

our welfare system. That is pretty good.

Folks often say those are real accomplishments, but what is next on Congress' agenda? We are working to continue responding to the issues and concerns of the folks back home and we have a simple agenda in this Congress. The Republican agenda is simple: Good schools, low taxes and a secure retirement for all America, and our budget that were working on today reflects that.

I am often asked some questions in town meetings back home. One of the most important ones we addressed this year. I am often asked by folks, whether at a senior citizen's center, a union hall or a VFW, when are the politicians in Washington going to stop raiding the Social Security trust fund? That is a pretty important, basic question. Of course, Washington has raided the Social Security trust fund for over 30 years. Back when LBJ was president, Washington began that process, and bad habits are hard to break. I am proud to say this Republican Congress is going to lock away 100 percent of Social Security revenues for social security only.

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Let me point out here what this means, and I will compare the Republican budget with the Clinton-Gore budget on Social Security. The Republican budget, of course, locks away 100 percent of Social Security for Social Security. I would point out that \$137 billion of the Social Security surplus under our lockbox will stay in Social Security.

Now, the President talks about 62 percent of the surplus for Social Security, and what the President and Vice President Gore are talking about doing is spending 38 percent of Social Security on other things. That is what the folks back home call raiding the Social Security Trust Fund.

Republicans say 100 percent of Social Security for Social Security. Clinton-Gore, they say 62 percent and spend the rest on other things. We want to put a stop to that, and that is why the lockbox proposal Republicans are moving through the Congress is so important, because it is the first step we should take as we work to save Social Security. Let us lock away Social Security first before we consider any other reforms.

Another question I am often asked is no one ever talks about the national debt. Let me point out that in this budget this year, we are in a position where we are going to be able to pay down \$1.8 trillion of the national debt. Last year we paid off \$50 billion; this year we are projected to pay off \$100 billion of the national debt, and under our budget we propose the potential of paying down \$1.8 trillion of the national debt. Saving Social Security, paying down the debt.

I am also asked at the union halls and the VFWs and the other commu-

nity centers and the grain elevators in the district that I represent, when are we going to do something about the tax burden on families? Today the average family in Illinois sends 40 percent of their income to Washington and Springfield and the local courthouse in taxes.

The tax burden today for the middle class is at its highest level ever in peacetime history. Twenty-one percent of our gross domestic product goes to Washington. That is the highest level ever in peacetime history, and it is putting a tremendous squeeze on middle class families.

I believe as we work to lower the tax burden on middle class families we should simplify the Tax Code; we should work to bring fairness to the Tax Code, beginning with the elimination of the marriage tax penalty. It is simply wrong that under our Tax Code 21 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married. Let us lower taxes by simplifying the Tax Code by eliminating the marriage tax penalty, let us pay down the national debt and let us save Social Security.

#### ISRAEL'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES CONTINUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, yesterday the people of Israel demonstrated their commitment to democratic values by electing a new Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, a highly respected, decorated soldier and former leader of the Israeli Army. Despite the strong differences voiced during the campaign, both Mr. Barak and Prime Minister Netanyahu deserve our congratulations for articulating thoughtful visions for the people of their country.

As he prepares to leave office, I commend Prime Minister Netanyahu's accomplishments. He stood by his commitment to take Israel down a road of less reliance on U.S. economic assistance and a greater reliance on the powerful forces of capitalism and free markets. I commend him for setting his nation on a course of economic independence. Because of his willingness to work with his fellow citizens and his demonstrated leadership, Israel is a vibrant, strong, self-reliant nation.

The Prime Minister-elect, Ehud Barak, left the ranks of the military just four years ago after a highly distinguished 36-year career as a platoon leader, tank battalion chief, senior intelligence analyst and head of the Israeli Army. As Israel's most decorated soldier, Ehud Barak is perhaps best known as the catalyst of the 1972 storming of a Sabena airliner hijacked by guerrillas at Tel Aviv's airport.

Following his retirement from the military, Mr. Barak served as the Army Chief of Staff and Interior Minister under former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, then Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Shimon Peres. When I traveled to Israel in 1997, I had a chance to meet with Mr. Barak, who was serving as the leader then of the Labor Party. I was impressed with Mr. Barak's meticulous attention to detail, commitment to important issues, and his construction of an aggressive grassroots political operation. Throughout the campaign, Barak promised, if elected, to continue Yitzhak Rabin's legacy of reviving negotiations with the Palestinians and making an impassioned personal commitment to the peace effort.

I am also impressed with Prime Minister-elect Barak's appreciation and understanding of the American-Israeli partnership, a partnership that goes beyond common political and strategic bonds. Both nations share a common set of values: freedom, individual responsibility, hope and opportunity. It is no coincidence that the birth of Israel coincided with the rise of the United States as the world's preeminent power. Our futures, both the United States' and Israel's, are tightly intertwined. Our shared traditions, which respect and value human rights, democracy, free speech, religious tolerance, are the seeds of a lasting peace throughout the world and in the Middle East.

The elections held yesterday are proof that the people of Israel are determined to withstand pressures and maintain a democracy, build a vibrant economy and achieve peace and security in the entire region. Our Nation has watched and admired a brave, determined and sometimes very divided people build a democracy under difficult circumstances that often have tested their resolve.

Throughout the past decade, Israel has lived and thrived through especially difficult circumstances: the assassination of Israel's great leader Yitzhak Rabin, repeated terrorist attacks, waves of immigrants challenging Israel's complex and the very contentious national elections. Through it all, the people of Israel stood strong, holding to its values and its belief that their country will remain strong and at peace.

I have also been encouraged by Mr. Barak's willingness to return to the land-for-peace Israeli commitments under the Wye River Peace Agreement brokered by President Clinton last October. As the Israeli government now changes hands, I am hopeful that the Middle East peace process can take meaningful steps forward.

It is critical that the United States continue to support Israel's commitment to see an end to terrorist aggression and State-sponsored attacks against its citizens and cities. We must also support Israel's desire to move the peace process by requiring that existing peace agreements be respected by

all sides. We should embrace these conditions, for they have at their core the values of any true democracy, the values of personal freedom.

Now that the citizens of Israel have spoken again, we must work to ensure that the Nation of Israel remains on course towards peace. Because of the perseverance, ingenuity and faith of its people, Israel has overcome the most daunting of challenges and become one of the world's great nations. I am confident that the people of the United States stand ready to help the people of Israel as they continue moving down a road of peace, security and economic self-reliance.

#### ENFORCE THE WAR POWERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, 56 days ago President Clinton launched a massive offensive air campaign against Yugoslavia. Over the past few weeks we have witnessed the capture and release of three United States soldiers. We have seen destruction, lives lost, and hundreds of thousands of men, women and children forced to leave their homes and seek refuge.

Most would call this a war. But Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution grants Congress, not to the Commander in Chief, the authority to declare war. Approaching two months of repeated air strikes, President Clinton has never asked for congressional authorization. Now, in order to proceed with Operation Allied Force, President Clinton must either ask Congress for authorization or remove our troops from the region. Unfortunately, he has made no indication that he is eager to do either.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that President Clinton has violated our Constitution as it pertains to the declaration of war. Therefore, I join the efforts of the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) and 15 of our colleagues in the House in filing a lawsuit against President Clinton in order to clarify Congress's constitutional war authority. I regret that we are forced to call upon the courts, but until we do, further administrations will continue to violate the Constitution and the War Powers Act.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with many of my colleagues who have very grave doubts about the United States involvement in Operation Allied Force. While I agree that the situation in Kosovo is a tragic one, our national security is not threatened. Our armed services already suffer from years of neglect under this administration. When we continue to commit troops in our limited resources on peacekeeping operations, we undermine our military's primary goals, to protect and de-

fend the citizens of this great country, and we leave ourselves vulnerable in an unstable post-Cold War climate.

Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine recently forwarded to me a letter from Charles Hunter, a military Reservist who served in Bosnia for nine months. I want to share with my colleagues some of what he observed. I feel very strongly that his words and observations will prove much more powerful than my own.

In an open letter to Congress, Mr. Hunter wrote, "It would be interesting to note what light further history will cast on the actions currently being implemented by this administration and enabled by this Congress." Mr. Hunter further states, "It is interesting to note that this is the first time that we have attacked another sovereign nation unprovoked and uninvited by a host or exiled government." He further states, "To me, this is a huge and pivotal point, the possible effects of which are frightening." Mr. Hunter further states, "Should we some day have a revolution in our land that is an affront to some sort of world entity, we have now forfeited the right to handle things as we as a Nation see fit. If we continue down this road before us, we will be handing national sovereignty, for any Nation, over to some non-elected multinational body."

Mr. Hunter further states, "My oath as a soldier and yours as a Senator included the phrase, 'to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.' Never has there been a vow made to an international constitution or treatise, so why the concern over the honor of NATO? Why is Congress not concerned with the honor of the United States?"

Mr. Speaker, these are words of a United States soldier who spent nine months in the Balkans, and he is absolutely correct. We need to restore the honor we once valued and treasured. President Clinton, my colleagues in Congress and I took an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. Especially now, we must keep that oath. Once again, I urge the President to seek congressional authority to declare war or bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will submit the full text of Mr. Hunter's letter for the RECORD. God bless our troops and God bless this Nation.

#### A BALKANS SOLDIER'S OPEN LETTER (By Charles W. Hunter)

I am a reservist. I have served in Bosnia for nine months. I am a linguist and interviewed between 100 and 200 people each day while I was there. I have also had the unique experience of losing a job due to my reserve commitment. I do hope that you will take these following points into consideration as you think about the possible future commitment of ground forces to, and our general involvement in, Yugoslavia.

As a point of clarification, I refer to the leader of the United States as "impeached" President Clinton, because that is the title that the House of Representatives voted to give him. I am not demeaning the office of

the president or the person of William Jefferson Clinton. They, not I, put him in a classification different from recent past presidents.

#### 1. THE YUGOSLAV PEOPLE DO NOT THINK AS WE DO

Due to the unique position and job which I had while I was in Bosnia, I had the opportunity to interview between 100 and 200 people each day for nearly 8 months. These people were mostly Croats and Muslims. However, during the last month of my tour my focus was with the Serbs. Because I had learned the language, these people felt that I was different than the majority of British and American soldiers they met and as a result they opened up to me. All of these people told me that as soon as we leave, if it is in one year, five years, or fifty years, they will go back to killing each other.

All of the sides committed mass executions, as is the case in Kosovo now. Look at the history of the region. I think that you will find it was not too long ago that the KLA was viewed to be a terrorist organization. They were raping, executing, burning and looting the Serbs in an attempt to drive them out of Kosovo. This was not that long ago. Our response at the time was probably tempered by the fact that our Secretary of State was not Serb, as now Mrs. Albright is Albanian. These people do not forget the wrongs done to them. Unless a firm handed dictator is in power, like Tito or perhaps NATO, these people will not live together. Period.

#### 2. HUMANITARIANISM IS A POOR EXCUSE FOR MILITARY DIPLOMACY

If we are to use the humanitarian crisis in the region as a reason for this gunboat diplomacy, then we are setting a dangerous precedent, as well as an inconsistent one. Millions of people have been killed in Sierra Leone in the past couple of years. The ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and Burundi has created over 1 million dead and 3 million refugees. Turkey has been killing the Kurds for years.

The list could go on, as you well know, yet to these tragedies a blind eye is turned. With this current administration it is even blasphemy to mention the abuses occurring in China. Yet, in all of these areas we do nothing. These examples serve only to show the glaring inconsistency of this as U.S. foreign policy. It also sets up a dangerous precedent. China will not renounce the possible use of force in relations to Taiwan. Tensions are still high between Iraq and Iran, India and Pakistan. What of the Taliban in Afghanistan? Will this foreign policy change dictate our future involvement in these areas? Why not?

#### 3. FORGOTTEN LESSONS OF HISTORY

It has been well quoted, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I am afraid that we are at such a crossroads now.

Some critics of this administration feel that all actions done by Impeached President Clinton are done so to create a legacy for history. It would be interesting to note what light future history will cast on the actions currently being implemented by this administration and enabled by this Congress. It is interesting to note that this is the first time in the history of our once great nation, that we have attacked another sovereign nation unprovoked and uninvited by a host or exiled government. To me, this is a huge and pivotal point, the possible effects of which are frightening.

Should we someday have a revolution in our land that is an affront to some sort of world entity, we have now forfeited the rights to handle things as we as a nation see fit. If we continue down this road before us