CAFTA
(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, coming in front of Congress, fact number one: The economic output of the six Central American countries entering into this agreement with the United States is equal to the economic output of Columbus, Ohio; Orlando, Florida; or the entire State of Kansas.

What this trade agreement, CAFTA, is all about: It is not about selling American goods into six small, poor countries in Central America. It is about outsourcing jobs. It is about weakening our economy. It is about losing our manufacturing base. It is about hiring low-income workers in Guatemala and Honduras and Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

This agreement hurts American workers. It depresses American wages. It does nothing to lift up standards of living in Central America.

CAFTA is a dysfunctional cousin of the North American Free Trade Agreement. It will continue to wreak havoc on the economy of Central America and Latin America and do nothing for American manufacturing.

RHETORIC VS. REALITY, SOCIAL SECURITY DEFINED
(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to clarify a few points about strengthening and preserving Social Security.

Unfortunately, partisan opposition groups are playing word games with social issues. Let me tell the Members what these words mean to the average American.

Privatization means taking Social Security completely out of the hands of government and turning the program over to a private entity. I will never support privatization of Social Security.

Personal accounts means giving younger workers a choice to invest a portion of their tax dollars into safe and secure accounts. Most importantly, these accounts would be owned by the individuals and protected from the D.C. practice of using these funds for general spending. This is not privatization.

I would hope that instead of slinging half-truths and misrepresentations, those groups opposed to any sort of reform of our incredible entitlements of their own and meet Republicans at the negotiating table in a productive, constructive manner.

SPECIAL ORDERS
The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announcement policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

NO FLY, NO BUY
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. Mr. Speaker, for years people have been hearing me talk about gun violence in this country, and the debate on tougher gun laws have been defined as “social issues.”

Gun violence has had tragic consequences for so many families, including my own. Gun violence presents a tremendous burden to our police departments, and I see it in my own district on Long Island where we are dealing with so many gangs. With the expiration of the assault weapons ban, many police departments will be outgunned by gangs and criminals. This is why basically we had the assault weapons ban put in place back in 1994.

Gun violence also costs this society over $100 billion a year. Most of that $100 billion is paid with tax dollars. It is estimated each shooting costs our economy $1 million in health care, police work, and lost productivity.

Mr. Speaker, the social costs of gun violence are ever increasing, but since September 11, the threat of gun violence has become an important homeland security issue as well.

We are at war, and our lack of tough gun laws allows our enemies to arm themselves right here in our country. People can go to gun shows and be able to buy guns. They can go into gun stores across this country with no background checklist whatsoever. My bill would ensure that those people on the no-fly list as soon as possible; and then they would be able to complete their gun purchase, no questions asked.

Let me set the record straight. I am not out to take away the guns of any law-abiding citizen. We need common-sense gun safety regulations that protect law-abiding gun owners while making it tougher for terrorists and criminals to obtain these guns. That is why I have introduced the No Fly No Buy bill.

This bill would deny those on the Transportation Security Administration’s No Fly List from purchasing firearms in this country. Granted, the No Fly List includes some law-abiding citizens who are on the list in error. But it is the only Federal terrorist watch list that allows innocent people to get their names removed. Other Federal lists without practical application may be just as inaccurate, but afford no due process to those wrongly listed. My bill would ensure that those people incorrectly listed on the No Fly List would be able to get their names off the list as soon as possible; and then they would be able to complete their gun purchase, no questions asked. Again, an inconvenience for some, but necessary steps to ensure terrorists are not buying guns in our country.

The Federal Government is charged with protecting us from terror. That is what 9/11 has taught us. I understand the second amendment concerns of law-abiding gun owners. These laws can co-exist. The Federal Government is charged with protecting our country. We should be stopping this. We can save a lot of money on medical costs. Our communities, all of a sudden, are asking themselves, is it safe to go out at
night. We have cut back on our police officers; we have let the assault weapons bill expire; we now cannot even have our police officers check to see if a criminal has bought a gun because in 24 hours the records are destroyed.

We are not going in the right direction. We can make a difference. I hope people will support this bill.

THANKING OUR ARMED FORCES FOR THEIR COURAGE, DEDICATION, AND BRAVERY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Poe). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Ros-Lehtinen) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces for the courage and the dedication that they have so bravely displayed while liberating Iraq from tyranny and terrorism. Through their hard work and dedication, these Marines, sailors, airmen, and soldiers have succeeded in defeating terrorism and giving birth to democracy in the Middle East, one that will serve as a model for the entire region.

Every day, U.S. forces transfer more security responsibilities to Iraqis, giving them the tools that they need to secure their nation. Today, there are more than 150,000 Iraqi security forces who have been trained and equipped by the United States and our coalition forces, Iraqis now patrol Baghdad’s hotspots, parts of Mosul, Fallujah, and Saddam’s hometown of Tikrit.

Every week, between 1,500 and 3,000 new Iraqi security forces enter active duty, joining the U.S. and coalition forces in our joint battle against terrorism and tyranny. By working hand in hand with the Iraqi people, we are enabling them to take control of their own future.

FOCUSING ON CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS TO U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to begin what I hope will be the start of a constructive dialogue about our Nation’s immigration laws.

There has been a lot of heated rhetoric about this topic in recent months. But what I believe has been lacking from this debate is a discussion of real solutions and an accurate portrayal of the real contribution of our Nation’s immigrant community.

In Congress, on cable shows and in newspaper columns across the country, we witness undocumented workers being unfairly and inaccurately blamed for all of our Nation’s ills. In fact, it seems as though there are some cable shows that host debates on immigration every night after night, night after night, night after night, night after night. Instead of endless footage of workers crossing the border, we see footage of real contributions of immigrants to our agricultural industry. They lack safety equipment and have no place to send their children to school. Many of these workers wake up at 2 in the morning to take a bus to our fields, and they do not return until long after dark.

But this is why we have fresh fruits and vegetables at our grocery stores and on our kitchen tables. It is men and women like this in this poster who sustain our $30 billion agricultural industry. According to the Department of Labor, at least half the 1.8 million crop workers in the U.S. are undocumented. That is the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to show the next poster, one we never see on TV. The subtitle of the article is “Jobs Americans Won’t Do.” I wish everybody would read the front page of The Wall Street Journal on March 11. The Wall Street Journal focuses on how farmers are finding workers. For example, ahead of a recent lettuce harvest, one grower took out ads in local papers for field workers to pick up the lettuce. He needed about 350 workers. The grower did not reply, just one reply. Mr. Speaker, the simple truth is our aging, more educated workforce is unwilling to pick the lettuce.