

United Nations before engaging in preemptive strikes on Iraq. I firmly believe that Congress has a vital role to play and a constitutional responsibility to act on matters of national security. However, I also believe there are several questions that must be answered before we rush into war.

Was Iraq involved in the September 11 attack on the United States? I have seen no evidence that it was. A tough and strong war against terrorism in response to September 11 does not reasonably extend to launching a war against Iraq. Indeed, attacking Iraq may be a distraction from the war against terrorism, not a continuation. Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein are natural enemies, not allies. The al Qaeda terrorist movement is based on the belief that secular regimes in the Arab world are antithetical to the fundamental teachings of Islam.

Does Iraq pose an immediate and independent threat to the United States and our allies? The President has identified the key threat from Iraq as its development of weapons of mass destruction and the potential for Iraq to transfer these weapons to the terrorist groups it sponsors. I agree with this concern. However, what weapons of mass destruction does Iraq now have at its disposal? Does Iraq now have the capability to deliver and use these weapons against the United States? The answer is we do not know. Without reinserting the U.N. weapons inspectors, we may never know.

Why do we not allow the inspections process to take place? Why do we not allow the United Nations to work its will? The first resolution the President sent to Congress would allow him to use all means he determines to be appropriate, including force. Giving the President a blank check to act alone will increase the danger of unilateral military action by others in the future. It will undermine our broader foreign policy goals. It will divert much-needed resources from our pressing domestic needs.

The President has submitted a second draft resolution. Although it is an improvement, I still have serious reservations. While I am confident that the leadership of both parties can work together to draft a more balanced resolution, we need more diplomacy, we need more information, and we need more international allies. I have no doubt that our military can defeat Saddam Hussein in a war. My doubts lie in what happens after we remove Saddam from power. Without the backing of the international community and, most importantly, the Arab world, the aftermath will be uncertain and precarious.

Other questions must be answered before we vote. How much will the war cost? How many American soldiers will be seriously wounded or lose their lives? How many innocent Iraqi civilians will perish?

I am disheartened that we appear to be following this course. If we take politics out of this decision, our voice will

be stronger. I believe that we should not vote on this before this election. We should take politics out of it, and I think if we do that, our message to the world will be clearer. The decision is ours.

THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 15 minutes.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge the House Republican leadership to address people's serious economic concerns. Today we awoke to reports on the radio which said that the front pages of major newspapers were dominated by the failed performance of our stock market.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation needs an economic plan that will address some of the challenges we face today, like restoring economic growth and opportunity. While the economy is crashing around us, the House Republican leadership continues to answer by passing more tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans and legislation that blames their failure to act on the other body. At a time of mounting economic pain, Republicans have ignored the people's priorities, from investor rights to Social Security, prescription drugs to education, to economic growth.

The Census Bureau reported this week that in the last year, the number of people without health insurance rose by 1.4 million due to a faltering economy and the rise in unemployment. Republicans will pass this week another non-sense of the House resolution calling for tax cuts 9 years from now, in 2011. CNN reported this week that U.S. stocks, and I quote, looked to wrap up what might be the worst September since the Great Depression and had their worst third quarter since 1987.

In a few days Americans will start receiving 401(k) statements showing another drop, a sharp drop, in their retirement savings. Senate Democrats will attempt to extend unemployment benefits today to 1.1 million people whose benefits have been exhausted, which is the right and responsible thing to do.

Today is the first day of the new fiscal year, yet as a result of their failed economic program, the Republicans have been unable to carry out their most fundamental responsibility by passing necessary budget bills. So they will have to bring to the floor this week a second continuing resolution in as many weeks to keep the government simply operating. Their failed economic plan now threatens to cut back resources for the Securities and Exchange Commission, cut back on medical expenses for the Veterans Affairs Department, cut back education, and cut back on front-line resources for homeland defense.

Last week I discussed on this floor this bankrupt economic agenda em-

braced by the House Republican leadership. Today let me discuss some basic facts about our Nation's economic future. In order to make progress for all Americans, we need to understand the results that the Democratic budget produced in 1993 versus the Republican economic plan that was passed in 2001. In 1993, the House of Representatives had an impassioned debate about America's economic future. Republicans predicted then that the Democratic economic plan to cut deficits and grow the economy would drive our economy into a ditch.

If you look at this chart, Mr. ARMEY on August 5, 1993, said that "this Democratic plan is not a recipe for new jobs. It is a recipe for disaster." On another chart, Mr. DELAY said that "this plan has got to be the biggest rip-off in modern history." Finally, on another chart, Mr. HASTERT predicted that "the Democratic plan would add more than \$2 trillion to the national debt."

The House Republican leadership could not have been more wrong about that Democratic economic agenda to secure the future for all Americans. In the 2 years after Democrats enacted this plan, the unemployment rate dropped by almost 2 percent. Real incomes after inflation for average families increased by more than 10 percent. We created more than 8 million jobs. The poverty rate came down. The stock market shot up. The Federal budget deficit was reduced by \$126 billion in just 2 years' time and became a surplus within 5 years. Our economic plan defeated the 1991 recession, and the lives of almost every American citizen were improved due in large part to this responsible economic agenda promoting opportunity in people's lives.

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Deficits came down; interest rates came down. The American people created a high-tech revolution that raised living standards and inspired hope in communities nationwide.

Under the Democratic plan, the facts speak for themselves. People created opportunity for themselves, their families, and they created opportunity for their fellow Americans. For almost 8 years we had record economic prosperity due to responsible economic policies that Democrats enacted.

Then, in the spring of 2001, the Republican economic plan passed the Republican House, the then-Republican Senate; and the Republican President signed it into law. But I would like to point to some other statements that were made at the time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), on this chart, on March 28, 2001, said that the President's budget will spur job creation. Again on the chart, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS) boasted that their budget not only provides tax relief, but secures jobs and grows the economy. But he said, we also fund our Nation's priorities and pay down the debt. Finally, the majority leader, the gentleman

from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), said that the plan will promote economic growth, a strong economy, and new and better jobs for our workers.

So the question now is, Where are we today? Did the predictions come true? Well, today, 18 months after these big and bold predictions, the Nation's economy and all of the economic indicators have headed south. The stock market has lost \$4.5 trillion since President Bush took office.

If we look at this chart, over 2 million people have lost their jobs since President Bush took office and the economic plan was passed. Income for American families in middle-income brackets has declined 2.2 percent since the Republicans took office and, last week, for the first time in 8 years, the poverty rate in our country went up again. Consumer confidence has dropped in each of the last 4 months and is at the lowest level since November 2001. The Federal budget, in just over a year, went from a \$236 billion surplus to a \$165 billion deficit. That is over a \$300 billion swing, almost \$400 billion. And if we look at this chart, turned record surpluses into deficits for the decade ahead. An amazing, unbelievable, incomprehensible change in our economic budget health.

A wave of corporate scandals has eroded people's faith and trust in our Nation's free markets. As Ronald Brownstein wrote yesterday in the *Los Angeles Times*, he said, "Almost all of the key measures of economic well-being for average families improved during Bill Clinton's 8 years in the White House and now, under the second President Bush, the trend lines are pointing down again."

This is a Republican group that has been wrong, and I mean dead wrong, twice. They were wrong about the Democratic plan in 1993, and they were again wrong when they talked about their own plan more than a year ago.

Today, they have an opportunity to sit down with Democrats and write a new economic plan in a bipartisan way that would create long-term economic growth and opportunity for all Americans. But to date, they refuse to reconsider any aspect of a plan that was passed long before September 11, 2001. In fact, what they are doing today is simply keeping on passing bills to make their failed economic plan permanent. I guess the byline here is if it is bad and not working, let us make it permanent. Let us rigidly, tenaciously hold on to what is not working, so that it can continue to not work.

The sole passion of House Republicans has been to reward their wealthy political clientele for the next decade and beyond at the expense of every need of the American people. They are content wasting the people's time with ridiculous, nonbinding House resolutions when they have at least 20 major economic issues to address that might and would affect people's lives in a positive way.

Where is the debate on the future of Social Security? Where is the min-

imum wage increase legislation? Where is education funding so that we really leave no child behind? Where is the real pension legislation so that we protect people's pensions against corporate misbehavior? Where is the real prescription drug legislation that will actually at least get the price down for people's prescriptions? Where is the health care and Medicare-buttressing legislation?

Well, I will tell my colleagues where it all is. It is nowhere. They have nothing better to do. They cannot finish the budget. They have put nothing substantial on the floor since the August recess. We have been here 3 days a week doing nothing but renaming post offices. We are fiddling while America's economy implodes around the American people's ears.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to wake up and address the most important problems that we face. Let us come together on a new budget for America, a new economic plan for America, and let us stop talking about meaningless nonsense resolutions about something that might or might not happen 10 years from now. The American people are living in today and tomorrow. They are not waiting for what might or might not happen 10 years from now. Let us stop the meaningless nonsense resolutions when we ought to be dealing with the American people's important problems today.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GUADALUPE CANTU

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great man, Mr. Guadalupe Cantu, who passed away on May 11, 2002 in McAllen, Texas, at the age of 79. I want to express my condolences to his wife, Elida, and his son and daughters, Alonzo, Elvia, and Hilda.

Guadalupe Cantu was not famous. Outside of my Texas congressional district, very few people knew him. But to me, he epitomized what every man should strive to become. Guadalupe Cantu and his wife came to this country in search of democracy and hope and promise for a better life. He began his adult life as a Mexican migrant farm worker and expert carpenter. He traveled throughout the country doing the hard manual farm labor that most Americans refuse to do; and yet, because of his hard work and the work of others like him, America produces food enough to feed our Nation and most of the world as well.

Guadalupe Cantu was never ashamed of the hard work he did, but he wanted something better for himself and his family. He strove for personal excellence and became a successful general contractor. Mr. Cantu knew that edu-

cation was the key to future success. He and his wife, Elida, made sure that their three children went to school and stayed in school. No matter where the family traveled as they followed the harvest, they always returned to the Rio Grande Valley in time for the first day of school.

Guadalupe and his wife, Elida, made the great sacrifices necessary and ensured that each of their children received a college education. From Mr. Cantu's work in the fields and in his construction business, he understood that no one can accomplish anything alone. He realized early on the power of working together and involving the community. He passed along to his son, Alonzo, the construction and building skills that he had learned so well. Armed with a college education and his father's guidance, Alonzo has become the largest and most successful residential and commercial developer in McAllen, Texas. Mr. Cantu encouraged his daughter, Elvia, to pursue a career in pharmacy entrepreneurship. Today, she and her husband own several independent pharmacies. His daughter, Hilda, inherited his love of learning and became a wonderful school teacher.

More importantly, Mr. Cantu passed along to his children a passion for working hard, perseverance, and setting high goals. Both he and his wife became American citizens to enjoy the opportunities and the freedom in this great Nation. His example of doing his best, taking responsibility, caring for others, exercising integrity, and community service was learned well by his children and grandchildren.

Guadalupe Cantu never forgot where he came from, and believed that everyone had a duty to help those less fortunate. He inspired his son, Alonzo, to initiate the McAllen Affordable Homes Project and to build the Los Encinos Project. This nationally recognized housing project has provided safe, affordable homes to many families leaving the welfare rolls. The planned community includes an elementary school, a police and fire substation, a boys and girls club satellite building, baseball and soccer fields, and other amenities. Residents of the community take pride in their homes and are building home equity.

Mr. Speaker, if all of us use Guadalupe Cantu as our example, our children would be well educated and very successful, our community would be stronger, our friends would be numerous, and our world would be a better place. I can think of no better example of greatness. Many of Mr. Cantu's hopes and dreams for his children and grandchildren were fulfilled. He will truly be missed by all, but his goodness lives on through his family and their countless accomplishments and good deeds. His kindness and generosity will never be forgotten.