Some of this is difficult, some of it just takes common sense, and we have already seen that when we raised our voices some of those common sense measures have been taken.

I am grateful that the White House announced just last week that it was opening White House tours to children if they left their Social Security number. Soon I hope families who leave their Social Security numbers will follow. We have seen the reopening of tours here in the Capitol, simply by having people go in the trailer to be screened first. We saw the White House lighting of the Christmas tree open simply because they moved the glass that they put around the President at the inauguration to the Christmas tree site. It is not rocket science, but it does mean somebody does have to sit down and not have a knee-jerk reaction to security without considering all the options.

In 1968, when our country faced an unprecedented racial crisis, the President had the good sense to say we do not already know it all, and so he called together the Kerner Commission. I believe that the problem posed to our free and open institutions is just as serious in 2002 as the racial crisis was in 1968. A presidential commission would bring to bear the Nation's best thinking on this unique issue and give it the thorough and rigorous investigation it deserves, with the result of advice we could take or not take. But at least we would have the satisfaction of knowing that there are people in our society who have thought about the most difficult problems in our society and given us some food for thought.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE NATION IN 2002

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, the President of the United States is going to give his first official State of the Union Address. It will be the third time he has spoken before a joint session. I think the challenges facing this Nation are great.

The President certainly is going to talk about the success so far in our war against terror, but I suspect he is also going to remind us of the tremendous challenge that we have, as a Congress, as an American people, to continue this fight. We do not know how long this war is going to go on. It could be for generations. The best defense against terror in this case is a good offense to get rid of the terror cells around the world.

I think this is an excellent opportunity for this country and the rest of the free world to push as vigorously to resolve, hopefully once and for all, the conflicts in Ireland, between Palestine and Israel, and certainly dispute between the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan looking at Kashmir. Many things can be done.

I hope this Congress can continue to work with this President, even though this is an election year. Most people understand that in an election year the Republicans would like to regain a majority in the Senate and keep a majority in the House. Democrats would like to do what they can to retake a majority of the House and keep their majority in the Senate.

I think the challenges are also great on spending. We have already acknowledged that we are going to reach into the surpluses of the Social Security Trust Fund and spend those revenues for other government spending. We had an emergency in this country on September 11, and like any family or any business that has a serious emergency, you come up with the funds to accommodate and fix that emergency as best you can.

Those families and those businesses normally say, look, we are going to put aside less important expenditures and we are going to deal with the emergency. I hope that the President says the same thing ultimately, that, look, we now have to do a better job at prioritizing spending. We are going to deal with this emergency the way we have to. We will win the war on terrorism, but let us not drive this country deeper and deeper into debt, which means that we put our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids at risk in paying for the overexpenditure of this government.

Prioritizing to me means that we cut down on some of the social programs that we were so willing to expand after the Cold War, as we cut down on military, as we cut down on our intelligence community efforts, and left ourselves weaker than we should have been September 11. I think a good example in showing how much spending has grown and become the problem of us running into a deficit is our projections of 1997.

In 1998, we promised that we were going to balance the budget by 2002. At that time the projections for revenues for 2002 was a little over $1.4 trillion, and we were going to balance the budget because we were disciplining ourselves on spending. Actually the revenues projected last week for 2002 by CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, were approximately $1.9 trillion. So more revenues coming into the Federal Government than we thought was possible but still a deficit. Why? Because spending has increased even more than the dramatic increase in revenues in this country.

So the question is and the challenge is, will the President tonight push this Congress and the American people to start prioritizing? Can we minimize the partisan bickering and blaming as we try to come to grips with a budget that is going to be challenging, if we are to avoid jeopardizing Social Security and Medicare and other programs by overspending, and borrowing more, and going deeper in debt?

Welfare reform I hope the President talks about because the welfare reform bill that we passed in 1996 is expiring this year. There has already been some suggestions from some of the Senators that we have to modify work provisions. I think the welfare reform bill has been extremely successful, and we have got to be very careful not to pass a bad welfare bill.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, tonight we will hear from our President on the State of the Union. I look forward to hearing his remarks, especially because he is committed to spending $190 billion over the next decade to overhaul Medicare and provide prescription drug benefits to our elderly.

This is an important first step but, Madam Speaker, we need more and we need it now. The average Medicare beneficiary fills 18 different prescriptions in 1 year alone, yet at least one in three people in the Medicare population have no drug coverage in the course of a year and spend on average 83 percent more for their medicines than those with drug coverage.

In my own State of Rhode Island, seniors are choosing between food or health care on a daily basis. In July of last year, I commissioned a study to assess what my constituents are paying for prescription drugs. This study found that uninsured elderly pay on average 78 percent more for most prescription drugs than do seniors in foreign countries.

What is most disturbing about these numbers is that almost half of all Medicare beneficiaries with no prescription drug coverage have incomes less than 175 percent of poverty, which was $15,000 in 2001.

The lack of prescription drug coverage for our seniors is a national crisis. Medicare+Choice, Medigap coverage, discount card programs and other accounts to chip away at this problem are not the answer. We must provide comprehensive drug coverage under Medicare and we must do it now.

Madam Speaker, I urge the President and my colleagues in both Chambers of Congress to work together to ensure that we pass this legislation this year.

SECURING OUR BORDERS

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

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, the events of September 11 forever changed

the world and the United States, and as President Bush declared, ''The resolve of our great Nation is being tested . . . but make no mistake . . . we will show the world that we will pass this test.''

Obviously, the President could not be more correct. Since then, the United States has decimated al Qaeda and bin Laden's network of terror; the Taliban no longer exist as a ruling form of government; and the war against terrorism is being waged against those who harbor terrorists.

While America is making significant progress on many fronts in eradicating terrorism, the war cannot be won without the key component of securing our borders from those who wish to do us harm. Those who violate our Nation's immigration laws do more harm than good in furthering our country's values, and it is those people we must ensure that do not enter our country.

Madam Speaker, a recent report by the United States Census Bureau reveals there are more than 8.7 million people now living in the United States illegally. About 40 to 50 percent of those violators are people who entered the United States legally but did not leave with the expiration of their visas. Out of the nearly 9 million illegal aliens now in the country, more than 90,000 are from Middle East Nations, including Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Many of those illegal aliens are from nations with close ties to terrorism and nations with al Qaeda presence.

According to the INS records, 13 of the 19 hijackers entered the U.S. with valid visas. Three of the 13 remained in the country after their visas had expired. Two were expected to have entered on foreign student visas, and the INS has no information on the six remaining hijackers. As such, we can keep enacting legislation and of course we could spend more money around here, but efforts to counter terrorism will be futile unless we establish effective controls to secure our borders at the points of entry.

Each year there are more than 300 million border crossings in the United States. These are just the legal crossings that are recorded. While there are 9,000 border control agents working to keep America secure on the U.S.-Mexican border, there are less than 500 agents tasked with securing our 4,000-mile border with Canada.

To make matters even worse, out of the 128 ports on the northern border, only four of them are open around the clock. The remaining are not even manned, thereby allowing anyone with good or evil intentions to enter the United States without even so much as an inspection, not to mention even a question or a written record of their entry.

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As it now stands, our immigration system needs increased and tighter controls. Currently, our Nation has an unmonitored, nonimmigrant visa system in which 7.1 million tourists, business visitors, foreign students, and temporary workers arrive. To date, the INS does not have a reliable tracking system to determine how many of these visitors left the country when their visas expired.

Furthermore, among the 7.1 million nonimmigrants, 500,000 foreign nationals enter the United States on foreign student visas. Hani Janjour, the person believed to have piloted American Airlines Flight 777 into the Pentagon, is believed to have entered the country with a foreign-student visa, but he never actually attended any classes.

Madam Speaker, our unsecured borders, along with inadequate record-keeping, have contributed to our inability to track terrorism in this country or to prevent them from entering in the first place. So as we start this second session of the 107th Congress, I call on my colleagues in both the House and the Senate to strengthen our border security, tighten our existing immigration laws, and to provide those fighting to end illegal immigration with the tools and resources necessary to defeat terrorism.

PENSION LAW CHANGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce that later today I will be introducing the Employee Pension Freedom Act, a measure that is urgently needed in light of the recent Enron scandal and other threats to pension security affecting millions of American families. I will be doing that with over 50 original cosponsors.

Over the past month, this Nation has been shocked at the revelations of how the Enron Corporation employees lost their entire savings through the actions of high-ranking company officials and how they lost their future retirement. As the value of the Enron stock plummeted last fall, Enron employees were prohibited from rescuing their own savings, estimated at over $1 billion, by company-imposed lockdowns on the Enron shares and by the outright prohibition of selling company-contributed shares until the employee had reached age 55.

The spectacle of company executives hiding billions of dollars of debt from investors and from employees through the secret offshore partnerships of Enron while simultaneously cashing out company stock for themselves is an audacious assault on our pension security laws and offends the sense of fairness and justice in every American.

These executives ignored their responsibilities to investors and to their own employees by cooking the books, making misleading statements about the company's health, and locking down the ability of employees to save themselves from the Enron collapse.

Employees at other corporations, like Kmart, face other penalties and restrictions on the sale of company stock in their 401(k) plans. For example, in some companies if you sell company stock in your 401(k) plan before a certain age, the company withholds an employer contribution to your plan for 6 months. The question is why should the employer be able to penalize you for exercising dominion over the assets that belong to you. It simply is not fair.

Now the questions of whether Congress will respond or will the employees get rhetoric and a few tweaks that leave the antiquated pension laws pretty much in place to the employees' disadvantage.

Clearly, there are two sets of rules when it comes to company stock. Ken Lay and other executives would get one set of rules, where they can get rid of their stock almost at any time, and the average employees get another more restrictive set of rules when it comes to the company stock and their 401(k)s. The executives are free to rescue their value and their family assets tied up in stock should they smell the company is in for a bad time in the stock market. The employees are artificially locked down. It is money that was given to them for compensation in working for the corporation, yet when they seek to rescue their family's retirement, when they seek to make a decision that maybe this stock should not be held any longer, that maybe they should buy something else or buy a mutual fund, they are prohibited from doing that.

What we really need is freedom for employees to be able to exercise complete and total control over the contributions, the assets, the money in their 401(k) plans so that they can do as we have told them to do, to diversify for the security of their retirement, to make retirement plans and investments based upon their age. The older one gets, the less risk they may want to take. The younger they are, the more risk they may want to take. That is the way it is supposed to be, but that is not the way it is. These companies have come along and placed restrictions and penalties on the ability of the employees to get rid of some of the assets within that plan.

The Employee Pension Freedom Act that I am introducing today with over 50 cosponsors makes several important changes to our pension laws. The most important change my bill makes is to provide employees 100 percent control over their investments and their 401(k) plans. Employees would have total control over the investment of the money they earned and contributed to the retirement plans and that their employer contributed to their plans as part of their compensation.

This change is critical to help avoid the problems we have just witnessed with Enron. It will help provide employees the ability to rescue their nest