

group of Members and others back every year.

So when he speaks about peace, he knows from which he speaks. I believe it might be well for this Congress to pause and this Nation to pause for a moment just to think about the issues of nonviolence and whether or not it shames us or diminishes us to find another option to the option now posed of a war against Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I frankly believe that we have not consented to a war against Iraq; and I believe this Congress has yet to fully debate this question, a simple question of declaring war against Iraq under article I, section 8. I am asking the Speaker to bring this legislation up.

I believe that we have another option, Mr. Speaker; and it does not again diminish our respect and admiration and acknowledgment of the hundreds of thousands of young men and women already deployed, willing to offer their lives so that we might live free. It respects their choices. It also acknowledges the different strains, stresses, and tribulations that these young people are under. The story of two Marines, male and female, parents of a 2-year-old son who have to leave now, one already gone, one about to leave and writing their will to determine where that child might go.

I believe we have another option because we are united around the fact that Saddam Hussein is a bad actor, a bad leader, a horrific and a heinous actor upon people. So I believe we can find a way to win this effort against the acts that he has perpetrated by using international law. We can, through the United Nations Security Council, convene an international war crimes tribunal and indict him so that the credibility of his government and Mr. Saddam Hussein is diminished. We can leave a coalition of 50,000 troops on the border to ensure that the U.N. inspection process goes forward. We can begin humanitarian aid. We can as well regain or rebegin, regain the prominence of fighting the war against terrorism, and we can reignite the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Speaker, there are options other than war. I would ask this Congress to do its job and not be silenced, debate this question; but I ask the President to review the options in light of the courage of our young men and women and the United States military. We salute them; we praise them. That is why we are owed the duty to render the right decision on their behalf and the people of the United States of America. There is another option. I argue for peace over war. Listen to the words of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS.) He knows from whence he speaks.

HONORING EDDY ARNOLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mrs.

BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor a true Tennessee legend and a national treasure. Eddy Arnold is the most successful country music singer of the 20th century. His body of work, including 28 number one singles, spent more weeks at the top of the country music charts than any other artist in the field.

This March, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville honored the Ambassador of Country Music for donating his personal effects and memorabilia. This selfless donation constituted the largest collection dedicated to a single individual ever received by the museum. The "Tennessee Plowboy" generously offered more than 2,000 photographs, 5,000 radio recordings, tuxedos, guitars, and his coveted Entertainer of the Year Award from 1967.

In a brilliant career that spans 7 decades as a guitarist, songwriter and singer, Eddy Arnold has made immeasurable contributions to the popularity of country music with such hits as "I Hold You in My Heart" and, my favorite, "Make the World Go Away." Now he has made an immeasurable contribution to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. For that, Tennesseans and, no doubt, country music fans across the country, are deeply grateful.

Eddy Arnold, a living country music legend and my constituent, has enhanced his genre and the culture of America. I want to thank him for his dedication to the arts and for his invaluable gifts to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

H.R. 1322, A BILL TO PROTECT RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the face of mounting evidence of a national crisis in retiree health care, and I want to announce the re-introduction yesterday of the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act, known as H.R. 1322.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1322 will stem the tide of post-retirement cutbacks or elimination of health care benefits that have victimized millions of American retirees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one would think that businesses and business values and basic fairness and, in fact, the law would ensure that retirees could rely on health benefits promised to them by employers. But the case is that increasingly, large profitable employers, even those who enticed employees into early retirement, have now changed and are reneging on their commitment.

These corporate cutbacks in retiree health care have reached intolerable proportions. For too long, working people have been denied health care bene-

fits that were promised upon retirement to the lack of strong laws in this area. The retirees lived up to their end of the bargain, Mr. Speaker, and now the companies must live up to their end.

To renege on these promises jeopardizes the life savings of people who are forced to absorb the precipitous decline in their standard of living and dip into their savings in order to make up for a cut or a cancellation in health benefits. Even worse, retirees with preexisting medical conditions may not be able to obtain or afford any new health coverage at all. As a result, their health declines rapidly and, in some cases, needlessly.

A recent study by the Employment Benefit Research Institute found that a 65-year-old retiree without employment-based insurance may require up to nearly \$1.5 million to fund lifetime medical expenses. That is assuming death at the age of 100 and medical inflation of 14 percent annually.

All of this is happening against a precipitous drop in personal savings. According to the AARP, which published "How Americans Save," the United States savings rate has been steadily declining over the last 25 years. The Economic Policy Institute reports that in September and October of 1998, personal savings rates for Americans consisting of contributions to individual savings accounts, as well as employer and personal contributions to 401(k)s and IRAs and similar pension plans, dipped below zero for the first time since the Great Depression. The United States Department of Commerce reports that at the beginning of the 1990s, households saved on average about 8 percent of their disposable income. By 2001, the proportion of income set aside for savings had fallen below 2 percent.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1322, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act, would reverse these recent trends and bring common sense and fairness back to retiree health. With certain limited exceptions, the bill would prohibit employers from making post-retirement cancellations or reductions of health benefits that retirees were entitled to when they retired.

In addition, the bill would obligate employers to restore benefits taken away after retirement, unless the employer can demonstrate substantial business hardship if compelled to restore the benefits.

Boosting a profitable bottom line would not qualify as a substantial hardship. While many employers are crying hardship today, Mr. Speaker, the hard truth is that many were aggressively cutting employee benefits in the midst of the economic boom of the 1990s when profits were high.

Basic fairness dictates that we ensure that the promises that have been made to those whose life's efforts have contributed to the great economic prosperity of our Nation are kept. We can ill afford the collapse of private

sector retiree health initiatives because retirees no longer have faith in their employers' promises.

Last Congress, this bill garnered national support from retirees across the country. My office received hundreds of testimonials from people affected by these cutbacks, and tonight I want to share three.

From my own district in Massachusetts: Leo Murphy of Ipswich, who is the regional Vice President of the National Association of Retired Sears Employees, which represents 154,000 retirees nationally, has this to say: "H.R. 1322 will ensure that companies don't sell out their retirees whose hard work grew the companies in the first place. We all made plans anticipating our retirement years, and those plans have all been torn apart. Enactment of H.R. 1322 will restore credibility to private sector health care plans and assure that retirees and their families continue to have the health coverage they were promised and worked for all their lives."

From a retiree in Morristown, New Jersey: "What a hardship it has been to see the health coverage I retired with, and fully expected to continue as is, be constantly whittled away. It just isn't fair. Not only is it eating into my pension every year, but my pension has not received a cost of living increase for the past 10 years. Please help us; we are counting on you. And thank you again for caring about us."

And from Wellington, Florida:

"I am writing you concerning retiree benefits. I retired in 1991. Since that time, the company has reneged on promised retiree life insurance. The company has also made the retiree medical plan almost unaffordable by raising premiums far beyond the normal type increase. They have cut averages and cut coverages, they have raised deductibles, and made it pretty obvious that retirees are a liability, and please go away is the preferred method of handling retirees. Legislation is needed to protect retirees from vigilante actions of companies and protect retirees from unscrupulous company executives. Since many companies can no longer act in a trustworthy manner towards retirees, it will take Federal legislation to protect retirees when those retirees are the most vulnerable and least able to provide replacement benefits."

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their courtesy, because I have received hundreds of testimonials from these people. Congress should act, and I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting H.R. 1322.

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WHAT COULD AMERICA DO DIFFERENTLY TO PREPARE FOR ANOTHER SEPTEMBER 11?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia

(Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, imagine if we could rewind the tape, we could rewind it back to September 10, 2001. We are sitting around looking at the world. We know that in 1993, the World Trade Center was bombed. We know that 17 Americans were killed when the USS *Cole* was bombed in Yemen. We know that two embassies in Africa have been bombed. We have withdrawn from Somalia.

If it was September 10, 2001, and we were taking a sober assessment of the world, what would we do differently? Particularly what would we do differently as respects the events of September 11?

Mr. Speaker, obviously we cannot rewind the tape ever, but the reality is we are sitting potentially on another September 10 date right now. We have been in this world for a long time. We are looking at a world where Saddam Hussein had 90 days from April, 1991, to disarm after withdrawing from Kuwait and after the U.N. action that we know of as Desert Storm.

We know that in the 12 years that followed April 19, 1991, he flaunted the weapons inspection process. We know that weapons inspectors such as Scott Ritter quit in disgust. We know that it was criticized. We know that he went 4 years without having U.N. weapons inspectors. We know that indeed 17 U.N. resolutions have gone by.

Our President has been very patient with the U.N. diplomatic process. It is too bad that it failed. It is too bad that maybe the U.N. could have stepped forward a little bit stronger during any of the time in the last 12 years, but that did not happen. Maybe the future of the U.N. should be debated in another Chamber at another date.

The reality is Saddam Hussein has chemical and biological weapons, and has tried to get nuclear weapons. We know that he has murdered hundreds of his fellow men. We know that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch estimates that there is something like 70,000 to 150,000 people who have disappeared in Iraq, which is more than any other country in the world.

We know that in the year 2000 they implemented tongue amputations as a way of dealing with their enemies. We know that he uses torture. We know that he drills people. We know that he rapes people. He films things like this and shows it to family members. We know that, indeed, he has killed some of his own family members.

The message from the United States of America to the people of Iraq is that the enemy of Iraq is not the United States of America; rather, the enemy of Iraq is their own government; very specifically, Saddam Hussein.

We in America stand against oppression. We in America stand for the liberation of the people of Iraq. We in America stand for our own homeland and national security, and we in America stand for our own troops, who at

this moment are abroad and ready for action.

I hope that in the 11th hour of this long process Saddam Hussein decides to step forward and save his country as he knows it and to help support another regime. I hope we do not have to pull the trigger; but should we need to do that, we will be successful. We will liberate the people of Iraq. We will do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, let me close with just saying that on this very critical hour in our history, we all say a prayer for our troops, and we all stand behind our troops. God bless America.

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

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

THE BUDGET RESOLUTION

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

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, the last few weeks have been a time of solemn reflection and debate in this country. It has been an impassioned and peaceful process with many voices heard, which have again reinforced the United States as the world's greatest democracy.

We owe our system of democracy and self-concern to America's veterans, who have given so much to ensure its legacy. Today our military is once again on the brink of a great sacrifice in the name of security and freedom for America and the rest of the world. Without reservation, it is time for all Americans to come together to support our men and women in uniform and their families back home. Our country's focus must now be on the success of their mission.

I urge every American to join with the Congress and our President to wish our Armed Forces Godspeed and safe return from abroad. However, we must not lose sight of our mission at home, the mission of our police officers, firefighters, and emergency personnel, our first-line responders, in the event of a terrorist attack that might occur.

While our Armed Forces have our full support, the front lines of our homeland and hometown security are our cities, counties, and towns. We must equip our first-line responders the same as we equip our military abroad.

Since the fall of 2001, local governments all over America have had to bear the burden of equipping and training all of our first responders against an unknown threat. My district, which is the Second Congressional District in Maryland, is home to two Army bases, the Port of Baltimore, Baltimore-Washington International Airport, and