

equality and freedom for all people be our goal.”

Crimes based on prejudice are a poor reflection on our communities, and I congratulate Galesburg for refusing to stand by in silence.

VETERANS FUNDING

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

Mr. STEARNS. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

My colleagues, the House passed the largest increase in veterans funding in the 77-year history of the Veterans Affairs Department. The bill provides more than \$37 billion for veterans programs. This is a \$4.4 billion increase over last year. As pointed out earlier, it has been over 130 days since the House passed the VA/Military Construction funding. Yet they have refused to appoint conferees like the Senate, their counterparts, have already done. So at this point the bill can't move forward and be signed by the President.

By the Democrats' failure to move forward on this bill, veterans are losing out on \$600 million for posttraumatic stress disorder care, traumatic brain injury research and care; \$4.1 billion to improve VA facilities, hospitals and clinics; and, lastly, \$480 million for prosthetic research to help our wounded veterans retain a positive quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we urge our Democrat colleagues to move forward on this bill and have it to the President so he can sign it on Veterans Day.

NATURAL DISASTERS

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Our hearts go out to the almost million people forced to flee their homes from wildfires in Southern California. At the same time a drought has gripped North Carolina and Georgia which in the long run may be end up being as devastating.

These disasters are almost unimaginable, except we've been there before, like in Southern California in 2003. And two-thirds of the new development in the last 10 years in Southern California has been in areas we know are subject to wildfire. What are we going to do about it?

The administration's refusal to deal meaningfully with global warming is the most glaring example of behaviors that doom us to reruns for years to come. Georgia has no real plan to deal with its water and doesn't even know what supplies it can count upon. Here in Congress, we fail to prioritize the right infrastructure and give billions of dollars for relief after a disaster and won't spend millions to invest in programs to protect before it happens.

I hope and pray that the message sinks in and that we use this disaster

as a wake-up call to get our act together to help people before these things happen to save both lives and money in the future.

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

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

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to express on behalf of California's congressional delegation our appreciation to our colleagues here in the House of Representatives and to the administration, President Bush and Secretary Chertoff and Director Paulison and others in the administration who are at this moment on the ground in Southern California, and to the courageous firefighters and Governor Schwarzenegger and his entire team for all that is being done to deal with what has been described by one battalion chief in San Diego, California, as the worst fire that the State has ever faced. Last night, Brian Williams of NBC News said that the fact that nearly a million people have been evacuated from their homes means that this is the largest movement of people since the Civil War.

We are going to go through some very difficult and challenging days ahead, and to the firefighters, to those who have suffered losses, our thoughts and prayers are with you. And again my appreciation to our colleagues who represent States across this country, North Carolina, Wyoming, Arizona, Idaho, States all across this country, Mr. Speaker, that have stepped up to the plate to help us. I also want to express my appreciation to Speaker PELOSI as well.

CHIP

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

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, the bipartisan CHIP Reauthorization Act had the support of over two-thirds of the U.S. Senate, nearly every U.S. Governor, and an overwhelming majority of the American people. Unfortunately, it did not have the support of two crucial parties, President Bush who vetoed it and his Republican friends who voted to uphold his veto.

Instead of helping us extend health care to low-income children, the President claims this fully-paid-for bill is excessive spending and instead he proposes to spend just \$5 billion more than we do now on the CHIP program. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the President's plan will lead to more than 800,000 children losing their coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how the President and his Republican enablers would determine which 800,000 children lose their coverage. And what do they tell the 4 million children who are currently eligible for CHIP, but

will have no hope of getting this coverage unless our bipartisan bill passes? It is time for Republicans in this body to reject the President's plan to cut health care for children and stand with us in strengthening the CHIP program.

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COMBATING THE EMERALD ASH BORER

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

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and urge my colleagues to join with me and our colleague Mr. KIRK in cosponsoring H.R. 3901, the Emerald Ash Borer Municipality Assistance Act.

What is an emerald ash borer, you may ask. Well, it is a nasty little bug that has found its way on to our shores, which has a very aggressive disposition towards ash trees in particular. It is a native of China, and there are no known natural predators here in the United States.

If you think of the districts that we all represent, many of them have beautiful canopies of trees that line our streets and create wonderful natural ways all throughout our districts. Yet this bug has shown up in Illinois, my State; Indiana; Michigan; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Maryland and West Virginia.

As one researcher of the Morton Arboretum, which I represent, said, "The emerald ash borer doesn't just kill a majority of the ash trees it encounters; it seems to kill them all."

This legislation creates a revolving loan fund whereby municipalities have access to those moneys, and they use it in order to take on this scourge.

PROVIDING HEALTH CARE FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICAN CHILDREN

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

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, last week 10 million children were denied health insurance because some of my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle chose to stand with President Bush over the children.

It is disappointing that some of our colleagues stood with the President and stood with the smoke-and-mirrors campaign to distort what the SCHIP legislation was. But this is not the end; it is only the beginning of the effort of this Congress to stand with American families to protect health care for our children.

Democrats in this body, along with 68 Members of the Senate and 43 of our Nation's Governors and over 80 percent of the American public want this piece of legislation to move. We are committed to ensuring that States have the resources and flexibility necessary to enroll these children.

Mr. Speaker, the American people, Governors and many Members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican,

were disappointed that more of our colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle didn't vote to override the veto. However, we will give them the opportunity soon and often to change that vote, stand with America's children, and reject the President's veto.

DEMAND THAT HOUSE APPOINT CONFEREES ON VA APPROPRIATIONS

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, more than 4 months ago the House passed an appropriations bill designed to provide benefits for our soldiers and veterans. H.R. 2642 passed the House by an overwhelming 409-2 vote. A similar bill went through the Senate 92-1. But since then, nothing has happened.

It has been 131 days since we passed the legislation, and still nothing has been sent to the President's desk for him to sign. The Senate appointed conferees to hammer out a compromise between the two bills 6 weeks ago. But the House leadership? Nothing has been done.

The question is why. Why would the new majority play politics with the health care of our brave men and women in uniform? There is no reason, a month into this fiscal year, that the bill is unresolved.

I ask all my colleagues, all 408 of them who voted for this bill, to demand that the House appoint conferees. Stop doing nothing. Do what needs to be done to meet the needs of our men and women in uniform.

CONGRATULATING THE UNITED NATIONS ON UNITED NATIONS DAY

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

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a happy note. It is a happy birthday today, the birthday of the United Nations. It was 62 years ago when 50 countries gathered in the great City of San Francisco, California, to make the cause of international peace and security a global mantra and launched the United Nations. It was a good idea then, and 62 years later, it is still a good idea.

In a world that is tense with war, the U.N. fights for peace every day. Where hunger plagues the poor, the U.N. provides food aid to more than 80 million people every day, every year. In 166 nations that suffer devastating poverty, the U.N. offers proactive programs to buttress economic development. And, most important of all, the U.N. deploys 100,000 peacekeepers around the world on missions vital to stabilization of regions under threat of conflict.

The answer to global distress is found in solving the problems that are the root causes of poverty, the lack of health care, shelter and legislation.

The U.N. is the only organization worldwide dedicated to this grand mission.

I congratulate the United Nations for its hard work, and ask Members of this body to support and invigorate America's commitment to this vital international organization.

SUPPORT THE SCHIP REAUTHORIZATION

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program. President Bush, as you know, has callously denied health care for 10 million poor children due to his misplaced priorities.

More than 800,000 children in my home State of California depend on the Healthy Families Program. More than half of those children happen to be Hispanic. The health of millions of children will be endangered and millions more will continue to suffer if we do not reauthorize this program.

We in Congress have an incredible opportunity to do what is right for our children, especially those children who are disadvantaged and come from low-income families. All children, regardless of race, income or geography deserve a healthy start in life.

It is time to end this false allegation that undocumented immigrants are receiving this coverage. Ten million children are counting on us to do the right thing. We have a moral obligation to protect the health and well-being of all of our children.

IRAQI CONTRACTS WITH IRAN AND CHINA CONCERN UNITED STATES

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, a very disturbing report has come out that Iraq has agreed to award \$1.1 billion in contracts to Iranian and Chinese companies to build a pair of enormous power plants. That is what the Iraqi Minister of Electricity said on Tuesday. Word of the project prompted serious concerns among American military officials who fear that Iranian commercial investments can mask military activities at a time of our heightened tension with Iran.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when young Americans are dying in Iraq and when the U.S. is spending billions of dollars in Iraq, this makes absolutely no sense at all. The Iraqi Electricity Minister said that the Iranian project would be built in Sadr City, a Shiite enclave in Baghdad that is controlled by followers of the anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. He added that Iran had also agreed to provide cheap electricity from its own grid to southern Iraq and to build a large power plant, essentially free of charge, in an area between two Shiite holy cities.

The expansion of ties between Iraq and Iran comes as the U.S. and Iran clash on nuclear issues and about what American officials had repeatedly said was Iranian support for armed groups. This is an outrage and should not stand.

THE PRESIDENT'S MISPLACED PRIORITIES: WHAT WE COULD DO HERE WITH MONEY GOING TO IRAQ

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

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, President Bush proposed that our Nation spend another \$196 billion in Iraq next year. Today we will spend \$330 million fighting the war in Iraq. Imagine that. Every day, \$330 million in taxpayer dollars is going to Iraq.

Just imagine for one moment what we could do here in the United States with that money instead. We could hire an additional 1,700 Border Patrol agents to work our borders for an entire year. We could provide health care to 50,000 more veterans so they receive the essential health care treatment that they need. We could enroll 46,000 more children in Head Start for 1 year, so they can receive early childhood education. If we took 1 day of funding from the Iraq war, we could help nearly 800,000 families keep their heat on this winter through the LIHEAP program. We could provide 270,000 more children health care coverage through the CHIP program.

Mr. Speaker, while President Bush has no problem sending billions of dollars to Iraq, he is neglecting essential needs here in America. The Democratic majority in this Congress refuses to follow that lead.

BUSH NEGLECTS DOMESTIC PRIORITIES TO CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, when President Bush vetoed a bill earlier this month that would provide health care coverage to 10 million American children, he said the spending was excessive. The bipartisan bill invested \$35 billion more in children's health over a 5-year period. Three weeks later, President Bush announces that he needs \$196 billion to fight the war in Iraq over the next year. If \$35 billion for children's health is excessive, what exactly is his request for the war?

I know the President believes that Congress is his personal ATM machine, but article I of the Constitution says different, and we will not rubber-stamp his funding request for the war.

As we have in the past, Democrats will continue to exert pressure on the administration to change course in Iraq so that we can begin to bring the