride, professionalism, dedication, and to represent the Coast Guard's core values. Mr. Heibel has excelled in all of these categories, over-qualifying him for this prestigious award.

Mr. Heibel possesses a solid set of leadership skills and he has utilized them in the noblest way possible: serving this country. Throughout his career, Mr. Heibel's leadership skills have propelled him forward. He began as a Seaman Recruit, then moved up to Storekeeper Third Class, and currently serves as Storekeeper Second Class. In all of these positions, Heibel demonstrated a commitment to customer service, setting a respectable example for his colleagues to follow. He continues to challenge himself as a leader by enrolling in Officer Candidate School.

Mr. Heibel has also committed himself to community service, volunteering for several causes and organizations. He has volunteered for the Fort Meade Turkey Donation, helping to prepare turkey dinners for low-income families in the Baltimore area. Heibel also served as a unit Morale representative and organized a series of Morale events. He planned a picnic at a Baltimore Orioles game which featured the ELC color guard in the opening ceremony. Heibel coordinated a private viewing of the movie ''The Guardian,'' an event which produced a significant turn-out. He also helps to fundraise by selling raffle tickets and concessions at Coast Guard softball games.

Mr. Heibel's accomplishments extend into the classroom as well. After earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Heibel has decided to continue his education by pursuing a master's degree. He has enrolled in and completed a series of challenging courses such as Business Calculus and Intermediate Accounting.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join with me today in honoring John Heibel. This outstanding individual will never stop challenging himself and his record of success demonstrates that there is no limit to all he can achieve. Mr. Heibel's aspiration for knowledge, strides as a leader, and service to his country all prove that he is worthy of recognition. Let his outstanding accomplishments serve as an example to us all as we work to improve our communities and our country.

A TRIBUTE TO THE REVEREND DR. M. JWAHIR BRATHWAITE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Reverend Dr. M. Jwahir Brathwaite. Dr. Brathwaite is a graduate of the Howard University School of Business and Public Administration, the Howard University Graduate School of Divinity, and the United Theological Seminary. She has also received educational certification from the University of Dayton.

Dr. Brathwaite serves the community as an associate pastor at the Stuyvesant-Heights Christian Church in Brooklyn, New York. Ordained at the Concord Baptist Church of Christ in 1997, Dr. Brathwaite is a Professor of Religious Studies and Holistic Health and Wellness at the College of New Rochelle's School of New Resources at both the Brooklyn and Harlem Campuses.

Dr. Brathwaite has been a fitness-professional for more than 25 years. She has worked with the YMCA in Brooklyn, New York, Washington, DC, and Memphis, Tennessee. She presently serves her community through the YMCA Bedford-Stuyvesant Branch.

In addition to teaching for the College of New Rochelle, Dr. Brathwaite has taught fitness health and wellness for Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, Shelby State Community College, and the University of Memphis in Tennessee. Dr. Brathwaite has trained International Dance and Exercise Association instructors and several others who have gone on to teach at places such as: the New York State Conservatory Police, colleges and universities, family fitness ministries, and numerous other fitness facilities.

Dr. Brathwaite is the president and founder of Family Fitness Ministries, a ministry focusing on fitness and wellness for churches and their communities. Dr. Brathwaite's training roster includes: Author Zora Neal Hurston; the internationally acclaimed singing group Sweet Honey in the Rock; late film, stage, and television actress Rosland Cash; and a host of Fortune 500 Company professionals.

A Christian broadcaster for more than 20 years, Dr. Brathwaite has carried the healing message of God throughout the community through public speaking and outreach. The world of Christian Broadcasting afforded her the opportunity to work with the National Association of Broadcasters' number one religious radio organization in the country, Salem Communications Corp. She also worked with A&M Records where she represented such gospel recording artists as: Richard Smallwood; Al Green; the Clark Sisters; Reverend Shirley Caesar; Rosie Grier; and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Dr. Brathwaite has been recognized numerous times for her community involvement and leadership. She has received awards from the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., the Ford Foundation, Outstanding Women of America, John Burroughs Elementary School, and the International Who's Who of Professional Business Women just to name a few.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize this pillar of our community the Reverend Dr. M. Jwahir Brathwaite for all that she has accomplished.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the Reverend Dr. M. Jwahir Brathwaite.

COMMENDING JACOB WEST

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jacob West of Marcus High School for his recognition as a 2007 Presidential Scholar.

The Presidential Scholar Commission honors up to 121 graduating seniors each year for outstanding academic achievement. This award is one of our Nation's highest for high school students. Jacob is being honored as a Presidential Scholar for his exceptional performance on the SAT.

At Marcus High School, Jacob is a member and leader within the Marcus band, who won a State championship this year. He is also involved in the Junior Classical League, the National Honor Society, and other organizations. He has received a plethora of academic awards at Marcus and was a National Merit finalist.

Jacob is a notable example of how the education system in Texas is committed to fostering growth in students and giving them the skills they need to achieve. Congratulations to Jacob, his family, and Marcus High School for this outstanding achievement.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARTIN VIRSIS

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Martin Virsis for his unwavering dedication and service to the veterans' community of Northeast Ohio.

Martin began his path to success by earning a bachelor's degree at Kent State University and later by receiving his master's degree at Ohio University. As a licensed nursing home administrator, Martin used his talents and implemented his knowledge to manage several nursing facilities in Ohio. His devotion to help others in need continued as he began to offer transportation for those in the community who encountered challenges with mobility due to their disabilities.

As an Army veteran, Martin is no stranger to the sacrifices and the hardships that face those who have courageously served our country, only to come home as unrecognized heroes. Because of Martin's desire to help those who have fought to protect us, it was no surprise when he, Joe Paul and Patricia Cicowicz established Mobil Martin.

Since 1996, Mobil Martin has provided Northeast Ohio veterans with quality service and the recognition they deserve. Each year Mobil Martin makes donations to various charities that benefit the veterans' community and local businesses.

Every June, Mobil Martin provides transportation to Founder's Day, a celebration of the Founder's Path Organization, which gives opportunities to disabled and less fortunate veterans without homes. He also ensures that the transportation needs for the VA Per Diem at 2100 Lakeside Avenue are met. In addition to the multitude of services Mobil Martin provides, Mobil Martin also employs a large percentage of U.S. veterans.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honoring Martin Virsis for his commitment to helpmg those less fortunate. His integrity and selflessness bring great pride to our community.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. CARSON. Madam Speaker, I was unable to record my rollcall votes No. 187, No. 188, and No. 189. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on all three.

A TRIBUTE TO IRVING FEINARMAN

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, today I am proud to honor my valiant constituent, Tec. Sgt. Irving Feinarman, as he receives the Jubilee of Liberty Medal for his courageous acts during the Normandy Invasion, and his illustrious legacy of courage throughout World War II.

Mr. Feinarman was drafted at the age of 22 into the army. He trained at Fort Meade, Camp Picket, and Fort Dix before he was sent into combat in North Africa and Sicily. After operations ended in Sicily, he was sent to train in England for the 8 months leading to a great invasion and then, as he put it, "Before I knew it, I was on Omaha Beach on D Day!"

Tec. Sgt. Feinarman was supposed to be part of the second wave on the beach, landing at 6 a.m., but the beach was so overrun, it was difficult to tell the first from the second wave of soldiers. He and his fellow soldiers just kept fighting, cut off from their leadership, and pushing onward until they found themselves fighting in the hedgerows of Normandy.

As the Battle of the Bulge began, Feinarman had been given leave in Paris for a few days. Suddenly, however, all American soldiers were rounded up. He and his compatriots did not know that they were being put back into combat as the Germans were about to start "their big push, trying to get us all out of Europe, period. Giving us everything they had."

Mr. Feinarman was awarded the Bronze Star for his valor in Aachen, Germany. Surrounded by enemy tanks and cut off from the commander of his unit, he volunteered to cross the field and get help. He was shot at, but got through unharmed, and returned with the assistance his company needed.

At the end of the war, Irving Feinarman was the only man from his entire original company—over 200 soldiers—who survived and remained unwounded, an amazing victory itself.

To his family and his lifelong friend Bill Etros, Mr. Feinarman's warmth and laughter are part of every fond memory. With great humility and humor, he insists that he is no hero for his brave actions, that he was only doing his duty. Would that there were some recognition beyond a medal that this country could award Mr. Feinarman who came through the hell of war with a laugh in his heart and a smile on his lips.

I ask my colleagues here in the House of Representatives to join me today in expressing the Nation's gratitude to a brave soldier, Irving Feinarman.

HONORING DAVID K. ISRAEL

HON. CAROLYN McCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize David Israel on the occasion of his retirement from teaching. For over 40 years Mr. Israel has served the East Williston School District with passion and commitment. With a degree in English, Mr. Israel graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College, and later received his masters in education from Harvard Graduate School. In 1965 he went to work as an English teacher at the Wheatley School, part of East Williston Union Free School District.

David Israel has been a brilliant asset to his community, to local teachers, to statewide legislators, and to the students he has taught. He became president of the East Williston Teachers' Association in 1980, a position which he holds to this day. Throughout his tenure, he has co-founded the East Williston Teacher's Association Scholarship Foundation, which awards a 4-year scholarship each year to a worthy Wheatley School graduate who intends to become a schoolteacher. Recently he has been elected to the New York State United Teachers as a representative of District 19, comprising the northwestern portion of Nassau County. Not only has Mr. Israel been a valuable member of his community, but he has been a great friend to myself and my staff with his guidance and advice.

The future of this country depends on the hopes and dreams of its children, and our community and our Nation are enhanced by the contributions of passionate and committed teachers like David Israel.

HONORING ROBERT LYNCH

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and honor one of my constituents, Robert P. Lynch, for his 65 years of service and commitment to the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department.

Mr. Lynch joined the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department in May 1942. Since then, he has served in every appointed and elected position in the fire department, including President, member of the Board of Directors, and Fire Chief, with over 15 years as Assistant Chief for Rescue. He has served as a Delegate or Alternate to the Maryland State Fireman's Association for an astonishing 52 years. Mr. Lynch has served his community at the county, state and national levels for scores of years and served as a Delegate to the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association. He taught emergency care for nearly 20 years and continues to serve on committees and workgroups, playing an active role, attending nearly every function, and participating in every company meeting.

Mr. Lynch retired from the United States Justice Department, where he served since 1941. He earned the American Legion's Citation for Meritorious Service. He was a devoted

husband to Margaret, who was also active in the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department, until her recent death.

Thanks to the tireless and dedicated efforts of Robert P. Lynch, our community is a safer place to live and work. Mr. Lynch is an extraordinary and unselfish American and an inspiration to us all.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting Mr. Lynch for his outstanding contributions to the people of the State of Maryland.

HONORING THE 2007 NCAA DIVISION II WOMEN'S NATIONAL BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS: THE SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY OWLS

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with the pride and excitement that I rise today to join our community and the State of Connecticut in congratulating this year's NCAA Division II Women's National Basketball Champions, the Southern Connecticut State University Owls. Led by coach Joe Frager and the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, Kate Lynch, the Owls earned the national title after a 61–45 win over previously undefeated Florida Gulf Coast—making the victory that much more thrilling.

Unlike the Division I tournament, where teams are seen from coast to coast throughout the season and information on the strengths and challenges of each team are well documented, the Owls of Southern Connecticut State University began their journey with little knowledge about any of the opposing teams. They did not waiver from the teamwork that brought them to the tournament. Navigating this uncharted territory with the trust they built throughout the season and an indomitable spirit, the Owls steadily moved through the tournament. With four teammates posting double figures in the final game against Florida Gulf Coast, the Owls cruised to a blow-out victory and proudly brought the championship trophy home, where they were greeted with a confetti-strewn welcome.

The people of Connecticut are tremendously proud of the Owls, who have set an example for us all with their teamwork and standard for perfection. This victory was a team effort—because of their hard work, absolute determination and a commitment to teamwork on and off the court, these talented young women have earned the title champions. Their outstanding success and unbridled enthusiasm for the game will certainly be remembered, serving as an inspiration for future players.

It is with my heartfelt congratulations that I stand today to honor the women of the Southern Connecticut State University basketball team on this outstanding victory. They played hard, they played smart, and they have made us all proud. Go Owls!

HONORING DANIEL HAHN

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to honor Mr. Daniel Hahn, in celebration of his over fifty years of federal service.

Daniel Hahn, a Tool Room Mechanic at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland, often tells people he feels like he's been at the Coast Guard Yard his whole life. Except for a few years while he served in the United States Marine Corps, he has spent his whole life at the Yard. In 1933, Daniel Hahn was born in a brown shingle house just outside the Coast Guard Yard's main entrance. His father, Louis, a 30-year Coast Guard Yard veteran, met his mother Elizabeth through a co-worker at the shipyard. Five of his uncles in the Hahn family also devoted their federal careers to the Coast Guard Yard. When Daniel was 3 years old, he and his family attended the Yard's Christmas Party, held in the on-base movie theater. That memorable afternoon, Daniel won a handmade wooden rocking horse—a now cherished possession that he keeps to this day. Not only did Daniel enjoy the rocking horse he won at the Coast Guard Yard, but his 3 children, 13 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren have also enjoyed many hours of play on the Coast Guard Yard holiday prize from 1936.

While attending Glen Burnie High School, Daniel worked the summer of 1951 at the Coast Guard Yard. He graduated the following year and joined the United States Marine Corps. However, within 3 years he returned to the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay and after a brief period of outside employment, has worked at the Coast Guard Yard ever since.

Most of Daniel Hahn's federal career at the Curtis Bay shipyard was as an electrician in the Electric Shop. Since 1990, he has worked in the Yard's Central Tool Room as a Tool Room Mechanic. On April 5, 2007, the United States Coast Guard will extend honors to Mr. Hahn in recognition of his 50 years of dedicated service. He is 1 of only 4 current Coast Guard civilian employees who have attained their Golden Anniversary with the federal government. Mr. Hahn plans to continue his work at the Coast Guard Yard beyond his 50th anniversary. Four months after this unique career achievement, Daniel Hahn will celebrate another milestone in life. He and his wife, Thelma, will celebrate their 52nd wedding anniversary on August 30, 2007.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join with me today to honor Mr. Daniel Hahn. He is an outstanding and dedicated employee at the Coast Guard's Curtis Bay Shipyard. Through his tireless efforts in over 50 years of public service, he has shown a unique and committed work ethic that few can emulate. He has gone above and beyond the call of duty in his devotion to the United States Coast Guard and the United States of America.

A TRIBUTE TO LT. COLONEL JOHN MULZAC

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend, constituent and all around great guy, Lt. Colonel John Mulzac. Colonel Mulzac, or Daddy John as he is affectionately called, is an original Tuskegee Airman. He is an original member of the very first group of African-American World War II fighter pilots of the "99th Pursuit Squadron," later incorporated into the "332nd Fighter Group" and finally the "477th Bomber Group."

After fighting in World War II, Daddy John went on to fly in the Korean War and later the Vietnam War. He was then a member of the Air Force Reserve and then the New York State Air National Guard. Overall, Daddy John has logged more than 15,000 flying hours for the United States Air Force serving from 1942 to 1983. In addition to his service with the U.S. Air Force, Daddy John worked for 20 years as a New York City firefighter. His son Robert Mulzac is continuing the family legacy and is currently a Lieutenant in New York City's Fire Department.

In 1970, Daddy John left the New York City Fire Department and became a member of the First Group of U.S. Sky Marshals Flying World with several airlines including TWA. He continued his career as a Sky Marshal through 1972 training other Sky Marshals in Washington, DC.

Following 21 years of service as a United States Customs Inspector for New York Kennedy Airport's Area Inspection and Control Division, Daddy John retired.

Born on October 11, 1923 in Baltimore, Maryland, Daddy John spent his childhood in Bedford-Stuyvesant, where he now resides with his wife of 61 years, Beatrice. They have been blessed with 8 children, 24 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. It was his wife Beatrice who pinned on Daddy John's pilots wings upon his graduation from Tuskegee Institute in 1944.

Daddy John now spends most of his time in real estate and on the computer emailing his 6 grandchildren, who are enrolled in colleges throughout the country.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Lt. Colonel John Mulzac for his years of service and his invaluable contributions to our country. He is a true leader among men.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a remarkable man, Lt. Colonel John Mulzac.

COMMENDING CAROLINE HAMILTON

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Caroline Hamilton of Lewisville High School for her recognition as a 2007 Presidential Scholar.

The Presidential Scholar Commission honors up to 121 graduating seniors each year for

outstanding academic achievement. This prestigious award is one of our nation's highest for high school students. Caroline is being honored as a Presidential Scholar for exceptional performance on the SAT. She earned a perfect score of 2400.

At Lewisville High School, Caroline is 2nd in her class and a leader in the band, as well as a member of National Honors Society and various other organizations. Outside of school, she is a member of our Congressional Youth Advisory Council and has received many well deserved accolades in Lewisville and Denton County.

Caroline is a notable example of how the education system in Texas is committed to fostering growth in students and giving them the skills they need to achieve. Congratulations to Caroline, her family, and Lewisville High School for this outstanding achievement.

IN RECOGNITION OF PATRICIA CICHOWICZ

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor of Patricia Cichowicz for her unflagging dedication to serving Northeast Ohio veterans.

Born to Emmett and Ann Holleran, Patricia excelled at school and developed a deep consideration for the most vulnerable in our midst. During her undergraduate and graduate studies, Patricia taught elementary school at St. Stanislaus and St. Vincent de Paul. After graduation, her devotion to our community's children continued as she taught special education at St. Thomas More.

Eager to spread her generosity to other members of the community, Patricia sought opportunities to serve other vulnerable populations. Her search brought her to cross paths with Martin Virsis and Joe Paul, two men on similar journeys to serve the community. They began Mobil Martin, an ambulette business that transports disabled veterans around the community. Since 1996, when Mobil Martin comprised three vans and a dining room office, they have been a vital resource for Cleveland's veteran community.

Despite the sacrifices that veterans make in service to their country, once they leave active duty their efforts can go unrecognized. Patricia and everyone at Mobil Martin recognized the injustice inherent in the treatment of veterans, and set to ensure they have the resources to meet their needs. Since Mobil Martin's inception, Patricia's dedication has been evident in everything she has done, from helping the organization in its infancy, to ensuring all the veterans had shoes or lap blankets.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honoring Patricia Cichowicz for all her contributions to the Cleveland community. May her commitment to veterans serve as an example for us all, that we may repay their service with our own compassion.

IN HONOR OF THE BIRTHDAY OF CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of César Chávez, not only because he was one of the great leaders of our country, but also because he was my friend. César was a man of courage, faith, and love who shared his strength with thousands and inspired millions of Americans.

To know César was to stand in awe of the enormous task he set for himself and the great moral leadership he gave to the campaign to challenge injustice and achieve peaceful change. His life, his cause, and his commitment have been and remain an inspiration to me.

His struggle for oppressed farmworkers fired our conscience. He insisted that this Nation acknowledge that every human being, regardless of origin, is of worth and is entitled to reach for a better tomorrow.

What made César Chávez stand out was that he lived the principles he preached: truth and courage. He knew what it was like to be treated without respect, and to work all day, everyday, with little to show for it. A lesser man may have burned up with anger, but Chávez burned with a love of justice and hope for a brighter future.

César's struggle for justice is far from over and we must continue to help others help themselves.

In Congress, we hold the power to create change. The Agricultural Jobs, Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act of 2007 would bring major improvements to the lives of farmworkers in America. This bill would create a path for eligible undocumented farmworkers to apply for temporary immigration status or permanent residency based on their work experience. It would also preserve and enhance key labor protections for guestworkers.

Like Chávez, I believe there's nothing more wasteful than leaving a child with no good choices after graduation, and nothing more un-American than charging children with the offenses of their parents. With César in mind, I introduced the Dream Act, a bill that helps undocumented students realize their dream of going to college and becoming permanent legal members of the communities they've always called home.

César helped us see through the eyes of farmworkers—and what they saw was a dark and hopeless world. But under his leadership, they saw a new world, one of strength and hope, united against poverty and exploitation. Under UFW contracts, they won higher pay and for the first time—health coverage and pension benefits.

We will remember César's fight and never forget what he taught us—that we will succeed—that we will protect the gains that were so hard to win—that we will never give up.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. CARSON. Madam Speaker, I was unable to record my rollcall votes Nos. 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on: roll No. 190, roll No. 191, roll No. 192, roll No. 193, roll No. 194, roll No. 195, roll No. 198, roll No. 199, and roll No. 201.

Had I been present I would have voted "nay" on: roll No. 196, roll No. 197, and roll No. 200.

HONORING DR. CHRISTOPHER COPPOLA AS HE IS HONORED WITH THE SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER AWARD

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to honor Dr. Christopher Coppola as he is honored by his alma mater, Xavier High School, with their distinguished Saint Francis Xavier Award. This prestigious award recognizes those who have demonstrated outstanding character and leadership—qualities which are at the core of an Xavier education.

Chris has achieved many great accomplishments throughout his life. He is a loving husband and father, dedicated pediatric surgeon, and proud member of the United States Air Force. It was just last year that Chris, a member of the 859th Surgical Operations Squadron, was deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During his 4 month tour, Chris fought to save the lives of hundreds—American and Iraqi alike. It was from his experiences there that he recently published the book, "Made a Difference for That One: A Surgeon's Letters Home From Iraq."

As a doctor and surgeon, Chris has witnessed a myriad of incidents and battled to save the lives of countless patients. Even with all of his experience, Chris was unsure of what he might find waiting for him in Iraq. He began writing to his wife, Meredith, and family as a way to purge the horrific scenes he saw day in and day out. Chris wrote about every aspect of the war—from what he was eating to descriptions of the patients he was treating. One of the most telling letters described his experience with two young girls whose home had been fire bombed. Both burned badly, Chris and the surgical team fought to save them—unfortunately they lost one. In a twist of fate, Chris also saved the life of a man whom he later discovered was responsible for the bombing of the girls' home.

Meredith saved all of Chris's letters, often sharing them with their three sons and other family members. Chris is one of my cousins and I received a package from his parents containing some of his letters. I was touched, not only by his description of his experience, but by the dedication and commitment he showed to his own mission. I was proud to

discover that, upon his return home, Chris and Meredith decided to publish this poignant collection of letters and use the book as a means to further support members of our military and their families.

All of the proceeds from the sales of ''Made a Difference'' will be donated to the Fisher House Foundation, an organization which supports America's military and their families in times of need. Because members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide and must often travel great distances for specialized medical care, Fisher House Foundation donates ''comfort homes,'' built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times—during the hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury.

As a husband, father, doctor, surgeon, and Air Force Major, Chris has touched countless lives—exemplifying the very spirit of Xavier's educational mission and I cannot think of a more fitting recognition than the Saint Francis Xavier Award. It is with great pride that I rise today to join all of those gathered to join his wife, Meredith, his parents, Dr. Paul and Eileen Coppola, family, friends, and Xavier High School in congratulating Dr. Christopher Coppola on this very special occasion.

A TRIBUTE TO OLANIKE T. ALABI

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ms. Olanike T. Alabi, who is the proud daughter of immigrants who came to the United States several decades ago. She is a product of the New York City Public School system, graduating from Midwood High School. She also attended Brooklyn College's prominent Medical Science Institute. She later received her bachelor of arts degree from Temple University, where she carried a double major and a minor. In 1999, she was accepted to the prestigious University of London in Great Britain, where she pursued a master of arts degree.

Olanike Alabi is currently employed by Local 1199 of the SEIU United Healthcare Workers East as an assistant to the president. There, she also participates in a voluntary voter-registration program as well as political campaign events.

Ms. Alabi has received certificates and awards from such organizations as the Family and Support Resources Group; the Training and Employment Council (TEC) Brooklyn; the Access Fund, an organization dedicated to providing scholarships for students attending institutions of higher learning; a Great Force Partner Award from former Congressman Major Owens; a Woman of the Year Award from State Senator John Sampson; and I have presented Ms. Alabi with a Community Service Award for her outstanding work in the community.

Additionally, she has established herself as a fighter for justice. In June of 2003, after being fired from her job as the District Manager for CB No. 2, she filed an Article 78 proceeding at the Kings County Supreme Court and was granted a favorable, unanimous decision from a panel of judges at the Appellate Division, 2nd Department in April of 2005. Her lawsuit resulted in her reinstatement with compensation and the City of New York issuing proper procedures for terminating a community board employee. In June of 2004, she filed a New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) proceeding against a Brooklyn-based property owner and was successful in the venture in March of 2005.

She continues to be featured as a public speaker at events celebrating women's history, school graduations, chemical dependency programs, and college fairs, and as a moderator for political debates, some of which were most recently aired on Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). She was recently elected as the state committeewomen (district leader) of the 57th A.D.

Finally, her primary interests include public service, international affairs, labor, industrial relations and education. She enjoys reading, writing and traveling. Her church, organizational board and memberships include: Emmanuel Baptist Church in Brooklyn, Board for the Education of People of African Ancestry, the Community Advisory Board of the Cumberland Diagnostic and Treatment Center, League of Women Voters, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Church Women United, Inc., and a host of other local and civic organizations.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Ms. Alabi and all of her hard work and the precedents she has set.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Ms. Olanike T. Alabi.

IN REFERENCE TO THE COOPER RIVER 10K BRIDGE RUN

HON. MIKE FERGUSON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. FERGUSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor one of my constituents, Michael L. Drozd of Hillsborough, New Jersey. He is dedicating his time and efforts to an important cause. On March 31, Michael will be running in the Cooper River 10K Bridge Run to support the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

This fund provides financial assistance to Marines in combat and training and to their families. Since its inception in May 2004 through the end of last year, the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund has provided more than $8 million to our wounded heroes.

At 23 years old, Michael has served in the Army, Navy, and the Marines. Michael is a senior First Classman who will be commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps when he graduates from the Citadel in May. He is the only Marine representative Cadet from New Jersey participating in the run and will be running in battle dress uniform, combat boots, and wearing a 50-pound rucksack.

I'd like to commend Michael not only for his selflessness and service to our country but also for his commitment and dedication to such a worthy cause. It is truly inspiring to see a young person like Michael give so much of their time and energy to help others in need.

HONORING GENERAL AND MRS. MICHAEL L. OATES

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment today to honor the service of BG Michael L. Oates as he leaves the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault, and the Fort Campbell community. He has been selected for promotion to Major General and will soon take on even greater challenges and responsibilities as he assumes command of the 10th Mountain Division, Light Infantry, in Fort Drum, NY. This new assignment is further evidence that General Oates is among the most capable and trusted officers in our Army today.

In early 2005, General Oates was at the forefront as the Screaming Eagles returned to Iraq, taking control of four volatile provinces. The Division would later gain responsibility for training Iraqi forces in two additional provinces and would participate in security operations in Baghdad itself. The 101st was given a series of difficult missions, and performed each of them well.

General Oates was also instrumental to the continuing transformation of Fort Campbell. Soldiers returning from service in Iraq were greeted by new training facilities, new infrastructure, new barracks, and first-class housing for their families.

A deployment leaves behind thousands of family members who must daily confront the stress and hardship of having a loved one at war. Barbara Oates has been a cornerstone of Fort Campbell's efforts to take care of these families. I have great admiration for her leadership and value her friendship.

Madam Speaker, please join me in thanking General and Mrs. Oates for their extraordinary service to the Army, the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault, and the Clarksville and Montgomery County communities. We will miss them, and we wish them the best of luck in their next assignment.

SUPPORTING H.R. 1132

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women and the leading cause of cancer death among women under the age of 40. Early detection and education are key to winning this battle. It is imperative that we reauthorize the National Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Act, H.R. 1132, so that all women are given access to free and low-cost breast and cervical screenings. No woman should be denied these lifesaving screenings simply because she cannot afford them. Further, all women should be made aware of the benefits of each screening and the risks of these cancers through public education programs.

This issue is very important within my District of Marin and Sonoma Counties in California, and especially so in Marin County because it has the highest rate of breast cancer

in the country. Among white women, aged 45 to 64, the breast cancer rate in Marin has increased 72 percent in the last decade. Marin County's rates are approximately 40 percent higher than the national average and about 30 percent higher than the rest of the Bay Area. This is why early detection and education in women of all ages is so important.

In addition to this important legislation, we need to do more to prevent breast cancer deaths in women under the age of 40. Approximately 11,000 women under the age of 40 will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, of which nearly 1,300 will die. That's why I introduced the Annie Fox Act, H.R. 715, named after a young woman in my district who was diagnosed with breast cancer and died at the age of 35. This bill will authorize research into the causes of breast cancer in younger woman and educate them about the risks of breast cancer.

It is important that we not only continue to fund preventative screenings, education and research for women over the ages of 45, but that we also do so for our younger women so that they may live long, healthy lives.

I applaud the passage of this important legislation and look forward to working with my colleagues to pass H.R. 715, the Annie Fox Act.

CELEBRATING THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GARFIELD MASONIC LODGE

HON. JOHN E. PETERSON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the 125th anniversary of the Garfield Masonic Lodge in Dubois, Pennsylvania. Established in 1882, the Garfield Lodge has selflessly served the DuBois community with high distinction for 125 years.

I commend the Freemasons for their work and for instilling in its members the virtues of charity, benevolence, brotherly love, and practicing the moral principles of life. Again, I extend my best wishes to the Garfield Lodge and to all of the individuals that continue its good work, as they celebrate 125 years of service in my district on May 4, 2007.

IN TRIBUTE TO MAJOR EUGENE BARLOW ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, on the occasion of his retirement from the United States Air Force, I want to recognize MAJ Eugene Barlow for his 23 years of dedicated service to our country. In his most recent assignment, he serves as the Chief, Air Force Congressional Fellows Branch, Congressional Inquiry Division, Office of Legislative Liaison with, additional duties as a White House Social Aide.

In June 1984, Major Barlow started his outstanding career as an enlisted Information Manager. He was selected for promotion to senior airman below-the-zone and later selected for promotion to staff sergeant under the Stripes for Exceptional Performers program. After assignments in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Legislative Liaison Directorate, Major Barlow was selected to attend Officer Training School. He was commissioned in 1996 and assigned to Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, as the Chief of Customer Support.

In August 1998, Major Barlow was selected for assignment to Kadena Air Base, Japan, where he served as Squadron Section Commander in the 67th Fighter Squadron. Before being handpicked for his current assignment, Major Barlow was assigned to his alma mater, the University of Maryland, as an Assistant Professor of Aerospace Studies

Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues in expressing our sincere appreciation to MAJ Eugene Barlow for his outstanding service to both the Legislative and Executive Branches and our United States Air Force. We wish him the best as he transitions into a new career. Major Barlow is a true professional and a credit to himself and the United States Air Force.

CELEBRATING THE 136TH ANNIVERSARY OF KERNERSVILLE

HON. VIRGINIA FOXX

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the town of Kernersville, NC, which will celebrate its 136th anniversary this Saturday, March 31.

Kernersville is a town with a rich heritage dating back hundreds of years. Known as Kerner's Crossroads in the mid-1800s, the town of Kernersville was officially incorporated on March 31, 1871. It had a small but respectable population of 147. Today, about 20,000 call Kernersville their home in the heart of North Carolina's Triad region.

The town has experienced dramatic growth in recent years as it transitions from what was once a rural community to a town making its mark in the economically vibrant Triad area. In the midst of this transition, Kernersville has worked to preserve its unique small-town character and historic architecture.

One of the most notable relics of Kernersville's historic flavor is an exceptional home called Korner's Folly. Some people have called it the strangest house ever built. Others have said it looks more like a small castle straight from the heart of Germany than a home built in the heart of North Carolina. But regardless, today it is a historic museum and serves to illustrate the unique place Kernersville holds in the Triad region.

I applaud the vision of Kernersville's citizens to pursue commonsense growth policies without sacrificing the essence of what makes Kernersville Kernersville. Their efforts will ensure that this great town celebrates many more anniversaries, each one a tribute to an attractive community that offers a small town atmosphere with the benefits of a community nestled in the Triad.

TRIBUTE TO THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE'S SAN ANTONIO MUSEO ALAMEDA

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, on behalf of Texas's 20th Congressional District, it is my honor to welcome the Smithsonian Institution to San Antonio as it officially launches its first formal affiliate, the Museo Alameda, from April 12 to 15, 2007. The National Center for Latino Arts and Culture is the only organization in the country that maintains formal partnerships with the Smithsonian Institution and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—important milestones in the development and appreciation of the diversity of the United States of America. Through its programming, the Museo will showcase stories of the Latino experience through art, history and culture.

The 4 days of opening festivities will begin with Tito Puente, Jr.'s Orchestra, the Latino Giants of Jazz, at the Gala Pachanga in Historic Market Square. It continues with John Quiñones of ABC as master of ceremonies for the opening festivities and concludes with Linda Ronstadt as headliner for Canciones de mi Padre, a concert for the people. I along with the Museo Alameda thank the Ford Motor Company, AT&T, and the Anheuser-Busch Foundation for their commitment and friendship in making the museum a reality.

From its inception as the vision of its founding chairman, Henry R. Muñoz III, to its designation as the first of more than 150 affiliates bridging the Smithsonian Institution across the country, the museum has impacted our country and our historic city. Through the years of planning and development, the unique and vibrant Museo Alameda has captured the imagination and inspired the support of countless admirers. The Nation's families are invited to visit our museum, to be inspired by it, and to appreciate the diversity, contributions and pride which Latinos bring to our Nation's greatness. It is time for these stories to be told.

HONORING JOE HOLLSTEIN

HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Joe Hollstein, who is retiring after 28 years of service to the city of Ceres.

Joe Hollstein has admirably served Ceres and its residents since 1979. In most cases, Joe has supervised most of the capital projects that have occurred in Ceres for nearly three decades. Joe was instrumental in getting new wells drilled to increase the water supply and he explored the possibility of tapping into surface water. Joe also increased water storage capacity by having ground water reservoirs constructed which added to the city's firefighting capabilities.

Seeing a need to expand the city's wastewater treatment plant, Joe has worked continually on this project with the latest development to develop a sewer line to Turlock from Ceres.

As a traffic engineer, Joe has always been a valued resource to the community and surrounding areas. He has worked from day one with Cal Trans to widen Whitmore Avenue Overpass and to revise the Mitchell Road interchange. In spite of funding delays, Joe has continued to provide technical expertise on these projects and have kept them as a focal point for the local Council of Governments.

Joe has continued to be responsive to the public and its concerns by hosting public hearings and meetings to allow for public input. It is not unusual for Joe to personally respond to the residents on matters of concern to them.

In addition to public works infrastructure projects, Joe has maintained a vision for acquisition of land for parks and city owned buildings, He worked closely on the design of the public safety building and the new fire stations.

Joe continued to find unique ways to fund the community's growth and needs. He was very proactive in establishing special assessment districts to bring additional funds to the city—the establishment of street lighting and landscape maintenance districts. These districts were established in Ceres at a time when few cities had special district fees.

Outside of city hall, Joe has continued his commitment to the community; Joe has diligently volunteered his time to pruning the beautiful roses at Smyrna Park and to the restoration of the Daniel Whitmore Home.

Throughout his career with the city of Ceres, Joe Hollstein has been a consummate public servant. He has utilized his skills and experience for the betterment of the community. Joe has not limited his work to his own department but worked to provide facts and figures for other city projects.

I am honored to rise today to recognize the work of Joe Hollstein and to honor him for his many years of distinguished service to the Ceres community. I wish him the very best in his retirement.

IN SUPPORT OF THE VETERANS' CARE ADVOCATE ACT

HON. PETER WELCH

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing legislation that will ensure that recovering veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have access to a strong patient advocate should they encounter bureaucratic road blocks to their recovery.

This legislation is in response to the appalling stories that have recently come to light regarding substandard outpatient care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. On March 5, I participated in an oversight hearing at Walter Reed of the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs where we heard from recovering soldiers coping with filthy outpatient living conditions and a needlessly cumbersome bureaucracy.

One of the conclusions I reached from this hearing is that veterans are, in some cases, on their own once they leave the excellent Department of Defense inpatient health care system. These men and women are being forced to navigate an onerous bureaucracy and manage their own outpatient care—even after traumatic brain injuries. This is an unacceptable betrayal of the men and women who have so bravely answered the call to duty.

The legislation I am introducing today, The Veterans' Care Advocate Act, would create an ombudsman in each military medical facility to assist in the care and overall well-being of recovering service members. The ombudsman will help patients overcome bureaucratic entanglements and ensure they receive the care they need. If the system breaks down, the ombudsman will go to bat on their behalf and cut through the bureaucracy.

Numerous accounts at Walter Reed describe patients not understanding where to obtain services and assistance and not knowing what services are available to them. The ombudsman will provide a forum for service members and their families to formally appeal to or seek review from the Department of Defense, receive information about services, and obtain help with paperwork.

My bill would also require the Secretary of Defense to effectively advertise the services of the ombudsman so that service members and their families know who to turn to for help with the bureaucracy. Finally, this bill would require regular reports to Congress on the status of the ombudsman program, including a description of the number and location of ombudsman positions established, a description of the services being provided by the ombudsman, an analysis of the effectiveness and timeliness of the services provided, and the adequacy of Federal resources for the ombudsman to carry out its entire mission.

Madam Speaker, I strongly believe that the cost of the war must include the care of the warrior. The Veterans' Care Advocate Act is just one step of many that will be required to ensure that recovering soldiers receive the care they were promised and the care they deserve.

Later today, as part of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, I will offer an amendment that will improve the medical care case manager and service member advocate provisions in the legislation. The underlying legislation creates two new positions as part of the team of doctors, nurses and staff caring for recovering soldiers: a medical care case manager and a service member advocate.

First, the medical care case manager will assist in understanding the service member's medical status and conduct a review, at a minimum of once a week, of the soldier's medical status to ensure that he or she is receiving the necessary medical care. Second, the service member advocate assists the service member in cutting through the bureaucratic red tape and looking out for the service member's overall welfare and quality of life.

My amendment requires that the Secretary of Defense conduct outreach to all service members and their families, advising them that the medical care case manager and service member advocate positions are there to help. The Secretary must also describe the nature of their services and how they can be contacted. The purpose of my amendment is to help assure that recovering members of our military are made aware of the resources available to them.

Furthermore, the amendment ensures that the medical case manager and service member advocate have the resources they need to expeditiously carry out the responsibilities and duties of their position.

I am pleased that the Wounded Warriors bill takes a number of important steps to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for our soldiers. Combined with the hospital-based ombudsman created by my bill, the creation of these two positions will help ensure that our soldiers get the quality care they deserve.

A TRIBUTE TO PETRUCCI E. HARRIS, MSW, LCSW, DCSW

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ms. Petrucci E. Harris. Petrucci Harris was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and is the younger of two daughters born to Timothy and Bessie Hardy. Her family moved to Long Island, New York, while she was still a child. After graduating from public school in New York, she attended Morgan State University in her hometown of Baltimore.

Ms. Harris' first professional job was with the Suffolk County Heard Start Program as a teacher, then a center director and later the county program coordinator. It was the experience of working with economically disadvantaged preschool aged children and their families which provided her with the motivation to return to school.

Ms. Harris was granted a fellowship by the National Institutes of Health which assisted her in earning a Masters of Social Work from the State University of New York's School of Social Welfare at Stony Brook. She also studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Urban Health Planning; Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy; New York University Ehrenkranz School of Social Work Post Masters Certificate Program; and the Mind/Body Institute of Harvard Medical School's Continuing Education Program.

Petrucci Harris has been employed in various areas of mental and behavioral health throughout her career. This includes the University of Louisville's Medical School Department of Psychiatry; Bingham Child Guidance Clinic; and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Newark Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine where she was an adjunct faculty member as well as Coordinator of Social Work Services for many years. She worked on many projects for the inclusion of cultural content into the curriculum for immigrant psychiatric residents.

Ms. Harris served as a field instructor for graduate students at the New York University Ehrenkranz School of Social Work for several years. She was also an adjunct professor and faculty advisor for students at the NYU Wagner College where she taught the ethno cultural issues in social work practice course. She is currently a field instructor for Rutgers University's School of Social Work.

Ms. Harris is a member of the National Association of Social Workers, Academy of Certified Social Workers, Diplomat in Clinical Social Work, and a Certified Supervisor of Clinical Social Work. Her commitment to improving the general quality of life through service to others is carried out in her pledge to community service as a Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Ms. Harris lives in Summit, New Jersey. She is the mother of three adult children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize my fellow social worker for all of her hard work and outstanding achievements.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Petrucci E. Harris.

TRIBUTE TO OFFICER DOUG BYRNE

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TANCREDO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a fallen policeman from Colorado, Doug Byrne.

Officer Byrne was killed earlier this week when he swerved to avoid a vehicle which stopped directly in front of him. At the time he was rushing to the aid of an individual in a life threatening medical emergency. He was just 37 years old.

Madam Speaker, Officer Byrne has a long and distinguished record of public service. Before becoming a police officer he was a member of the United States Marine Corps and a veteran of the first gulf war. Prior to working for the Aurora Police Department Doug Byrne was an officer for the Glendale Police Department for 6 years. He was awarded the Medal of Valor for rescuing several people from an apartment fire in 2003. After becoming an Aurora policeman, he was entrusted with the important task of training other officers.

Officer Byrne was a graduate of Gateway High School.

Madam Speaker, all Coloradans morn the loss of such a good person and dedicated public servant. The loss of Officer Doug Byrne will be felt not only by those who knew and loved him, but the community as a whole.

RECOGNIZING TRENT HARRISON FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Trent Harrison, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 692, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Trent has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Trent has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Trent Harrison for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRE SPRINKLER INCENTIVE ACT

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act, which will create expedited tax incentives for property owners to install automatic fire sprinkler systems.

Four years ago tragedy struck Rhode Island when a fire tore through the Station nightclub in West Warwick. That fire, which killed 100 people and injured 200 more, could have been prevented if fire sprinklers had been installed throughout the building. We all learned a very hard lesson on the importance of installing fire protection equipment—in our homes, our workplaces, our schools and recreational buildings. But with a renewed focus on installing fire sprinklers and other safety devices, we truly can prevent a tragedy like the one in West Warwick from ever occurring again.

The legislation I am introducing today will amend the Internal Revenue Code to provide an incentive to business owners for retrofitting existing buildings with life-saving sprinklers. Specifically, this legislation will reduce the tax depreciation time for retrofitting sprinklers in nonresidential real property from 39 years to only five.

Since January of this year 157 have died nationwide in fires where three or more people were killed, with over 50 percent of the fatalities being children. This is simply an unacceptable reality that could easily be changed with the installation of simple, lifesaving technology. The National Fire Protection Association has no record of a fire killing more than two people in a public assembly, educational, institutional or residential building with a complete and fully operational automatic fire sprinkler system.

Unfortunately, due to the high cost of installing these safety measures, property owners have faced tremendous financial burdens when considering the addition of sprinkler systems. Some states, including my home state of Rhode Island, have passed stricter fire codes requiring the installation of more sprinklers and alarms. While I applaud these efforts, the unfortunate reality is that many business owners simply cannot afford to comply. That is why my legislation is designed to provide a meaningful financial incentive for property owners, reducing any cost burdens they may incur, while significantly improving public safety throughout our country.

The need for enhanced fire safety incentives is certainly not new. In fact, similar legislation was introduced in both the 108th and 109th Congresses, where it garnered over 140 cosponsors each time. Together, we can make a tremendous impact by providing a financial incentive to install sprinklers in every office, restaurant, and nightclub in the country. It is my strong hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting and quickly passing this important measure, before tragedy strikes another community.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, today, the House takes up the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, a bill that ensures that our troops are properly trained and equipped, that sets strong standards for accountability in Iraq, and that sets a date certain for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq.

Our servicemen and women have performed courageously in Iraq, and we are deeply grateful for their sacrifice and unflagging commitment. They have served our Nation admirably, despite inadequate planning and incompetent management by this administration. There is nothing more we could ask of them. They have risen to every challenge, and carried out their mission faithfully, in the highest traditions of military service.

This bill honors that service, by ensuring that our men and women in uniform are properly equipped, and properly trained, before they are deployed to combat duty. It sets strong readiness standards, to protect our troops by requiring that their deployment is consistent with Department of Defense guidelines for equipment and training, and that they are fully ''mission-capable.'' It also ensures that they do not serve longer deployments than is the tradition of their service—while including provisions that grant flexibility in the case of a real national-security need.

The Bush administration has extended troop stays, brought back our troops for tour after tour, time and again. But the time for more tours, and more troops, and more war, is finished.

It is time to bring our troops home.

While I'd like to see our troops begin an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, concluding by the end of the year, I have become convinced that the bill before us is the best we can achieve. I commend Speaker PELOSI, for her hard work to build consensus in this House for a new direction in Iraq, and for her efforts to bring our troops home.

This bill is a historic step in the right direction in that it sets a date-certain for the withdrawal of troops. After four years of war in Iraq, it is evident that this conflict is not amenable to a military resolution. Rather, we must withdraw, and engage Iraq and its neighbors in the region in a diplomatic initiative, rather than a military conflict. I also believe we must give the Iraqi people an incentive to take responsibility for their own security, to disarm the militias and reduce sectarian violence. This bill gives them that incentive in no uncertain terms.

Under this bill Iraq, and the Bush administration, must begin to show real progress, and will be held accountable by this Congress for that progress. The bill requires the President to certify that the Iraqi government is meeting the political and military benchmarks he laid out in January, and hold the Iraqis accountable for making progress towards those benchmarks. The bill offered by this Democratic Congress requires the Iraqi government

to take steps to disarm the militias, pursue extremist groups, and start delivering Iraqi Security Forces to protect Baghdad. It requires the Iraqi government to fairly share oil revenues, ensure that elections are free and fair, and begin to responsibly allocate and spend Iraqi government funds to rebuild the nation of Iraq.

If the Iraqi government does not take action to disarm the militias, and has not taken steps towards political reconciliation and responsibility for its own security by July of this year, Americans will begin to come home, and will be out of Iraq within 180 days. Most importantly, under this bill, American combat troops will begin to leave Iraq by March 2008, and will be out of Iraq by August of 2008.

This is not the bill that many of us want, but it is the best bill we are likely to get, and I am going to support it.

It is not a perfect bill. But it is a step in the right direction—towards ending the war. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this bill, and for a timeline for withdrawal from Iraq. This war has cost us 3,225 American lives to date and almost half a trillion dollars. It's time for a new direction. It's time for our troops to come home.

TRIBUTE TO DR. GRANVILLE COGGS, MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR CORPS

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. GONZALEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Granville Coggs, member of the United States Army Air Corps, also known as the Tuskegee Airmen, on the occasion that the leadership of the United States Congress and the President of the United States presents to him the Congressional Gold Medal.

The prestige and honor exemplified by this medal could not be more appropriate for a man of Dr. Coggs's stature. As a nation, we will forever be grateful for his service to our country from 1943 to 1946 as a member of the segregated Black United States Army Air Corps. It was here that Dr. Coggs was a member of the historic World War II fighter group known as the Tuskegee Airmen and earned military badges for aerial gunner, aerial bombardier and multi-engine pilot.

Upon completion of his service, Dr. Coggs received his bachelor of science degree from the University of Nebraska in June of 1949. In June of 1953, he received his M.D. degree from Harvard Medical School, and has since had a celebrated career in medicine of the highest merit.

Dr. Coggs's accomplishments are worthy of the honor represented by the Congressional Gold Medal and of equal importance, they are worthy of the praise and recognition of the American people. The role he has played in our country's history during one of its most difficult and trying times will never be forgotten. His desire to serve the country that he loves so dearly, and to do so at a time when many in our country doubted the skill, intelligence, and patriotism of our African-American citizens, personifies the words bravery, valor, and courage.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Granville Coggs and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen today as they receive the highly celebrated Congressional Gold Medal. We will forever be grateful to the role they have played in shaping our nation's history and for playing an integral role in the fight for social justice and racial equality in our Nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I would like to share with our colleagues information on a new initiative for the Middle East that will combine economics and faith. Ambassador Dennis Ross, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and former presidential negotiator in the Middle East, and Ambassador Tony Hall, who served in Congress from 1979 to 2002, will be key players in the initiative. The initiative will be coordinated by the Center for the Study of the Presidency and be supported by a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

I submit for the RECORD my remarks, as well as those of Ambassador Tony Hall, at a press conference on March 22 at which this initiative was announced.

FRANK WOLF'S REMARKS BEFORE THE MARCH 22, 2007 PRESS CONFERENCE ON NEW MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

Thank you for coming today. I also want to thank and recognize Ambassador David Abshire and Ambassador Tony Hall for joining me today. Both will be speaking in a few minutes. I have known and worked with both David and Tony for a number of years and have great respect for them. And I can honestly say that Tony was my best friend in Congress and remains my best friend today.

Today we are here to announce the launching of a new initiative in the Middle East that will combine economics and faith. It will be coordinated by the Center for the Study of the Presidency and be supported by a grant from USAID. We are deeply concerned that time is running out to find a peaceful solution to the issues that separate the people in the land so many call holy.

In the Middle East, religion plays such an important role in people's lives. If you're Jewish, you have the Western Wall. If you're Christian, you have the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. If you're Muslim, you have the Dome of the Rock. We cannot work toward peace in the Middle East without taking into account the religious roots of its people.

The U.S. government doesn't have the capacity to deal with this reality in the lives of those who live in that region. That is why I have put together an initiative that includes the faith component. The faith component of this initiative will be led by former Congressman Tony Hall. His depth of faith and experience in building bridges between people is critical to this initiative.

The economic development component will be led by Ambassador Dennis Ross. Dennis is a seasoned diplomat who has maintained a significant role in shaping U.S. involvement in the Middle East peace process for many years.

Dr. Bob Cooley, president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, recently provided me some insightful observations about the faith dynamics in the Middle East. He has worked with Palestinian Muslims, Palestinian Christians, and Israelis during his 48 years of pursuing Hebrew Studies and Syro-Palestinian Archeology.

He points out that the three major religious groups in the land are ''all Sons of Abraham, who share a common understood relationship that serves as a basis for living together in harmony today.'' It is largely the past 50 years of failed politics that have undermined communal harmony in the region and modified the relationships between these groups. A complete copy of Dr. Cooley's remarks about the relationships between these groups is attached to my statement.

The faith dynamic in the region is critical to forming the most effective approach to the political situation. If you buy a young plant, you can't place it in the ground without tilling the soil first. The purpose of this initiative isn't to deal with boundaries, or questions of status. It is to build relationships; to prepare the soil in preparation for the diplomatic efforts of Secretary Rice and others to find a political solution for the region.

Psalm 122:6 tells us to ''pray for the peace of Jerusalem.'' I do this every day. I believe that this initiative will bring the people of different faiths together and build bridges between them. Now I am going to turn the program over to Dr. Abshire and then Tony. We will take any questions after both of them speak. Thank you.

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TONY HALL AT MIDDLE EAST PRESS CONFERENCE ON MARCH 22, 2007

I am very pleased to be part of this initiative headed by my friend, Frank Wolf, and supported by other members of the Congress and Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.

As His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan so clearly spelled out two weeks ago to the Congress, the unresolved conflict between Israel and Palestine has resulted in tremendous pain in Israel, the Palestinian territories and other nations in the Middle East. This problem has fueled additional fires outside of the region that have brought fear, destruction and extremism to many countries and people, including our own. The situation is at such a point that it is no longer only an isolated regional conflict in which we can choose to be involved, it is a problem that directly affects the security of the United States.

I have traveled a number of times to the Middle East, starting in 1979, and most recently having returned from there this past week. We did a lot of listening; and what I have seen and heard leads me to believe that there has not been a more urgent time for peace. There are a lot of people already working on multiple fronts in waging peace, and my role in the coming months will be to support them by fostering additional relationships, understanding, and cooperation among the various communities in the Holy Land.

I want to clarify that my mission is not to distract from the political side of the peace process, but to lay additional groundwork for an eventual political outcome. However, one cannot speak about peace on the political level without taking into account the religious roots of the people involved—especially in the Holy Land.

Our service is to support and encourage the people of faith who bear influence in the region. We are connecting with people of faith because as leaders of these communities they can either encourage the way of compassion, sacrifice, and grace in this process—which is necessary to support a political outcome—or they can incite their people in the hopeless path of the status quo. We want to help the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities who recognize and labor for peace

by practicing the commandment to ''Love your neighbor.''

The Abrahamic faiths have been in conflict for so long, that most of us have forgotten that at the core of each of them lies that universal commandment: ''Love your neighbor.'' By going back to this fundamental starting point ourselves, and encouraging our friends in the region to do likewise, we believe that we can construct some good will that we hope may help support a political settlement.

We are not under any illusion that we alone can solve the conflict. My good friend Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and other community, political, business and religious leaders are coming together to share in the work of preparing the way for peace in the Holy Land. Together we hope that our combined efforts can, in some small way, assist in paving the way for a just and lasting peace.

It's worth a try.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 90TH BIRTHDAY OF PEARL RICHTER

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure and honor that I congratulate Mrs. Pearl Marcus Richter of Toledo, Ohio, on the occasion of her forthcoming 90th birthday. Pearl will be celebrating this milestone event with family members, including two grandchildren, who will be gathering this weekend in the Washington, DC area where Pearl's daughter and son have each settled.

Pearl was born on April 6, 1917, in Indianapolis, Indiana, to immigrant parents (like so many other fine Americans) on that momentous day in history during which Congress declared war against Germany and the United States entered the conflict in Europe that became World War I. Her mother was ill during most of her childhood and Pearl was always a great help in the home. Pearl graduated from Shortridge High School in Indianapolis in 1934 at the age of 17. By then, her mother had passed away, leaving Pearl to be the female head of a household that included her father and one older and one younger brother. In 1940, life changed dramatically for Pearl. She met Morris A. Richter in February, it was love at first sight, and in May they married and moved to Terre Haute, Indiana, where Morris worked.

For nearly 15 months, December 1944–February 1946, Pearl was at home alone to care for a daughter, born in 1940, and a son, born in 1944, while Morris served in the American Area Campaign of the U.S. Navy. Both children share the same birthday, July 18, and Pearl always jokes that it was because her husband was an accountant. In the summer of 1958, the Richter family moved to Toledo, Ohio, where Morris had taken a job with the federal government, and into a house on Cheltenham Road in the Old Orchard district. Daughter Ceceile Kay graduated from the University of Toledo in 1963 and son Sheldon Jay graduated from Ohio State University in 1967. Pearl was at both graduations but unfortunately Morris was not; he had died of a heart attack in October 1961, just weeks after his 46th birthday. Pearl went to work soon afterwards as a sales clerk with Petrie Stores and had worked her way up to assistant manager before she retired.

Pearl has always been active in her synagogues and taught Sunday School in both Terre Haute and Toledo. In Toledo, she is a member of B'nai Israel Synagogue and its Sisterhood and its Synagogue Organized Afternoon Program. She is also an active member and was an officer for several years in the Friendship Club, one of many activities she enjoys through the Jewish Family Services Senior Adult Center. Pearl lived in Kenwood Gardens for over 35 years and since late 2001 has enjoyed living at Carriage House East where she is regular caller at monthly bingo and a semi-regular in an informal poker club in which she is one of the youngest members. Pearl's favorite activity besides working crossword puzzles is mah jongg, and she plays as frequently as she can. She is a member of the National Mah Jongg League, having joined soon after its inception in 1937, and she is always the first in her groups to learn the rules changes each year.

Even more so than any of the above, her family and friends know Pearl as a favorite baker. Pearl used to bake almost every day and most of this she would give away. Now she has cut her baking back to a few times a month. A visitor to her home is always served a cup of steaming hot coffee or, perhaps, fresh-squeezed lemonade or limeade, and a baked dessert. If something fresh is not on the counter, her visitors need not worry. There are always tins of baked goods in her freezer. Her family has been wishing for some time that Pearl would move to the Washington, DC area where one of the pleasures, besides her company, will be the ritual of opening her freezer to see what baked goods are inside. Pearl has always been generous about sharing her recipes. Family members and close friend Bea Goldman have now sent copies of these recipes to Pearl's daughter, who will be combining them with recipes in her collection and from her memory into a recipe book to be provided to guests after the dinner in honor of Pearl's birthday.

I join with Pearl's family and friends in wishing her a most joyous birthday, spent looking back in fond recollection and looking forward to future years. Congratulations and best wishes!

TRIBUTE TO PHILIP DEPOIAN

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize and honor an individual whose service to the people of City of Los Angeles is as a model to us all. His dedication, talent, and integrity played a role in building Los Angeles to the cultural and cutting edge city it is today.

Philip Depoian dedicated nearly 34 years to the City of Los Angeles, serving under four Mayors and many city council members. He began his career with the city as Mayor Tom Bradley's first Scheduling Director and thereafter as Special Counsel. Mr. Depoian subsequently became the Intergovernmental Liaison to the Mayor, to the Police Department, and to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA). During his time with the mayor, Mr. Depoian took a leave of absence to work on the International Presidential Advance Planning for the White House during a portion of the Jimmy Carter Administration.

In 1994, Mr. Depoian was appointed by Mayor Tom Bradley to the position of Deputy Executive Director for the Government and External Affairs of Los Angeles World Airports that includes representation for all four of LAWA's airports: Los Angeles International Airport, Ontario International Airport, Palmdale Regional Airport and Van Nuys Airport. With his extensive knowledge of governmental affairs, legislative analysis, international relations and public policy, he oversaw many divisions at LAWA including Environmental Management, Noise Management, Public Affairs and Rideshare. He also launched the Air Service Marketing Division and developed a multi-faceted approach to market LAWA's regional airports

Through Mr. Depoian's efforts, LAWA was able to expand its market overseas by creating marketing offices in Tokyo and London. He played a key role in re-establishing passenger service in Mexico and reopening U.S. Customs and Immigration there. It was through Mr. Depoian's leadership that LAWA was able to create sister-airport cooperative agreements with airports in Inchon, South Korea, and Beijing and Guangzhou, China.

Mr. Depoian is retiring to spend more time with his wife, Julie Pastor Depoian and their daughter, Katie. His retirement from city service will leave a great void to all who depended on his sage advice, his tenacity, his charm and intelligence with which he approached all tasks. He has served the city at several capacities and his innovation and expertise has helped Los Angeles keep pace with its mission as an economic hub.

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to express my thanks, and that of a grateful city, to Philip Depoian for his years of dedication to public service. I wish him success and happiness in all his future endeavors.

KATRINA HOUSING TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I'm submitting the CBO cost estimate on H.R. 1562, the Katrina Housing Tax Relief Act of 2007.

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, March 23, 2007.

Hon. CHARLES B. RANGEL,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 1562, the Katrina Housing Tax Relief Act of 2007.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Emily Schlect.

Sincerely,

PETER R. ORSZAG.

Enclosure.

H.R. 1562—Katrina Housing Tax Relief Act

Summary: H.R. 1562 would extend and expand certain tax laws specific to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, which were enacted in the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005. The bill would also raise revenue by changing the collection due process procedures for employment taxes.

The Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) estimates that enacting H.R. 1562 would decrease revenues by $1 million in 2007 and increase revenues by $42 million over the 2007–2012 period and by $4 million over the 2007–2017 period. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that implementing H.R 1562 would have discretionary costs of less than $500,000 in 2007 and 2008, subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

JCT has determined that the tax provisions of the bill contain no private-sector or intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). CBO has determined that the non-tax provisions (section 4) contain no private-sector or intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs .on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impact of the bill over the 2007–2017 period is shown in the following table.

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—												
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2007–2012	2007–2017
CHANGES IN REVENUES [1]													
Low-Income Housing Provisions	0	0	−61	−97	−53	−10	0	0	0	0	0	−221	−221
Treatment of Repairs for Bond Purposes	−1	−4	−7	−4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	−16	−16
Modification of Collection Due Process	0	53	54	28	20	17	20	23	26	0	0	172	241
Corporate Estimated Tax Payments	0	0	0	0	0	107	−107	0	0	0	0	107	0
Total Changes	−1	49	−14	−73	−33	114	−87	23	26	0	0	42	4
On-Budget	−1	6	−58	−96	−49	100	−103	4	5	0	0	−97	−191
Off-Budget	0	43	44	23	16	14	16	19	21	0	0	139	195

[1] Assuming availability of appropriated funds, the cost of the Government Accountability Office report required by the bill would be less than $500,000.

Note: Numbers may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Basis of estimate: For this estimate, JCT assumes that the bill will be enacted by July 1, 2007.

Revenues

The legislation would reduce revenues through two provisions related to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, and it would also raise revenues by changing collection due process procedures for employment tax liabilities and making other changes. All in all, JCT estimates that the bill would increase revenues by $42 million over the 2007–2012 period and by $4 million over the 2007–2017 period.

First, H.R. 1562 would decrease revenues by extending and expanding low-income housing credit rules that were enacted in response to damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Generally, low-income housing credits are subject to a cap. In response to Hurricane Katrina, this ceiling amount was increased for the states affected, for the years 2006 through 2008. This bill would extend the higher cap for two years (through December 31, 2010). It would also make changes to the carryover allocation rules that specifies the time by which the housing must be completed to still qualify for the credit. This provision, JCT estimates, would reduce revenues by $221 million over the 2009–2012 period.

Second, the bill would reduce revenues by treating certain repairs in the Gulf Opportunity Zone (composed of areas affected by the hurricane) as qualified rehabilitation for purposes of certain bond rules. In general, qualified mortgage bonds are tax-exempt and must be used for new mortgages. Qualified rehabilitation loans, on the other hand, may be used for replacing existing mortgages. Since the hurricane, states in the Gulf Opportunity Zone have been allowed to issue Gulf Opportunity Zone Bonds for construction and rehabilitation of property. This bill would allow loans financed with qualified mortgage bonds and Gulf Opportunity Zone Bonds to be used for existing mortgages, regardless of certain rules in place for normal qualified rehabilitation loans. JCT estimates that this provision would reduce revenues by $1 million in 2007 and by $16 million over the 2007–2012 period.

H.R. 1562 would raise revenue by changing collection due process procedures with regards to employment tax liabilities. Currently, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) may seize a taxpayer's property given a federal tax lien. Prior to seizing the property, the IRS must notify taxpayers that they have a right to a collection due process hearing. This bill would enable the IRS to seize property without first having a hearing. JCT estimates that this provision would increase revenues by $172 million over the 2007–2012 period and by $241 million over the 2007–2017 period. Of the revenue gain, JCT estimates that a portion would be off-budget—totaling $195 million over the 2007–2017 period.

Finally, one provision would shift revenues between 2012 and 2013. For corporations with at least $1 billion in assets in 2012, the bill would increase the portion of corporate estimated tax payments due in July through September of that year. This change would increase revenues by $107 million in 2012 and decrease revenues by $107 million in 2013.

Spending Subject to Appropriation

Section 4 would require the Government Accountability Office to report recommendations to the Congress on the use of federal tax incentives provided to state and local governments affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. Based on similar reports, CBO estimates that preparing and distributing the report would cost less than $500,000 in any one fiscal year.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: JCT has determined that the tax provisions of the bill contain no private-sector or intergovernmental mandates as defined in the UMRA. CBO has determined that the non-tax provisions (section 4) contain no private-sector or intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state. local, or tribal governments.

Estimate prepared by: Federal revenues: Emily Schlect. Federal spending: Matthew Pickford. Impact on state, local, and tribal governments: Melissa Merrell. Impact on the private sector: Nabeel Alsalam.

Estimate approved by: G. Thomas Woodward, Assistant Director for Tax Analysis. Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND SONIA PATRICIA SMITH

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Reverend Sonia Patricia Smith. Reverend Smith is a woman who has always placed her faith and confidence in the Lord.

For the last 15 years, Reverend Smith has been employed with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York where she has spent most of her time working tirelessly on behalf of her patients. Whether it is working with the elderly or providing nursing support to those infected with HIV, she is committed to ensuring that her patients receive the highest level of care and respect. She believes that as a medical professional it is not only her job only to heal her patients physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Because of her dedication to her patients, she was promoted to the management level at VNS.

In many ways, Reverend Smith sees the fruits of her labor through her family, whether it is her childhood sweetheart whom she married, Anthony, or her three children. Her eldest son Dr. Oronde Smith is a physician and loving husband to his wife Paula and wonderful father to his daughter Oniya. Reverend Smith's middle son Jonathan earned both his bachelors and masters degrees from Harvard University and is currently a third-year law student at New York University. Reverend Smith's youngest son Matthew is a talented musician and a third-year medical student at Downstate Medical School.

Reverend Smith's work with her daughter-in-law Paula demonstrates the compassion she has for others. Several years ago Paula was interested in entering the nursing profession but did not believe she was qualified and decided to terminate her schooling early. Reverend Smith refused to let her quit and tutored Paula helping her through her courses. Today Paula is a registered nurse as well as a nurse practitioner with an M.S. in nursing. Reverend Smith's example with Paula is not the exception, but rather the rule.

Reverend Smith has assisted countless individuals by providing help and often doing everything within her power to ensure that they achieve their goals. She has a special place in her heart for women and children, and being the first lady of Gethsemane Baptist Church where her husband serves as pastor. She has reached out to many members of the congregation giving them advice and lending a listening ear. She has worked extensively with the children's ministry or her ''angels'' as she

likes to call them, leading the children's church and vacation bible school.

Another example of Reverend Smith's commitment is demonstrated when she, along with her husband, organized and led a trip to Disney World for nearly 50 children in the church several years ago. Although neither the children nor their families had the financial means to afford the trip, Reverend Smith raised the funds and the support for this excursion.

Reverend Smith has touched countless lives through the work she does, and there is no doubt that she will continue to do so for many years to come.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize all of the good works of Reverend Sonia Smith and her commitment to the most vulnerable in our society, our elderly and our children.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to this wonderful for her kindness and compassion.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL R. TURNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 23, 2007

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, you cannot legislate victory in a military conflict—but you can legislate failure. This legislation abandons our troops and sets an arbitrary timetable for our withdrawal.

Although America's commitment in Iraq is not unlimited, this legislation sends the wrong message to our troops. Also, this bill contains unrelated spending such as subsidies for spinach farmers, and payments to citrus and peanut farmers.

I fully support the funding for BRAC and I was disappointed when the majority stripped $3 billion from the FY07 continuing resolution and replaced it in this legislation.

We have a Commander in Chief, who has replaced the military leadership, from the Secretary of Defense down to the Commanders on the ground. A new military strategy has been developed, based upon a strategy and commitments made by the Iraqi Government. Additional forces are being provided to support the Iraqi forces. This supplemental pulls the rug out from under the feet of our military commanders—and our troops. This legislation does not give the new commanders, the chance to succeed. It imposes restrictions and a deadline for withdrawal.

We've talked about supporting the troops. We need to provide the troops with tools, equipment, and moral support necessary for success. The legislation tells the troops, despite your sacrifices, we will not wait for you to get the job done. It tells our enemies to be patient, you only have to wait until August 2008. It tells our allies that the United States is not committed to peace and stability in the Middle East. I, for one, am opposed to sending that type of message.

TRIBUTE TO FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOHN BRADEMAS

HON. JOE DONNELLY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of my distinguished predecessors in representing the District I am now privileged to serve in Congress and to wish him a Happy 80th Birthday.

I speak of Dr. John Brademas of South Bend, Indiana, who for 22 years, from 1959 until 1981, served the then Third District of Indiana in the House of Representatives. While in Congress, John Brademas was a member of the Committee on Education and Labor where he played a leading role in writing most of the Federal legislation enacted during that time concerning schools, colleges and universities; services for the elderly and the disabled; libraries and museums; the arts and the humanities.

During his last four years on Capitol Hill, John Brademas was, by appointment of then Speaker Thomas P. ''Tip'' O'Neill, Jr., House Majority Whip.

PRESIDENT, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

In 1981 John Brademas was named president of New York University, the largest private university in the United States, a position in which he served from 1981 until 1992, when he became president emeritus, his present position.

During that time Dr. Brademas led the transition of NYU from a regional commuter school to a national and international residential research university. In 1984 he initiated a fundraising campaign that produced a total of $1 billion in ten years. Said the New York Times, ''A Decade and a Billion Dollars Put New York University in [the] First Rank.'' Added Crain's New York Business (August 6, 2001), ''John Brademas turned NYU into an Ivy League rival . . .''

In 2005 New York University announced the establishment, in its Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, of the John Brademas Center for the Study of Congress. The Center undertakes research, teaching and public outreach activities focused on the role of Congress in making national policy.

In 2006 Dr. Brademas received The John Gardner Spirit Award from Common Cause/New York for ''his unparalleled dedication to public service and a stronger democracy through his work in Congress, at New York University and as one of the Nation's leading champions of the arts and education.''

In his book, *An Entrepreneurial University* (Tufts University Press), former Tufts Provost Saul Gittleman said, ''[T]he trustees at NYU . . . in 1981 found an individual who proved to be nontraditional and transformational. . . . [T]he Brademas presidency became another model for trustees and regents to examine, as he took NYU to a new and competitive eminence in New York City and the Nation. By the time his presidency was over, Columbia University was looking over its shoulder, in no small measure due to John Brademas. He was a potent fundraiser and extraordinary ambassador for the university''.

In their book, Shakespeare. Einstein, and the Bottom Line (Harvard University Press, 2003), scholars David L. Kirp and Jonathan Van Antwerpen state, ''NYU is the success story in contemporary American higher education''.

PRODUCTIVE LEGISLATOR

From 1994 through 2001, Dr. Brademas served, by appointment of President Clinton, as Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, which in 1997 released Creative America, a report to the President on ways of strengthening support, private and public, for these two fields.

Former Chairman of the National Endowment for Democracy, Dr. Brademas was also for 11 years Chairman of the American Ditchley Foundation, which helps organize conferences at Ditchley Park, near Oxford, England.

In Congress, a co-sponsor of the 1965 legislation creating the National Endowments for the Arts (NEA) and the Humanities (NEH), Dr. Brademas for ten years chaired the subcommittee of the House of Representatives with jurisdiction over them.

He was chief House sponsor of the Arts, Humanities and Cultural Affairs Act; Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act; Museum Services Act; Library Services and Construction Act Amendments; National Commission on Libraries and Information Services Act; Education for All Handicapped Children Act; Drug and Alcohol Abuse Education Act; International Education Act; and Environmental Education Act.

He was also a major co-author of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; the Higher Education Acts of 1972 and 1976, which focused on student aid; and chief author of the measures creating the National Institute of Education and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

He was chief House author as well of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974, which assured ownership by the Federal Government of the papers and tapes of the Nixon Presidency.

WIDE-RANGING PRO BONO SERVICE

Dr. Brademas has served on a number of boards and national commissions on subjects ranging from the arts to higher education, foreign policy, jobs and small business, historic documents and records, and science, technology and government.

In 2004 he was elected to the New York State Board of Regents by the New York State Legislature.

He is a founding director of the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, headquartered in Salonika, Greece. He is also a trustee of Anatolia College, the American College of Thessaloniki.

He currently serves on the boards of the Center for National Policy in Washington, D.C., the Queen Sofia Spanish Institute, InsurBanc, Comfidex Corporation and Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage.

He is a member of The Century Association, Committee on Economic Development (CED), Council on Foreign Relations, Council on the United States and Spain, U.S.-Japan Foundation, and the National and International Advisory Councils of Transparency International, the organization that combats corruption in international business transactions.

In 2006 the Committee for Economic Development released a report, Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security. Dr. Brademas was a co-chair of the CED Subcommittee that produced the report.

He is also Vice Chairman of the Advisory Council of Americans for UNESCO and a member of the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation. He is a trustee of the World Conference of Religions for Peace and member of the Mental Illness Prevention Center Advisory Board of the NYU Medical Center.

He is also a member of the Executive Council of the Cyprus International Initiative for the Environment and Public Health—Harvard School of Public Health.

FORMER CHAIRMAN, FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF NEW YORK

Former Chairman of the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Dr. Brademas also served on the boards of Americans for the Arts, The Aspen Institute, Board of Overseers of Harvard, New York Stock Exchange, Rockefeller Foundation and The Trilateral Commission.

He has served as well on the boards of RCA and NBC, Columbia Pictures, Berlitz, Kos Pharmaceuticals, NYNEX, Oxford University Press-USA, Scholastic, Texaco, Loews Corporation and the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation.

In 2004 he was elected to the New York State Board of Regents by the New York State Legislature and served on the Board until 2007.

Dr. Brademas is a Lifetime Trustee of New York University and the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Brademas is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and served on the Council of the Academy. He is a Fellow of the National Academy of Education (USA) and a Corresponding Member of The Academy of Athens.

In 1983, as president of New York University, Dr. Brademas awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to His Majesty, King Juan Carlos I of Spain.

In 1997, in the presence of His Majesty and Queen Sofia of Spain and the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Dr. Brademas announced the establishment of the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at New York University. He is President of the Foundation established in Spain to support the Center; His Majesty is Honorary President.

In 1985 Dr. Brademas received the Annual Gold Medal of The Spanish Institute; in 1993 was named a ''Friend of Barcelona'' by then Mayor Pasqual Maragall; and in 1997 was decorated by the Minister of Education and Culture of Spain with the Gran Cruz de la Orden de Alfonso X el Sabio.

Among the other centers established at NYU during Dr. Brademas' presidency are the Casa Italiana Zerilli-Màrimo, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, The Center for Japan-U.S. Business & Economic Studies and, for the study of Europe, the Remarque Institute.

GRADUATE OF HARVARD, RHODES SCHOLAR AT OXFORD

Born in Mishawaka, Indiana, on March 2, 1927, Dr. Brademas graduated from South Bend Central High School in 1945. After service in the U.S. Navy in 1945–46, in the Naval Officers' Training Program at the University of Mississippi, he was a Veterans National Scholar at Harvard University, from which he graduated with a B.A., magna cum laude, in 1949, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

In 1949 he was an intern, appointed by the U.S. Department of State, to the United Nations, serving at Lake Success.

He was from 1950 to 1953 a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, from which he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Studies in 1953.

Dr. Brademas has been awarded honorary degrees by 52 colleges and universities, most recently (2003) the degree of Doctor of Civil Law by the University of Oxford. The degree citation described him as ''a man of varied talents and extraordinary energy, the most practical of academics, the most scholarly of men of action''. He is an Honorary Fellow of Brasenose College, his college at Oxford.

In 1955–56 he was Executive Assistant to Adlai E. Stevenson in charge of research on issues during the 1956 presidential campaign. Prior to his election to Congress, he was (1957–58) Assistant Professor of Political Science at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Dr. Brademas, a former member of the Senate of Phi Beta Kappa, its governing body, is a director of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

He is a former member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and was a delegate from the United Methodist Church to the Fifth Assembly of the WCC held in Nairobi in 1975.

LEADER IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

In a 1975 Change magazine poll of 4,000 college and university presidents, foundation executives, government officials and journalists, John Brademas was named one of ''the Top Four'' (with Clark Kerr, Theodore M. Hesburgh and Roger W. Heyns) ''most important people in American higher education''.

In 1977 Dr. Brademas chaired the first Congressional delegation during the Carter Administration to visit the People's Republic of China, and in 1985 took part in the First Chinese-U.S. University Presidents' Seminar, held in Beijing.

In 1979, he led a delegation of Members of the House of Representatives who met in Moscow with Members of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Dr. Brademas led other Congressional delegations on official visits to Europe and Latin America.

During 1981–83 Dr. Brademas served, by appointment of House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., on the National Commission on Student Financial Assistance and chaired its Subcommittee on Graduate Education. In 1983 the Commission approved the Subcommittee's study, Signs of Trouble and Erosion: A Report on Graduate Education in America.

Dr. Brademas is a former member both of the National Commission on Financing Postsecondary Education and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. In 1982–83 he served on the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Relations between Universities and Government in Support of Science.

In 1984 he served as chairman, by appointment of Governor Mario Cuomo, of the New York State Council on Fiscal and Economic Priorities.

In 1986–87 he served on the American Council on Education's Commission on National Challenges to Higher Education.

In 1986 he served on the National Commission on Jobs and Small Business.

During 1987–89 Dr. Brademas served on the National (Volcker) Commission on the Public Service, which produced Leadership for America, recommendations for attracting able persons to the career Federal civil service. He subsequently served, by appointment of President George H.W. Bush, on the National Advisory Council on the Public Service.

In 1992 he served on the Carnegie International Endowment National Commission on America and the New World. He also served on the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government and chaired its Committee on Congress.

MEMBER, EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

In 1998, in Buenos Aires, he was inducted as a Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Education of Argentina and in 1999, in Vienna, a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.

He is an Honorary Patron of the Fundación Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid.

He is a director of the American Friends of Girona (Spain) Museum and Institute, and member of the Board of Advisors of VSA/arts and the International Advisory Council of the Pharos Trust (Cyprus).

He serves on the National Advisory Board, Institutions of Democracy, Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania.

He is a member of The Pilgrims Society of Great Britain and The Pilgrims Society of the United States.

He is former chairman of the National Advisory Committee of ''Fighting Back,'' a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program to help communities reduce demand for illegal drugs and alcohol

He was also chairman of the Advisory Council of the David Rockefeller Fellowships of the New York City Partnership.

In 1990 he served as co-chairman of the Independent Commission created by Congress to review the grant-making procedures of the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1996 he served on the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Presidential Appointments Process.

In 1975 Dr. Brademas was awarded the Gold Medal of St. Barnabas by President Makarios of Cyprus.

In 1978 Dr. Brademas received the annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

In 1980 he was, with Leonard Bernstein and Eubie Blake, one of the first three recipients from the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Baltimore, of the George Foster Peabody Award for Outstanding Contribution to Music in America.

In 1981 he received the Town Hall (New York City) Friend of the Arts Award.

Dr. Brademas was named High Knight Commander of Honor (Order of the Phoenix) by President Constantine Karamanlis of Greece in 1981.

In 1982 Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem made Dr. Brademas a Grand Commander of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher.

Dr. Brademas has received other awards, including the Annual Cultural Award, Recording Industry of America; the Distinguished Service Award, American Association of University Presses; the Medal for Distinguished Service, Teachers College, Columbia University; and the award for Distinguished Service in International Education of the Institute of International Education.

Dr. Brademas received the first James Bryant Conant Award for distinguished service to

education from the Education Commission of the States, the Gold Key Award of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, the Distinguished Service Award of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Caritas Society A ward for outstanding contributions in the field of mental retardation, and the Humanist of the Year Award of the National Association for Humanities Education.

HONORS AND AWARDS

In 1984 Dr. Brademas received the annual Hubert H. Humphrey Award of the American Political Science Association for outstanding public service by a political scientist.

In 1984 Dr. Brademas was named a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of France.

In 1985 Dr. Brademas received the annual Charles Evans Hughes Gold Medal Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews ''for courageous leadership in governmental, civic and humanitarian affairs.''

In 1986 Dr. Brademas, first native-born American of Greek origin elected to Congress, was one of eighty persons to receive the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

In 1988 he received the National Governors' Association Award for Distinguished Service to State Government.

In 1990 Dr. Brademas received the Athenagoras Award for Human Rights, named for the late Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople, Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

GOLD MEDAL OF HONOR, CITY OF ATHENS

In 1991 he was awarded the Gold Medal of Honor of the City of Athens.

In 1992 he received the Annual American Assembly Service to Democracy Award and Dwight D. Eisenhower Medal.

In 1993 he received the Human Dignity Award of the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

In 1996 he received the American Council for the Arts Award for Distinguished Service.

In 1997 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Indiana Council for the Humanities.

''SERVICE TO DEMOCRACY'' AWARD

In 1998 he was named a ''Distinguished Friend of Oxford University'' and received the Lifetime Achievement Award of The Cyprus Federation of America.

In 1999 he received the Benjamin Rush Award for ''humanistic values in corporate and government life'', Dickinson College, Pa; and the Anderson Ranch Arts Center (Aspen, Colorado), National Service Award.

In 2000 he received the Annual Fulbright Award from Metro International (New York City) for ''significant contribution to international understanding''.

In 2000 he received the Lifetime Achievement for Leadership in the Arts Award from Americans for the Arts and the United States Conference of Mayors. He also was awarded the Honorific Title of Commendatore in the Order of Merit, conferred by the President of the Republic of Italy.

In 2001 he received the Service to Democracy Award of the National Endowment for Democracy.

In 2001 he was awarded the Albert Gallatin Medal of New York University, presented annually to a member of the NYU family for outstanding contributions to society.

JOHN BRADEMAS POST OFFICE, SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

In 2002 the Post Office in South Bend, Indiana, was named the ''John Brademas Post Office''.

In 2002 he received the Distinguished Service Award of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

In 2004 he received the first Global Education Achievement Award from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

In 2006 he was selected by the American Association of Museums for inclusion on the AAM Centennial Honor Roll as ''a pioneer in the museum field'' because of his co-sponsorship of the ''legislation establishing the National Endowment for the Humanities and his having been ''chief House sponsor of the Museum Services Act. . . .''

AUTHOR, ''WASHINGTON, DC TO WASHINGTON SQUARE''

Dr. Brademas' study of the anarchist movement in Spain, ''Anarcosindicalismo y revolución en España, 1930–37'', was published in Barcelona by Ariel in 1974.

Dr. Brademas is, with Lynne P. Brown, author of ''The Politics of Education: Conflict and Consensus on Capitol Hill,'' published in 1987 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

He is also author of Washington, DC to Washington Square (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), a collection of essays, speeches and book reviews on Federal policy toward higher education, the arts, humanities, libraries and museums, and the education of handicapped children; as well as on foreign and economic policy; Greek studies in the United States; the place of religion in public life; and other subjects.

He is married to Mary Ellen Brademas, of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. A physician in private practice in New York City, Dr. Brademas is a graduate of the Georgetown University School of Medicine. A member of the Department of Dermatology of the NYU Medical Center, she is former director of the venereal disease clinic at Bellevue Hospital and former chief of dermatology at St. Vincent's Hospital.

JOHN BRADEMAS HAS LIVED SEVERAL LIVES

Madam Speaker, Our distinguished former colleague, John Brademas, has lived several lives. He has been a dedicated and highly productive Member of the House of Representatives, an effective legislator and maker of national policy; he has been president of the Nation's largest private university in which position he brought NYU to new heights; he has served in a wide range of pro bono positions, both as a Member of Congress and since his having gone to New York University.

There will still be some members of the House of Representatives and the Senate who served with John Brademas, and they will, I believe, share my sentiments, on both sides of the aisle, in expressing our admiration for his outstanding public service.

HONORING MICHAEL HOWE

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary career of Michael Howe. Mike served as the president of the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) in Oakland from 1993 until 2006. Throughout his career, Mike has been known for his tireless work on behalf of the East Bay community. This year Mike, who currently serves as the EBCF president emeritus, celebrates his retirement after more than a decade of unparalleled service to that organization, and many more to the 9th Congressional District.

Mike holds a B.A. in sociology from the University of San Francisco, as well as an M.A. and an ABD in sociology from the University of California, Davis. Before joining the EBCF, Mike was the senior planning and evaluation officer for the Marin Community Foundation from 1986 until 1993. Prior to that, he was a professor of sociology and founding dean of the College of Professional Studies at the University of San Francisco, where he was also tenured as an associate professor.

Mike came to the East Bay Community Foundation in 1993. Under his leadership, the EBCF evolved from a small grant-making organization into one of the top 50 community foundations in the country. Mike's work was central to the EBCF's transformation into an organization that is known for leading changemaking initiatives that successfully solve community problems. Working with government agencies, non-profit organizations, business leaders and civic groups, Mike has sought to improve afterschool programs for youth; prevent street crime and violence; provide arts education; enhance land-use planning to incorporate features for sustainable communities; and expand community philanthropy. Mike has attracted new expertise and funding to the EBCF, which now makes grants to more than 1,000 non-profit organizations, primarily in the East Bay. His efforts have made the EBCF a world-class institution for community leadership and social change, and have touched countless lives here in the 9th Congressional District and beyond.

In addition to his stellar work leading the EBCF, Mike has been and continues to be heavily involved in a number of other boards and organizations here in the Bay Area. He serves on the boards of organizations such as the Institute for Community Peace; Northern California Grantmakers; the John Gardener Center at Stanford University, the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth; and the Richmond Children's Foundation.

Today the friends, family and colleagues of Mike Howe have come together to celebrate not only his retirement, but also his legacy of service, and his permanent and positive impact on our community. On this very special day, I join all of them in thanking and saluting Mike for his profound contributions to California's 9th Congressional District, our country and our world.

HONORING CHARLES W. DAVIDSON FOR HIS PHILANTHROPIC WORK IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. Charles W. Davidson, one of San Jose, California's most successful home builders and a dedicated patron of San Jose State University.

Mr. Davidson is an alumnus of San Jose State University. Born and raised in Oklahoma cattle country, Davidson served 3 years in the Air Force before working as an engineer for the state highway department.

In 1954, Davidson met and married Anita Wien, also a graduate of San Jose State University and they settled in Willow Glen.

Davidson opened a consulting engineering company in 1960 and then in 1961 began his business in homebuilding. He founded five companies and by the 1980s he had become the biggest independent builder of subsidized housing in Northern California.

While his businesses are a vital part of the area economy, Davidson is also a role model in giving back to the community. In 1992 he created a foundation that supports the arts, higher education and human services organizations.

Mr. Davidson's foundation was a major contributor to San Jose State University's new athletic training facility. He chaired the fundraising efforts which resulted in a $1 million gift from the Koret Foundation. Although Davidson did not play competitive sports at SJSU, he has been a devoted fan of Spartan athletics, attending nearly every football game since 1952.

For the College of Engineering at San Jose State University, Davidson has recently endowed a $2 million professorship for construction management in his field of civil engineering.

Davidson is also strongly loyal to the several hundred people who work for him, providing the maximum retirement plan the government allows and overseeing the companies' pension funds himself.

I am pleased to honor Mr. Charles W. Davidson for his philanthropic and business contributions to the San Jose area that I have the honor of representing.

A TRIBUTE TO SHERINE BROWN JENNELS, PH.D.

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Sherine Brown Jennels. Dr. Jennels is a native New Yorker and the daughter of James and Delva E. Brown, sister of Jayson S. Brown. She is an Interdisciplinary Scientist at the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. She is developing science policies and enforcement strategies to promote the public's health and protect the Nation's food supply.

In May 2002, Dr. Jennels became the first African-American of Panamanian heritage to obtain a Ph.D. from Harvard University in Biological Sciences in Public Health. Her doctoral research focused on biochemistry of nutrition in the area of cholesterol metabolism, genetic epidemiology, and coronary heart disease risk. Dr. Jennels did her postdoctoral training at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston, Massachusetts, where she worked on protocol and laboratory development of the OMNI-Heart Clinical Trial (Optimal Macronutrient Intake and Heart-Disease). She was the featured scientist on the website's educational recruitment video.

Dr. Jennels presented her graduate research in Florence, Italy, at the sixth International Symposium on Global Risk of Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke. She also presented her research at Scientific Sessions of the American Heart Association, which published those findings.

In 2004, Dr. Jennels was accepted as a science fellow to the United States Department of Health and Human Service's Emerging Leaders Program. This fellowship has given her the unique opportunity to work with leading government officials and scientists at the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition; Office of the Secretary; Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; Office of Minority Health; and the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Jennels is driven to improve the health and wellness for all Americans as a way to address the social conditions affecting the underserved. As a scientist, she considers herself an ambassador of health, nutrition and fitness, especially advocating for minorities experiencing health disparities.

Attending Oakwood College crystallized her commitment for service and community. Appreciating the value of her B.S. degree in biochemistry from the historically Black Seventh-day Adventist institution, she also recognized the importance of her college's motto, ''Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve.'' Taking this to heart, she has served as a youth ministry leader, short-term missionary volunteer, and a keynote speaker for several health, youth, and women's events.

In 2005, Dr. Jennels developed Operation Love Thy Neighbor, an organization designed to provide resources and support to families displaced by Hurricane Katrina in the Maryland area. This collaborative ministry of the Emmanuel-Brinklow SDA church assisted families and individuals in securing permanent housing, health care, transportation, emotional support, and/or household needs.

Dr. Jennels is married to Ernest Leland Jennels, and they reside in Bowie, Maryland. She enjoys traveling, sightseeing, the outdoors, sports, the arts, music, photography, and inspirational reading.

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize Dr. Jennels for her endless list of accomplishments.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Dr. Sherine Brown Jennels.

CELEBRATION OF REGISTER BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, today I rise in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Register Baptist Church. Originally organized in 1906 as the Missionary Baptist Church of Register, Register Baptist Church was officially constituted and accepted into the Bullock County Baptist Association in 1907. Although the first church building was destroyed by fire in 1956, the church rebuilt and dedicated the new building on June 21, 1959. Later expansions included a social hall and education building. Register Baptist Church has brought joy, laughter, support, and glory to the town of Register for 100 years—may God bless the future years for Register Baptist Church.

HONORING IOTA LADY BULLDOGS

HON. CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR.

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Iota Lady Bulldogs basketball team, who ended a perfect season this year by claiming the Class AA Louisiana Girl's Basketball Championship with a 95–72 win over Many High School.

The Lady Bulldogs sealed their victory in the second half, outscoring their opponents 56–30 to claim the school's first girl's State championship victory in 15 years. Previously, many had eliminated the Iota girl's team from the 2005 and 2006 State tournaments, but the third time was a charm for this year's Iota Lady Bulldogs squad. The win caps off a remarkable season for the team, which compiled a 43–0 overall record.

Madam Speaker, these student athletes will always cherish the memory of this season. The players, their families, and their classmates who cheered them on will always look back to this season as a source of pride, accomplishment and satisfaction.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the Iota Lady Bulldogs for their achievement.

IN HONOR OF COMMANDER JOHN A. HAYES

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, Commander John A. Hayes relinquishes command of Electronic Attack Squadron Two Zero Nine on April 14, 2007 and leaves behind a legacy of honor, courage, and personal contributions to his shipmates and our Nation.

Commander Hayes was raised in Avon, New York, and entered military service in 1986 from the University of Notre Dame Reserve Officer Training Corps. He was detailed to flight training and received his designation as a Naval Aviator in November 1988.

He reported to Attack Squadron Forty Two (VA–42) for fleet replacement training in the A–6E Intruder, and upon completion was ordered to Attack Squadron Thirty Five (VA–35) assigned to Carrier Air Wing Seventeen onboard USS Saratoga (CV–60). Commander Hayes deployed to the Red Sea in August of 1990 in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, completing an 8-month deployment and flying 30 combat sorties.

In 1996, Commander Hayes was selected for affiliation with Electronic Attack Squadron Two Zero Nine (VAQ–209) assigned to Carrier Air Wing Reserve Twenty. While assigned to VAQ–209, he has deployed three times to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, in support of Operation Northern Watch, to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Southern Watch, to Aviano Air Base, Italy for

Operation Allied Force, and has completed numerous other land and sea-based detachments.

Commander Hayes assumed command of VAQ–209 in October 2005. During his command tour, he led the Star Warriors on a 3-month combat deployment to Al Asad Air Base, Iraq for operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Under his leadership, the squadron also earned the 2005 Department of Defense Family Readiness Award and the 2006 Noel Davis Battle Efficiency Award, and received the 2006 Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve nomination for the Secretary of Defense Maintenance Excellence Phoenix Award.

Commander Hayes received numerous military decorations and awards. They include the Air Medal with Combat ''V,'' the Strike/Flight Air Medal (8), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat ''V'' (2), the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (4), and various campaign medals and unit awards.

On a personal note, it is my honor to have served with ''Woody''—his call sign. I have deployed with him many times, including to Operation Allied Force, which ended the nightmare in Kosovo, to Operation Northern Watch which enforced U.N. mandated No Fly Zones over Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and many other smaller detachments. I have flown with him. Professionalism and consummate skill are the hallmarks of this Naval Aviator in combat. Courage and inspired leadership are those of this naval officer in command.

TRIBUTE TO THE CEDARVILLE TROJANS

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the only undefeated high school basketball team this season in the State of Michigan, the Cedarville Trojans. The journey for the Trojans to the State Championship at Michigan State University in East Lansing to win the Class D State Championship was a long road, but one that these young men navigated with heart and dignity, making all of Michigan's Upper Peninsula proud.

Last season, the Cedarville Trojans traveled to the State championship semi-finals, but their path stopped there. This year, when the team returned to Michigan State for the finals, they were determined not to be stopped. Equally dramatic, in this year's championship game, the Trojans faced the Tri-Unity Defenders, the same team that defeated the Trojans in last year's semi-final game.

The 2006–2007 Cedarville Trojans are not, by any means, the tallest team in Michigan High School Class D Basketball. The Trojans' tallest player, Justin Baker, stands at six feet and one inch. However, what the Cedarville Trojans lacked in height, they made up in hard work, practice and natural ability.

Throughout the season, the Cedarville Trojans distinguished themselves as effective scorers. In particular, the team honed their three-point shooting ability, making their outside game a dangerous weapon. Thanks to the team's remarkable shooting ability, the Cedarville Trojans broke the 100-point ceiling during four different games throughout the season, including scoring 106 points against Posen High School in the regional final. Cedarville's scoring ability would prove critical during the State championship game.

Early in the championship game, the Cedarville Trojans put their opponents on notice that the Trojans planned to win. By halftime, thanks to their avalanche of three-point shots, the Trojans led 45–32. In the second half, while the Defenders used their superior height to creep back into the game, the Trojans continued their three-pointer scoring onslaught. Ultimately, Cedarville would score 11 three-point shots, breaking the previous record of 10 three-point shots in a single State championship game. This shooting lead Cedarville to a 77–74 victory and capped a perfect, 26–0 season.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you and the entire U.S. House of Representatives join me in congratulating the 2006–2007 Cedarville Trojans: Jordan Sweeney, Sheldon Tassier, Jim Eberts, Matt Hansen, Kevin Thompson, Jason Duncan, Jordan Duncan, C.J. Paquin, Taylor Smith, Luke Murray, Justin Baker, Cody Thompson, Scott McGreevey, James Mitchell, and Keith Foster.

It is with great pleasure that I single out their head coach, David Duncan, who has built a solid coaching record over the last year 17 years, winning 248 games and losing only 147 games. Mr. Duncan's assistant coaches, Scott Barr and Kurt Duncan, are also to be commended for leading this year's Cedarville Trojans through this historic season. I also salute the team's managers, Adam Dingman and Joe Duncan, for their hard work. These adults deserve our collective commendation for spending so much personal time preparing these young men for the challenges of the season and the challenges they will face later in life.

As Coach Duncan has noted, the unofficial theme for the Cedarville Trojans basketball team this year has been, ''Dream Big.'' Clearly, the young men of this team dared to dream big by battling their way to a perfect season, defeating taller teams, and bringing home Cedarville's first State championship. For dreaming big and for making their families and community proud, I salute this fine basketball team and ask that you, Madam Speaker, and the entire U.S. House of Representatives join me in saluting their efforts. Congratulations to the Class D, State of Michigan Basketball Champions, the Cedarville Trojans.

THE GLOBAL WARMING EDUCATION ACT

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce the legislation I am introducing, the Global Warming Education Act.

Scientific concepts, whether simple or complex, can take a significant amount of time to become widely known and understood. Hundreds of years ago, Galileo and Sir Isaac Newton made remarkable discoveries about gravity and the behavior of falling objects, but to this day, most people cannot explain the Law of Gravity, what determines the speed of a falling object, or why an astronaut in orbit appears to be weightless. Many adults have difficulty explaining the cause of the seasons, the phases of the Moon, or the composition of the atmosphere.

People can go on with their everyday lives without most scientific knowledge, suffering no ill effects. You don't need to understand gravity for things to keep falling. You don't need to understand how your lungs work in order to breathe.

Global warming, however, presents a new kind of problem. The widespread understanding of global warming will play a significant role in our ability to actually address the problem. If we do nothing, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise, and global warming will continue. We don't have much time.

It is well established that global warming may cause significant negative impacts, including drought, rising sea levels, retreating glaciers, changes to wildlife migration patterns, and increased storm strength. These threats are real. They are the natural consequences of a worldwide over-reliance on fossil fuels, an insatiable appetite for energy, and inefficient use of resources.

There are things that people can do, right now, to help fight global warming. People need to be armed with the knowledge that will help them in this fight. I believe that by expanding knowledge, we can maximize the impact of carbon-reducing measures.

My new legislation, the Global Warming Education Act, will create a Global Warming Education Program in the National Science Foundation, to broaden the understanding of human-induced global warming, possible long and short-term consequences, and potential solutions. This program will provide formal and informal learning opportunities to people of all ages, including those of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The program will provide actionable information to enhance the implementation of new technologies, programs, and incentives related to energy conservation, renewable energy, and greenhouse gas reduction. Maximum understanding will ensure maximum impact.

The activities in the Global Warming Education Program will include a public information campaign to help people understand global warming, and grants for innovative projects to expand climate science education. These grants can be used to develop new climate science education materials including print, electronic, and audiovisual materials.

With the increased knowledge provided by this act, people will be able to make choices in their lives and in their communities to fight global warming. People will learn about home improvements, tax incentives, and other measures that can benefit the environment. They will learn about alternative energy sources and new technologies. They will learn about transportation and consumer choices that can also benefit their pocketbooks. They will learn how their own actions and their own informed choices can make a difference.

The Global Warming Education Act is one part of the solution to global warming. In addition to improvements in climate science education, this Congress will need to pass measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, promote clean, renewable energy, and increase energy efficiency.

I thank the cosponsors of this bill for their support, and I urge the rest of my colleagues

in the House to support the Global Warming Education Act.

TRIBUTE TO MAN MINH PHAN

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a man whose life has touched many people in San Rafael, California. Man Minh Phan, known as Mr. Man, is receiving the 2007 Citizen of the Year award from the city for his outstanding community activism in the Canal neighborhood. This area has a large immigrant population, including 500 Vietnamese-Americans, endeavoring to assimilate into our country's culture.

Now 73-years-old, Mr. Man is a former South Vietnamese army officer who immigrated with his wife to the United States in 1990 after 6 years of imprisonment in a communist re-education camp and another 8 years waiting for relocation. They joined his son, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, who had arrived in San Rafael a year earlier after escaping Vietnam by boat. Mr. Man also has two daughters who live in Vietnam.

During his 16 years in the Canal area, Mr. Man has been active in organizing and teaching classes in citizenship as well as Vietnamese (for the children) and English as a Second Language (to help adults). He founded the Vietnamese-American Friendship Group, serves on the Advisory Board of the local Pickleweed Park Community Center, leads the Canal Beautification Project, served on the Marin County Sheriff Advisory Board, and helps organize the annual Tet New Year festival.

But these descriptors do not do justice to the man who is the very heart of his neighborhood, a man who works tirelessly and enthusiastically for his community. Often referred to as the ''Angel of the Canal,'' Mr. Man is everywhere, offering a helping hand to anyone who needs it. His neighbors in the Canal understand that his classes are a place to bring people together, not just to learn languages. He is not paid for his teaching and lives simply, relishing the opportunity to give back for the freedom he enjoys here.

Mr. Man also gives to his homeland. He is known for his habit of picking up recycling on the streets, with the proceeds sent to the needy in Vietnam, from wartime amputees to orphans—''whoever wrote me a letter,'' he says. Others have been inspired to join him in the collection to add to the amounts he can provide.

Madam Speaker, Man Minh Phan's activism and spirit inspire all of us. His own words sum up what our country is about: ''I was asked what we need, and I said the most important need is freedom. Freedom is the top of my life.''

REMEMBERING SERGEANT NICHOLAS J. LIGHTNER

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. HOOLEY. Madam Speaker, I ask this chamber to pause today and reflect upon the life of Sergeant Nicholas J. Lightner, United States Army.

Nicholas served proudly with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the famed 1st Cavalry Division.

Sergeant Lightner was known by his peers as a tough soldier; to his men he was known as the kind of leader that people followed. He set an example of courage and valor that will stand the strains of memory and time.

For much of his twenty-nine years, Nicholas Lightner wore the uniform of our country because he believed there was no higher calling.

He took his profession seriously, and Sergeant Lightner reflected great credit upon himself, the Army, and the State of Oregon.

Sadly, Sergeant Lightner died just a few days ago, just a few miles from the Capitol at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Most of his patrol perished in the attack on March 15, 2007. Nicholas Lightner survived Baghdad, and fought for his life with the same bravery he showed in the field. But the wounds were too severe; his devotion to duty ultimately was paid in full with his last measure.

I am here today to ask us all to remember. Remember the sacrifice of those we send onto foreign soil for our benefit; to pledge to ourselves and to the families forever altered by this sacrifice that they will not have perished in vain.

America is a great nation: great, because it is defended by volunteers that answer the call of service and stand in our stead; great, because our values are important enough to the men and women of our Armed Forces that they willingly sacrifice their sweat, their labor, and sometimes their lives.

Nicholas Lightner died because he took upon himself the burden of protecting the Nation, State, and community he loved. Newport, Toledo, in fact all of Oregon, are now forever less than we would have been had Nicholas survived.

Let us begin anew to dedicate ourselves to a cause that Nicholas Lightner believed in; let us begin today.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH AND WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague Congressman CIRO RODRIGUEZ for arranging this time on the floor for us to celebrate World Social Work Day and to acknowledge the contributions of social workers to the well-being of our society.

I'm proud to say that I'm a social worker and that my predecessor, former Congressman and now mayor of Oakland, Ron Dellums, was also a social worker. I believe our records, interests and efforts here in Congress and outside reflect the influence of our social work background. This education has helped me to form my principles and has helped me to fight injustice and inequality, not just here in the U.S. but also abroad.

Social workers make a difference in people's lives everyday and at all levels. They're in the streets working one-on-one with the homeless. They're in the hospitals and clinics helping people through their health crises. They're in the schools making our kids safe, adjusted, and prepared to take on the world. They're advocating for the rights of our country's most vulnerable citizens—our children, the elderly, the mentally ill, the poor, and others in our society that may not have a strong voice. They're fighting for social justice and human rights internationally and they're creating policies and programs here in the halls of both the Congress and the Senate that address the needs of our society.

The hallmark trait of a social worker is their ability to empathize—their ability and willingness to put themselves in someone else's place. This is not always an easy thing to do. Many times social workers encounter people who are in extreme states of crisis. Times when their lives are feeling out of control. It's no easy feat to step into someone else's nightmare and help them find the strength to cope, to problem-solve, and to move forward. But this is what social workers do on a daily basis.

Nonetheless, there are also times that are incredibly heartening and rewarding—times that renew your faith in humanity. They are the times when you see the first trusting smile on the face of a child that came from the chaos of an abusive home and you feel that connection. They are the times when you're able to help a family—homeless and devastated by the ravages of a massive natural disaster. They are times when the grassroots movement you've been working with is able to achieve its goal. They're the times when you're able to help a young man who seemed like he was starting down the path to a life of crime to find a better road and to make better decisions.

One of the ways that I think I've best used my social work education has been in the work I have done here in Congress. As a social worker, I am concerned about the many things that ail our community as a whole. That is why I have made the fight against AIDS a priority—not just domestically, but also abroad. We need to stop crimes against humanity, like the genocide that continues to ravage the Darfur region. I also believe we need to fully fund No Child Left Behind. Our education system is failing—No Child Left Behind is failing our children, our teachers, our parents, and our community as a whole.

Recognizing the importance that social workers bring to our schools, I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues who have cosponsored H.R. 171, the Student Support Act. I hope more of my colleagues will consider supporting this legislation, which helps ensure that our schools have the necessary amount of mental health professionals at their schools, including school social workers, school psychologists, counselors and psychiatrists. Almost all States fall below the recommended guidelines by the American Counseling Association of 1 counselor for every

250 students. My own State of California has 966 students for every one counselor. So I hope my colleagues can cosponsor this important act, and maybe we can see this legislation make some progress here in the House.

Social workers don't just make an impact on our students—social workers give back to our society by helping to make better citizens of us all. They strive to help their clients become the best that they can be, to improve their communities and to confront the injustices that they see. They foster a new way of looking at the world around you—one where you see promise and possibility. Social workers help us to realize a world where mediation, coalition building and effective communication are used to find peaceful solutions instead of military posturing.

I'd like to close by saying, I'm grateful to be part of a profession that is devoted to service to our people and that is so necessary to our society's well-being. I know that many of my dedicated colleagues work quietly in the field and that their contributions are not always given the attention they deserve, so I'm very pleased to be able to celebrate this day and to publicly acknowledge their contributions.

Thank you again, Congressman CIRO RODRIGUEZ for organizing this special order, and also thank you to all of my colleagues who were able to participate tonight.

INTRODUCING A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE ''DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. POST OFFICE'' IN PORTLAND, OREGON

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing a bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located as 630 Northeast Killingsworth Avenue in Portland, Oregon as the ''Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Post Office.'' This post office, located near Martin Luther King Boulevard, shall serve to remind us of the civil rights leader who inspired a nation and served as a catalyst for change. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of equality and brotherhood between people of all creeds and colors remains a vital and relevant vision. While our nation has come a long way since the days of the civil rights movement, it will always benefit us to be reminded of the ideals and inspiration of Dr. King. I am honored to introduce this bill as another tribute to and reminder of this remarkable leader.

ANIMAL FIGHTING PROHIBITION ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE KING

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 26, 2007

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, on February 7, 2007, the House Committee of the Judiciary passed by voice vote H.R. 137, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2007. This is a bad piece of legislation that will greatly devalue human life in the eyes of the law.

H.R. 137 would make it a federal felony to transport a chicken across state lines for the purpose of exhibiting it in a fight. Currently, 49 states have laws on the books to address this issue. To add a federal law would add another layer of bureaucracy to an already complicated legal code.

I believe that human life is diminished by our making it a felony to transport animals for fighting, without first making it a felony to take a minor girl across a state line for an abortion. It is a strong conviction of mine to fight for the sanctity of life.

While I believe that it is important that we act humanely in our treatment of animals, I do not believe that we should put their welfare ahead of unborn babies or minor girls. I call upon the Humane Society to work for humanity to humanity first.

Until we provide a higher standard of protection for human life, I will oppose making interstate transportation of animals for purposes of animal fighting a felony. In the U.S., we are faced with the alarming practice of people taking a minor girl across state lines for an abortion to avoid their own state's laws that require the minor's parents to be notified. Federal legislation, CIANA, the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, would only make this abhorrent activity, which exploits a young woman and kills her child, a misdemeanor. Though this legislation has not yet become law, it is a step forward in the right direction. Many who I know opposed CIANA in the past will vote today for the misdemeanor in current law, transporting a chicken, to become a felony, thereby placing animal welfare over that of a young girl and her unborn baby.

I believe that we should not place more value on animal life than we do on human life. It makes no sense that killing a person is a misdemeanor offense while transporting animals to a fight is a felony, punishable by three years in a federal penitentiary.

Mr. Speaker, while on the topic of valuing human life, I would like to talk briefly about bio-medical research, which is opposed by animal rights activists. I would like to mention that there is bio-medical research being done demonstrating, through transgenics, that the immune system from a baboon, or a human for that matter, can be spliced into the DNA of a hog to grow a heart a baboon can use.

The heart was then harvested from the hog and transplanted to a baboon. The baboon lived another 6 months with a heart that was grown in a pig. This is longer then the first human heart transplant patient.

But what has been proven now is that humans can transplant through transgenics the human immune system into a hog. In doing so, and we are only 3 years, maybe 4 years away from being able to custom build the human organ. rejection genetics into a pig.

We will be able to very soon custom raise human organs in hogs. Today we are already transplanting out of hogs and into humans anterior cruciate ligaments and heart valves.

We can raise in hogs 28 different organs. Not just hearts, but lungs, esophagus, stomach, bladder, but other important organs as well, kidneys, pancreas, liver, even skin for bum patients; name your organ. Except for the brain.

The reason for bringing up these pigs is that it further illustrates how the animal rights community, through legislation such as H.R. 137, seeks to pass their agenda for animals on the rest of America. They oppose using animals for lifesaving research like I just mentioned.

My home state of Iowa is an agricultural state. We understand the importance of animal husbandry and good stewardship of our animals. However, we also understand that animals are less important than humans. Animal rights activists seek to place heifers and hogs on the same level as people. I disagree.

I strongly oppose this legislation because animals should not be elevated above humans. Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

HONORING CESAR CHAVEZ ON THE OCCASION OF THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute and to honor the legacy of one of our nation's most important advocates of civil rights and labor organization. Cesar Chavez answered one of the highest callings of human life—to lead others in the struggle for social justice. It is for this reason that we proudly observe the 80th anniversary of his birth by voicing our support for House Resolution 76, to establish a national Cesar Chavez Holiday.

Born near Yuma, Arizona, on March 31, 1927, Cesar Estrada Chavez endured a difficult adolescence as a migrant farm worker when his formal education ended after the 7th grade. Migrant workers of this era suffered very harsh working conditions, and were routinely refused pay by farm owners. Chavez was able to escape this life by joining the United States Navy in 1944, at the age of 17.

In 1946, after 2 years of service, Chavez returned to California where he married Helen Fabela and resumed life as a farm worker. Before long, he joined the Community Services Organization, CSO, as a community organizer. Chavez traveled up and down the coast of his State urging Mexican-Americans to register to vote and become legal U.S. citizens, and frequently speaking on the topic of workers' rights.

By the late 1950s, Chavez was convinced that farm workers would be treated fairly only if they were able to form unions to represent their rights. After leaving his post as CSO president in 1962, he used his meager life savings to co-found the National Farm Workers Association, NWFA, the precursor to the United Farm Workers. Though past attempts to organize migrant workers had failed, Chavez traveled to dozens of camps in California and Arizona, teaching workers the fundamentals of union organization and inspiring many to become organizers themselves.

In 1965, Chavez and the NFWA led a strike on behalf of California grape-pickers that culminated in a 250-mile march from Delano, California, to the state capital in Sacramento. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, investigating the strike with the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, fully endorsed Chavez and his organization, and pronounced Chavez, ''one of the heroic figures of our time.'' The Delano strike

was the first major step in the battle for farm worker rights in the U.S., setting the stage for the 1975 Agriculture Labor Relations Act, the only law in the United States that protects farm workers' rights to unionize. This landmark legislation increased pension benefits, heath insurance coverage and pay for thousands of workers.

Chavez continued to demonstrate his devotion to nonviolent advocacy of workers' rights until his death in 1993, at the age of 66. In 1994, President Clinton posthumously awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, saying that Chavez had faced ''formidable, often violent opposition with dignity and nonviolence''. The legacy of Chavez's life's pursuit—his tireless fight for the basic civil rights of millions of workers—remains one that we must not let slip from the collective consciousness of this body. My home State of Michigan has been celebrating Cesar Chavez Day since 2003, and it is time for the Federal Government to follow our example.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pay tribute to Cesar Chavez on this day, and to commemorate his legacy by supporting H. Res. 76 to honor a true hero of our Nation.

IN HONOR OF ROBERT POWERS

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a man who has dedicated his entire life to the betterment of his community and the success of his family.

It is my great pleasure to inform the House of Representatives that Mr. Robert ''Elliott'' Powers of Savin Hill, in the Dorchester neighborhood of Massachusetts, is celebrating his 75th birthday at a surprise celebration with friends and family this Saturday, March 31st, 2007.

Bob Powers is a lifelong resident of Boston who attended Boston public schools, including the Edward Everett and Christopher Columbus High School. Then, at the age of 17, Bob volunteered to serve his country by enlisting in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. The Navy instilled in Bob a lifelong work ethic as well as personal pride and integrity.

As a letter carrier, Bob was a familiar face in the South End, Back Bay, and the Prudential Center where for many years he worked to ensure postal customers received their mail in a timely and professional manner. For 38 years, as a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch No. 43, Bob Powers put on his uniform every day to ensure that the men, women, families, and businesses on his route received their mail. Bob set an example of hard work and dedication to his friends and family that nobly illustrates the best of the American work ethic.

Madam Speaker, Bob Powers has also been a man committed to his community and has dedicated many hours and much energy to various activities within his home parish of St. William, including coaching basketball and managing the band. For many years Bob led St. William's Band, helping countless numbers of young people to find a purpose and direction in their lives. Through his thousands of volunteer hours Bob made sure that each young person had an opportunity to grow and learn in a safe, enriching, and fun environment.

And most importantly, Bob has had the enormous pleasure and tremendous good fortune to be married to his wife Pat for over 47 years. Additionally, Bob has been blessed with five children: Rosemary, Trish, Kevin, Robert, and Caroline, and is the proud and, from what I hear, doting grandfather to Tierney, Colm, Brendan, Kelli, Erin, and Tara.

Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honor to take the floor of the House today to join with Bob's family and friends to thank him for his service to his community and to wish him a happy and healthy 75th birthday. I hope my colleagues will join me in celebrating the birthday of Bob Powers and wishing him well in all his future endeavors.

HONORING THE BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN OF ONTARIO

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. WALSH of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today recognition of the bicentennial anniversary of the Town of Ontario. Ontario is located in the northwest corner of Wayne County, with Lake Ontario forming its northern border.

Led by Freeman Hopkins, the town separated from the town of Williamson 200 years ago, on March 27, 1807. After its separation, the town came to be known as Freetown. On February 12, 1808, the town officially became known as Ontario, in honor of the Great Lake on its border.

Ontario was a major location of the iron industry in Wayne County. In 1811, iron was first discovered in Ontario by a Mr. Knickerbocker. A few years later, Samuel Smith built a forge and began the making of iron. The real boom in iron industry came in 1880 when the Furnaceville Iron Company constructed a $200,000 furnace. For the next 17 years, Ontario became a mining town, and the product was sold for mill and foundry iron. As competition from the other parts of the country grew, the iron beds in Wayne County became idle and the people of the town of Ontario turned to another attribute of the region for sustainability.

Sitting on the shores of Lake Ontario the area proved to be the perfect climate for apple growing. From the initial apple farms roughly a hundred years ago, the apple industry in Wayne County has grown to one of the top producing apple regions in the country.

During the Civil War, the people of Ontario lived up to their town motto of ''A Community of Good Neighbors.'' No other town in Wayne County had as many fearless and brave citizens who served in the Union Army.

Today, the town of Ontario is home to many high-tech industries and alternative energies. Ginna Nuclear Power Plant provides clean energy for the town and the surrounding region while wind power investment at Harbec Industries has spurred economic development. Other small businesses in the town boost accolades that include the manufacturing of parts for the Hubble telescope and equipment for our American troops.

This once farming community has seen many changes from once booming iron production. Today Ontario grows and expands its industrial base while continuing to be a community of good, and proud, neighbors.

On behalf of the people of the 25th Congressional District of New York State, I proudly honor the 200 years of existence of the town of Ontario.

CONGRATULATING ROBERT L. DOMINICK

HON. CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR.

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud the devoted service of Robert L. Dominick, a resident of Crowley, Louisiana who recently retired after concluding 42 years of service to the United States government.

Throughout his career, Robert devoted himself to public service. After graduating from Southern University in 1966 with a degree in Vocational Agriculture, Robert was employed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as an Assistant County Supervisor. In addition to his new career with USDA, Robert also enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve in 1966, where he dutifully served for 22 years.

Having a desire to continue his education, Robert enrolled at Louisiana State University at Eunice (LSUE), where he received over 30 hours in Administration and Supervision.

Robert held various positions with USDA, including Assistant County Supervisor, County Supervisor, Rural-Economic and Community Development Loan Specialist, Lead Single Family Housing Specialist, and Guaranteed Rural Housing Specialist.

In addition to his distinguished service to our country, Robert also is a devoted member of many organizations in his state and local community. He is a life member of the Southern University Alumni Association, the Peoples Investment Company, the County Supervisors Association, and the Israelite Baptist Church.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me and the people of Southwest Louisiana in wishing Robert Dominick a happy retirement, and congratulating him for his invaluable service to his state and his country.

THOMASVILLE HIGH SCHOOL—THE HOME OF CHAMPIONS

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. COBLE. Madam Speaker, many towns, states, schools, conferences, or leagues try to lay claim to be the ''home of champions.'' But really, can anyone make a better case than Thomasville High School in Thomasville, North Carolina? The fact that the mighty Bulldogs reside in the Sixth District of North Carolina does nothing to dissuade me that Thomasville High School truly deserves to be called the home of champions, or perhaps, be renamed Title Town High! Allow me the opportunity to make the case for Thomasville High School.

On March 10, 2007, the Thomasville Bulldogs captured the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) 1–A men's basketball championship with an 86–76 win over North Edgecombe High School. This win was the fifth state basketball championship in the last 10 years. On December 9, 2006, Thomasville won its seventh state football title with a 13–7 victory over James Kenan High School in the NCHSSA 1–AA championship contest. This was the seventh football crown in the school's history, the third consecutive state championship, and the 37th straight win dating back to the 2004 season. So, that is 12 state titles from just two sports, football and men's basketball. Space and time do not permit us to list all of the titles—such as the men's soccer team in 2005 and the women's basketball team in 2004—we could go on and on, but for argument's sake, let's stipulate that Thomasville High School is truly the home of champions. Permit me a moment to detail the two most recent titles in men's basketball and football.

In the middle of March Madness, the Thomasville men's basketball team won the NCHSSA 1–A championship. Thomasville defeated North Edgecombe 86–76 in a game that saw nine lead changes and seven ties. The win capped a remarkable season for the Bulldogs in which they finished 24–2 and were perfect following back-to-back losses at a tournament in December. Head Coach Woody Huneycutt told the Thomasville Times that the title win came against a strong opponent. ''I am really proud of this group,'' Coach Huneycutt told his hometown newspaper. ''They did a heck of a job today. North Edgecombe was an extremely quick, physical, hustling team. They put everything I thought they had on the floor, and I thought our guys did the same. Of course, we had to, to be successful.'' And successful they were thanks to a complete team effort.

Congratulations are in order for Coach Huneycutt and his assistant Lacardo Means. In fact, Coach Huneycutt told the Thomasville Times, ''One of the main reasons we are here and we do as well as we do year after year is Lacardo Means. He is very instrumental to us being successful.'' Both men will be the first to tell you that most of the credit goes to the players on the court. Those who contributed to the title run included Donald Sims, Justin Moore, Bud Ray, Jeremy McKiver, Alex Perry, Zach Perry, E.J. Abrams-Ward, Evander Davis, Dominique Pickett, Trey Ray, Chris Woods, Michael Byrd, and Ari Foust. The team was ably assisted by scorekeeper Connie McLendon, statisticians Willie Green, Quan Warley and Demajio Lawson, and videographers Quiana Mock and Felicia McFadden. Several seniors on the basketball squad also play football for Thomasville and they are leaving high school with five championship rings.

On December 9, 2006, the Bulldogs completed a perfect 16–0 season with a third consecutive NCHSSA 1–AA football championship. Thomasville defeated James Kenan High School 13–7 at aptly-named Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill to cap an incredible run to the crown. Head Coach Benjie Brown, who has led the Bulldogs to the three straight titles, told the High Point Enterprise at the end of the game that meeting everyone's high expectations does take a toll. ''When you get to this point,'' he told the newspaper, ''it's so taxing and so tiring, it won't set in for a day or two. The emotions and effort that goes into it, the length of the season, it's wearing on players and coaches. It'll take a little while to really sit back and enjoy it, but I am happy for those kids out there.''

Now that some time has passed, I am sure that Coach Brown is very happy and proud of the hard work that went into completing the quest for the Bulldogs third straight state football championship. The perfect season was thanks in no small part in Coach Brown and his assistant coaches Stan Baranowski, Allen Brown, Roger Bryant, Sam Captain, Danny Medlin, Matt Pugh, Brandon Staton, Nick Sweitzer, Jaz Tate, and Tyler Tobin, along with community coaches Vince Brown, Ed Courtney, Kemp Harvey, and Don Osborne.

The entire roster contributed to Thomasville's latest football triumph. Members of the team included: Najee Brown, Jeremy McKiver, T.J. Steele, Willie Green, Bradley Watkins, E.J. Abrams-Ward, Justin Moore, Chris Woods, Quinton Lindsey, Scott Hines, Quan Warley, Mose Jones, Rashad Whitaker, Chris Webber, Brad Wilkes, Bud Ray, Arsenio Hudson, Dujuan Ingram, Lawrence Jackson, Heath Stroud, Kirk Yarborough, Martez Wilson, Demagio Lawson, Brandon Moss, Jaquane Mouzone, Mark Green, Lorenzo Cannon, Logan Barnes, Jerrell Wilson, Marcus Bratton, Courtney Henry, Avery Hudson, Ari Foust, Akeim Rainey, Quentin Long, Preston Atwood, Tommy Green, Cornelius Davis, Trey Ray, Evander Davis, Jameson Donnell, Willie Cannon, and Michael Byrd.

Those who didn't wear a uniform, but contributed in so many other ways can equally share the accolades coming to Thomasville's champions. We congratulate trainers Kenny Coker and Byron Lattimore, team doctors David Williams and Rob Williams, statistician Barry Tucker, film crew members Travis Leanord, Wade Loflin, Casey Medlin, and Adam Oakley, middle school head coach Eric Rader, gym maintenance staffer Bill Moore, and team managers Ryan Hanner, Luke Williams and Antwon Simon.

Congratulations to Principal Dick Gurley, Athletic Director Woody Huneycutt, the faculty, staff, students, and families of Thomasville High School on another outstanding athletic season.

Madam Speaker, I feel I have made a compelling argument to christen Thomasville High School as the ''home of champions.'' Even if others disagree with our assessment, I am sure that everyone in the Sixth District of North Carolina does agree that the Bulldogs' collection of state championships is mighty impressive.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. ANDREWS. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained on matters affecting my family from voting on Tuesday, March 27, 2007. Had I been present I would have voted ''yea'' on the following rollcall votes:

Rollcall No. 190—Providing for the consideration of H.R. 1401, Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007.

Rollcall No. 191—H. Res. 269—Rule providing for consideration H.R. 835—Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007.

Rollcall No. 192—H.Res. 270—Rule providing for consideration of H.R. 1401, Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007.

Rollcall No. 193—H. Res. 299—Supporting the goals and ideals of Professional Social Work Month and the World Social Work Day.

Rollcall No. 194—On agreeing to the Thompson (MS) amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 195—On agreeing to the Cohen amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 198—On agreeing to the Thompson (MS) amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 199—On agreeing to the Cohen amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 201—On passage—H.R. 1401.

Had I been present I would have voted ''nay'' on the following rollcall votes:

Rollcall No. 196—On agreeing to the Sessions amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 197—On agreeing to the Flake amendment to H.R. 1401.

Rollcall No. 200—On motion to recommit with instructions—H.R. 1401.

HONORING THE 80TH BIRTHDAY OF CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, on the 80th anniversary of his birth, many across our Nation will celebrate the life of a pioneer and advocate, César Chávez.

It is my honor to commemorate the man who inspired many and offered hope not only to his fellow farm workers, but to our entire Nation.

César Chávez was a migrant worker who knew firsthand the hardships faced by migrant farm workers and their families. Working the fields he saw the injustice, the poverty, and the poor health conditions that faced these families who were working to make America the breadbasket of the world.

César Chávez represented farm workers. But the issues he fought for are relevant to all Americans: Equal pay and better benefits. Improved education for all of our children. Expanded civil rights for minorities. All working Americans today owe a debt of gratitude to this outstanding individual.

His work is far from finished—we should continue to fight to see that every child receives a quality education so they can obtain a good job. American workers should have health care and safe working conditions and the opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families.

César Chávez served as an example to all of us who live in this great country of how important it is to serve and work for the betterment of all. We should be honoring this man by commemorating his achievements with a César Chávez Day.

May his legacy continue and live on. Let us always remember César Chávez—si se puede!''

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, on the eightieth anniversary of César Chávez' birth, it is appropriate to reflect on the impact his life and work has had on our Nation. As the founder of the United Farm Workers, Chávez was able to bring about great and positive change for many of the Nation's most vulnerable workers, notwithstanding the seemingly insurmountable obstacles confronting him. He was a remarkable man, who not only fought for the basic human rights of a too often neglected segment of our country, but he went on to inspire a whole new generation of activists who would later carry on his path-breaking work.

César Chávez understood the poverty and disenfranchisement of his fellow farm workers, having grown up working in the fields to support his own family. He fought for fair wages, medical coverage, pension benefits and humane living conditions for farm laborers around the country. And this legacy carries us forward today.

During my time in the California State Senate I supported legislation to designate a State holiday in honor of this remarkable leader. California is currently one of only eight States in the Nation that officially celebrate César Chávez' accomplishments with a holiday, and it has proven an excellent opportunity to educate adults and children about his important effect on social justice and civil rights. That is why I support the effort to create a national holiday to honor César Chávez and share his achievements with the entire Nation.

César Chávez had a motto, sí se puede (it can be done). This message continues to embody Chávez's legacy by inspiring Americans to demand social justice and civil rights. I call upon our community and our country to join me in honoring the contributions and services of a true American hero.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL ON NATIONAL SECURITY LETTERS

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Ms. HARMAN. Madam Speaker, we now know that the FBI may have violated the law or government policies as many as 3,000 times in the use of National Security Letters.

This body has been deeply deficient in its oversight of how NSLs are used, and legislative changes to current law are clearly needed in light of these stunning abuses. That is why the bill I am reintroducing today is even more important now than when I and others first introduced it in December 2005.

I doubt anyone disagrees that law enforcement must be armed with the necessary tools to catch terrorists, spies and others who threaten U.S. national security, but we must do so in a manner that protects the cherished liberty and privacy expectations of all Americans.

This legislation will strengthen accountability and oversight of NSLs, which, to remind my colleagues, are requests for personal data and records issued directly by government agencies without the approval of a judge.

We knew 16 months ago about the lack of checks and balances on both the front and back end of the NSL process—and we knew of the almost non-existent congressional oversight of their use.

Currently, Congress receives a one-page summary listing aggregate numbers of NSLs employed over the course of 6 months. These broad summaries are often delivered as much as a year late or longer. This was grossly inadequate in 2005, and is a bone-rattling embarrassment in 2007.

This bill would make the following changes to the use of NSLs. On the front-end, the bill would: Require the government to show a specific connection to a terrorist or foreign power before an NSL could be issued—a return to the pre-Patriot Act standard; require NSLs to be approved by a FISA court or designated Federal magistrate judge; and require the FISA court to set up an electronic system for filing NSL applications, so that requests are expedited and will not slow down investigations.

On the back-end, this legislation would: Provide a Sense of Congress that, in cases where an NSL recipient challenges the ''gag''/non-disclosure requirement, the government's certification that harm to national security will occur shall be treated as a 'rebuttable' presumption, not as ''conclusive'' evidence that harm would occur; require minimization procedures to ensure destruction of information obtained through NSL requests that is no longer needed; and require detailed semi-annual reports to the Congressional Intelligence and Judiciary Committees on all NSLs issued, minimization procedures, court challenges, and how NSLs aided investigations and prosecutions.

Now, more than ever, Congress must reassert its oversight prerogatives not only to regain control of a program that the Executive Branch allowed to morph into an out-of-control beast, but to reassure the American people that their interests and most fundamental rights are being protected.

In the 109th Congress, the bill was coauthored by the present Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and all Democrats then on the Intelligence Committee. It was also endorsed by key civil liberties groups. I urge its broad support again.

HONORING LT ADAM A. DYER

HON. CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR.

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of Lieutenant Adam A. Dyer of Lafayette, Louisiana. A U.S. Naval Aviator, Lieutenant Dyer's life was tragically cut short on January 26, 2007 when a Navy Knighthawk helicopter carrying him and three other crew members crashed into the Pacific Ocean while conducting a routine training mission near San Clemente Island, California.

Madam Speaker, Adam Dyer was an American patriot from day one. A native of Lafayette, Louisiana, he attended Lafayette High School and graduated from the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts in Natchitoches, Louisiana. He went on to receive a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Louisiana State University in 2002. While attending college Adam held several jobs, and at the time of his graduation worked for the State of Louisiana as an interpreter in the Department of Tourism.

As a young Boy Scout, Adam attained the distinct honor of Eagle Scout and, following a tradition of that honor, always felt a natural calling to serve his Nation. For a Boy Scout project, Adam once wrote that his goal was to become a Navy pilot. In December 2002, his goal was accomplished when he was commissioned as a United States Naval Officer.

After being commissioned, Lt. Dyer completed primary and advanced flight training in Pensacola, Florida. During training, Lt. Dyer's instructors often challenged his knowledge, but they soon came to realize he had a gifted intellect as well as a photographic memory. This allowed him to recite correct procedures back to his instructors verbatim, including the page numbers.

On November 5, 2004 Lt. Dyer was designated a Naval Aviator. He was then assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 3 in San Diego, California for training in the MH–60S, and upon completion reassigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21. Lt. Dyer was also instrumental in the formation of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23. In 2005, he participated in hurricane relief operations in Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina, for which he was awarded the Joint Service Achievement Medal and the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Lt. Dyer was deployed to the Middle East twice. During these missions, he and his team were credited with rescuing numerous people. His awards include the National Defense Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service and Expeditionary Medals.

Before his tragic and untimely death on January 26, 2007, he was in training to return to the Middle East for a third tour of duty.

Lt. Dyer realized his lifelong dream of being a Navy pilot, and in his final moments, he sacrificed his life as unselfishly as he lived it, trying to save those around him. Whatever the circumstances surrounding his all too sudden death, there is no doubt that to the point of his last breath, Lt. Dyer's efforts were focused more on saving his crew than on saving himself.

Lt. Dyer came from a military-oriented family, with his father and both grandfathers having served in the military. In addition to flying helicopters, Lt. Dyer loved golf and running. His family and friends remember him as a strong person who would never quit anything, no matter how hard things were. He always saw things through from start to finish. As a Naval Aviator, Lt. Dyer was the consummate professional. He knew his aircraft and his procedures backwards and forwards. Though certainly possessing natural talent, Lt. Dyer's best attributes were his never-ending desire to learn, the great responsibility he felt for his crew, and the fact that he was a loyal friend.

Lt. Dyer was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on March 9, 2007. He is survived by his parents, David and Stephanie Dyer, and a sister, Lindsay Dyer, of Lafayette, Louisiana.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, March 29, 2007 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

MARCH 30

10 a.m.
Appropriations
Legislative Branch Subcommittee
To hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, and the United States Capitol police.
SD–138

APRIL 10

10 a.m.
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).
SR–253

APRIL 11

9:30 a.m.
Veterans' Affairs
To hold hearings to examine issues relative to Filipino veterans.
SR–418

10 a.m.
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
To hold hearings to examine the availability and affordability of property and casualty insurance in the Gulf Coast and other coastal regions.
SD–538

Rules and Administration
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Smithsonian Institution.
SR–301

APRIL 17

10 a.m.
Judiciary
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Department of Justice.
SD–106

APRIL 25

2 p.m.
Veterans' Affairs
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Department of Veterans Affairs, focusing on mental health issues.
SR–418

APRIL 26

10 a.m.
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Science, Technology, and Innovation Subcommittee
To hold hearings to examine clean coal technology.
SR–253

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S3985–S4079

Measures Introduced: Nineteen bills and four resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 1003–1021, and S. Res. 130–133. **Page S4047**

Measures Reported:

S. 223, to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form, with an amendment. **Page S4046**

Measures Passed:

National Agriculture Day: Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 114, recognizing the contributions of agricultural producers in Pennsylvania and throughout the Nation on the occasion of National Agriculture Day, and the resolution was then agreed to. **Page S4078**

Honoring Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson: Senate agreed to S. Res. 133, celebrating the life of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson. **Pages S4078–79**

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations: Senate continued consideration of H.R. 1591, making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, taking action on the following amendments proposed thereto: **Pages S3986–S4039**

Adopted:

Craig (for Warner) Modified Amendment No. 697, to provide for an independent assessment of the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces. **Pages S3988–89, S3999, S4001–02, S4036**

By 75 yeas to 22 nays (Vote No. 118), Wyden Amendment No. 709, to reauthorize the secure rural schools and community self-determination program and to provide funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program. **Pages S3986–88, S3990, S4017**

Murray (for Hutchison) Amendment No. 655, to authorize the conveyance of a parcel of land for use for purposes of a prison in the State of Texas. **Pages S4027–28**

Murray (for Clinton) Amendment No. 666, to link award fees under Department of Homeland Security contracts to successful acquisition outcomes under such contracts. **Page S4028**

Murray (for Kennedy) Modified Amendment No. 685, to provide for a prohibition relative to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. **Page S4028**

Murray (for Cochran) Amendment No. 674, to require the reports on the progress of the Government of Iraq in meeting benchmarks to be submitted jointly by the Commander, Multi-National Forces—Iraq, and the United States Ambassador to Iraq. **Page S4028**

Murray (for Kerry/Hagel) Modified Amendment No. 687, to improve programs for small business concerns that employ Reservists. **Pages S4028–30**

Murray (for Stevens) Amendment No. 727, to make a technical correction regarding the availability of funds from the Iraq Freedom Fund. **Page S4030**

Murray (for Landrieu) Modified Amendment No. 732, of a technical nature. **Page S4030**

Murray (for Snowe) Amendment No. 772, to relieve burdens on small business concerns operating on Federal disaster projects. **Page S4031**

Murray (for Landrieu/Cochran) Amendment No. 776, to provide funds to recruit and retain teachers, principals, and other school leaders to areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita. **Page S4031**

Murray (for Klobuchar) Amendment No. 793, to provide effective rural and small community assistance by the Environmental Protection Agency. **Page S4032**

Murray (for Pryor) Amendment No. 807, to increase by $5,000,000 the amount available for the Department of Homeland Security for State and Local Programs and make the increase available for the Domestic Preparedness Equipment Technical Assistance Program and to provide an offset. **Page S4032**

Murray (for Coleman) Modified Amendment No. 835 (to Amendment No. 700), to provide for a hospital in Cass County, Minnesota and Kemper County, Mississippi. **Pages S4032, S4034–35**

Murray (for Leahy/Specter) Modified Amendment No. 755, to authorize a cost of living adjustment for the Federal judiciary. **Pages S4030–31, S4034–35**

Rejected:

By 8 yeas and 89 nays (Vote No. 119), Burr Modified Amendment No. 716, to reauthorize the

secure rural schools and community self-determination program and to provide funding for the payments in lieu of taxes program.

Pages S3986–88, S3989, S4017–18

By 23 yeas and 74 nays (Vote No. 120), Coburn Amendment No. 657, to provide farm assistance in a fiscally responsible manner.

Pages S3986, S4002–03, S4015, S4018–19

By 45 yeas and 51 nays (Vote No. 121), Coburn Amendment No. 648, to remove $100 million in funding for the Republican and Democrat party conventions in 2008.

Pages S3986, S3999–S4000, S4014–15, S4016, S4019

Withdrawn:

Hagel Amendment No. 707, to provide a Sense of Congress relative to additional policy and requirements on Iraq. **Pages S4004–08, S4015**

Pending:

Cochran (for Lugar) Amendment No. 690, to provide that, of the funds appropriated by this Act under the headings ''DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PROGRAMS'' and ''ECONOMIC SUPPORT FUND'' (except for the Community Action Program), up to $50,000,000 may be made available to support and maintain a civilian reserve corps.

Pages S3986, S4004

Obama Amendment No. 664, to appropriate an additional $58,000,000 for Defense Health Program for additional mental health and related personnel, an additional $10,000,000 for operation and maintenance for each of the military departments for improved physical disability evaluations of members of the Armed Forces, and an additional $15,000,000 for Defense Health Program for women's mental health services. **Page S3986**

Webb Amendment No. 692, to prohibit the use of funds for military operations in Iran. **Page S3986**

Coburn Amendment No. 649, to remove a $2 million earmark for the University of Vermont.

Pages S3986, S4000–01, S4025–27

Coburn Amendment No. 656, to require timely public disclosure of Government reports submitted to Congress. **Page S3986**

Coburn Amendment No. 717, to make certain provisions inapplicable. **Page S3986**

Coburn Amendment No. 718, to make certain provisions inapplicable. **Page S3986**

Reid Amendment No. 823 (to Amendment No. 690), to establish the enactment date. **Page S4004**

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By a unanimous vote of 97 yeas (Vote No. 117), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, having voted in the affirmative, Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the bill.

Pages S4003–04

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the bill at 9 a.m., on Thursday, March 29, 2007, that all debate time in post-cloture be deemed expired; that the only amendments remaining in order be the following, and that they not be subject to second-degree amendments: Ensign Amendment No. 752, to be modified, DeMint Amendment No. 704, Coburn Amendment No. 649, Sanders Amendment No. 737, to be modified, Biden Amendment No. 739; that Reid Amendment No. 823 (to Amendment No. 690) be withdrawn, and that Amendment No. 690 be agreed to; provided further, that all other pending amendments be withdrawn; and that there be 4 minutes, equally divided and controlled in the usual form, for debate prior to the votes, that, upon agreement by the Majority and Republican Leaders, and the bill managers, a managers' amendment be in order; that upon disposition of the aforementioned amendments, the bill be read the third time; that the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended.

Pages S4035, S4079

Nomination Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nomination:

Vanessa Lynne Bryant, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut. **Pages S4078, S4079**

Nomination Withdrawn: Senate received notification of withdrawal of the following nomination:

Sam Fox, of Missouri, to be Ambassador to Belgium, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007. **Page S4079**

Messages From the House: **Page S4044**

Measures Referred: **Page S4044**

Measures Placed on the Calendar: **Page S4044**

Executive Communications: **Pages S4044–46**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Pages S4046–47**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S4047–50**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S4050–63**

Additional Statements: **Pages S4043–44**

Amendments Submitted: **Pages S4063–67**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Pages S4067–68**

Record Votes: Five record votes were taken today. (Total—121) **Pages S4004, S4017, S4018, S4018–19, S4019**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m., and adjourned at 8:44 p.m., until 9 a.m. on Thursday, March 29, 2007. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Acting Majority Leader in today's Record on page S4079 .)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Department of Labor, after receiving testimony from Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of Labor.

APPROPRIATIONS: FOREIGN AID

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the United States Agency for International Development and foreign assistance programs, after receiving testimony from Randall L. Tobias, United States Director of Foreign Assistance, and Administrator, United States Agency for International Development.

APPROPRIATIONS: NAVY

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Defense concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the United States Navy, after receiving testimony from Donald C. Winter, Secretary, and Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chief of Naval Operations, both of the United States Navy; and General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2008 for the Department of the Treasury, after receiving testimony from Henry M. Paulson, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Committee on Armed Services: On Tuesday, March 27, 2007, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities met in closed session to receive a briefing on Special Operations Command's global operations from Major General David J. Scott, USAF, Deputy Director, Center for Special Operations, United States Special Operations Command and sundry members thereof.

BUDGET: DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces concluded a hearing to examine the Strategic Forces Program in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from General James E. Cartwright, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Strategic Command, Major General Roger W. Burg, Director of Strategic Security, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Air, Space and Information Operations, Plans and Requirements, Headquarters, United States Air Force, Rear Admiral Stephen E. Johnson, United States Navy, Director, Strategic Systems Programs, Naval Systems Command, and Brian R. Green, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Strategic Capabilities, all of the Department of Defense; and Thomas P. D'Agostino, Acting Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy.

BUDGET: DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Personnel concluded a hearing to examine active component, reserve component, and civilian personnel programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from David S.C. Chu, Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Thomas F. Hall, Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs, and Stephen L. Jones, DHA, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs, all of the Department of Defense; Lieutenant General Michael D. Rochelle, USA, Deputy Chief of Staff G–1, United States Army; Vice Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., USN, Chief of Naval Personnel; Lieutenant General Ronald S. Colman, USMC, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; and Lieutenant General Roger A. Brady, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower and Personnel.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Armed Services: Committee ordered favorably reported the nominations of James R. Clapper, Jr., of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Claude M. Kicklighter, of Georgia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, S. Ward Casscells, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, and William Charles Ostendorff, of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, and 2,600 nominations in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

COAST GUARD DIVE PROGRAM

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard concluded an oversight hearing to examine the future of the Coast Guard Dive Program, focusing on lessons learned from the accident on

board CGC HEALY, and the steps taken to prevent future diving accidents, after receiving testimony from Rear Admiral Wayne Justice, Assistant Commandant for Response, and Real Admiral Paul Higgins, Director, Health and Safety Directorate, both of the United States Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security; and Rear Admiral Michael P. Tillotson, Deputy Director, Standing Joint Force Headquarters North American Aerospace Defense Command, United States Navy.

HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT SYSTEM

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Subcommittee on Space, Aeronautics, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine transitioning from the Space Shuttle to a next generation Human Space Flight System, after receiving testimony from William H. Gerstenmaier, Associate Administrator, Space Operations, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Allen Li, Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management, Government Accountability Office; Ron Dittemore, ATK Launch Systems Group, Brigham City, Utah; John Karas, Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, Littleton, Colorado; Johnny Walker, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Cape Canaveral, Florida; and Michael J. McCulley, United Space Alliance, Arlington, Virginia.

GOVERNMENT BUILDING OPERATIONAL COSTS

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee concluded a hearing to examine reducing government building operational costs through innovation and efficiency, focusing on legislative solutions, after receiving testimony from David L. Winstead, Commissioner, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration; Kateri Callahan, Alliance to Save Energy, Washington, D.C.; and Melanie Townshend, Gilbane Building Company, Arlington, Virginia, on behalf of the Associated General Contractors of America.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Committee on Finance: Committee concluded a hearing to examine risks and reform, focusing on the role of currency in the United States-China relationship, after receiving testimony from Senators Schumer and Graham; Stephen S. Roach, Morgan Stanley, New York, New York; Eswar S. Prasad, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; and Morris Goldstein, Peterson Institute for International Economics, and John H. Makin, American Enterprise Institute, both of Washington, D.C.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee ordered favorably reported:

S. 193, to increase cooperation on energy issues between the United States Government and foreign governments and entities in order to secure the strategic and economic interests of the United States;

S. 613, to enhance the overseas stabilization and reconstruction capabilities of the United States Government;

H.R. 1003, to amend the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 to reauthorize the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy;

S. Res. 30, expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the need for the United States to address global climate change through the negotiation of fair and effective international commitments;

S. Res. 65, condemning the murder of Turkish–Armenian journalist and human rights advocate Hrant Dink and urging the people of Turkey to honor his legacy of tolerance, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. Res. 76, calling on the United States Government and the international community to promptly develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive regional strategy in Africa to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian operations, contain and reduce violence, and contribute to conditions for sustainable peace in eastern Chad, and Central African Republic, and Darfur, Sudan; and

The nominations of Paul J. Bonicelli, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Curtis S. Chin, of New York, to be United States Director of the Asian Development Bank, with the rank of Ambassador, Eli Whitney Debevoise II, of Maryland, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Zalmay Khalilzad, of Maryland, to be the Representative to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador and the Representative to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during his tenure of service as Representative to the United Nations, Margrethe Lundsager, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund, Katherine Almquist, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Douglas Menarchik, of Texas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development. (Reappointment), Ford M. Fraker, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and a promotion list in the Foreign Service.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND REAUTHORIZATION

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee concluded a hearing to examine No Child Left Behind Reauthorization, focusing on effective strategies for engaging parents and communities to be involved in schools, after receiving testimony from Anne T. Henderson, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and Wendy Puriefoy, Public Education Network, both of Washington, D.C.; Daniel J. Cardinali, Communities In Schools, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia; Kathy Patenaude, Rhode Island Parent Teachers Association, Coventry; and Philip J. Ritter, Texas Instruments Incorporated, Dallas.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Rules and Administration: Committee ordered favorably reported S. 223, to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form, with an amendment.

AFFORDABLE DRUG COVERAGE

Special Committee on Aging: Committee concluded a hearing to examine affordable drug coverage that works for the state of Wisconsin, focusing on preserving Wisconsin's SeniorCare Program, after receiving testimony from Leslie V. Norwalk, Acting Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services; and Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle, Tom Frazier, Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Patricia Finder-Stone, AARP Wisconsin, and Bette Linton, all of Madison, Wisconsin.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 27 public bills, H.R. 1725–1751; and 2 resolutions, H. Res. 281–282, were introduced. **Pages H3277–78**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H3278–79**

Reports Filed: There were no reports filed today.

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein she appointed Representative Baldwin to act as Speaker Pro Tempore for today. **Page H3187**

Chaplain: The prayer was offered by the guest Chaplain, Rabbi Paul Silton, Temple Israel, Albany, New York. **Page H3187**

Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007: The House passed H.R. 835, to reauthorize the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development for housing assistance for Native Hawaiians, by a yea-and-nay vote of 272 yeas to 150 nays, with 1 voting "present", Roll No. 205. Debate began on Tuesday, March 27th.

Pages H3190–91, H3205–06

H. Res. 269, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to on Tuesday, March 27th.

Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007: The House passed H.R. 1538, to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, by a yea-and-nay vote of 426 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 208. **Pages H3206–36**

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment. **Page H3219**

On a demand for a separate vote on a certain amendment agreed to in the Committee of the Whole:

By a yea-and-nay vote of 426 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 207, agreed to the Sestak amendment (No. 7 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop and implement a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members (agreed to in the Committee of the Whole by a recorded vote of 434 ayes with none voting "no", Roll No. 206).

Pages H3227–28, H3231, H3233–34, H3234–35

Earlier, agreed to amendments in the Committee of the Whole:

Barrow amendment (No. 1 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that eliminates the deductible and changes the method of determining the mileage reimbursement rate under the beneficiary travel program administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs;

Pages H3224–25

Skelton amendment (No. 2 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that makes technical changes in section 101 to clarify the qualification of military officers who may supervise medical care case managers and in section 107 to require that the tracking system for reports to medical authorities regarding wounded warrior symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or suicidal tendencies be developed not later than 180 days after the date of enactment and that the results be included in the Congressional reporting requirement; **Page H3225**

Kline (MN) amendment (No. 3 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that directs the Secretary of Defense to ensure that $10,000,000 is directed to support programs, activities, and facilities associated with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment program from the Medical Support Fund created by this bill; **Pages H3225–26**

Kennedy amendment (No. 4 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that adds a definition to Sec. 2 to clarify that ''medical care'' includes mental health care; **Page H3226**

Corrine Brown amendment (No. 5 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that ensures confidentiality for members of the military who call the hotline for help; **Pages H3226–27**

Eddie Bernice Johnson amendment (No. 6 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that strengthens language that professionals' training be ''improved'' rather than ''modified,'' and places greater emphasis on adequate training to detect mental health conditions among recovering service members; **Pages H3229–30**

Hooley amendment (No. 8 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that gives members of the Reserve Component the option to use Military Medical Treatment Facilities closest to home for treatment on an outpatient basis of injuries sustained in theater; **Pages H3230–31**

Hensarling amendment (No. 9 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to conduct a study to determine what the average length of time is between the date for which a veteran requests an appointment and the date he is able to receive care and also requires that the Secretary report back to Congress within 180 days with recommendations as to how this time could be decreased to 15 days; **Page H3231**

Bilirakis amendment (No. 10 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that creates an office of the ombudsman within the Office of the Secretary of Defense which would develop policies for the military departments on providing assistance to recovering service members and their families; **Pages H3231–32**

Buchanan amendment (No. 11 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that directs the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility of a Soldier Patient Tracking System so any patient can be located in the medical holdover (MHO) process; and **Pages H3232–33**

Welch (VT) amendment (No. 12 printed in H. Rept. 110–78) that requires that the Secretary concerned provide the medical care managers and service member advocates with all the resources they need to expeditiously carry out their work and also requires the Department of Defense to conduct outreach to inform all service members and their families about the existence of and services available to them by the medical care managers and service member advocates contained in the bill. **Page H3233**

Agreed that the Clerk be authorized to make technical and conforming changes to reflect the actions of the House. **Page H3236**

H. Res. 274, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to by a yea-and-nay vote of 243 yeas to 179 nays, Roll No. 204, after agreeing to order the previous question. **Pages H3199–S3203, H3204–05**

Older Americans Reauthorization Technical Corrections Act: The House agreed by unanimous consent to S. 1002, to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to reinstate certain provisions relating to the nutrition services incentive program—clearing the measure for the President. **Pages H3236–27**

Revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012: The House began consideration of H. Con. Res. 99, to revise the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012. Further consideration is expected to continue Thursday, March 29th. **Pages H3237–65**

H. Res. 275, the rule providing for consideration of the resolution, was agreed to by a yea-and-nay vote of 229 yeas to 197 nays, Roll No. 203, after agreeing to order the previous question by a yea-and-nay vote of 225 yeas to 196 nays, Roll No. 202. **Pages H3192–99, H3203–04**

Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following Members to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group: Representative Pastor, Chairman, Representative Linda T. Sánchez, Vice-Chairman, and Representatives Filner, Reyes, Solis, Rodriguez, and Giffords. **Page H3265**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate today appears on page H3236.

Senate Referral: S. Con. Res. 21 was held at the desk.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Six yea-and-nay votes and one recorded vote developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H3203–04, H3204, H3205, H3205–06, H3233–34, H3235, and H3235–36. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10:00 a.m. and adjourned at 11:03 p.m.

Committee Meetings

CROP PROTECTION PROVISIONS

Committee on Agriculture: Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held a hearing to review proposals to amend the program crop provisions of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FDA, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Rural Development. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the USDA: Tom Dorr, Under Secretary; Jack Gleason, Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service; Russ Davis, Administrator, Rural Housing Service; James Andrew, Administrator, Rural Utilities Service; and W. Scott Steele, Budget Officer.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Testimony was heard from Michael J. Sullivan, Acting Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Department of Justice.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Department of Energy: Nuclear Energy/Office of Civilian Nuclear Waste/Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Energy: Dennis R. Spurgeon, Assistant Secretary, Nuclear Energy; Edward F. Sproat III, Director, Office of Civilian Nuclear Waste; and Dale E. Klein, Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government held a hearing on Secretary of the Treasury. Testimony was heard from Henry M. Paulson, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury.

HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Homeland Security held a hearing on Ensuring that the Department of Homeland Security's Research and Technology Investments Pay Off. Testimony was heard from Jay Cohen, Under Secretary, Science and Technology Directorate, Department of Homeland Security.

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a hearing on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Department of Interior: Office of Insular Affairs/Departmental Management/Office of the Solicitor. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of the Interior: Dale Hall, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Nikolao Pula, Director, Office of Insular Affairs; R. Thomas Weimer, Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management, and Budget; and David Bernhardt, Solicitor.

LABOR, HHS, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies continued appropriation hearings. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VA, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Army Budget. Testimony was heard from GEN Richard Cody, USA, Vice Chief of Staff, Department of the Army.

STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs held a hearing on Latin America and Caribbean. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of State: Tom Shannon, Assistant Secretary, Western Hemisphere Affairs; and Adolpho Franco,

Assistant Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development.

TRANSPORTATION, HUD, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Federal Railroad Administration/National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK). Testimony was heard from Joseph Boardman, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation; and Alexander Kummant, President and CEO, National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK).

IRAQI SECURITY FORCE TRANSITION

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on outside perspectives on transitioning security to the Iraqi security forces. Testimony was heard from Robert Perito, Senior Program Officer, U.S. Institute for Peace; and public witnesses.

DOD IT BUDGET

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities held a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Budget Request on information technology. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Defense: John Grimes, Assistant Secretary, Networks and Information Integration and Chief Information Officer; and LTG Charles Croom, USAF, Director, Defense Information Systems Agency.

COAL MINE SAFETY

Committee on Education and Labor: Held a hearing on Protecting the Health and Safety of America's Mine Workers. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

DIGITAL TV TRANSITION

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet held a hearing entitled ''Status of the Digital Television Transition.'' Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Financial Services: Ordered reported, as amended, H.R. 1257, Shareholder Vote on Executive Compensation Act.

The Committee began markup of H.R. 1427, Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007.

Will continue tomorrow.

BAD AROLSEN HOLOCAUST ARCHIVES

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Europe held a hearing on Opening up of the Bad Arolsen Holocaust Archives in Germany. Testimony was heard from Representative Hastings of Florida; J. Christian Kennedy, Special Envoy, Holocaust Issues, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State; Paul Shapiro, Director, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum; and public witnesses.

AFRICAN OPINIONS ON U.S. POLICIES

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Africa, and Global Health held a joint hearing on African Opinion on U.S. Policies, Values and People. Testimony was heard from a public witness.

TRADE, FOREIGN POLICY EFFECTS ON AMERICAN WORKERS

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade held a hearing on Trade, Foreign Policy and the American Worker. Testimony was heard from Carla A. Hills, former U.S. Trade Representative; and public witnesses.

AMERICAS—POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on Poverty and Inequality in the Americas: The Unaddressed Problem. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AUTHORIZATION ACT FY 2008

Committee on Homeland Security: Ordered reported, as amended, H.R. 1684, Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008..

SECOND CHANCE ACT

Committee on the Judiciary: Ordered reported H.R. 1593, Second Chance Act of 2007.

OVERSIGHT—ROYALTIES AT RISK

Committee on Natural Resources: Held an oversight hearing on Royalties at Risk? Testimony was heard from C. Stephen Allred, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior; Mark Gaffigan, Acting Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO; Bobby Maxwell, former Auditor, Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior; Dennis Roller, Audit Manager, Auditors Office—Royalty Audit Section, State of North Dakota; Michael Geesey, Director, Department of Audit, State of Wyoming; and public witnesses.

GSA—ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Held a hearing on Allegations of Misconduct at the General Services Administration. Testimony was heard from Senator Grassley; and the following officials of the

GSA: Lurita A. Doan, Administrator; and Brian D. Miller, Inspector General.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Science and Technology: Ordered reported the following measures: H.R. 362, amended, 10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds, Science and Math Scholarship Act; H. Con. Res. 76, Honoring the 50th anniversary of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) and its past contributions to space research, and looking forward to future accomplishments; and H. Res. 252, Recognizing the 50th anniversary of John Herschel Glenn, Jr.'s, historic achievement in becoming the first United States astronaut to orbit the Earth.

MEDIA INFLUENCING SCIENCE POLICY

Committee on Science and Technology: Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight held a hearing on Shaping the Message, Distorting the Science: Media Strategies to Influence Science Policy. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

SMALL MEDICAL PRACTICES HEALTH IT

Committee on Small Business: Subcommittee on Regulation, Health Care and Trade held a hearing entitled "The Value of Health IT to Solo and Small Medical Practices." Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

FAA'S AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Aviation held a hearing on the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. Testimony was heard from D. Kirk Shaffer, Associate Administrator, Airports, FAA, Department of Transportation; Gerald Dillingham, Director, Physical Infrastructure, GAO; James E. Bennett, President and CEO, Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority; and public witnesses.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT OF 2007

Committee on Ways and Means: Ordered reported, as amended, H.R. 1677, Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007.

NATIONAL SECURITY LETTERS

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence: Held a hearing on National Security Letters. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Justice: Glenn A. Fine, Inspector General; John S. Pistole, Deputy Director, FBI; and Kenneth Wainstein, Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division; and public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Joint Economic Committee: Committee concluded hearings to examine the current economic outlook, focusing on economic activity, inflation, and the housing market, after receiving testimony from Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2007

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Armed Services: to hold hearings to examine the Department of the Navy in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2008 and the future years Defense Program, with the possibility of a closed session in SR–222 following the open session, 9:30 a.m., SD–106.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: to hold hearings to examine the nomination of David James Gribbin IV, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation, 11 a.m., SR–253.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: business meeting to consider S. 521, to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse and customhouse located at 515 West First Street in Duluth, Minnesota, as the "Gerald W. Heany Federal Building and United States Courthouse and Customhouse", S. 801, to designate a United States courthouse located in Fresno, California, as the "Robert E. Coyle United States Courthouse", S. 992, to achieve emission reductions and cost savings through accelerated use of cost-effective lighting technologies in public buildings, S. 496, to reauthorize and improve the program authorized by the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, and the nominations of Roger Romulus Martella, Jr., of Virginia, to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Bradley Udall, of Colorado, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall Scholarship and Excellence In National Environmental Policy Foundation, 10 a.m., S–211, Capitol.

Committee on Finance: to hold hearings to examine clean energy from the margins to the mainstream, 10 a.m., SD–215.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security, to hold hearings to examine eliminating and recovering improper payments, focusing on the Office of Management and Budget report entitled "Improving the Accuracy and Integrity of Improper Payments", 10 a.m., SD–342.

Committee on Indian Affairs: to hold an oversight hearing to examine Indian trust fund litigation, 9:15 a.m., SR–485.

Committee on the Judiciary: to continue hearings to examine Department of Justice hiring and firing of United States Attorneys, focusing on preserving prosecutorial independence, 10 a.m., SH–216.

Full Committee, business meeting to consider S. 236, to require reports to Congress on Federal agency use of data mining, S. 376, to amend title 18, United States Code, to improve the provisions relating to the carrying of concealed weapons by law enforcement officers, S. 849, to promote accessibility, accountability, and openness in Government by strengthening section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as the Freedom of Information Act), S. 119, to prohibit profiteering and fraud relating to military action, relief, and reconstruction efforts, S. 621, to establish commissions to review the facts and circumstances surrounding injustices suffered by European Americans, European Latin Americans, and Jewish refugees during World War II, and S. Res. 108, designating the first week of April 2007 as ''National Asbestos Awareness Week'' and to discuss the possibility of the issuance of certain subpoenas in connection with investigation into replacement of United States Attorneys, 2 p.m., SD–226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: business meeting to mark up S. 163, to improve the disaster loan program of the Small Business Administration, 9:30 a.m., SR–428A.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: to hold joint hearings with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of AMVETS, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Gold Star Wives of America, Fleet Reserve Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, Military Officers Association of America, and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, 9:30 a.m., SD–226.

Select Committee on Intelligence: closed business meeting and hearing regarding certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, hearing to review colony collapse disorder in honey bee colonies across the United States, 10 a.m., 1302 Longworth.

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, on Food Safety and Inspection Service, 1 p.m., 2362A Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, on Commission on Civil Rights/Legal Services Corporation/State Justice Institute, 10 a.m., and on International Trade Commission, 2 p.m., H–309 Capitol.

Subcommittee on Defense, on Secretary of Defense, 10 a.m., 2359 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, on Weapons Activities Oversight, 10 a.m., and on Department of Energy: Weapons Activities and Naval Reactors, 2 p.m., 2362B Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Financial Services, General Government, and Related Agencies, on IRS, 10 a.m., 2220 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Homeland Security, on Bioterrorism Preparedness and the Role of Department of Homeland Security Chief Medical Officer, 10 a.m., 2362A Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, on Bureau of Indian Affairs/Office of the Special Trustee, 3 p.m., B–308 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, on public witnesses, 2 p.m., 2359 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, on House of Representatives, 10 a.m., H–144 Capitol.

Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Related Agencies, on Air Force Budget, 2 p.m., H–143 Capitol.

Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, on Public Witnesses, 10 a.m., B–308 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, on Transportation Safety: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration/Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration/Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration/National Transportation Safety Board, 10 a.m., 2358 Rayburn.

Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, hearing on overview of morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) programs, 2 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, hearing on How NCLB Affects Students with Disabilities, 10:30 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, hearing entitled ''Climate Change: Lessons Learned from Existing Cap and Trade Programs,'' 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, to continue markup of H.R. 1427, Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007 and to mark up the following: H.R. 1515, to amend the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to treat certain communities as metropolitan cities for purposes of the community development block grant program; H.R. 1675, Preservation Approval Process Improvement Act of 2007; and H.R. 1676, Native American Home Ownership Opportunity Act of 2007, 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, hearing on the 2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the Promotion of Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy, 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity and Science and Technology, to mark up H.R. 1680, Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate Act of 2007, 10:30 a.m., 1539 Longworth.

Committee on the Judiciary, to mark up H.R. 1281, Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2007, 10:30 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law, hearing on Ensuring Executive Branch Accountability, 1 p.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans, oversight hearing on ocean policy priorities in the United States, 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, hearing on the following bills: H.R. 189, Paterson Great Falls National Park Act of 2007; H.R. 359, César Estrade Chávez Study Act; and H.R. 1080, Grand Teton National Park Extension Act of 2007, 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, to consider the following measures, H.R. 401, National Capital Transportation Amendments Act of 2007; H.R. 1124, To extend the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999; H.R. 1402, To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 320 South Lecanto Highway in Lecanto, Florida, as the ''Sergeant Dennis J. Flanagan Lecanto Post Office Building;'' H.R. 1425, To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 4551 East 52nd Street in Odessa, Texas, as the ''Staff Sergeant Marvin 'Rex' Young Post Office Building;'' H.R. 988, To designate the Facility of the United States Postal Service located at 5757 Tilton Avenue in Riverside, California, as the ''Lieutenant Todd Jason Bryant Post Office;'' H.R. 1434, To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 896 Pittsburgh Street in Springdale, Pennsylvania, as the ''Rachel Carson Post Office Building;'' H. Con. Res. 88, Honoring the life of Ernest Gallo; H. Con. Res. 71, Commemorating the 85th anniversary of the founding of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), a leading association for the Nation's 1.3 million American citizens of Greek Ancestry, and Philhellenes; H. Res. 179, Expressing support for a National Foster Parents Day; and H. Res. 273, Supporting the goals and ideals of Financial Literacy Month, 9:30 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Domestic Policy, hearing on Build It and They Will Come: Do Taxpayer-financed Sports Stadiums, Convention Centers and Hotels deliver as promised for America's Cities, 10:30 a.m., 2247 Rayburn.

Committee on Science and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, hearing on reauthorizing the National Science Foundation, Part 2, 2 p.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, hearing on JPDO and the Next Generation Air Transportation System: Status and Issues, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Small Business, hearing entitled ''The Importance of Patent Reform on Small Businesses,'' 10 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Aviation, hearing on the FAA's oversight of Outsourced Air Carrier Maintenance, 10 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, hearing on The SouthEast Crescent Authority and the Northern Border Economic Development Commission, 2 p.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Joint Meetings

Joint Hearing: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to hold joint hearings with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of AMVETS, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Gold Star Wives of America, Fleet Reserve Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, Military Officers Association of America, and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, 9:30 a.m., SD–226.

Next Meeting of the **SENATE**

9 a.m., Thursday, March 29

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: Senate will continue consideration of H.R. 1591, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations, and vote on, or relation to, certain amendments, to be followed by a vote on final passage of the bill.

Next Meeting of the **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

10 a.m., Thursday, March 29

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: Complete consideration of H. Con. Res. 99—Revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2007, establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2008, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 through 2012.

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