

In the year 2003, a vibrant Greek democracy serves once again as an inspiration to its neighbors and the free world.

The recent apprehension of one of the 19 members of the November 17 terror group provides reassurance that Greece deals sternly and effectively with terrorists. That is one reason that in Greece this is considered as the trial of all trials. Certainly, there is every reason to welcome the fact that the group responsible for killing many people, including four American officials and a British general, is finally being brought to justice.

This significant contribution to the prevention of terrorism and Greece's membership to the EU will provide Hellenes with even greater stature.

The Hellenic American community shares a love of freedom, liberty, and individual rights. The friendship between our two nations is based on mutual respect, a commitment to common goals, and a sharing of fundamental values. Ties of blood and kinship also unite us. The modern community of approximately 3 million Greek Americans has established a natural and enduring bridge between our two nations.

Today, we take special note of these citizens and thank them for their many contributions to our Nation's cultural, economic, and political heritage. In the coming year we look forward to the preparations for the 2004 Olympics, which will take place in their birthplace of Greece. We also look forward to progress in the reunification of Cyprus.

The EU council said, "The EU strongly supports the continuation of the Secretary General's mission of good offices and of negotiations on the basis of his proposals." They continued that "it urges all parties concerned to spare no effort toward a just, viable and functional settlement and, in particular, the Turkish-Cypriot leadership to reconsider its position."

My desire is that this Greek Independence Day be the symbol of independence for all enslaved people. Zeto e eleftheria.

□ 1915

VACCINE INJURY COMPENSATION FUND

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s, Congress passed a bill that established a Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund. It was supposed to be a nonadversarial fund that was to help children and their parents when they were damaged by vaccines.

We have found in the last few years that we have had a tremendous increase in the number of autistic children in America. We went from 1 in

10,000 children who are autistic to 1 in 200; and now many scientists and doctors around the world and in the United States believe it has been caused by mercury in vaccines.

There is a product in vaccines called thimerosal; and 50 percent of thimerosal, which is a preservative in vaccines, is mercury. Mercury causes damage to the neurologic system and to the brain; and yet we have been putting it in needles and then into our kids for many, many years, mercury which has a cumulative effect in the brain and does cause things like autism and other neurological disorders. Most parents do not know that.

When we established this fund in the late 1980s, there was a 3-year window when people could file if their children had been damaged by vaccines. Many parents with autistic children did not know about the fund until the 3 years had elapsed. We are trying to get that changed so these thousands and thousands of parents with autistic children have the opportunity to apply to that fund to get the kind of restitution that they need to take care of their kids.

Many parents have gone bankrupt, have lost their homes, have had to take extra mortgages to help with their problems, and the children are never going to be completely right. If Members saw the movie Rainman, Members know what I am talking about.

Mr. Speaker, each night I am coming to the floor and reading one of the thousands of letters I get from parents who have no place to turn except to the Congress.

This lady who wrote this letter is named Melinda Clark from Parma, Missouri. Here is what she writes:

"My family's journey down this road began a little over 3 years ago. The day of my son's diagnosis is permanently etched in my mind. I stood there frozen in the doctor's office almost as if time stood still, and I was instantly put on autopilot. It is still painful to go back to that time in my mind. It finally explained why my precious little boy no longer uttered my name or even looked into my eyes. Oh, how I longed to hear the words 'I love you,' but those were not going to come easily. It would take numerous hours of intense therapy to put together any sounds. With our backs against the wall, we immediately immersed ourselves into research and getting therapy treatment under way. While most kids his age enjoyed leisure time playing with toys and watching Sesame Street, my son began a time-intensive schedule of 40 hours a week of combined therapies. We started from scratch and had to first learn what exactly Nicholas knew and then work from there to fill in many gaps.

"As our research continued, I was quick to discover the use of thimerosal in many of my son's vaccines. Nicholas received his vaccines from both the county health department as well as the doctor's office. All in all, too much thimerosal was accumulated for his fragile immunity and nervous system. My investigation has been thwarted by the doctor's office from the beginning. As I began to put together pieces and find proof for my well-founded fears of mercury poisoning in my son, I requested the specific lot numbers as well as manufacturers' names for his vaccines in order to file a vaccine injury report. The doctor's office effectively stalled

me for many months before finally telling me that no specific records had been maintained. I could not believe my ears. This was their legal, not to mention ethical, obligation to their patients' safety and welfare. Without this specific information, I was never able to officially report the injury, but it is my sincere hope that through this letter my story can be told. Nothing can be done to undo the damage done to my son, but I pray that no other family will have to suffer at the hands of our ignorant use of mercury in these vaccines.

What sickens me even more is I worked in an environmental lab where we would test for this toxin in parts per billion, and no one ever mentioned to me during my son's vaccines that this toxin was being used as preservative. As an intelligent human being, I given the opportunity and knowledge of being told this chemical was contained in his vaccines, I never would have allowed this poison to be injected into my child.

Then it goes on and tells how horrible it was as she saw her child slip away from her and does not pay attention or look at her any more.

It is difficult for those who are not personally affected to understand or even acknowledge the truth. We have been trained from early on to trust in our government and follow all the guidelines set forth for vaccine safety. Like many others, I used to have that trust. Now my vision has been greatly blurred as the blame and acceptance of this issue has been set aside time and again. It is time for our country to step forward and do what is right. No other family should have to walk this stony path when it can easily be avoided by the complete removal of all mercury in all vaccines. The monetary loss of dumping these vaccines is a small price to pay. My son is now 6, and he is doing as well as anyone can expect.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of these children who have been damaged by mercury in vaccines, and here are a few pictures of some of these children. We need to adjust the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund to take care of these kids. We cannot leave them and their parents high and dry. It is absolutely criminal for this Congress not to deal with this issue.

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

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

TAX CUTS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES NEED NOT BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when the House considered the Republican budget last week, there was a lot of debate regarding whether the President's tax cut proposal was coming at the expense of other obligations, obligations to pay for child care, for public schools, college loans and nutrition programs that help children get a good start in life.

Lost in the argument was the fact that nearly everyone in this body is for tax cuts in some form. Our differences are about who these tax cuts go to. Who needs them and why. Tax cuts and our spending priorities need not be mutually exclusive.

But who do the tax cuts in the President's dividend tax plan go to? By and large, no matter how we look at it, they go to Americans who do not need them. Specifically, two-thirds of the benefits of the tax cut would flow to the top 5 percent of the population. That is individuals with an average income of about \$350,000 per year. The top 1 percent of people who, on average, have an average income of \$1 million, this is 1 percent of tax filers, they would receive 42 percent of the benefits; and people with incomes that exceed \$3 million would receive nearly a quarter of the tax cut benefits. The top 2 percent of tax filers would receive nearly as much from this tax cut as the bottom 90 percent of all tax filers combined.

How much is that exactly? Well, millionaires could receive up to \$90,000 in a tax cut. But if one's income is between \$40,000 and \$50,000, people who could really use a tax cut, they would receive an annual average benefit of \$84; and people with incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000 would receive only \$42.

Mr. Speaker, I think most of us recognize those who pay more into the system will get more out of the system, but a \$42 tax cut for some and a \$90,000 tax cut for others is simply beyond all reasonable bounds of proportion and fairness, particularly in this economy when these tax cuts mean that vital services are being reduced at a time when so many families are struggling to make ends meet. \$42 will not go far for a family worrying about paying the rent or putting food on their table. At the very least, we have an obligation to do something for these families.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I offered an amendment during the Committee on the Budget markup to expand the child tax credit from \$600 to \$1,000 per child, to make it available to low-income families with children who are currently not eligible because they do not pay enough in Federal income tax to qualify for the full credit. They pay taxes, they pay payroll taxes, State taxes, local taxes, and excise taxes, but they do not pay enough in Federal income tax. My amendment would have built on the President's tax plan to help working families, while at the same time stimulating the economy.

As a matter of fact, the President's tax plan includes a proposal to increase the child tax credit to \$1,000 per child for some families. In fact, he allocated \$7.4 billion for this purpose in fiscal year 2003. But, today, 20 million children will not receive the full increase, including 10 million who will not receive any increase at all, because, as I have said, these families do not pay

enough in income taxes to have the credit count.

I want to be clear, these working families do pay taxes. They pay FICA, payroll taxes, State and local taxes, excise taxes, all of which place a far heavier burden on those with the lowest incomes. This is not an issue of income redistribution. Even taking into account the Earned Income Tax Credit, about two-thirds of low- and moderate-income families with children still face a net tax burden. They deserve to receive the full amount of this tax credit.

Over three-quarters of these children are in working families who are struggling to make ends meet. The President's proposal will also leave out about one-half of African American children and over 40 percent of Hispanic children.

My amendment would have reaffirmed President Bush's proposal to increase the child tax credit to \$1,000, but it would make the credit fully refundable so every single eligible family could benefit from it.

In addition to being the right thing to do for working families, this tax cut would stimulate our economy, which continues to flounder. Only about one-fourth of the \$300 rebate in the last tax cut were put back into the economy. The rest was saved. Giving tax cuts to families who would spend the money immediately, typically low- and middle-income families, would be the best stimulus we could give to our economy right now.

This proposal would have been offset by reducing other aspects of the President's tax plan, such as the dividends tax cut which, as I have said, would give nearly two-thirds of its benefits to the top 5 percent of the population. The top 5 percent with average incomes of \$350,000 do not need another tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, this week is being touted as a week to focus on our children. We should take this opportunity to provide relief to families who need it the most. When this body takes up the tax cut legislation next week, the least we can do is consider the working families who are the backbone of our economy.

H.R. 1413, SMALLPOX EMERGENCY PERSONNEL PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, the Committee on Rules may meet tomorrow, March 26, 2003, to grant a rule which could limit the amendment process for floor consideration of H.R. 1413, the Smallpox Emergency Personnel Protection Act of 2003.

Any Member wishing to offer an amendment should submit 55 copies of the amendment and one copy of a brief explanation of the amendment to the Committee on Rules up in room H-312 of the Capitol by 2 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26. Members should draft their

amendments to the bill introduced March 25 by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BURR).

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that their amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain that their amendments comply with the rules of the House.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise because something has been weighing on my mind since last week, and as I have watched the pressure in the streets of America and around the world, I thought I would observe the protests that were taking place a week ago last Saturday that gathered around the Washington Monument.

I walked around for an hour and a half amongst the people, and the mood was something like I imagine Woodstock was. But as I looked at the signs and I read the profanity, I began to try to sort the people out and what they believed in, and I saw the desecrated American flags in their ranks. There were quite a number of people there.

□ 1930

Then I went up to the White House for a little while and ended up down by Pershing Park on what I call the grassy knoll. I watched probably 50,000 people come streaming by that corner in what I would call a river of discontent. As I looked at the flags and the signs and I watched the people, I saw some things that, of course, I hope was not on television, if your children are watching, but I also saw Communist flags, socialist flags.

I had made the statement a couple of weeks ago that these people were anti-American and that you would not find a single undesecrated American flag in the bunch, but I looked closely through and found about a dozen. For every undesecrated American flag, and some of them were on their way to desecration, there were at least 10 others that were already desecrated marched through. There were probably 10 Palestinian flags for each American flag undesecrated.

The people sorted out into some categories as you watched them go by. Out-and-out Communists, proud and avowed socialists, radical fundamental Islamists, the angriest of the group by my opinion, and regular liberals and pacifists. I deal pretty well with the pacifists. They have a political opinion and a right to speak, as does anyone in this country constitutionally; but when it undermines our war effort, it concerns me greatly.

And so I left that sea of discontent thinking, well, I'll come back to Congress where it will be logical and it will