

was no viable 'exit strategy' we could see, violating another of our principles. Furthermore, we had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish." President Bush the first wrote in 1998.

"Had we gone the invasion route, the United States would conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different, and perhaps barren, outcome." Those are the words that President Bush, Sr. wrote only 5 years ago, 4 years before his son led an attack on Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, those letters from constituents that I have discussed night after night here were particularly compelling, especially some letters I got from the families of men and women who are serving in Iraq. And a couple of weeks ago I met in Akron, the largest city in my district, with 25 families who have loved ones in Iraq; and they talked about our failure, the Bush administration's failure, to support the troops, to supply the troops, to protect the troops: not enough safe drinking water, either bottled water or purification facilities, not enough antibiotics. Soldiers and sailors had to pay for their trips home, pay for their airfare. Some soldiers were actually charged by the hospital, had to pay the hospital for their food when they were recovering. And some soldiers, about one fourth of them, we are told, do not have the body armor which will protect their lives.

So on the one hand, these families said to me, our letters from constituents said to me, we have \$300 million a week going to private contractors to do work that is not really very well accounted for. On the other hand, we have our soldiers simply not being protected, not enough safe drinking water, not enough body armor, not enough antibiotics. And I would hope that President Bush would have listened to his father, which he clearly did not, from his father's words, but would begin to listen to some of my constituents and other constituents who beg him to focus on protecting and supplying the troops with a little less focus on all these unbid contracts and the corruption that this has brought and the waste of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars that we are seeing literally every week in Iraq.

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

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

SUPPORTING THE VETERANS

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, next week is November 11. And often, I believe, in this Chamber we pay lip service to our veterans; and we fail to deliver on solid votes and programs that would better demonstrate our recognition of their sacrifice and service. And this year, unfortunately with the budget and the appropriations passed, is no exception.

I was astonished earlier today when a colleague from the Republican majority stood up to pretend to document how great things are for our veterans, all these new services and things we are providing. I am hearing a very different assessment from my veterans and their dependents. And facts are stubborn things.

Here are some real facts, unlike what we heard earlier today: 150,000 veterans are waiting 6 months or longer for appointments; 14,000 veterans have been waiting 15 months or longer for their "expedited" disability claims; 560,000 disabled veterans are subject to the disabled veterans tax, something we have tried to rectify.

We have 373 cosponsors. There are only 435 people here. If 373 people want something, we should be able to do it, should we not? That is a super, super, super majority. But guess what. The Republican leadership, under urging from the President and Secretary Rumsfeld and threats of veto from the President, are refusing to bring up a repeal of the disabled veterans tax.

We can have tax breaks for people who do not work for a living, the investor class. We can have tax breaks for whole hosts of people and things. But we cannot have tax relief for disabled veterans. Is that not extraordinary? President Bush refused to spend \$275 million in emergency money for veterans health care provided by Congress in the fiscal year 2002 supplemental appropriations bill. But of course he wants to do everything he can to recognize the service of our veterans and our young men and women.

January 8 of this year, the Bush administration cut off VA health care for 164,000 veterans. They put them in a new category called Category 8. They are wealthy veterans just like the wealthy people they are giving tax breaks to. Well, not quite. The wealthy people the Bush administration is raining tax breaks on earn over \$311,000 a year. But these vets are wealthy. They do not deserve that veterans health care, according to the Bush administration. They earn \$25,000 a year. They should pay for their own health care.

The President's budget also proposed doubling the prescription drug copayment from \$7 to \$15 for veterans, the ones who are still able to qualify, and a \$250 enrollment fee on another category, Category 7 and 8. These could be people with low incomes, distinguished

service, but under the Bush administration, we just cannot quite afford to give them the service we promised when they enlisted.

Now we either believe in the all-volunteer military or we do not. And we are either going to recognize the sacrifice and service of veterans or we will not. And if we do not, probably the next generation is not going to want to enlist for what is a very tough and today very bloody and dangerous job because they are not quite sure of the promise that we will take care of them and we will take care of their families and their dependents.

A few other problems. Rather than funding the VA, the Bush administration sent a memo to regional VA facilities that forbid Veterans Administration employees from proactively informing veterans about the services available to them in order to reduce the number of veterans using VA facilities.

□ 2100

That is supportive. Is that not great?

In March, House Republicans voted in favor of their budget resolution that cut \$14 billion, "B" billion dollars, from mandatory veterans benefits over 10 years, including veterans pensions, education and other benefits. That was an hour after we voted to support the troops in Iraq.

Maybe it would have been a better message if we just had not bothered with the words, but had duly voted for the money. But, no, the Republican majority, pushed by President Bush, could not vote for that money, and that budget passed by one vote.

The House Republican budget resolution also cut \$14 billion from veterans health care and other discretionary veterans programs. The Republican budget also included the President's proposal to impose a \$250 enrollment fee on our veterans for the free health care that they were promised.

The Republican budget also included the President's proposal to double the prescription drug copayment from \$7 to \$15. The President had already raised it from \$2 to \$7, but, hey, we need money. We have got to send a lot of money over to Iraq, and we cannot ask them to pay any of it back, so we have to double the prescription drug benefit fee for our veterans.

Now, the House VA-HUD appropriations bill funded VA at the level requested by the President, which was \$1.8 billion below the House Republicans' own budget, and it was \$3.3 billion below the level requested by national veterans organizations in their independent budget proposal.

Let us really celebrate Veterans' Day, and give them the services they earned and need, and pay for them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.)

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

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

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

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

IN HONOR OF SERGEANT SEAN DRISCOLL, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, UNITED STATES ARMY

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with the Members of the House and the American people my experiences visiting Walter Reed Army Medical Center yesterday. I had the pleasure and the honor of visiting some true American patriots who were severely injured in Operation Iraqi Freedom and are currently recuperating at Walter Reed. I was especially pleased to meet with Sergeant Terry Jones, a reservist, from Columbus, Georgia, Fort Benning, who served bravely in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, my visit to Walter Reed was one of the most moving things I have done since coming to Congress in January. I felt it was important to let these heroes of Operation Iraqi Freedom know how much we in Congress appreciate their sacrifices. I wanted to relay to them my belief that through their heroic deeds, they have made the

United States a safer place for all Americans and brought precious freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I also had the pleasure to meet with Sergeant Sean Driscoll of Clarksville, Tennessee, and his wife Georgette. Sergeant Driscoll was recently wounded in Iraq as part of his operations serving in the Army's 101 Airborne Division.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk at great length about Sergeant Driscoll's dedication and sacrifice to his Nation during a 15-year career in the Army, as well as about my immense gratitude for all that he has done to advance freedom across the world. But I think that his 18-year-old daughter, Antoinette, has paid tribute to her father much better than my words could.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the following testimonial written by Antoinette Driscoll about her father, Sergeant Sean Driscoll, so that it can be placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

It is titled "Hero."

"Words cannot express how proud I am to be able to say that my Dad is a HERO. There are people who have parents that are doctors that save and rehabilitate people everyday, but my Dad is far greater. Some parents save others from fiery buildings or patrol the streets at night, but my Dad is far more dignified. Those people may be heroes in their own way, but my Dad is far more superior than they. For my Dad is a soldier, defending our wonderful nation, putting in countless hours of sweat, tears, and selfless sacrifice and service for those who live in the United States.

"My Dad is the one who fights and risks his own life for us privileged Americans. He makes sure that doctors have a place to educate themselves and practice. He makes sure that everyone has the opportunity to find a job, and has a home and an education, and makes sure everyone can sleep safely at night. I can't think of any other who is greater than he. I am proud and honored to be able to love someone like this.

"I can only hope that I will one day follow in his footsteps and defend my country. He has taught me a couple of things which I feel every American should know. One, freedom is not free, and there is no greater Nation than the United States of America. He has served many years and has shed blood for my freedom. I could never thank him enough for all that he has done. Not just for me, but for my family, friends, and people who he doesn't even know. I hope that one day I'll be able to fight for him, so he can live safely and rest when he comes home. I love him for these reasons and many more."

Mr. Speaker, I think this statement from Antoinette Driscoll poignantly demonstrates her love and admiration for her father. It is also important to note that Antoinette will soon enter the United States Air Force herself,

and her younger 16-year-old brother will join the service in a few years as well.

The Driscoll family has demonstrated to me great resolve in the face of difficult circumstances. Even though Sergeant Sean Driscoll was severely wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom and he has spent many months away from home, his family remains undaunted in its commitment to serving our Nation. They can teach all of us a valuable lesson in sacrifice and dedication to the American ideal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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