

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, he is absolutely correct. The people of Wisconsin have an independent tradition and the people of Indiana have an independent tradition. And the Founding Fathers knew, although Indiana and Wisconsin were not in existence at the time, that we have inherited that belief that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We have a healthy skepticism of a concentration of power.

Our Founding Fathers knew that we needed a balance. We needed individuals with rights. We needed a Court, we needed a Congress, a President. We needed strong States. A lot of people believed that going to a Constitution as opposed to Articles of Confederation was consolidating too much power.

Back then, they did not think about departments of education and national tests. That was far from it. They were doing minimal Federal Government. Our Founding Fathers had it right. They were fearful that power concentrated, as it was in Europe, would lead to the type of tracking in the education systems, would lead to the type of monarchy dependency, that we would look to our capital city for all the solutions rather than inside our souls and inside our own families and look to government to fix the problems of the poor rather than sacrificing our own time and money to reach out to those who are hurting.

Mr. Speaker, that is indeed what is happening in America. We need to stand up. And this budget deal and the tax cuts were an important first step. Now we have to follow through on some of the details, because we have the big picture right. We need to make sure that they do not back-door us as we go through the actual appropriations bills.

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would conclude my hour this evening by wrapping up what we have been talking about. The discussion has been about more Washington and more Washington control of our lives versus less Washington and less Washington control of our lives, and the integrity of this Government in general.

We started with the past. We started with before 1995. We started with the broken promises of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill, how they promised to get to a balanced budget but never got around to doing it; how in 1993 the way they decided to get to a balanced budget was to raise taxes on the people, and the people in 1994 said: Enough of that stuff; We do not want any more broken promises; We do not want any more tax increases. They elected a new group of people to the House of Representatives.

They elected Republicans to control the House and Republicans to control the Senate and left the Democrat President, in all fairness, to complete this picture.

But from 1995 to 1997, things have been very, very different. We, too, laid out a plan to balance the Federal bud-

et, and we are in the third year of that 7-year plan. We are not only on track but we are going to have the first balanced budget in fiscal year 1998, the first time in 30 years we are going to actually have a balanced Federal budget; Washington is not going to spend more money than it takes in.

Mr. Speaker, how has this happened? It has been done not through tax increases like back in 1993 but at the same time we lower taxes. It has been done by curtailing the appetite of Washington spending.

It has been a battle; there is no question about it. Washington spending is still going up, but at a much slower rate than what it was going up before. It was going up almost twice as fast as inflation before 1995. By slowing that growth of Washington spending, we are at a point where we have both a balanced budget and lower taxes; first time since 1969 for the balanced budget, first time in 16 years that we have had a tax cut, and Medicare has been restored.

At the same time, we have to look forward to the future and ask ourselves what is coming next. The next in the picture is, we are going to put us on a plan to repay the entire Federal debt. As we repay that \$5.3 trillion debt, that puts us in a position as a Nation where we can give to our children the legacy of a debt-free country.

At the same time we are repaying that debt, we are putting that money back into the Social Security Trust Fund that has been taken out over the last 15 to 20 years, so Social Security is once again solvent and secure for our senior citizens. This plan entails keeping one-third of our surpluses and dedicating it to additional tax cuts as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very, very changed discussion in Washington, from past broken promises and higher taxes, to the present of promises kept on track and ahead of schedule in balancing the budget, lower taxes and a restored Medicare, and a future that includes paying off the Federal debt with additional tax cuts, restoring the Social Security Trust Fund, and, most important of all, as we repay that Federal debt, we can give this Nation to our children absolutely debt free.

What better legacy, what better hopes and dreams could we have in this Nation than that plan for our future?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REDMOND). The Chair would remind all Members to refrain from references to occupants of the gallery.

SLIPPERY SLOPE OF DEFENSE BUDGET CUTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. HUNTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I submitted an article for the prestigious military magazine on military affairs, "Proceedings." In that article, I outlined the slippery slope that we are presently on with respect to our deteriorating national defense and where I think we should be going, what I think we should be doing, my opinion, and what future actions should be taken.

Mr. Speaker, my staff mentioned to me tonight when they read the article, and I had mentioned service leaders who had not spoken up over the past several years, "Do you think people will think you are referring to Chuck Krulak, the Commandant of the Marine Corps?" And I said, "Absolutely not."

Mr. Speaker, I am down here on the floor tonight to make sure that folks understand that that is not the case, because Chuck Krulak is one of the finest Marine Corps Commandants and one of the finest Marine warriors of this century.

□ 2130

I think of Chuck in the great tradition and legend of guys like Chesty Puller and Gimlet I. Butler, great Marines, and Chuck's own father, Brute Krulak, who is one of the great Marine warriors of all time.

I talked, Mr. Speaker, about the deteriorating infrastructure of national security and the fact that just a few years ago, when we won Desert Storm, we had 18 Army divisions. We are now down to 10. We had 24 fighter air wings. We are now down to 13. We had 546 naval ships. We are now down to 346. And as this decline continues, very few Americans understand what is going on.

I am reminded also that it was General Krulak who spoke up and put down in writing the fact that the Marines are about 93 million M-16 bullets short of what they need to fight and win two regional conflicts; that is, two regional wars and have enough money to continue to keep their training rotations going and keep the troops coming in.

If you look at those two regional wars, we have actually fought both of the wars that we think we might have to have. We fought the war in the Middle East, in Iraq, and we fought the war in Korea. We only have 10 Army divisions today, but when we fought the war in the Middle East, we used some 8 Army divisions. That only leaves 2. And yet when we fought the war in Korea, when the North Koreans, on June 25, 1950 invaded the southern part of the peninsula, we used 7 Army divisions in that war along with a large contingency of Marines. So we used 8 in the Middle East, 7 in the Korean peninsula. That is 15 Army divisions. And yet today we only have 10 Army divisions.

Similarly, we have slashed our air power, almost slashed it in half, from 24 fighter air wings to only 13.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing with this low level defense budget to go

down the slippery slope. That means that when we have a war which surprises us, where the enemy comes at us with better preparation than we expected, which usually is the case, with higher technology than we expected, which is usually the case, and with surprise which, yes, is usually the case, as was the Tet offensive in Vietnam, as was Pearl Harbor, as was the invasion of Kuwait, we are going to be in trouble and we are probably going to have more young Americans come home in body bags because of our rush to cut government spending.

We are cutting the one area where you have to remain strong. That is national security.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, let me applaud my good friend, Chuck Krulak, and all the great service he has given this country. And to everybody who has spoken up similarly, even though they have taken some hits for it, let us try to make the case again to the American people in this new year and bring that defense budget up.

EDUCATION REFORMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REDMOND). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], for joining me this evening. I have a few opening remarks and then I will ask him, if he would like, to join me. I want to thank him for being here this evening and for helping to organize this special opportunity to talk about a very important issue involved in the Democratic effort to reform, to improve and to strengthen public schools in this country.

We have held this series of after hours speeches to engage the American people in a dialogue about the policy choices that are being made that will have a profound impact on the way our children are educated in every community all across this great country. We simply must put the maximum effort we can into improving of our public schools for our children. By that, I mean all the children of this country, not just a select few that we can give vouchers or something else and give a lot of lip service, but I am talking about every child, no matter where they live in this country.

We have a lot of work to do. Some of these things certainly are local responsibilities, no question about that. But we at the Federal level cannot walk away from our responsibility to help every child in this country.

Mr. Speaker, before I became a Member of the people's House, I spent 8 years as the superintendent of public schools in the State of North Carolina. I am proud of the record that we have established in our State in improving

education. I had the privilege during those years to spend a good deal of my time in the classrooms, on the front line in the struggle of our schools in the battle against ignorance.

I am here this evening to talk about those North Carolina values that I think have made a difference in our State and certainly can make a difference across this country.

In all the time that I spent in those classrooms, and I still go in them now at least once a week since I have been elected to Congress, no student has ever asked me who paid for the textbooks, who built the building, who paid the power bill, who paid the electrical bill or who bought the school buses they rode to school on. The child does not care who provides them the opportunity to learn. A child only knows what that opportunity is, whether or not they have been provided one and, in many cases, unfortunately an opportunity denied. And once you deny an opportunity for an education, you deny a child an opportunity to have a level playing field to compete and develop their God-given ability.

I think sometimes those of us in public office get too carried away by whose responsibility it is and forget that it is all of our responsibility. It is not just the responsibility of the Federal Government or the State government or local government or parents and children. All of us share a responsibility. That is why public schools in this country are asking parents to be engaged, asking the business communities to be engaged, because all of us share a responsibility for our children.

One issue that we must make a top priority is the issue of school facilities and school construction and, yes, the repairing of those buildings in many cases. All across this country we have crumbling schools, some in our inner cities as well as in rural areas of this country. And we have major overcrowding in schools where areas are growing and growing very rapidly. And in some cases they are adjacent to urban centers where those areas are poor and do not have the resources to match it. I know because my district contains areas, directs spending and faces all of these problems.

My State just passed last November the largest bond issue in the history of our State, \$1.9 billion for school construction, by the largest majority of any bond issue in the history of our State. That tells me people care about children. They care about them having quality facilities, and people want action on this important issue. We have to get beyond the dialogue and the rhetoric of whose responsibility it is and just say it is our responsibility, it is our country, and these are our children. We have to deal with all of them.

There are some communities that cannot do it without help, without some leveraging. I think that is an issue that we have to grapple with, and we have to grapple with it at the Federal level. There was a time when it

was not our responsibility at the Federal level to determine whether or not people had electric power. But in the 1930's we decided we ought to do that and we put a policy in place that every citizen of this country would have electric power and we put in the REA. We also made the same decision as related to telephones and, shock of all things, we decided that water and sewer was important. It was not a national priority before that.

And I happen to believe if there is anything important to this country beyond the defense of our borders, it is education for the young children of this country, making sure that they have the minds to be able to compete in the 21st century. And, yes, education is all of our responsibilities so that children can develop their God-given ability.

The President made a very sound school construction proposal during the budget talks but, unfortunately, the Republican leadership refused to allow it to be included in the final budget package. That was very disappointing. It was a very disappointing decision by the Republican leadership because the American people need some help to repair their local schools, and this Congress should do more to provide that help. Sure, we have balanced the budget. I am proud of that. And now that we have balanced the budget, we should not shirk our responsibilities to help our children.

While Washington often bickers over what role the Federal Government should and should not take on these issues, our focus should really be on the needs of our local communities and making sure that our children have the best opportunity.

You can walk into a school in any community in America and immediately know where education ranks in that community. As a matter of fact, you do not have to walk into a school. You can drive into a community and find out where the nicest buildings are and you will know what the priority is in that community. We have to change attitudes and support public schools and public education.

Many poor communities do not have the resources to build the quality facilities that they need. We should help them. We must help them. Many growing communities cannot keep up with the pace of expansion that they have to meet the needs of all the children in the school system. We should help them.

I speak to many chambers of commerce, as I know other Members of this Congress do, to business leaders, community leaders and other groups. Sometimes someone will say to me that the quality of buildings really does not make a difference. I have a ready answer for those folks. I say, when you go out and recruit new business and bring jobs to your community, why do you not take them down to the side of town where you have the old run-down warehouses or old run-