

things, as did the gentleman from Missouri, as did the gentleman from Texas [Mr. BRADY], to accomplish things that we think are meaningful to the future of this country: Balancing the Federal budget, lowering taxes, saving Medicare, and putting more power back in the hands of the people in this country and less power in Washington, DC.

We have done all this. These are things that are incorporated. These are the principles upon which all the things that we voted on today and we will vote tomorrow, those are the principles on which we stand. I think it is important that the American people know not only what we are for, lower taxes, a balanced budget, but why we are for it, and that is to give them more freedom, more power, more control, more decision-making.

This is an incredibly historic occasion for us in this country, and I would hope that it is not lost on the American public what is happening in this institution for the first time in 30 years. It is amazing. It is good for my kids and for your future kids and grandkids and for the people in America who have held the promise for a long time that we would come down here and do something that is meaningful, about protecting their future and making sure that they have access and are not deprived of the American dream. As we continue to pursue this, this is the first step, but I hope it is the first step on a long journey to putting more power back in the hands of individuals and not in Washington, DC.

Mr. HULSHOF. I think the gentleman has enunciated very eloquently what it is we stand for and why it is that we sought office and what we are doing to accomplish the goals that many of us stood for and campaigned on. It is especially poignant, I think, when we look just a couple of years ago when we had a President who, with the liberals in control of this body, passed a tax hike.

There was a discussion about ever-expanding government bureaucracy, universal health care, and then suddenly the stark contrast, that we are returning power to the people, getting it out of this city and giving it back to the Main Streets and the local chambers of commerce and civic clubs all across this great land. I agree with the gentleman that this Fourth of July will certainly be a day to celebrate.

Mr. BRADY. If the gentleman will yield, as I was listening to the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE], I was reminded of a quote attributed to your former famous constituent Mark Twain, who said "Nothing makes liars out of more honest citizens than the income tax." It is not simply because it is so complicated and people do not think it is fair. It is because when they are struggling so hard to make ends meet in South Dakota and make ends meet in Missouri, they do not believe the Federal Government is doing the same. Every dollar that we can cut taxes is a dollar we have not

sent to Washington, that we are leaving back in our States and our communities. I am convinced most Americans are not seeking a safety net under them. They are objecting to the tax net that we have thrown over them. If we will provide them the relief that we have scheduled for this week, that they so desperately need, I am convinced we are going to get support across this country for deeper tax cuts and less spending and more local control, as the gentlemen have both stated so eloquently.

Mr. HULSHOF. I especially appreciate the comment the gentleman made earlier because again waiting for the special order to begin, barrage after barrage from our friends on the other side, particularly our Democratic colleague from Arkansas who talked about the earned income tax credit and how it was that the family that he mentioned, he had a nice portrait, a beautiful portrait of this family that was struggling, but yet who bore no tax liability because the earned income tax credit eliminated any tax liability. In other words, that family in Arkansas did not have to pay taxes to the Federal Government. And because we do have limited resources, this targeted tax relief is going to those people that have tax burdens. I think the gentleman pointed that out a few moments ago.

Mr. THUNE. If the gentleman will yield on that, I think it is incredibly important to make the distinction here that we are trying to bring tax relief to people who pay taxes and not increase payments for people who do not. That is a fundamental distinction that needs to be made.

Mr. HULSHOF. Our colleague from Arkansas further pointed out that this family in the portrait that he had, that they paid the payroll taxes and certainly paid taxes toward Medicare and somehow that that ennobled the family to receive these income tax credits. But the fact is that paying Medicare taxes and paying the payroll taxes entitles that family to reap the benefits of Medicare down the road or to reap the benefits of Social Security. So the fact that that family is paying those payroll taxes and Medicare taxes, those benefits will come and inure to that family at the appropriate time. But because we have limited resources and tax relief, we are trying to give tax relief to those Americans who most need it.

Mr. THUNE. If the gentleman will yield further on that, it is interesting again to see the irony here in that we are talking about not counting Social Security and Medicare payments toward a future benefit and yet when it comes to computing income to declare someone as being wealthy, we add retirement benefits, capital gains and imputed income from rental payments and everything else. There are a lot of things being done here with the numbers which I think we need to continue to put the facts out, and if we do, the people will agree with us.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, I recognize we are down to our final minute or so. Let me just sum up that what we believe and especially in this vote tomorrow and the debate that we have on this tax relief package, letting Americans keep more of their money sounds like common sense to most of us, especially those of us who are newly elected Members. That seems to be a pretty radical idea here in Washington, DC. People in Washington should never ever forget that tax money belongs to the taxpayers and not to the government. It would be a big change from how things used to operate, but that change which comes tomorrow is long overdue. It is true and we have already heard it. We have gone back to the old divisive style of debate, this class warfare politics. I would hope and pray that we are beyond that. Instead of dividing Americans and pitting groups against each other, we should be working together to face our national challenges. We have a moral responsibility to ourselves and to our children not to tolerate such acts. We have a moral imperative to make it possible for everyone to climb the ladder of success.

Mr. Speaker, let me say to the parents who are struggling to make ends meet, the parents that are burning the candle at both ends to put food on the table and keep a roof overhead, the parents that are sacrificing their own needs and giving everything they have got to make sure that their children have every opportunity for a brighter future, we hear you. For those who believe that we spend too much in Washington, we agree. For those who believe that we tax too much in Washington, we agree. For those who believe we must balance the budget, cut wasteful Washington spending and provide permanent, real, meaningful tax relief, we agree. And for those that demand that we here in Washington do better than we have done in the past, we agree. If we can pass this tax package, Mr. Speaker, the next week and the Fourth of July will truly be a day that we can all celebrate our independence.

#### TRIBUTE TO SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS JESSE BROWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. TIAHRT]. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay a special tribute to someone that I feel is one of the brightest stars in President Clinton's administration, Secretary Jesse Brown. But before I begin, I would like to say a word about a woman who is in Washington today, a member of the Russian Duma, Mrs. Svetlana Go Voyz Da Va is the deputy chief of the Economic Policy Committee in the Russian Congress. During our visit this afternoon, we have agreed to set up an international conference where elected

women, officials from Russia, France, England, Africa and the United States can meet to discuss solutions and strategies for the problems that face women across the world. These problems include education, labor, health care and poverty. We have pledged our cooperation and will continue to work together to help women and children throughout the world. As she said earlier today, "Why not?"

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to recognize the great achievement of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown. Secretary Brown will leave his post on July 1st of this year after serving a distinguished 4 years with the administration. Secretary Jesse Brown, a combat-disabled Vietnam veteran, guided VA through a significant transition period where health care delivery systems evolved to reflect marketplace changes, where severe budgetary challenges presented themselves in the wake of deficit reduction, where growing demands were placed upon existing veterans' services, and where emerging illnesses from Gulf War veterans challenged the Nation's best physicians and scientists. Secretary Brown embraced all of these challenges with vigor and directed the Department of Veterans Affairs to be more responsive in the areas of claims processing, more sensible in its benefits for Agent Orange veterans, more proactive in developing programs for the significantly growing number of women veterans, and more compassionate with the treatment and compensation of Gulf War veterans suffering from illnesses. I commend Secretary Brown for his outstanding work in these areas, and I also call for Members of this House to observe his example and not abandon veterans in our budget, veterans who have fought so hard for this country.

□ 2100

The United States have the most comprehensive system of assistance for veterans in any Nation in the world.

Jesse Brown begins serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs on January 22, 1993. As Secretary he directed the system that included hospitals, clinics, benefit programs and national cemeteries. In his vision statement Secretary Brown said, "Our vision is as simple and is noble. It is to provide our veterans with quality health care, timely benefits and burial with dignity."

I believe this simple statement says a lot about Secretary Brown. It shows how he has the leadership to put our Nation's veterans at the top of the priority list in terms of receiving benefits and service they deserve for fighting to protect this Nation's liberty and freedom.

I was most impressed with his motto, putting veterans first. Let me repeat that. The motto: Putting veterans first. That is exactly what he did as Secretary, and it is so important that we continue to do so.

I yield to my colleague the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida, CARRIE MEEK.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Thank you very much to my colleague, the gentlewoman from Jacksonville, FL Florida's Third Congressional District, who is held in outstanding esteem by everyone in the State of Florida and beyond. I want to thank her for this special order recognizing the contributions of Secretary Jesse Brown.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today not only to thank CORRINE BROWN for bringing this to the country, the accomplishments of Secretary Brown; he has been one of our Nation's most faithful and valiant veterans, and we want to thank this man because he has successfully led the Federal Government's second largest department for the past 4 years.

You do not get much glory out of Washington, hardly any praise. But this man is praiseworthy, and we are so happy to take the time to give him the praise that he deserves.

Three words, my dear friend, CORRINE BROWN, and to the Speaker, three words personify Jesse Brown: dedicated, heroic, accomplished.

The Department of Veterans Affairs was created by Executive order in 1930 as the Veterans Administration. At that time there were 54 hospitals, 4.7 million veterans and 31,600 employees. The Department that Jesse Brown, Secretary Brown, inherited in 1993 when he was sworn in by President Clinton as Secretary of VA, well, he was one, 1 of 266,000 employees responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits and national cemeteries for America's 26.5 million veterans.

Dedicated, heroic, accomplished, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brown has successfully managed this huge department with great care and concern for the welfare of our Nation's veterans and has successfully led the charge to improve its operations and services.

Jesse Brown has been accomplished, Mr. Speaker. That is why the gentlewoman from Florida, CORRINE BROWN, called this special order, to raise the consciousness of this Nation about the accomplishments of this great man.

Jesse Brown's accomplishments at the VA and his outstanding service to veterans, they are not surprising given his distinguished career. Mr. Brown was a honors graduate of Chicago City College and also attended Roosevelt University in Chicago and Catholic University. Jesse Brown served in the Marine Corps in 1963 and was wounded in combat in Vietnam in 1965.

Heroic, Mr. Speaker. Secretary Jesse Brown is a hero.

Mr. Speaker, before his appointment as Secretary of VA, of the Veterans Administration, he spent his professional career as executive director with the Disabled American Veterans where he directed the DAV's Washington office. He has led legislative, employment and volunteer programs as well as advocacy

efforts on behalf of disabled veterans and their families.

Mr. Brown has been criticized sometimes for his zealous advocacy on behalf of our Nation's veterans and their families. That is why he is a cut above a lot of bureaucrats who survive here in Washington. However, it was his faithful, consistent and abiding commitment to these national heroes that resulted in the success he has realized as head of VA.

Under Secretary Brown's leadership the VA has expanded benefits for veterans who were prisoners of war or were exposed to Agent Orange, radiation or mustard gas. He has expanded treatment services to those suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. Secretary Brown successfully worked for the enactment of laws authorizing the VA to pay compensation for Persian Gulf war veterans' undiagnosed illnesses and to provide them with priority health care, the illnesses they may have incurred in the gulf.

I have seen Secretary Brown in action before the Committee on Appropriations. He has taken no shelter. He has pushed hard for veterans. Additionally, he has formed the task force whose recommended changes have led to reduction in the backlog of veterans' benefits through improved technology, redesigned work processes and more staff training.

The gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN], of the Third Congressional District of Florida, we can attest to the fact that many of our veterans had to wait for years before they got their claims adjusted. Secretary Brown cut that out. He made this system more efficient for the veterans of this country.

Mr. Brown's campaign of putting veterans first has formed the basis of his work to maintain the VA system as an independent provider, to broaden veterans' access to the system and to offer a continuum of comprehensive care. The Secretary's program coverage has spared numerous categories of veterans' concerns ranging from the homeless to women veterans' issues to sensitivity training for VA employees. He continues to press for changes to make the VA medical system competitive in a changing health care environment.

Mr. Speaker, I say Secretary Brown is dedicated. The Department of Veterans Affairs will lose a stellar leader when Jesse Brown leaves his position as Secretary this year. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending him for his success and thanking him for his outstanding service to our Nation through his dedicated service to our veterans.

Secretary Jesse Brown, I salute you as a leader of men and women who are willing to give their lives for our beloved country. God bless America, thank God for Jesse Brown.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I thank the gentlewoman.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DAVIS].

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. First of all, I just want to commend and congratulate the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] for her sensitivity and enlightenment in organizing and bringing together this group who will give tribute to Jesse Brown. And so, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize another great leader with roots in the Chicago community, another individual who lived in the congressional district which I am fortunate to represent. Rarely does an individual come along who possess qualities which tend to elude the multitudes.

This individual is driven. He must be if he is to set an example for those around him. This individual is intelligent, not only from the study of books or formal training, but from applying the lessons of life, lessons learned at the nadir of life's inevitable pitfalls and also those which come while at the pinnacles of its glorious triumphs.

This individual is selfless. If he was not, he might not be able to administer with wisdom and compassion the great resources with which he has been entrusted. This individual is a leader. But also a good follower, committed to service.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to tell you that Jesse Brown is one such individual. He has maintained an exemplary record of service not only to the Nation's veteran community but to his family, numerous professional organizations and indeed to his country. Jesse's tireless efforts are certainly felt throughout my congressional district and all over America each day, a large veteran community with 3 major VA hospitals: Lakeside, Hines and West Side, all of which lie within the boundaries of my district in Chicago and the western suburbs.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown worked diligently to insure that our Nation's veterans received the quality health care and other benefits which they are deserving. In fact, throughout his entire professional career Jesse Brown has worked to ensure that America lives up to the promises made to our veterans.

Oftentimes I did not have to ask Jesse Brown for a thing. I did not have to ask because he would not let me.

Jesse is proactive and meets issues head on. I admire his bold determination to guarantee that those who have served this country beyond her borders will not suffer and, in fact, will receive quality services and benefits.

I must tell you that Jesse's mother is a resident of Chicago, and I know that she beams with pride at the very mention of her son's name. I know veterans in my district who have nothing but positive things to say about Jesse and directly attribute their success to his lifelong efforts, and I can tell you that I know that all of us are perhaps stronger and better because we have had the benefit.

And so, Jesse, I know that we could not persuade you to stay. I know that

if we did, we would be stealing your gift from those whom you will be moving on to enlighten, and if you taught us anything in this country, it is that your company is too precious to keep all to ourselves.

And so I say thank you on behalf of my constituents and veterans all over not only America, but all over the world. And I know that Jesse's heart is saddened when he thinks about the budget, our spending plan and tax cuts. We are passing laws which has taken away health care for veterans and doing nothing for military retirees. So maybe, Jesse, you are leaving at the right time because I know that it would be very difficult to do justice to veterans with all of these cuts and tax breaks for the rich as we balance the budget on the backs of the poor.

And so, Jesse, as you leave, hopefully the same people who voted for the flag will now learn to vote for veterans and their families. We thank you for being a great servant to the American people.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I yield now to the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] from the committee.

Mr. FILNER. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for having this special order for a very special person. That picture looks at us, and we know his warmth and his friendship and his charisma and his concern for so many people, and it just beams out from that picture, and we thank you for that.

As you said, I serve on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and although I greatly enjoy the challenges and responsibilities and even the frustrations involved with being a Member of Congress, my service on that committee is a source of particular satisfaction to me. Veterans are special and unique members of our American family, and it has been a great honor to work on their behalf.

Additionally, my service on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs has given me the opportunity to meet and work with many remarkable people, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Jesse Brown, is one of the most extraordinary.

Adlai Stevenson once said that patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime. By this or any other definition Jesse Brown has lived the life of a patriot.

As a young man Jesse enlisted in the Marine Corps and was among the first American forces to be sent to Vietnam. In 1965 he was ambushed in a rice paddy outside Da Nang.

□ 2115

In his letter of resignation to the President, Jesse described this life-altering event. As he said in 1965, in one short moment, my life was changed by a shot I never heard.

Subsequently, as we have heard already, Jesse went to work for the Disabled American Veterans and began his career as a passionate advocate for vet-

erans. As he told the President over the succeeding 32 years, I have been driven by an obsession to make sure that veterans, whose lives have also been changed, are not disadvantaged by having honorably served in the military. That was Jesse Brown.

As Secretary, he demonstrated the same courage he showed as a marine in Vietnam. He spoke out on behalf of fellow veterans with a directness and honesty that was criticized by some, but deeply appreciated by every veteran in this Nation. He never faltered in his personal commitment, and never lost sight of his duty as Secretary to ensure our country never faltered in its commitment to our veterans.

I was honored to have Secretary Brown visit my district on several occasions. He spoke with veterans, he spoke to veterans, and they recognized him as one of their own. These veterans left those meetings more optimistic because they had met Jesse Brown.

I took him to high schools where he met our young people. They saw a man, a black man, a black man with a paralyzed arm, who sat in the Cabinet of the President of the United States, and I think those youngsters will have a better chance to succeed because they met Jesse Brown.

I took him to churches, and he could preach. He could preach. He was a different man in the church, and I know that my constituents who heard him were spiritually enriched because they met Jesse Brown.

He was an extraordinary man. I am proud to call him my friend, and like all of my colleagues tonight, we will miss him as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I thank the gentlewoman for being so involved in this.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I would now like to yield time to Delegate DONNA CHRISTIAN-GREEN, who I had the opportunity to visit her veterans, and also note the work that Secretary Brown has done for the veterans from the Virgin Islands.

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN], who, as she said, traveled with me to the Virgin Islands to speak with our veterans, for organizing this Special Order and tribute to our outgoing Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Jesse Brown and for affording me this time to offer remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Secretary Brown on behalf of the veterans of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Though relatively small in absolute numbers, these brave men and women have served our country in per capita numbers unequalled by many States.

I am proud to say that I too come from a family of veterans who served, beginning with the First World War and, who along with the more than 26 million veterans nationwide, have benefited greatly because of the efforts and the advocacy of Secretary Jesse Brown.

While it would have been easy to overlook the veterans of our small, but beautiful territory, Secretary Brown, as always, putting each and every veteran first, and recognizing the uniqueness of our situation, traveled to the Virgin Islands to meet with our veterans and their families and to listen to their concerns.

Because of his caring and strong leadership, that visit marked a turning point in improved services for the veterans of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have this opportunity to add my voice to the many others in recognition and gratitude for the outstanding years of commitment and service to veterans, their families, and the Nation.

The legislature of the Virgin Islands and Senator Alicia Chucky Hansen, chair of its Committee on Veterans' Affairs, add their thanks and their congratulations.

So, Mr. Speaker, we reluctantly let him go, but we do so knowing that he will be leaving a better Veterans' Administration, and that he has laid the groundwork for ever improving services to our veterans. Mr. Speaker, we thank Secretary Jesse Brown and wish him well and God's blessings in all of his future endeavors.

I thank the gentlewoman for affording me this time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Now I would like to yield time to Congressman SANFORD BISHOP, who is also on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and for giving me the opportunity to pay tribute to a friend and to a real friend of America's veterans. It is an honor to join my colleagues, especially the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN], in honoring the outgoing Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, Jesse Brown. He is a true American hero who has served his country with honor and with distinction. Moreover, he has been a real asset to the Clinton administration and his bold leadership in behalf of our Nation's veterans will definitely be missed.

Jesse Brown, a native of America's Midwest; a proud marine, a combat veteran, who served bravely in Vietnam and a disabled veteran who has worked for the past three decades to help make sure his fellow veterans receive the full benefits they have earned through their service and their sacrifice.

When he was named to the President's Cabinet as Secretary of Veterans Affairs in 1993, veterans everywhere knew that this would be an outstanding appointment, one that would provide strong, effective leadership for the core interests of veterans at the highest level of our national government. And it certainly has been.

During his tenure, Secretary Brown has been instrumental in the enactment of a landmark VA health care eligibility reform bill which promises to

open up VA health care services to many more veterans and pave the way for improvements throughout the whole VA health care system.

Benefits for veterans suffering from exposure to agent orange in Vietnam and to the Persian Gulf illness, full payment of veterans' cost of living adjustments, expanded benefits for surviving spouses of veterans, greater employment protection for Americans who are called up for military service: These are just a few of the initiatives he has helped get enacted into law.

As a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have the privilege of working closely with him, and on these and other legislative goals, he proved to be a real bulldog, the tenacity that you would not normally see in a Cabinet member working in behalf of America's constituency.

The partnership between the Secretary and our committee has been exceptionally productive, and throughout our country's history, brave Americans have answered America's call, a great personal sacrifice. Jesse Brown sacrificed much. He served greatly, and he will be greatly missed in the office of veterans affairs.

Jesse Brown brings to my mind many, many very, very pleasant memories. He visited the Second Congressional District of Georgia on several occasions, and he touched the hearts of many, many veterans. It was heartwarming and it often brought tears to one's eyes to see him just as at ease with a young active duty military person, or a gold star wife, and he could remember her, having met her 10 or 15 years ago at a veterans service organization convention.

Jesse Brown is a very, very special individual. He genuinely loves the work that he has done for veterans. Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays said that you make your living by what you get, but you make your life by what you give. Secretary Jesse Brown has truly made a life, for he has given so much and he has, indeed, made a life not just for himself, but for all of America's veterans and for that, we are forever grateful.

God bless Jesse Brown; God bless America.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Now I yield to the gentlewoman from Indiana [Ms. CARSON].

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman very much for bringing to the fore this tribute to the Honorable Jesse Brown. Truly Jesse Brown is an honorable man, and I would not want it to appear that we are doing anything tonight beyond commending Jesse Brown, even though it may sound as though we are doing something else about Jesse Brown. But I am glad that Jesse Brown has an opportunity to hear the praise and the accolades that he so richly deserves during his lifetime.

So, Mr. Speaker, and certainly to the people of the United States in general

and to the veterans in particular, on July 1, an all-American public servant, the Honorable Jesse Brown will step down out of his formal role as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a position that he has served honorably, tirelessly, courageously.

The Honorable Jesse Brown's public service as VA's Secretary is unparalleled. It is unsurpassed, it is uncompromising on behalf of this Nation's 26.5 million veterans. Mr. Brown directed the Federal Government's second largest department responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefit programs, and yes, indeed, cemeteries.

Mr. Brown enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1963 and was wounded during combat in 1965 while patrolling the Da Nang area of Vietnam. As a consequence, he is a member of the military order of the Purple Heart.

When he left the battlefield in Vietnam, he landed on the American battlefield for this Nation's veterans. He became a warrior for veterans in countless ways: Successfully working for the enactment of laws authorizing the VA to pay compensation for those veterans with undiagnosed illnesses and to provide them with priority health care for illnesses they possibly incurred in the gulf.

To reduce a backlog of veterans' benefit claims, the Secretary formed a task force whose recommended changes have led to improved technology, redesigned work processes and staff training.

Mr. Brown convened the first national summit meeting on homeless veterans under his leadership, expanded services to women veterans, including counseling for sexual trauma suffered in the military, new health centers with specialized treatment capabilities, and more full time coordinators for women's care at VA medical centers. Mr. Brown ordered sensitivity training for all of the employees as part of his campaign of putting veterans first. He guided the VA's role in the administration of health care reform.

In Mr. Brown's resignation statement recently he reminded this Nation that the Veterans Affairs Department "was formed to care for those men and women who placed themselves in harm's way. They are the citizen soldiers who have borne the battle, suffered the consequences of their determination to defend the freedoms we enjoy, and stood by our allies around the world when needed."

□ 2130

He reminds us that there is still much to do, not the least of which is to continually remind this Nation that all we enjoy under the Bill of Rights the laws of the land, and bountiful fruits of the Nation are ours because more than 1 million citizens died to protect those precious freedoms, and another 1½ million citizens came home wounded and scarred for life.

We can never fully repay them for their losses, but we must never forget them nor shove them aside when freedom is abundant and unchallenged. We cannot shove them aside when, under the guise of balancing the Federal budget, we deny and neglect those who fought ferociously for freedom all over this world.

So, Mr. Jesse Brown, in honor of all of your good work, we thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your heroic public service, and we are reminded tonight that unto whom much is given, much is required. Mr. Brown has certainly given us much, as Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Department. Our gratitude is eternal. Unto whom much is given, much is required, Mr. Speaker, lest we forget the veterans that Mr. Brown, who himself is a veteran, has so capably and ably represented.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California [Ms. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD].

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank my esteemed colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida Ms. CORINNE BROWN, for allowing us the opportunity to come tonight to, Mr. Speaker, applaud an outstanding American, an outstanding African-American, with commendations. That person is Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown, whom we all applaud for his tireless advocacy on behalf of America's veterans.

His departure from the Clinton administration creates a loss for veterans and for all of us. It will be hard to find another champion for veterans with such outstanding capabilities, commitment, and a track record of groundbreaking accomplishments.

Brown made a difference in the quality of veterans' lives. Brown was a veteran, and that experience enabled him to provide special leadership at a critical time of Government downsizing but increasing service needs.

Jesse Brown came to the office of Secretary with very unique qualifications. Brown grew up in Chicago's South Side and was recognized even as a youngster as a natural leader. He graduated from Chicago's City College, and later joined the U.S. Marines, where he served his country during the Vietnam war.

In 1965 Brown crossed a rice paddy near Da Nang when an enemy bullet shattered his right arm. He was awarded a Purple Heart. After a year of rehabilitation at a Naval Hospital, Brown joined the Disabled American Veterans, the DAV, as a service officer in Chicago. Brown said, that job offered fire to my life; it gave me a reason for living and a noble cause. He eventually became DAV's executive director. President Clinton appointed Brown to Secretary of Veterans Affairs in 1993. To say that Jesse Brown has fought in the trenches would not adequately describe Brown's efforts on behalf of veterans.

Some have said his commitment verges on obsession, but I think he

would find a compliment in that assessment. Brown has championed American veterans' causes, especially during the budget-cutting debates, by pointing out that veterans' benefits are not entitlements. They are the equivalent of inalienable rights. Brown has asserted that veterans should not be discussed in the same breath as welfare recipients. "We can't spend billions preparing people to go to war and then, when they come home, nickel and dime them to death." That was Secretary Brown.

Secretary Brown has consistently reminded those of us here in Congress of the critical role played by American veterans and the respect they deserve for their efforts on our behalf. Some of Secretary Brown's accomplishments include changes in how the VA is run, changes that will allow VA doctors to treat veterans for whatever ails them, not just conditions linked to their active duty service. Brown's reforms also include care for children of veterans who may have spina bifida linked to a parent's duty in Vietnam, and Persian Gulf war veterans whose ailments cannot be linked to any specific illness.

Brown's reforms also enabled female veterans to finally have medical clinics at most VA facilities. As a female Member of Congress, I applaud Jesse Brown's sensitivity to the needs of women veterans and the changing composition of our U.S. military.

I know that whatever Jesse Brown tackles in this next phase of his public service, the veterans of America will be better off because of his efforts. Again, I commend Jesse Brown's many accomplishments and wish him all the best. And as one veteran would say to another one, and I am sure all American veterans are saying this, God bless America, God bless Jesse Brown, for having graced our stage. Again, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for allowing us this opportunity.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for, one, her advocacy on behalf of veterans, and the recognition that it is important to give flowers when they can be accepted and received.

It was interesting to hear the gentlewoman from Indiana, who made a humorous remark; no, this is not Secretary Brown's eulogy. It is a commemoration and celebration for all of the service that he has given to so many. I am certainly grateful that the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN], in her leadership in the veterans arena, recognized that he should not go quietly into the night.

Let me for a moment do the formal statement, and very briefly acknowledge Secretary Brown as a friend. How interesting, so many of us coming from so many different places around the country, California, Illinois, where he is from, and he spoke fondly, fre-

quently, of Chicago and Illinois, Florida and Indiana and other places who have paid him tribute, to be able to stand here and call him a friend. That is very special.

Mr. Speaker, I say that he is a friend to all veterans. There is not a one that he comes upon, whether it is the veterans still living from World War I, or that veteran with a glitter in his eye from World War II or the Korean action, whether it was the Vietnam action or the Persian Gulf and other places unknown that we fail to remember, when he comes and sees these veterans, there is a spark, an excitement of recognition that a friend has come into their eyesight.

Jesse Brown served this Nation in uniform long before he came the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. His experience in and after military service provided much-needed insight and sensitivity into the plight of our Nation's veterans. Secretary Brown's slogan "Putting Veterans First" sounds almost like a campaign for the next election, "Putting the people first," but Secretary Brown did not use this as a campaign slogan. It was a heartfelt commitment, putting veterans first, and putting that slogan into every action at every level of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Under Secretary Brown's leadership the Department of Veterans Affairs had expanded benefits for veterans who were prisoners of war or exposed to Agent Orange, radiation or mustard gas, and has expanded treatment services to those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Mr. Brown also directed the Veterans Affairs' aggressive research initiative to determine the causes of illnesses of Persian Gulf veterans.

Mr. Speaker, there is something special, albeit we have a great love for all of our veterans, but the special kindness that Secretary Brown had for our Vietnam veterans, the fondness and the relationship that he was able to show to those who still had relatives, loved ones, husbands, fathers, brothers, who were MIAs, he could empathize and sympathize realistically.

I remember as a member of the City Council in Houston how special to be part of those veterans who would come and celebrate Veterans Day or Memorial Day, and continue to raise up the POW and MIA flag. Secretary Brown knew this in his heart, that he must continue the fight dealing with veterans and dealing with those who were MIAs and who were POWs.

Secretary Brown convened the first National Summit on Homeless Veterans programs and medical centers, and I know that the standdown that we had in Houston, and that has occurred across the Nation, brought homeless veterans from around our community who felt loved and respected, because volunteers came every spring to cater to them and to allow them to get over some of the illnesses and addictions

that many faced. Secretary Brown always acknowledged that these were veterans, too.

He expanded services to women veterans to include counseling for sexual trauma suffered in the military, new health centers with specialized treatment capabilities, and more full-time coordinators for women's care at Veterans Affairs medical centers.

My own Shirley Smith in Houston worked so very hard to have the women's section of the veterans hospital grow and thrive and make women feel comfortable. When I visited on many occasions, whether it was a holiday occasion and when we had Valentine's Day with the veterans, it was special to see women veterans, a true product of the work of Secretary Brown, feeling comfortable and being treated well with special services in our veterans hospitals.

I would like to salute Secretary Brown for his commitment to America's sick, homeless, and disabled veterans. As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Secretary Brown was the best and brightest from his generation to take on the job of preparing the Department of Veterans Affairs for the next century.

Secretary Brown was an effective voice in the administration and on the Hill for this Nation's veterans. His leadership in the administration to promote and defend the interests of veterans in the making of policy that our Nation's government promulgated is worth noting tonight.

I said to the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN], interestingly enough they both have the same last name, and it is appropriate to note that, no, they are not related, but apparently the Browns stand strong in America because they come, apparently, from the same good stock. That is the stock of serving this country well.

I have given my official compliments to Secretary Brown, and if the gentlewoman would allow, let me just say some things straight from the heart. First of all, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] said something very special. The gentlewoman has his picture there on the floor, how wonderful it is that tonight we pay tribute to an African-American, an American war hero. How important it is for all of this Nation to recognize, as the flag is reflected behind the gentlewoman, that we are best when all of us can shine, Hispanics and Anglos and Asians and African-Americans. In this time when there has been a call for apologies for slavery, there has been a call for a dialog, it is important that this gentleman led our veterans.

I hope those who may be thinking of negative comments, that we do not need to live together in harmony, can look tonight and see that a man who stands tall by the name of Jesse Brown did not lead the Veterans Department as an African-American, but he led the Veterans Department as an American.

I think the many veterans and those who worked in our Veterans Affairs De-

partment and those who worked in our veterans hospitals who happen to be people of color, and let me be honest with you, I heard from many who felt that in these hospitals sometimes, as employees, they were not treated the best; and I am trying to work with those in Houston who have concerns, but they felt that Secretary Brown cared about them and their treatment as employees, no matter what their racial background was.

I remember the sad times. The gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] was right, we were here fighting to avoid the shutdown across this Nation in the 104th Congress. We wanted to avoid putting those people out on the street who worked hard every day in the veterans hospitals.

□ 2145

When I was able to go back to my veterans hospital and see those people working without pay to keep the veterans there safe, it was because they believed in Secretary Jesse Brown, that he would not let them down. And he instructed his veterans hospitals to find any way possible to coordinate with local banks to reach out to avoid the employee's credit going bad or their being out of apartments or housing. He truly cared whether this government was shut down by my Republican colleagues.

So I am saddened somewhat that he is going to leave us from government, but I want to make a commitment to Jesse Brown, because tomorrow we will be putting forth a tax bill. And I heard just a few minutes ago some of my Republican colleagues talking about people who do not pay taxes, people making 15,000 and 20,000 and 25,000.

I know, when I have had a chance to talk to Secretary Brown, he said, you know, some of those people are veterans. Some of those people who have to get food stamps and work are veterans. So let me set the record straight, because I will be voting no on the Republican plan and it will be somewhat of a tribute to Secretary Jesse Brown.

That is because the EITC, the earned income tax credit, is important and because people making \$25,000 a year, former members of the military, now veterans, are paying taxes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, would the gentlewoman believe that one-third of the homeless people are veterans, veterans who have slipped through the cracks? We owe service to these people who have paid their dues up front. When I look at the budget that is put forth tomorrow, I look with disgust, because we are sacrificing the veterans who have paid their dues. Perhaps it is a good time for Secretary Brown to leave, although we will miss him. He is and I am sure he will continue to be a strong voice for the veterans in this country.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as I come to a close, the gentlewoman is so very right. I know that you know this because I have heard

you speak so eloquently on the floor about your veterans hospitals and trying to work so hard for the veterans in your area.

We thank the administration for giving Jesse Brown the latitude and leeway to fight for veterans. As I was saying, these individuals who are veterans, some homeless, but some who work every day, but they make \$15,000 a year or \$25,000 a year, let me set the record straight, since we will vote on the tax bill tomorrow.

They do pay taxes. They pay Social Security taxes. Payroll taxes are taken out. And it is important that we have a tax bill that responds to Americans who served their country, who may not be making \$250,000 a year.

Jesse Brown used to go across this Nation. He came to my district several times. So many of us can account for his time. He was not sitting in his office with the door closed. He was on the road working and reaching out to veterans.

Let me tell you something tonight and to all of my colleagues, because I know that Jesse Brown will live and this is not his eulogy; my promise to you Secretary Brown is, one, to wish you well, and hopefully your voice will continue to be raised on behalf of the veterans as a private citizen. I have an obligation now to work with my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Florida, to ensure that the veterans of this Nation are continuously supported by this United States Congress.

Yes, to support tomorrow the fairest tax bill, the Democratic alternative that does not turn its back on the veterans of this country, the working men and women of this country, those that make \$25,000, those that make \$50,000, those who make \$85,000, working every day to send their children to college, to make ends meet, those are the folks that we will be supporting. That is my promise and tribute to Secretary Brown, that I will continue to work for the 1,646,700 veterans in the State of Texas and, yes, the veterans all over this Nation.

Secretary Brown, we will miss you in your service to this Nation, but how proud you have made all of us for what you have done by offering almost your life on our behalf of freedom and, yes, fighting for the least of those, our brothers and sisters. God bless you and God bless America.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. Someone said earlier tonight, let the work I have done speak for me. It is clear that Secretary Brown has done the work, and we all are grateful.

The gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] wants to make a few closing remarks, but before she makes those remarks, I have a story that I want to share with America about Secretary Jesse Brown.

Often in this Chamber I hear bashing of government employees on this and government employees on that. I have got a story that tells how government

should work. In my district that extends from Jacksonville to Orlando, in the Orlando area we had a serious problem as far as a facility for veterans. When the Base Closure Commission recommended closing the Naval Training Center in Orlando, which was devastating, we came up with how we could take that lemon and make it lemonade.

We invited the Secretary to come down to the Naval Training Center. He did. He viewed the hospital facility there. And he wrote the Secretary of Defense and asked him to give this facility to the veterans in this country. The Secretary of Defense gave the hospital to the veterans. They came, they needed an appropriation of \$14 million.

Well, they came to me and we were able to get that \$14 million in the budget. It was a win-win for the veterans in the area. And, of course, taking a lemon, making it lemonade.

But do you know that when the Republicans first took over, the first thing they did was to take that \$14 million out?

I went to Orlando and met with the veterans and they got on the phone and called the Congresspeople from Florida, and we put that money back in. And today I can tell my colleagues that that hospital is up and operational, thanks to Secretary Brown.

That is an example of how government should work for the people.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. MEEK] for a few closing remarks.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the Third Congressional District of Florida.

The anecdotal record that you have just stated about Secretary Brown is proof in itself that he is a leader, that he is someone who knows management. He is a man who knows service.

I think his dictum was, service is the price you pay for the space which God has let you occupy. Secretary Brown was elevated to that position by President William Jefferson Clinton. I want to commend President William Jefferson Clinton for appointing Secretary Brown, for having the foresight to look for a man who had fought the wars and was back to this country. And the only thing he asked for was fairness for veterans.

It is wonderful to talk about Secretary Brown. That is why this seems a little like a eulogy, but it is not. It is not a memorial. He is a vibrant, young person who will leave here with all of the benefits accrued to a person who has been on Capitol Hill representing veterans.

We know we owe him a debt of gratitude. We owe you one for helping America understand about this great heroic gentleman who stepped out from the crowd, with a uniqueness and a cut above from the rest, to lead this country and to say to the world, we respect our veterans. We owe them a debt of gratitude for wanting to give up their lives for this country.

This is a unique tribute tonight. My heart is strangely warmed, as I know that people of this country, their hearts are warmed, and so are the veterans. We thank you. We thank America for having shared this fine gentleman who is of African descent and shared him with the world. I thank the gentlewoman.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida.

As I close, I want to also thank President Clinton for appointing Secretary Brown as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I often say when we begin our committee meetings, that Secretary Brown is one of the brightest spots in President Clinton's administration, but he is also one of the brightest spots in this country.

I guess I am going to say good luck. Joy go with you. Leave us here fighting. I know you are going to help us out when you can.

I thank my colleagues for joining me. I just want to thank Jesse Brown's family for letting him share this time with us. Let me say, God bless Secretary Jesse Brown and God bless America.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this occasion to offer remarks on the imminent departure of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown. Secretary Brown is due to leave the helm of the second largest Federal agency at the conclusion of this month.

Special thanks should go to my Committee colleague Representative CORRINE BROWN of Florida for her efforts to organize this special order.

As the second secretary of this relatively new cabinet-level agency, I believe that Jesse Brown's steadfast advocacy has defined the role for future holders of this post.

No one has worked harder or more effectively to be an advocate for veterans. His decision to be an advocate inside the administration was both courageous and necessary. His passionate voice will be missed. Secretary Brown has truly been a "Secretary for Veterans Affairs."

We have had some differences in matters of policy. But we have shared—and we will continue to share—a sincere desire to serve our veterans. For I believe there is no higher calling than to serve those who have given to our country.

I want to take a moment to point out what I believe to be one of the major accomplishments of Secretary Brown's administration. His decision to hire Dr. Kizer as Undersecretary for VA Health Care, and permitting him to reshape the VA Health Care System, shows world-class vision. It was that kind of vision that was necessary for revitalization of the Nation's largest health care system.

I have been frustrated in the past by the lack of sustained progress in making our VA health care system better. I believe that with Dr. Kizer's stewardship, we are on the correct course. Secretary Brown should be highly commended for such foresight, and for the support he has provided to those who are improving the delivery of medical care services to our veterans.

On behalf of the entire VA Committee, I want to express my gratitude for Secretary

Brown's undiminished support for veterans, and his willingness to speak on behalf of the veteran whenever it was needed. Secretary Brown, you have left an enduring legacy, and have raised the bar of expectations for your successors.

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman, and my colleague on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for organizing this special order tonight to honor our esteemed Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown.

Jesse Brown came to his job with a long and distinguished career fighting for veterans and their needs. As the executive director of the Disabled American Veterans and a decorated veteran, Secretary Brown had already fought many battles in the trenches, joining with leaders of other veterans' service organizations in convincing the Bush administration that veterans' problems could not be ignored.

He is renowned for his "in-the-face," frank talk about what his department needs in the way of money and resources to serve veterans. Many stories abound about how he cornered President Clinton—or some other administration officials—and bluntly let them know veterans would suffer if their budget proposals became law. He personally got the President to agree to add millions to the VA budget—a step which made many budget crunchers wince and many veterans smile.

The Wall Street Journal put it best when it said that to Secretary Brown, veterans' benefits are not entitlement but "the equivalent of inalienable rights." To the Secretary, it is unconscionable that our Nation will not hesitate to spend billions to prepare for war and then wants to "nickel and dime" veterans.

I stand squarely with Secretary Brown in believing our Nation owes a deep and lasting obligation to veterans. I can only hope his successor will have the same level of passion for our veterans.

I know we are going to deeply miss Secretary Brown and I sincerely wish him the best in his future endeavors.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the distinguished lady from Florida, CORRINE BROWN, for reserving this special order. I join her and many others in paying tribute to Jesse Brown, the retiring Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Brown has served in this post for 4½ years. His departure brings to a close a distinguished Cabinet assignment which earned him the respect and admiration of veterans, their families, and people across America.

In January 1993, Jesse Brown accepted the call from President Clinton to head the Department of Veterans Affairs. He took responsibility for directing the Federal Government's second largest department, responding nationwide to the need for health care services, benefits, programs, and national cemeteries for America's 26 million veterans. When the President asked Jesse Brown to head the Department of Veterans Affairs, he selected an outstanding individual who was more than prepared to meet the challenge.

Jesse Brown is a veteran of the Marine Corps. He was wounded during combat in 1965 while patrolling in the Danang area of Vietnam. Before joining the Clinton administration, he spent his professional career with the Disabled American Veterans, serving as its executive director from 1989 to 1993. While in this post, he earned a reputation as a fearless



advocate for disabled veterans and their families.

Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Secretary Brown, the Department of Veterans Affairs has entered a new level of commitment and service. These accomplishments are the direct result of Secretary Brown's strong leadership. During his tenure, the Veterans Department has expanded benefits for veterans who were prisoners of war or exposed to agent orange, radiation or mustard gas. The agency has also expanded treatment for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Further, Secretary Brown has undertaken an aggressive research initiative to determine the cause of illness for military personnel who were involved in the Persian Gulf war.

Secretary Brown has to his credit the fact that they convened the First National Summit on Homeless Veterans during his tenure. He oversaw the reorganization of the veterans health care system to broaden access to the system and offer the highest level of comprehensive care.

Mr. Speaker, I am the former chairman and now ranking minority member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs—Housing and Urban Development—Independent Agencies. I know of no one more committed to service than Jesse Brown. Veterans and their families are the beneficiaries of his hard work and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, as he prepares to depart his post, we take this opportunity to recognize and thank Secretary Jesse Brown for a job well done. We salute his tireless efforts and wish him well in his future endeavors.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order, Secretary Jesse Brown.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PAPPAS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

#### THE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will not take the entire hour. There may be some colleagues coming down to join me in this special order tonight.

I want to talk a little bit about where we have been as a country; in other words, where we were, where we are and where we are going.

Mr. Speaker, it is my observation that for 40 years Washington had it wrong. For 40 years Congress thought that Washington knew best, that big bureaucracies could solve social problems. And so for 40 years, spending increased at double the inflation rate, taxes went up faster than the family's income, the debt ballooned and social problems got worse. Washington had it wrong.

Washington waged a war on poverty. We spent over \$5 trillion on a war on poverty. But, Mr. Speaker, I encourage you to take a walk through any burned-out inner city, and you will see the victims of that war on poverty.

I ask you to ask yourself, who won the war on poverty? No, I think Washington had it wrong.

Washington overtaxed those who worked hard and, as some say, played by the rules. They squandered much of it on top-heavy programs that did little but breed more dependency.

When I was a child growing up and my parents raised three boys, I was the oldest of the three, my father was the sole breadwinner in our family. He worked in a factory. I am a blue collar kid. When I was growing up in the 1950's, the largest payment that the average family made was the house payment. In fact, families back then could afford to raise their kids on one paycheck, because the largest payment they made was the house payment. In fact, taxes back then averaged something like, Federal taxes, less than 4 percent of the family's income.

But today, according to the National Taxpayers Union, the average family in America today spends more for taxes than they do for food, clothing, and shelter combined.

No, I think Washington had it wrong. They thought if we took more money from families who were doing the right things and gave it to people who perhaps were doing the wrong things, we could solve those problems. And Washington was just wrong. We encouraged more irresponsibility, and we discouraged personal responsibility.

I want to show a chart here, because I had my staff do a little research. And it is something that I had suspected for a long time and I think this chart confirms it. What it shows is that since 1975, for every dollar that the Congress took in, and these red lines are really how much more the Congress was spending than it took in, for every dollar that they took in, for example, I think in the year 1976, for every dollar that Washington took in it spent \$1.23.

The following year they got a little more frugal and dropped to \$1.15. But if you take the averages from 1975 until 1994, for every dollar that Washington took in, it spent \$1.21.

The good news is that since the Republicans took control of Congress, and these are the blue lines over here, that number has dropped to \$1.08. And when we enact the budget that we voted on today here in the House and when that budget is finalized, we, in fact, will be spending 99 cents for every dollar that we take in. And we are laying the foundations for actually paying off the national debt. So things are changing here in Washington.

As my colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN], who put this chart together with the help of the House Committee on the Budget and the Congressional Budget Office, what it shows is that we have come a long

way. Since the days when we consistently spent \$1.20 for every dollar that we took in, right now we are actually ahead of budget, ahead of our goal and under budget.

□ 2200

And what we see in the red lines, this was our 1995 budget plan, the 7-year plan that we put in effect 2 years ago when those of us came here in the 104th Congress and decided to change the way Washington does business. What we said was, in fiscal year 1997 we would have a deficit of \$174 billion. Now that is a lot of money. But when I first came to Washington, some people were saying that we could actually be seeing deficits of something like \$274 billion.

Well, there is a lot of good news. Because what has really happened, because we have had a stronger economy and because we eliminated about \$50 billion worth of wasteful Washington spending, because we have begun to limit the growth in entitlements, because we are actually doing what the American people had wanted Congress to do for 40 years, we are ahead of schedule and under goal.

As a matter of fact, in our budget resolution of 1995 we said that the Congress would spend no more than \$1,624 billion. That is still a lot of money. But we said that is the most we would spend in fiscal year 1997. Well, the good news is that we are actually going to spend only \$1,622 billion. In other words, this Congress is actually going to spend less money than we said we would spend in this fiscal year 2 years ago.

Now that is the good news. And that news gets even better. Because the economy has been stronger than we expected, we have actually taken in over \$100 billion more than we expected to take in; and, as a result, rather than having a \$174 billion deficit this year, it is actually going to be less than \$70 billion.

If we stay on that path and we have that kind of fiscal discipline, I believe that this Congress will balance the budget not by the year 2002 but actually by the year 2000. I think there are good economic reasons to believe that that is going to happen.

The best news is that we are balancing the budget while saving Medicare and providing significant tax relief for working families here in the United States. As I mentioned earlier, we are also laying the foundations for actually paying off that debt, making Social Security truly secure, and leaving our kids a debt-free future.

Now I would like to talk a little bit about some of the things, and there is going to be a real heated debate, and already there is a heated debate about what actually is in the tax relief package. I think the more the American people begin to understand what we are really talking about in terms of tax relief for working families and what it