

life-saving prescription drugs. It also means that seniors with high-cost drugs will have an insurance benefit that will protect them. Finally, the average senior will get their drug costs reduced by up to 60 percent because of this far-reaching reform.

Included in this historic legislation was historic assistance for rural and urban hospitals, as well as other important health care reforms. I am most proud of the new health savings accounts, tax-free savings accounts that allows consumers to have more control over their health care costs. These health savings accounts will revolutionize the health care market in this country, giving consumers better health care at a lower price.

Aside from health care, we faced another domestic crisis, the lack of comprehensive energy policy. From the rolling brownouts of California to the New York City blackouts, from the turbulence of the natural gas market to the persistent problems of higher gasoline prices, energy policy became a front-burner issue.

So working with the White House, we put together a comprehensive energy policy aimed at making our Nation more energy independent. This legislation did several things. It created incentives to get the most out of our natural resources, from promoting greater energy efficiency, to encouraging the use of renewal fuels such as ethanol. It encouraged greater reliability for electricity by providing for open access of transmission lines, while improving the transparency of electricity markets.

This energy policy has another salutary effect. It will create jobs. The latest estimates are that it will create up to a million jobs. We passed the energy conference report by a large bipartisan margin in the House, and we are waiting for final action by the other body. It is my hope that this vitally important legislation will not get caught up in the flurry of lobbying by the trial lawyers. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the rotunda to drop the delaying tactics and send this conference report to the President.

Another perennial issue is education. In the 107th Congress, we passed the President's No Child Left Behind legislation aimed at increasing accountability and demanding results when it comes to educating our children. This year, we kept our promise by increasing education funding to \$4.1 billion, the highest Federal contribution to education in history. Clearly, we are keeping our promise to the parents and teachers and children of America.

Finally, we passed a series of legislation initiatives designed to make this Nation a better place to live. We passed the Do Not Call and Do Not Spam bills, aimed at stopping consumers from being harassed through the phone and through computer by telemarketers. We passed the Amber Alert bill, to help keep our children be safe from kidnapers. We passed historic levels of fund-

ing to combat AIDS. We passed the President's Healthy Forests Initiative, to protect communities from out-of-control forest fires. We passed the Fair Credit Reporting Act so that consumers have better access to their consumer reports to protect against the persistent problems of credit card fraud.

In other words, we delivered good legislation for the American people. As we get ready for the second session of the 108th Congress, we still have some work to do. We still have a highway bill to pass. Nothing is more important to our Nation's economic well-being than a modern transportation system. I want to get this bill done by early next spring.

We need to complete the work on the welfare reform bill. When we reformed welfare in 1996, we helped millions of Americans get a hand up rather than a hand out. Millions of Americans woke up in the morning and went to work rather than woke up and went to the welfare office. They got a job and got a paycheck. We need to reauthorize this bill, and we need to reauthorize it soon.

We also must find a way to get the budget back to balance. The attacks of September 11, the war against terrorism, and the struggling economy have all led to deficit numbers that, while manageable, must be controlled. This year's nondefense, nonhomeland security discretionary budget increased by a 3 percent margin, a relatively small increase, but one that can be improved. Our budget chairman, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUSSLE), has worked hard to find ways where we can control Federal spending. As we debate next year's budget, we will work to find ways to cut the budget deficit in half through lower spending.

But as we work to control spending, we must also work to ensure that the economy stays on track. The tax cuts were enacted to help spur recovery. We must keep them in place to ensure that they finish the job. Those who want to raise taxes and thus threaten our recovery and job creation are just wrong. We have already seen that as the economy grows, the budget deficit falls. Keeping the economy growing is a sensible way to get the budget back to balance.

Finally, we need to start the debate in this Nation on how to reform our tax laws. Not only is our tax system too complicated, it also hurts our Nation's competitiveness. If our companies cannot compete, we lose jobs here in America. As we reform the Foreign Sales Corporation Tax, as required by the recent WTO decision, we must also start a discussion on how we create the best tax system possible to meet the needs of the people of this country in the 21st century.

I want to thank all Members for their patience and for their perseverance. Public service in the Congress is not an easy vocation, and it is especially hard on families. I thank all Members for their service to this Nation. I would

also like to thank the dedicated staff and especially the floor staff, the clerks and the pages, who work long and hard to make this place efficient and workable. Thank you for your fine service to this Nation. I wish you all a happy holiday season, and God bless you all.

TURNING OUR BACKS ON HUNGRY CHILDREN

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to talk about one small program in the omnibus appropriations bill which I believe is a reflection of America's commitment to defeat terrorism, or rather its lack of commitment. It is a reflection of America's commitment to address hunger, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance; or rather, its lack of commitment; and that reflects America's commitment to help educate the children of the world, especially girls; or rather, its lack of commitment.

Tucked away inside the agriculture appropriations section of the omnibus bill is \$50 million for the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education Program. McGovern-Dole began as a \$300 million pilot program in 2001, providing nutritious meals to nearly 7 million children in 38 countries. The catch, these children had to attend school in order to get the meals. The McGovern-Dole program sends wheat from Illinois, Minnesota and Oregon to feed children at schools in Bolivia and Lebanon. It sends corn, milk and soybeans from Kansas and Wisconsin to feed school children in Nicaragua and Guatemala. And it sends lentils from Idaho and Washington to children we have helped return to school in Afghanistan. Beans from Colorado, rice from Texas and Louisiana, cooking oil from Florida and Tennessee, the blood, sweat and tears of America's farmers find their way to children attending humble schools around the world.

Providing food to malnourished children in schools is one of the most effective strategies to fight hunger and poverty. Where programs are offered, enrollment and attendance rates increase significantly, particularly for girls. Instead of working or searching for food to combat hunger, children have the chance to go to school. Providing food at school is a simple, but effective, means to improve literacy and help poor children break out of poverty.

The McGovern-Dole program helps us achieve many of our foreign policy goals, and communicates America's compassion to those around the world. At the end of the day, it will be programs like McGovern-Dole that will ultimately triumph over poverty and terror.

Earlier this year, in February 2003, the United States Department of Agriculture evaluated this program, and the conclusions were overwhelmingly positive. In addition to significantly reducing the incidence of hunger among school-age children, the program was also found to promote educational opportunity, especially for girls, among some of the poorest populations in the world.

Sadly, in fiscal year 2003, McGovern-Dole received only \$100 million in funding, reducing the number of children served to scarcely more than 2 million world-wide in just 28 countries. In fiscal year 2004, President Bush only asked for \$50 million, and if this allocation remains unaltered, the United States will literally be taking food out of the mouths of yet another one million hungry children and forcing their families to remove them from school.

The senior Senator from Kansas and chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, PAT ROBERTS, a leading proponent of the McGovern-Dole program in the other body, has stated on a number of occasions his belief that this program serves our national security interests by attacking the breeding grounds of terrorism, hunger, poverty, ignorance and despair, while at the same time ensuring that children receive meals in settings where they receive a quality education, rather than hate-filled indoctrination.

I could not agree more. But rather than expanding this program to reach even more school-aged children, to help stabilize communities devastated by HIV-AIDS, and to support HIV-AIDS orphans so they might contribute to the future of their nations rather than burden them, we are cutting it again.

On November 26, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization released its 2003 report on hunger. It found that after falling steadily during the 1990s, hunger is again on the rise. In the developing world, the number of malnourished people grew by an average of 4.5 million a year for the past 3 years. The report also found that hunger exacerbates the AIDS crisis, drives rural people into the cities, and forces women and children to trade sex for food and money.

Yet over the past 3 years, we have cut funding for the McGovern-Dole school feeding program so it is now one-sixth of what it once was. This is a disgrace, plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker, we are going in the wrong direction, not just for the children of the world, but for the security of our own Nation. I call on President Bush and congressional leadership to restore full funding in fiscal year 2005 to the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education Program.

A WORTHWHILE PROPOSAL

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, much has been written lately about several attempts to craft an alternative peace plan in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The best-known of these recent plans, the Geneva Initiative, was conceived and written by representatives of both sides of the conflict but without the involvement of governments or politicians. As such, it is a fresh approach that should provide a lesson to those who continue to believe that peace is something that can only be crafted by government officials or bribed or bullied by the international community.

We do know this: After decades of conflict and tens of billions of U.S. tax dollars spent, U.S. Government involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has led nowhere. The latest U.S. Government-initiated plan for peace, the road map, appears to be a map to nowhere. This does not surprise me much. With a seemingly endless amount of money to bribe the two leaders of the two opposing sides to remain engaged in the process, is it any wonder why the two parties never arrive at peace?

But people on both sides are becoming more and more frustrated at the endless impasse and endless government and bureaucrat-written peace agreements that go nowhere.

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That is why plans like this should be of such interest. Initially conceived by an obscure Swiss professor, the project was joined by former Israeli Justice Minister, Yossi Beilin, former Palestinian Authority Information Minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo, and by other prominent officials like former President Jimmy Carter. The negotiations led to the creation of a 50-page detailed accord.

I do not know whether the product is perfect. I have not studied the minute details of the proposal. But what I do know is that politicians, governments, and special interests promote war at the expense of those who have to fight them. Wars end when the victims finally demand peace, and that is what we are beginning to see. According to one recent survey, a majority among both the Israeli and Palestinian populations support this new initiative. That is encouraging. To his credit, President Bush has demonstrated an open mind toward this alternative approach. He declared the Geneva Initiative "productive" and added that the United States "appreciates people discussing peace." Secretary of State Colin Powell echoed the President when he resisted hard-line pressure to ignore the proposed accord stating, "I have an obligation to listen to individuals who have interesting ideas." This is also encouraging.

Predictably, though, this new approach is not as welcomed by those governments, politicians, and special interests who have a stake in dragging out the process indefinitely. Pales-

tinian Authority President Yasser Arafat has been lukewarm at best. Extremist Arab organizations who have a special interest in continuing the violence have also rejected the Geneva Initiative. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has rejected the initiative out of hand. Said Mr. Sharon, "Geneva is an attempt to do something only a government can do."

But the point is that governments have little incentive to finally end conflicts such as these. The United States is in places like Kosovo and Bosnia indefinitely in the name of peacekeeping and peace processes. The same will be true of our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is not until foreign involvement ceases, that means our continued meddling in the Middle East, and the people directly involved demand peace, do real working solutions begin to emerge. The Geneva Initiative is therefore a positive step toward peace in the Middle East. Let us step back and get out of the way.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT LEAVES MANY VICTIMS IN ITS WAKE

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was December 7, known as the Day of Infamy, so named by the great President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Mr. Speaker, I suggest this evening that this day is a kind of day of infamy for this House, particularly with the passage of this conference report. This conference report contains within it so many violations of basic democracy in this House that this day will not soon be forgotten, which is why I make the analogy that I did.

The conference report leaves many victims in its wake. Let me name just a few of them. It is a 50/50 country. But if you were not of the majority party, if you are among the independents, you had little participation in this final product. Or if you happened to live in the wrong State or the wrong district, even though it might be closely held, you will look long and hard before finding your place in this conference report.

And help you, help you if you are in the low or middle classes of our country because you have been sacrificed time and time again in this report to big corporations, to wealthy Americans. If you are among the millions of what I call the disfavored elderly who will get little or no help from the prescription drug Medicare bill, you will not find yourselves among the bills we have passed this year on prescription drugs. The most unfortunate of you are the long-term unemployed. Unbelievably, this is the second Christmas Congress has gone home to leave the long-term unemployed with no relief to face the Christmas and the new year with a