

RECOGNIZING FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

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

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to recognize and to commend the work of our public servants and those individuals who do the work of the Federal Government every single day. Our Federal employees are not thanked enough for their service to our country. They do the work that keeps this country moving. Yet they are not given the compensation and the benefits that they deserve for the work that they do. Instead of receiving wages comparable to the private sector, instead of receiving affordable health care benefits, Federal workers are attacked by my colleagues often on the other side of the aisle.

Recently a friend of mine handed me a letter that I found deeply disturbing. The letter is a fund-raising appeal sent out on behalf of a private organization and signed by a distinguished Member on the other side of the aisle.

Unfortunately, the letter does more than argue for Tax Code changes. It condemns the work of thousands of dedicated employees of the IRS. The letter says that, by establishing a flat tax, and I quote, "We will effectively dismantle the Internal Revenue Service which in addition to being the most burdensome, intrusive and aggressive Federal agency, is also considered one of the most wasteful." It goes on to discuss how people believe the IRS is grinding this country to a halt and jeopardizing the future opportunities for the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe these kinds of blanket attacks on a Federal agency and its workers are unjustified, they are unfair, and they are offensive. While no one would argue that our tax system is perfect, we certainly cannot blame Federal employees for its shortfalls. After all, the IRS employees are only doing their jobs, enforcing our Nation's laws.

In all my years of representing the people of Michigan, I have found Federal employees to be some of the most dedicated, hard-working and honest workers that I have ever met. They are our public servants. They come to work every day to make sure our seniors get their Social Security checks, our schools get funds to teach our children, and our communities get the resources to protect their environment.

They come to work every day knowing they are being paid on an average 30 percent less than the private sector counterparts and struggling to afford Federal health insurance premiums that have soared 36 percent over the past 4 years.

They come to work every day unsure of their jobs, whether they will be contracted out to private companies the next time the Bush administration gets a chance.

We depend on our Federal employees, and they deserve our recognition and

respect for the hard work that they do. After all, no matter how much we may simplify our Tax Code or any other regulation, we still need public servants to enforce our laws and do the people's work.

While we consider policy changes that affect Federal agencies and their workers, it is my hope that we will stay focused on the policy. We have had enough scapegoating of the people who we have given the responsibility to enforce and implement these policies. Our Federal workers do a phenomenal job with the task we put before them. They deserve to be applauded, not attacked for their service to our country.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 27. An act to amend the Federal election Campaign Act of 1971 to provide bipartisan campaign reform.

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

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

READINESS FACTS

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I decided to come to the floor tonight to talk about the military readiness of our men and women in uniform.

Last week, I happened to hear the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), who is a ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, on the floor talking about this same issue that I am going to be talking about tonight.

Then last night, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness, also came to the floor. I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services. I am also a member of the Subcommittee on Military Readiness.

I just wanted to come on the floor to remind my colleagues, as well as this administration, that our men and women in uniform who are willing to give their lives for this country have a

lot of need that we need to start addressing.

I am very hopeful that the administration will soon be working with the Congress to submit an emergency supplemental. There is a dire need by our military.

I certainly want to commend the Secretary of Defense. I think he was right in requesting this top-to-bottom review. But in addition to what he is doing, we also need to make sure that our men and women in uniform are ready to defend the national security interest of this country.

What is beginning to happen is that the accounts are becoming very low of money, and they are beginning to have some serious problems. Let me give my colleagues a few examples on this.

The Navy Flying Hour Program is short over \$450 million for fiscal year 2001. Since the end of the Cold War, the average age of Air Force aircraft has risen 58 percent. The Army is more than \$3 billion short of basic ammunition. Although improving, separate spare parts problems caused the mission-capable rates of both the AV-8B Harrier and the CH-53 helicopter to drop below 40 percent last year.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the Coast Guard has projected a fiscal year 2001 shortfall reaching almost \$100 million. Let me also share with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, the military health care plan is expected to be \$1.4 billion short in the same year.

I wanted to be on the floor tonight because this is a very unsafe world that we live in. We certainly know about the unrest and the problems of the Middle East; but we also know that Iran, Iraq, and these countries are not friendly towards the American Government. In addition, I think of North Korea. In addition, China. All these countries that I mention are spending a great deal of their gross national product on building their military.

So I wanted to come to the floor tonight to join the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), as well as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), and there are many others on both sides of the political aisle on the Committee on Armed Services that feel like I, as well as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), that we need to move forward now with this emergency supplemental.

So I will tomorrow be sending my second letter. My first letter went to the President of the United States, asking him to please start the movement forward on this emergency supplemental for our military.

I intend tomorrow to write a letter to Mitch Daniels, the OMB director, and say that we do not need to continue to wait, that we need to prepare this legislation, that we need to put this legislation in just as soon as we return after the Memorial Day recess.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to all the men and women in uniform that I

thank them for their service to this Nation. May God bless them and may God bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONFUSING DAY FOR REPUBLICANS AND CONSERVATIVES

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

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, first let me, too, congratulate, as a fellow Midwesterner, the city of Detroit. We had many escaping slaves go through the Underground Railroad through Detroit. We provide many auto parts. Unfortunately, our beloved Pistons used to be the Fort Wayne Pistons, and they, too, moved to Detroit; and I wish they would win as many games in Detroit as they used to win in Fort Wayne.

But today has been a confusing day for Republicans and conservatives. We had a handout during the amendment of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) to eliminate the national testing that came from the Republicans.

It said that, if one voted to eliminate national testing, one would wipe out the President's cornerstone of accountability. Without assessment, schools cannot be held accountable for improving student achievement. Without annual assessment information, parents are powerless to choose a better-performing school. For over 35 years, there has been little or no academic accountability in K-12 education programs. We need more accountability for Federal tax dollars, not less.

This is really confusing. It is a Republican handout.

Now, let us apply this to economics. Without the cornerstone of accountability, without assessments, business cannot be held accountable for improving business achievement. Without annual assessment information, workers are powerless to choose a better-performing business. For over 35 years, there has been little or no business accountability in ergonomics programs. We need more accountability for Federal tax dollars, not less.

Now, let us try health insurance. Without assessments, businesses cannot be held accountable for improving health insurance. Without annual assessment information, workers are powerless to choose a better-performing business. For over 35 years, there has been little or no business accountability in health insurance programs. We need more accountability for Federal tax dollars, not less.

This is a disturbing trend. Since when did the Republican Party stand for national accountability when we have always argued for local responsibility and accountability. It is not a question of accountability, it is accountability to whom. That is really what we have been arguing over today.

I am curious what is happening to our party. A few minutes ago, a group of conservative Republicans had been hauled down to the White House for a combination of persuasion and subtle threats. I hope that the people in this body can still vote their conscience, and we have not handed over our voting cards to the deals developed with Senator KENNEDY in the Senate, with veto power for the House Democrats.

My friend from South Carolina is under heavy pressure not to even offer his minimal State flexibility for a mere seven States because it might upset the Democrats. This scaled down Straight A's was accepted by Senator KENNEDY. Apparently, we must stay to his left, and then what is to guarantee that we can even hold that in conference. It used to be that the House was the conservative body. Now, apparently, it is Senator KENNEDY who is the conservative.

President Bush is a great President. I agree with him on almost everything, and I am so enthusiastic about his leadership. But on this issue, he has chosen to go with Democrats and a liberal bill. About every major conservative organization in America, including Dr. Dobson, Rush Limbaugh, the home schoolers, the Family Research Council, over 40, I think now, 50 conservative organizations oppose this bill.

Maybe there is only going to be 5 or 10 or even 20 Members with the courage to vote no in the end. The pressures are great on us. Forty-nine Republicans today stood up to the President on national testing. Last year, we probably had over 220. Interestingly, this year, the Democrats kind of switched sides, because previously the Democrats had been for national testing. That is partly why people are distrustful of politicians, because it appears that one does not take a ideological position and stick with it, it is more a party position. It is a very upsetting trend in America.

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Part of my concern is that there will not always be a President Bush. We do not know who is going to be the next president. And when we pass things that mandate national testing, we are taking a risk that the next president will not be George W. Bush and, instead, we may have someone who is going to ram this stuff down our throat, and we may regret and rue the day that we passed a bill with less flexibility, more money, more bureaucracy, and now national testing.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, this is a continuing discussion of the so-called national energy policy of the Bush administration. Buried way back in the back of this report, under appendix one, under summary of recommendations, on an unnumbered page, is a recommendation that the Federal Government and, of course, the States' rights party, my Republican friends, should mandate that every State in America adopt energy deregulation.

Now, if it was working somewhere, that might be a good idea, but we have all seen the extraordinary disaster in California. The disaster in California is spreading across the western United States. It is extracting billions, billions of dollars from residential ratepayers, small businesses and large businesses, and upstreaming that money to a few special companies. It happens that three or four of them are based in Houston, Texas, in particular, one really outstanding corporate citizen named Reliant Energy.

Now, Reliant saw its profits go from \$27 million last year to over \$500 million in 1 year. What great new thing did they invent or provide? Nothing. What they managed to do was buy cheap a couple of energy plants in California and begin the most sophisticated gaming of the energy market as reported in Sunday's San Francisco Chronicle, and all of us in the west are paying. In fact, in the Pacific Northwest, we are paying higher average wholesale prices than are the people of California.

This manipulation is spreading across the entire western United States, and now the Bush administration thinks this is such a great thing, we should spread it across the entire United States with a new mandate that every State adopt this. Now, my colleagues may say, ah, well, the California system is flawed. Well, I tell my colleagues, take out the flaws of the California system and go to Montana. You will find that all the large manufacturers in Montana are closing down because Pennsylvania Power & Light bought their generation, gaming them, and they cannot afford the power any more.

Or let us go to New England. In New England, PGE of California, that says they are broke in California, sent the money to the parent company. The parent company created a new company, which is PGE of New England. And PGE of New England is manipulating the market there and has raised the prices substantially.

This is the great new thing the Bush administration wants to bring to all of America: more profits, rolling blackouts, price gouging, and a mandate from the Republican administration that every State be subject to this sort of case.