

same time refusing to honor commitments made to that person.

It is time to stop honoring our veterans with just words, ladies and gentlemen, instead let us honor them with action.

Retirees that entered the military prior to 1956 were promised that if they served 20 years, they would receive free health care for life for both themselves and their dependents. For those who signed up after 1956, they were told that they would receive free health care at military facilities or supplemental health insurance.

Today both groups are pushed out of the military health care system entirely and enrolled in Medicare, the same plan they would have received had they never served a day.

On September 28, I introduced the Keep Our Promises to America's Military Retirees Act, H.R. 3573, along with the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS), as a nonpartisan restoration of the health care benefit we owe our retirees.

A companion bill, S. 2003 is being introduced by the Senator from Georgia (Mr. COVERDELL) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON).

The pre-1956 retirees would be enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan at no cost, just like we told them, no matching premiums, no deductibles, no copays. The post-1956 retirees would be enrolled under the same rules as civilian Federal retirees.

As we consider this legislation, we need to be keenly aware that there is more at stake than just these benefits. Today's young people take note of the level of importance we place on military service.

If we renege on our promises to veterans, we have stated in a very loud voice that we hold their sacrifices in contempt.

Why should anyone sacrifice life, limb, career or temporary personal freedom, when their reward will be the contempt of those that they defend? They will not. And when the next challenge to national existence erupts, there will be few or none willing to carry America's banner.

As of the State of the Union address, there are 236 Members of the House who have signed onto this legislation. It is the fairest, most practical means of any available to redeem the promises we made to our retired veterans.

We have a clear-cut majority, very evenly split between our two parties, ready to bring this bill forward.

There are certainly cost issues that have to be addressed. I urge leaders on both side of the aisle to move quickly to bring this bill up before all appropriate committees of jurisdiction.

Madam Speaker, we have an unanticipated budget surplus. If we cannot restore the promises we made to these men and women now, we never will.

Madam Speaker, let us pay off our past due promises before we take on any new spending. It is now our turn to defend the lives of the men and women who spent a lifetime defending ours.

CREATION OF A BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION TO CELEBRATE ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Madam Speaker, today's agenda for the Congress was quite a small one. I think it is one item that we ought to pay close attention to, that is the creation of a bicentennial commission for Abraham Lincoln to celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birth.

Madam Speaker, I think it is very important that we pass the bill today. We are going to have a chance to take a look at the age of Lincoln, the man Lincoln and all the things surrounding Abraham Lincoln.

Our country owes a great debt to the wisdom and the courage of Abraham Lincoln. There are people who try ranking the greatest Presidents, always starting with Lincoln, then they debate who the second, third and fourth might be. But Lincoln and Washington are clearly ranked first. I think that the Lincoln discussion would lead us into some very profound considerations of issues that need to be discussed that normally are not discussed.

The President had a commission on race that was created for just one year, a very limited budget; and they unearthed a few important items and just got started and then they had to stop. I think a discussion of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, the considerations of what went into holding the Union together and why it is considered such a moral high point for America needs to be thoroughly discussed.

There was a time when people stood for great principles, and I often talk to young people of African American descent who are always looking for the negative side of things who want to declare that Abraham Lincoln did not really care about black people, Abraham Lincoln was not our friend, and you would have a chance to show them how ridiculous that was. The same people say that white folks never are concerned with the welfare of black folks or white people in power are never concerned with other people at all, that principles of Judeo-Christian heritage and all that is a big laugh.

We will have a chance to examine that. We will see how white people on one side had great principles and cared a great deal about fighting slavery, while others, of course, took advantage of it and enjoyed it; but there were some who had great principles and who were not themselves affected.

White people, who were not slaves, were the people who determined that America should not have slavery. It is important to understand that in the battle of Gettysburg, the crucial battle in the Civil War, almost no blacks participated.

They were not allowed in the army of either the Union or the Confederacy at

that time so it was not their fault; but it was a battle that really decided the war and it was white people fighting white people on the basis of principle, principle on the basis of understanding, some understanding, that the Nation would never be able to be a great Nation if half are slave and half are free.

At one point there were States that declared themselves slave States and other States that were free States and there were bloody clashes among the border States, the free States versus the slave States and all that history has gotten lost and nobody needs to hear and understand that history more than young African Americans. All Americans need to hear it and understand it, but young African Americans need to understand there are principles that have been fought for and large numbers of people died for them who did not have a vested interest. They could have all made a deal and if they did not stand for principle, if the Judeo-Christian ethic was not in place in the hearts of so many, the status quo would have prevailed.

So I think we cast a very important vote today and I would just like to note that in passing.

The real big issue of the day, however, is the budget. The budget was released by the President yesterday and there was a big hearing in the Committee on the Budget today; and I think that that is an item that not only is the biggest item for this Congress but also it may be the biggest item for the next 10 years, for this decade. The way we handle this budget this year may set the tone for the whole century.

Consider the year 2000. We are about to discuss a budget of the last and only superpower in the world; and unquestionably, the United States of America is a superpower, an economic superpower, to begin with. We cannot debate it. We are an economic superpower as a result of an appreciation of science and technology and genius and the art of government. We have governed in a way to maximize the advantages of science and technology. Our systems have allowed us to emerge at this particular time as the richest nation ever in the history of the world, by any relative standards, any way we want to try to create a scenario.

Rome, at the height of its greatness, was just a village compared to the wealth and might of the United States of America at this point in history. So our budget is a budget for a people, a nation, that is at the very center of the globe in terms of power and decision-making. Our budget is a budget for people who probably are at the center of the universe.

I also happened to read today that some of the leading scientists have reached agreement and have concluded that there is no other life anywhere in the universe. There cannot be any life similar to the life on Earth. They may continue to debate that and theories of physics and theories of the universe

have changed over time but right now all the evidence points to the fact that in this whole universe, which is so much larger than we ever imagined, with all kinds of galaxies and black holes and billions of stars, overwhelming in this great thing that exists there are no other living creatures, certainly nothing approaching mankind.

So we are not just at the heart of the globe but this Nation, the United States of America, at this point in history, is at the heart of a whole universe. The way we make decisions, and what we do can greatly determine the course of where mankind in the universe goes. That is an awesome, awesome thought, and I think that we trivialize where we are. We play it down.

In the State of the Union address, the President certainly was broad and encompassing in terms of the agenda for America; and also it addressed some issues in terms of the entire globe but it was really not looking at the fact that we are at the center of the universe and this is the beginning of the 21st Century and that not only is this Nation the last superpower, well governed with a tremendous economy but also all of that put together has created an enormous amount of wealth.

The amount of wealth that the government is able to make decisions about is just a tiny part of the total wealth of America.

□ 1915

But that tiny portion of the wealth that becomes revenue and comes under the decision-making powers of the Congress and the White House, that amount itself is still an enormous amount of money. We are talking about a budget past a trillion dollars; and more important than the budget that has passed a trillion dollars, we are talking about a budget surplus over the next 10 years which will be, by very conservative estimates, \$1.9 trillion.

Over the next 10 years, the surplus, after we factor out Social Security surplus, the Social Security surplus will be in a locked box. Put that aside. In addition to the Social Security surplus, we have a \$1.9 trillion anticipated surplus of revenue above expenditure.

That is an awesome position to be in, to be able to look, as a Nation, at a situation where money is not the problem. The problem is our capacity to make decisions about investments, our capacity to act in the most humane and compassionate way, at the same time we act in a most practical way.

The Romans, at one point in history, they did not earn it through science and technology and good government; they earned it through their savage conquests. Their savage conquests produced a lot of wealth. They had so much booty and treasure they brought in from the rest of the world until the Romans decided at one point that we are all so rich until every man in Rome shall not pay taxes, we shall give every

man in Rome a certain amount of money every year. The government will give them a big amount of money because the treasury is so full.

That turned out to be an unwise way to invest their wealth because all of the surrounding countryside moved into Rome; all of the people in the surrounding countryside heard about the goodies in Rome. They began to move in, and of course the Romans were overwhelmed by having to pay out more and more money, and they had to bring that to a stop.

The great Roman empire would do it for a long, long time. They thought it would go on forever. Maybe there is a God, and he does look down on Earth. There are periods where certain people, he smiles upon and chooses them to try to lead us and create the kind of Earth, the kind of world below heaven that he would like to have. The Romans might have been selected for that purpose. They failed.

Before the Romans, there were the Greeks. Maybe God was smiling on them and hoping that they would do it. Maybe this God does not like to get involved. The joy of God is to watch us and see what mankind individually does or mankind collectively does. Maybe he smiled on Greece, the great age of Greece being celebrated now on public television.

The Greeks were great people in every way: in science, in literature, in architecture, militarily. They defeated opponents who had many more soldiers and far greater resources militarily. The great Greeks, the people we know so very well: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, all three came right together. Aeschelus, Sophocles, Euripides, the great dramatist, and on and on it goes in medicine, architecture. There is a Greek related to the beginnings of western civilization, the great Greeks, and do it for a long time.

Then they got fascinated with military conquests under Alexander who had studied under Aristotle and understood some very important things that Aristotle taught him. Alexander started his conquests. The great secret of Alexander's ability to keep conquering was that the people that he conquered he looked upon as human beings, he absorbed them into the Greek culture. He tried to. He did not have to occupy the places that he conquered because the people became allies and friends.

But as his ego mounted, as his conquests increased and his ego rose, he forgot the secret of his success and became a cruel and inhuman tyrant, and eventually he spread out the Greek resources and Greek empire in such a way that, upon his death, things began to fall apart. So Greece failed.

Rome failed to live up to the possibilities of mankind, to spread their great civilization throughout the world. Greece failed.

Before that was Egypt. Egypt, we are still now digging up new tombs. Egypt, Nubia, as you move toward black Africa, they are discovering more and more

pyramids, more and more tombs. They are discovering that Egypt's Egyptians were as black as they were brown.

As they dig up these tombs, they find new and more splendid treasures, gold and jewels and all kinds of things that evidently Egypt was, at that time, a place of unparalleled wealth. They had an organized society. Something was wrong, though, because the society chose to focus on death more than life. One can imagine how many millions died creating those pyramids and tombs and creating the treasures that went into those tombs.

They had an obsession with death. They had an elitist culture. They had people who, despite their great wealth, had no vision. Egypt failed too.

So here we are, the United States of America, unprecedented in terms of wealth and power. The great advantage we have perhaps over Egypt and Rome and Greece is that we have a modern democracy. Greece had a democracy. They did not have television. They did not have the Internet. One could not click on and give one's opinions. There is a whole lot that we have now that they did not have.

They did not have an ability to make wealth multiply as rapidly as Bill Gates is able to multiply his wealth or Ted Turner is able to multiply his wealth. They did not have this great contradiction where there were people in one part of the world who still do not have running water and who live on a dollar a day, and there are other people in the Fortune 500 who have millions and millions of dollars, more money than they will ever be able to spend.

The United Nations has put out a report and calculated that one could provide enough decent water, one could provide vaccinations and medical care for children, one could provide an elementary education, one could provide a way for youngsters to get a start in life with educational opportunity, one could provide a package for the poor and downtrodden of the world for \$40 billion a year. All of the developing countries, all of the dirt-poor countries like Haiti, like the countries in Africa whose life is bleeding away from disease. All of those things could be brought under control with \$40 billion of expenditure per year.

We have just proposed a budget of more than a trillion dollars just for the United States of America. We anticipate a surplus of \$1.9 trillion over a 10-year period.

Bill Gates, according to estimates, is worth at least \$40 billion. That is several months ago. They talked about \$40 billion, one man whose net worth is \$40 billion, and because it increases geometrically, it is far beyond that probably now. That estimate was made a few months ago.

So with all of that, we approach the budget for the year 2001 that is going to be debated and discussed here in the Congress and here in Washington. We are the dawn of a digital age. America

is leading the world very rapidly at an ever-escalating speed into what I call a cyber-civilization.

What drives the wealth of Bill Gates and new millionaires, the new billionaires is a cyber-civilization. It is the age of the "e," the age of the dot.

If one watched the Super Bowl, one knows what I mean. Most of us watched the Super Bowl. It is not something which is elitist, esoteric. The "dot" is here. The "dot" is here because the great United States of America invested in the kind of science that produced the Internet.

It was the people of the United States through their military that created the Internet, just as the people of the United States through the military created radio, mass broadcasting, and television. If one looks at the history of all these great developments, they belong to the people. They would not exist if it had not been for a government that chose to make investments. Yes, they chose for military reasons. The Navy wanted to develop radio. For military reasons, we developed the Internet. The defense system needed to meet certain needs.

Whatever the reason, American taxpayers' dollars invested well, created the possibilities for the great cyber-civilization which we are contemplating now.

Now, what does all this have to do with the figures and the numbers, the priorities and the proposals released by President Clinton today as we start the budgeting process? The President released his budget. The President is a Democrat, so the Republicans in Congress in the majority received it with a statement that it is dead on arrival. That is the way the budget was treated last year, the year before. When we had the Republican Presidents, the Democrats in the Congress used to say the same thing.

We need to get away from that cliché, "dead on arrival." Nevertheless, that is the way we start, dead on arrival. That means we are going to have a great debate.

I am trying to take a few minutes to appeal to my colleagues to get beyond the trivial, to get beyond the immediate and the myopic approach. We all are held very closely to reality.

We all know as Congresspersons that, when we go back to our districts, people expect us to have our feet on the ground. They do not want to know about the possibilities of a cyber-civilization. They do not want to know about the fact that we are at a point where the Romans first once stood and the Greeks once stood and the Egyptians. We are now the pivotal Nation, what President Clinton called in his inauguration address a few years ago, we are the indispensable Nation.

Once Rome was the indispensable nation. Once Greece was the indispensable nation. Once Egypt was the indispensable nation. Now the United States is the indispensable nation to determine the future of the world. Is that

too ambitious a vision to project? I do not think so.

There was a time just a few years ago when people were predicting that the little island of Japan, because it was moving so rapidly in technology and overtaking the other industrial nations, that we would all be trailing in the wake of Japanese economic power.

There was a time when we looked at Europe and the wonderful and very much appreciated unifying factor there, the uniting of Europe, where, instead of wasting their resources and their genius on war, now they are uniting in economics and politics that they would surely be leading the world, and we would be following in their shadow.

But history has not developed that way. The fact that we are at the point that we are now is more than just luck. Some great decisions have been made, some immediate decisions in 1993 made by the Democrats on the floor of this House and in the Senate, and some long-term decisions made in terms of the investment in items which not only include the Internet, radio, television, but also the science that produced wonder drugs. We keep people alive longer, they are able to produce more scientific miracles. Wisdom, the longer one lives the greater the wisdom in general, and one is able to take advantage of that.

Just an item like that on the side, wonder drugs and the things that have helped people function throughout their lives for longer periods, all of it comes together, all of it is American, all of it is part of what we have created by maximizing freedom and allowing all flowers to bloom, allowing the innovations and the ideas to come up from the bottom. All of this has led us to the point where we now have the prospects of a \$1.9 trillion surplus over a 10-year period.

□ 1930

And we have a President who has proposed a budget of more than \$1 trillion.

The Congressional Black Caucus has asked me to serve on the committee to develop an alternative budget, and I welcome the opportunity. In previous years I have helped to develop an alternative budget and found it to be an exhilarating experience, to take the President's figures, to take the parameters that are set by the White House and set by the majority party and to try to operate within those parameters.

Last year the Republicans were so parliamentary cruel that they banned other budgets from being offered on the floor. I hope that they will become more civilized and that we will go back to the tradition of the House of having alternative budgets offered by various groups. Let the Blue Dogs offer their budget, let the conservative Republicans offer their budget, let the moderate Republicans offer their budget, let the Congressional Black Caucus offer its budget, and the Hispanic caucus, and let us see what the alternatives are.

We would like to combine with people who are not just African American but people who care about others; what I call the caring majority. There is in America a caring majority. The caring majority is made up partially of people who are suffering from oppressive policies, who are suffering from the blindness of leadership, who are suffering from the blunders of leadership, from people who are not necessarily cruel but who do not understand what it means to force a welfare mother to go to work instead of taking care of a young child.

We have a whole bureaucracy related out there to putting that welfare mother to work and complicating the life of both the mother and the child because they like the idea of people going to work. In the process of creating the order to go to work, they have to create a decent day care center. And a day care center will not exist unless we have funding for that. But we do not provide decent funding for the day care centers, so we have inadequate salaries and people in day care centers who are going to be a negative influence on the children because they do not know what they are doing and they are bitter about their low wages.

We create bureaucracies and take away a child from the one most beneficial thing that they have: a parent. That is the kind of blunder that a lot of decent people fall into. That is the kind of reasoning that seems to be straight and logical but which is very, very crooked and harmful.

So we have the opportunity to seriously debate these parts of the budget and reach some conclusions that we should spend money in a way which allows what Thomas Jefferson stated in the Declaration of Independence to become a reality; that people really have not just the right to pursue happiness but the opportunity to pursue happiness. The right to the pursuit of happiness is important. Do not interfere with that, but let us also in the great America of the year 2000 create opportunities to pursue happiness.

We have had great debates over the past few years about race-based legislation; race-based programs. Some people have sweated, turned all kinds of colors at the thought of doing anything that is race based. I have said that if we are talking about race-based programs in the abstract, yes. But if we are talking about programs to compensate for the fact that for 232 years one group of people were held in a cruel bondage, where no wealth could be created, where laws were made which made it illegal to teach them to read, where all kinds of cruel things were done and now the descendants of those folks are behind the mainstream, it is not really race based, it is justice based to talk about scholarships just for African Americans, to talk about policies which force the end of gerrymandering which creates districts that keep African Americans out of power so they cannot help themselves, and on and on it goes. So the so-

called race-based phenomenon is offered as a first step towards some kind of justice.

Reparations is something we do not want to talk about in connection with American slavery. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission will probably rule out any discussion of reparations for the descendants of African American slaves, rule it out of order. Oh, yes, we can discuss reparations for the Japanese who were interned during World War II in America, and we did discuss that and we did pass some legislation. I certainly, along with other members of the black caucus, welcomed that legislation and supported that legislation. We supported recognition that a government has responsibility, a present government has a responsibility for what past governments have done.

The Japanese day in and day out are fighting that notion. They refuse to apologize for what they did to the Chinese. They refuse to apologize for what they did to the Koreans. But let us applaud the fact that the Swiss have finally owned up to the fact that they swindled desperate people out of billions of dollars. The Swiss have finally said that, yes, we did take the money from the Jews fleeing the Germans, we did put their money away and refuse to allow anybody to claim it later, refused to come forward, so we will pay. The Germans are now creating a \$5 billion fund, reparations for all those people they forced into slave labor in the industries. And maybe they have some kind of compensation for all those who died that they can pinpoint.

I do not want to get into details. I do not know the details. I just know that the concept of reparations, that a present government has a responsibility for what past governments did; that the people of a present Nation have a responsibility and should bear some responsibility for what the people did in the past. That has been established everywhere.

What does this have to do with the budget the President sent to Congress today? Throughout this budget there are opportunities to do things which would greatly facilitate the correction of some of the injustices that were done to the forefathers of African Americans. There are great opportunities in this budget to go forward and create programs which not only help the descendants of slaves but also help all poor people.

Yes, we have had this great debate. We have lost it. Those of us who wanted reparations, those of us who said we needed to have affirmative action, we basically lost ground. We have lost ground in the Supreme Court. The Voting Rights Act is being diluted. We have lost ground in the universities. They have ruled out giving scholarships on the basis of race. We have lost ground. Let us switch the concepts. If we have lost ground on the basis of reparations and the need to correct past injustices, let us talk about oppor-

tunity. Let us go for an opportunity budget.

In the President's budget we should create maximum opportunities not only for the descendants of slaves but for all people who are disadvantaged; for immigrants who came here from dirt poor countries who have problems assimilating, for other people who in some way have been disadvantaged, for the Native Americans who were driven off their land and treated cruelly. They fell for the trap of segregation and separated themselves out and have not been able to get a foothold in the power structure and, therefore, are suffering more than any other group probably of disadvantaged people in America.

Let us have an opportunity program which looks upon every child that is born. Let us not focus so much on what happens in the womb, let us focus on what happens after the child gets here. Let us say we will guaranty an opportunity that every child born in America will have an opportunity to get an education which maximizes their God-given talents; that no child shall be hungry from the time he is born until the time he gets to be 18 years of age or 21 years of age, finishing college; that every child should have an opportunity to go to a school which is a school that physically is better than his home. It does not threaten his health because at the school there is a coal burning furnace spewing fumes into the air which may ruin his lungs and create a situation where asthmatic conditions develop in that child.

Let us not send a kid to school which is so crowded that it forces him to eat lunch at 10 o'clock in the morning, which ruins his digestive system and his whole attitude toward eating because he just had breakfast. Because of the bureaucracy of the school and the fact they have so many kids to feed, in a cafeteria that was built for one-third of the number that they have to feed, they have to have three lunch periods and they have to start early. The children who eat lunch early at 10 o'clock are forced to eat lunch before their breakfast is digested. The children who eat lunch late are hungry, unusually hungry, and their systems are damaged. Let us not have an America that allows that.

Let us have an America that with a \$1.9 trillion projection over a 10-year period decides to invest heavily in opportunity in various ways. Opportunity may involve health care or opportunity may involve housing. There are very few housing programs any more that are being driven by Federal initiative. We are barely hanging on to the programs that were created by the New Deal and by the Great Society. So we need to create decent housing for every child born; an opportunity not to have to live in a cold house that makes it difficult to sleep at night for a child or creates the possibility of many more illnesses so they will miss many more days of school and also develop many kinds of childhood illnesses which cre-

ate difficulties later as an adult. On and on it goes. An opportunity to be free of that.

Why not look at the budget in the year 2000 as being an opportunity to get rid of all those impediments to children; an opportunity budget as we go into the great cyber civilization.

The cyber civilization needs brainpower. Brainpower drives America right now. Those nerds, those kids that everybody made jokes about in high school and in college, they now are in command. They are in command. They are the ones who drive the computers and the Internet and the e-commerce. It is not a passing phenomenon. We are going to need more and more of them. The projection is that right now we have 300,000 vacancies that are going unfilled in information technology? These are cyber technicians, people who can create the Internet; programmers, people who can merge a sense of the culture with what is possible in the digital world and come out with a product that is very useful and also very profitable. All of these developments require brainpower. We know that.

If brainpower drives the future, then let us invest in activities which create more brainpower. So the opportunity approach is not only the ethical approach, not only the moral approach, the opportunity approach is the most practical approach. If we want to keep America great, if we want to keep this economy going, if we want our military to remain the greatest military, the most effective military in the world, we have to have recruits that go into that military who are exposed to the digital revolution, who have come in understanding a great deal and can be trained to use our high-tech weapons.

There is no sector in American public life that is not affected by the digital revolution.

Madam Speaker, I began by saying that two great things happened today. One was that we voted to create a bicentennial commission in honor of Abraham Lincoln, and that commission and all the activity surrounding that is very beneficial to the American Nation as we examine where we are at the beginning of the 21st century.

□ 1945

I also said today we launched the most important budget in the history of the United States of America. I also said I think it is most unfortunate that we are casually launching this budget and trivializing the significance of this particular moment in history, that we are downplaying the fact that we have a \$1.9 trillion budget surplus progression over a 10-year period.

We are trivializing the fact that this budget will definitely not have a deficit if we are going to have a budget that is certainly balanced, and we can do that without having to cut large numbers of programs.

The challenge before us is, when we have this kind of opportunity, when this kind of wealth exists unparalleled

in the history of the world, when we stand at the pinnacle of the rudder system that guides the world, and maybe we are the gyroscope that guides the entire universe at this point, that great responsibility will be taken seriously enough to utilize this budget for the sake of the entire world, starting with our own people who need health care, who need a greater investment in education and opportunity.

Why be too cautious? Why be cavalier? Why be uncaring? If we are cautious, cavalier, and uncaring at this moment in history, we may lose our opportunity, the way the Romans lost theirs and the way the Greeks lost theirs and the Egyptians and maybe the way the British Empire lost its opportunity to provide leadership that would create a heaven on Earth, a place where all human beings have an opportunity and a right to pursue happiness. It is possible.

The United Nations has said, as I repeat, that, with \$40 billion expenditure per year, you could end most of the greatest hardships of the world, you could vaccinate children all over the world, you could provide a primary school of education, you could provide decent water for everybody in the world. It may be that they are off by a few billion dollars, but the fact that they have come up with a quantification of what the world needs is a great beginning.

I salute Ted Turner, the great American billionaire, when he decided that he would devote a billion dollars to helping people throughout the world. That is the kind of action that individual Americans with wealth can take, and we are probably going to see more of that. Let us applaud that.

I salute Bill Gates and his magnificent set of foundation projects, one of which is a billion dollar grant to the United Negro College Fund. The United Negro College Fund has been given a billion dollars to provide scholarships for students over a 10-year period. For college students, they are going to pay the entire college expense for 4 years. These students who are fortunate enough to be chosen will have their college expenses paid for 4 years. That is Bill Gates, the billionaire. There are other billionaires and other millionaires who have various kinds of projects of their own.

That is American. This is very American. Never in the history of the world have we had this kind of foundation approach to the utilization of wealth by individuals. I do not think the Greeks had any foundations or the Egyptians or the Romans. There is no evidence that they had centers of philanthropic operation run by ordinary citizens.

The governments did have certain programs, but probably the Greeks failed because they did not educate enough Greeks. It was an elitist process. The academy that was run by Aristotle probably only took the elite. Probably the Egyptians failed because the priest and the whole religious soci-

ety of an elitist ran the culture and eventually ran the whole nation.

On and on it goes. Let us not make that mistake. We have a great democracy now. Let us invest in education so that the maximum number of people will be able to be fully developed and make their contribution.

The greatest natural resource in the universe is the human mind. That is not just a flowery phrase. It is reality. With the human mind, you open up vast caverns of possibilities and scientific miracles that have produced the technology and the medicine and the kinds of things that are happening in today's world. It all came out of human minds.

If you put to work twice as many human minds in 10 years as you have working now in the area of science and math and agriculture, producing music, drama, the kinds of things that create a culture, we take advantage of the opportunities that are created by technology and science. Because the human being is molded a certain way.

One of the problems with the Romans is that even while they were building vast architectural empires, they invented concrete, they were the geniuses in military strategies, at the same time the Romans had the coliseums. If you have ever been to Rome and been to the Coliseum, a fascinating thing to behold is that underneath the main arena are all these pits where the animals were kept, big animals, like lions and tigers. They were kept there because they are what they threw the Christians to. And Christians were not the only ones sent to the lions.

The Romans sat in these huge coliseums while watching animals eat people and watching gladiators kill each other. They were a culture out of sync with compassion and humanity. Even though they had the greatest military inventions and strategies and created Roman law and logic, the breadth of the Roman empire was so impressive they liked to watch people get eaten by animals.

That lack of development, that cruelty streak, whatever you want to call it, probably played a great role in the fall of the Roman Empire, the lack of compassion, the inability to make use of all their great wealth for everybody.

So we would like not to be an American people who watch the Super Bowl in millions. We would like not to be an American people who find that phoney wrestling on television is the most popular cable television programs, phony wrestling, watching people do crazy things to each other, knowing very well it is all staged.

Our culture, our minds are being shaped by that. Where might we be in 10 or 20 years if more of that keeps going on? Our science, our genius, our government all may not be able to save us if our culture is watching phony people throw each other around in the ring. That is our entertainment. Our minds may get affected and shrink as a result. I am laughing, but I really do not think it is funny.

If we enjoy that kind of cruelty, we may institutionalize cruelty. And we have to some degree institutionalized cruelty. We have vast expenditures by the Federal Government and by State and local governments in a prison system which now is the largest in the world. No industrialized nation has more people in prison than the United States of America.

Is that where we want our wealth to go, to build more prisons? We build a prison and keep a person in prison for no less than about \$20,000 a year. The price to keep a man in prison costs a minimum of \$20,000 per year.

In the New York City school system, people complain about the fact that we spend \$8,000 a year per child for an education. But yet, we are willing to send that same child to prison and spend \$20,000 a year. That is the kind of thinking that probably led to the downfall of the Roman Empire.

I am talking about the President's budget today. You might wonder why I am not reciting figures. You are going to hear a lot of figures. You are going to hear a lot of numbers.

Let us take time out to salute President Clinton for the fact that he has placed a great deal of emphasis in his budget on education, not enough, in my opinion. But where else in Washington, where else in the world will you find more emphasis being placed on education? Where else in the context of the American government systems, the States, the cities.

There are cities like New York City that have surpluses and had a surplus a year ago of \$2 billion. The amount of revenue collected was \$2 billion greater than expenditures. And yet New York City would not spend a single penny to remove the coal burning furnaces in its schools.

There are more than 200 schools in New York City that have coal burning furnaces. New York City spent several million dollars on an asthma project to educate school kids and their parents about asthma to try to do something about an asthma epidemic. Asthma is growing as a problem in New York City. And in the course of that asthma project, which got high visibility for city hall and the mayor, they did not mention a single time that the city, the Board of Education, was responsible for 200 coal burning furnaces spewing pollutants into the air very close to where young children were being educated.

If a child is sent to school from a house that burns oil or gas and the school is burning coal, that means that at school he is placed in jeopardy in a way that he is not placed in jeopardy at home. Going to school becomes harmful to children who at an early age are put into a school that is burning coal.

When I bought my first house, it was a coal burning furnace. We got a bargain. I could not afford it otherwise. And we tried very hard with filters and we worked very hard to keep it clean.

But no matter how hard you work, those tiny particles of coal dust get into the air and eventually in the lungs of young children.

We were glad when we could convert to gas, I assure you. Coal is used for many purposes but it should not be in a situation where children are being exposed day in and day out to the fumes and the dust that comes from coal.

But in New York City, we had \$2 billion and not a single penny was spent to get rid of a single coal burning furnace. In New York City, \$2 billion and not a single penny was spent to build a new school.

The mayor squirreled all that away. That is the kind of cruel and blind decision-making that we do not want to be guilty of in this budget.

The President has proposed, and I want to salute him for this breakthrough, the President has proposed in the area of school construction we go beyond what has been proposed in past years. He has proposed for the past few years that the only Federal involvement in school construction would be limited to a \$25 billion program where the Federal Government would participate in the program where localities and States could borrow up to \$25 billion across the country, the total would come to that much, and the Federal Government would pay the interest on the bonds.

And if that whole program went into motion and the whole program was utilized, the Federal Government would be paying \$3.7 billion in interest and, therefore, its contribution to school construction in the entire country would be \$3.7 billion.

Now, the General Accounting Office has said that in 1995 we needed \$110 billion to repair and build schools in order to keep up with the population at that time. Without projecting additional children who would be going to school and therefore needing more classrooms, \$110 billion was needed in 1995.

Bob Chase, who is the President of the National Education Association, made a speech at the Democratic Caucus retreat this weekend where he said that now we need \$300 billion in order to stay even, that in order to have a decent school and classroom for every child that is going to school, you need to bring it up to \$300 billion.

But the President is proposing, and he is way out ahead of everybody else, the Republicans propose zero, the President is proposing \$3.7 billion to pay the interest. We need at least the amount that the General Accounting Office projected in 1995, more like \$110 billion dollars.

I have a bill which, based on the General Accounting Office progression in 1995, proposes that we spend \$110 billion for school construction, repair and modernization over the next 10 years. The President has at least gone beyond his \$25 billion borrowing scheme and made a breakthrough in thinking in this administration and he has an-

nounced a new school construction initiative where \$1.3 billion will be directly appropriated, directly appropriated, not borrowed, no interest, no principal, the Government of the United States will directly appropriate \$1.3 billion for emergency school repairs.

□ 2000

Mr. President, we thank you for that great breakthrough in logic. We thank you for joining the commonsense Americans.

We have made a first step. In fact, I sent out a "Dear Colleague" to all the Members saying we are winning. We are winning. This is a great step over where we were 2 years ago. We are winning because the commonsense logic of the American people is beginning to prevail.

The American people in survey after survey have indicated education should be the highest priority. When you ask them in great detail to tell you what items within the education budget need the most help, they say fixing schools. School repair, construction, renovation, security, all of those items relate to infrastructure, and rank highest in the minds of the American people according to several key polls.

Why do I single out school construction? Why do I walk around with this hat as a symbol, a trademark, to keep it in people's minds when we are talking about it? Why do you care about education and care about schools?

I have been on the Committee on Education and the Workforce now for my 18th year. I care about education. I asked to be placed on the Committee on Education and the Workforce when I came here, Education and Labor it was called then, because I saw education and jobs, education and employment, as being inextricably interwoven. You cannot separate them. If I was going to do anything about the high unemployment in my district, about the opportunity for the poor people, I needed to be on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. So education has been the one thing that I have considered most important in my life for a long time.

Why do I single out school construction among all the other items that relate to improving education? Because school construction, the physical infrastructure, they are so dilapidated, so rundown, such obvious symbols of a lack of commitment in certain areas. Not just the big cities, but even when you get outside of the big cities, you have schools in the suburbs with trailers all over the place, indicating that the commitment to build schools is not there, that the trailers were put there instead.

They are supposed to be temporary. Some places have had trailers for 20 years now. The trailers do not have indoor toilets. When the weather is bad you, you have to go out to the real building for that. Trailers are not symbols of education commitment to children.

So why do I see the physical infrastructure as being so important? If I am an intellectual, why do I not care about the books, the curriculum, the standards? Why do I not care about testing? Why do I not care about whole school reform?

I care about it all. It is all very important. I think it is dangerous to try to separate out any one part and say we do not need it all. We need it all. But there is such a thing as a core need, a kingpin need, a critical need, which, if it is not addressed, all of the attention to other needs is folly.

For example, let us consider school reform and investment in education as we would approach a patient that is very ill in a hospital. The patient is delivered to the doctors in the hospital and they are told that this man has heart congestion. Because of the heart condition, if something is not done about the heart very rapidly, very quickly, he is going to die. But he also has infected feet. He also has strange sores growing all over his skin. He also has some damage to one of his internal organs. Which shall the doctors address first if they care about keeping the man alive?

The school systems are no different. In order to keep the patient alive, you have to address the heart congestion first. If the heart stops beating, none of the other illnesses matter. If the heart stops beating, trying to cure the infected foot is a waste of time. If the heart stops beating, trying to cure the damaged organ internally is a waste of time.

If you do not address the school buildings, the infrastructure, which provides the place for the library and the laboratory, the physical symbol of commitment, if you do not address that, then the children will pass judgment immediately. Walking into a dilapidated school with a sagging roof, water dripping through the roof on the top floors, window panes out, coal burning furnaces. I went to one school, I had a town meeting, 7 o'clock in the evening, and under the chairs in the auditorium where we were holding the town meeting, mice were playing. No extermination was taking place, no effective cleaning services were taking place in that school.

What does that tell the children? What does that tell the teachers? It tells the children and teachers that there is a lack of commitment by the people that make decisions about the budgets to provide a decent education to those children.

We have gone from blaming the children, change the curriculum standards, test the children, blame the children, now we have come down to blaming the teachers. This is the year of blaming the teachers. We have dealt with curriculum standards out there. We tried to institute national testing. Some of us fought that. We said "do not test the kids until you have more resources so they have a chance to learn before you test them."

Now we have gone to focus on the teachers. If only the teachers were better prepared, if only more teachers were certified, if only more teachers understood what they are doing, then we could reform the school system.

Not for one moment will I disagree that we need quality teachers. We need systems that provide certified teachers, qualified teachers, right across the board.

In my district, one-third of the schools in my district, where the poorest children live, half the teachers are not certified. Each school has at least 50 percent not certified teachers, 50 percent unqualified teachers, because they have been given a chance, in some cases, 9 or 10 years, to get certified, and some have not wanted to care.

Recently the United Federation of Teachers, the teachers union, said to the uncertified teachers, if you want to go back to school, we will pay your tuition. We will make it possible for you to get certified.

They were shocked to find that the majority of the people they were addressing turned it down. When they turned it down, they said to the union people, "This school system needs our bodies. We cannot be replaced. We are not worried about losing our jobs. You need our bodies."

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that at the heart of education reform, education investment, which should be the heart of this year's budget, should be \$110 billion over a 10-year period for construction, because that is the way we show our commitment for education as we go into the 21st century as the leaders of the world and as the leaders on this whole globe. We ought to take this budget seriously. We ought to make the decisions that will carry our Nation forward, and not make the error that the Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians made when they were at the pinnacle of power and had the world in their hands.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 6, MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY RELIEF ACT OF 2000

Mr. DREIER (during the special order of Mr. OWENS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-495) on the resolution (H. Res. 419) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 6) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to eliminate the marriage penalty by providing that the income tax rate bracket amounts, and the amount of the standard deduction, for joint returns shall be twice the amounts applicable to unmarried individuals, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

DEALING WITH THE BUDGET SURPLUS AND THE NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GANSKE). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention a very important issue facing the American public, something that we dealt with today in the Committee on the Budget and something I talked about with the constituents I represent in the First Congressional District of Wisconsin throughout the past 2 months during the Christmas recess, and that is this: What are we going to do about our Social Security surplus, what are we going to do about our non-Social Security surplus, and what are we going to do about our national debt? These are the issues that are driving our Federal budget process now. In doing so, the President, as he is required by the Constitution, sent the budget that he is proposing to pass into law to Congress yesterday.

This morning we had a hearing in the Committee on the Budget where the President's budget director outlined the budget. I would like to share a few of those details with the viewing public tonight and my colleagues.

First, we finally have agreement, we have progress on the fact that all Social Security money should go to Social Security in paying off the debt we owe to the program.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, last year in this well, before the Nation and before Congress, the President in his State of the Union address said he wanted to dedicate 62 percent of the Social Security trust fund to Social Security, thereby spending 38 percent on other government programs.

Last year this Congress said no, that is not enough. I actually authored the Social Security lockbox bill with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) which requires that from now on, if you are going to pay Social Security taxes, it goes to Social Security; that 100 percent of the Social Security taxes we pay, 100 percent of the Social Security surpluses actually go to the program, go to the trust fund and go to pay off our national debt so we can create more solvency in the Social Security trust fund.

So there was a difference last year. Congress was for protecting 100 percent of the Social Security trust fund last year; the President was for protecting 62 percent of the Social Security trust fund.

Now we have good news. The President has finally come around and agreed that, finally, for the first time in 30 years, we should pass legislation to protect 100 percent of the Social Security trust fund. I am very encouraged by this news.

However, I am a little concerned at what Jack Lew, the OMB Director, the President's chief budget writer, said this morning, and that was this: They support the idea of putting 100 percent of the Social Security surpluses back into Social Security and paying off our debt, but they are not in support of leg-

islation to ensure that this happens. That is a little odd, I think. So I would like to see this administration walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

But then what happens when we look at the non-Social Security surpluses? Today in America people are overpaying their taxes. They are overpaying their taxes in two very fundamental ways: They are overpaying their taxes with Social Security taxes. That spending of the surplus has occurred for years. We have actually raided that fund for 30 years, this government has, to spend on other government programs.

For the first time in 30 years, last year this Congress stopped the raid on the Social Security trust fund. I am seeking to pass our lockbox legislation which will make sure we never go back to the days of raiding the Social Security trust fund.

But on the other side of the Federal Government ledger book, the non-Social Security part, millions of American taxpayers, hard-working families, are overpaying their income taxes. So we now have a non-Social Security surplus approaching \$2 trillion over the next 10 years. That is astounding.

We were looking at deficits as far as the eye could see just a few years ago. Now we have the opportunity, now we have the good fortune, based on good discipline in spending and based on a great economy, to have a \$4 trillion surplus; \$2 trillion for Social Security, \$2 trillion from an overpayment of income taxes.

Here is what the President is proposing to do. He is finally agreeing with Congress that we take the \$2 trillion from the Social Security surplus and apply that back to Social Security, towards shoring up the program and paying off our National debt, which consequently is some money we owe back to Social Security.

But on this non-Social Security part, the income tax overpayment, the President in this budget is proposing to spend \$1.3 trillion of that surplus. He is proposing to spend 70 percent of the non-Social Security surplus on new government programs in Washington.

Specifically, as we analyzed this budget in the Committee on the Budget as we did so this morning, the President is calling forth creation of 84 new Federal spending programs to be launched this year by the Federal Government, to be paid for by the income tax overpayments of the American taxpayer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I held over 60 town hall meetings in the district I serve in southern Wisconsin, the First Congressional District, where I posed a lot of questions to my constituents to ask them about this. They said that if they are given a choice between tax reduction and debt reduction with this money, they were evenly split. But if they were given a choice between spending their income tax overpayments on new spending in Washington or reducing our national debt further