

say that when it came to issues like retirement security, like assuring that people could get health care, like guaranteeing that there was at least a little sanity in the budget process, and I initially met Al working with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and with his predecessor, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO), as a young member of the Committee on the Budget, on issues like tax fairness that have been so important to me personally, that Al was committed to those issues.

His tragic passing reminds us that we never know how long our tenure and our ability to serve what we view the public interest is going to be, and I think we are called upon in remembering Al to remember the causes that were most important to him and to redouble our efforts in his spirit and on his behalf to fight for fairness, to oppose hypocrisy, to stand up for what is right for the American people in much the way Al would do if he could be here offering us suggestions tonight.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues gathered here today to honor and memorialize Ways and Means Democratic Staff Economist Al Davis who life was tragically cut short.

Al dedicated many years of his life to helping Democrats in the House of Representatives promote policies to improve the lives of America's working families. He did this first when working for the House Budget Committee Democratic staff and more recently with the Ways and Means Committee Democrats as our chief economist.

Those of us lucky enough to serve in Congress know how important the role of staff really is. A good staffer is not someone who will just agree with you—though it takes many of us a very long time to discover that reality. The best staffer is someone who understands the facts and helps you use those facts to promote policy that you support or oppose, but will tell you when the facts aren't on your side.

Al excelled in this role. He knew the tax code and budgetary impact of any change in law better—and more quickly—than almost anyone. If you needed the facts to support your argument, he was there with a memo to assist you. But, only if your argument was correct and could be substantiated! And, that was why Al will be missed so greatly. He'd tell you if the facts didn't support you—and you couldn't convince him to do otherwise.

There are two words that I think best describe Al Davis. The first is "integrity". As I've said above, he always held true to the facts and helped us do so as well. The second word is "commitment". Al was truly committed to the work he was doing here on Capitol Hill. He was here helping us whenever the Ways and Means Committee was meeting or the full House was considering Ways and Means bills—no matter how late at night it was. When the House wasn't in session late, he was usually still here long after we'd gone home analyzing bills, making charts and getting his memos out to us to make sure that we had the facts necessary to promote or combat various policies.

Al Davis will be sorely missed. He was the consummate Congressional staffer. We need

more Al Davis' on both sides of the aisle. It is very sad that, instead, we have one less in our presence today.

Mr. MCNULTY. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to join with my colleagues tonight in celebrating the life, and mourning the loss, of an exemplary public servant, Al Davis.

Al was the embodiment of the concept of public service. He possessed an encyclopedic understanding of the tax code and was committed to the promotion of truth and honesty in American tax and budget policy. In fact, if there was one word synonymous with Al, it would be "honesty". Members and staff on both sides of the aisle expected nothing but the raw truth from Al, and they were never disappointed. It was the core of his being.

Armed with a keen sense of American history, a quick mind and sharp wit, and the passion of his convictions, Al would cut through the political rhetoric to translate complex technical data into readily understandable facts. While the Congress may be diminished by his physical absence, his commitment inspires us to continue the fight for better government.

Al, you will be missed both personally and professionally. But as you look down on us from a better place, we will be inspired by your example and the sense of purpose you set in the fight for a better life for the working people of our country.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to join my colleagues from the Ways and Means Committee honoring Mr. Al Davis.

As one of the two newest members on the committee in the 108th Congress, I was privileged to become acquainted with Al and appreciate his round the clock efforts to make sure the Democratic members of the committee and their staffs were kept abreast of the upcoming events and legislation we would be dealing with. And I do mean round the clock. Messages would come on my Blackberry pager at 11 o'clock at night, sometimes later. When major bills were getting ready to be discussed in a hearing or markup before the committee, the first memo that reached my hands in the morning would be the most recent information that Al had spent the previous night researching and compiling.

To say that Al provided sage-like advice to the committee is an understatement. While my colleagues on the committee are extremely knowledgeable of the economic issues related to the Ways and Means' jurisdiction, rarely would they not yield to Al as he would offer greater insights into the complex issues we faced. I think I can speak for other members when I say that a common first response to questions we had for our staffs was "Let me check with Al and see what he thinks."

Al's tireless work ethic, attention to detail, and cunning sense of humor will be remembered by all his friends and colleagues, here on Capitol Hill and elsewhere. As I take these moments to remember Al, I also want to thank him for his steadfast commitment to the ideals of the committee.

AMERICA'S GREATEST THREAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I think that our recent military successes in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated very clearly that we are the preeminent military force in the world. Our economy, although it has been somewhat slowed recently, is certainly the strongest in the world.

By most measures, the United States is the most powerful Nation in the world. At the present time, we stand alone in a position of preeminence; and so sometimes when one is in that position, it is easy to begin to think that we are invincible and that this will go on forever, and certainly we hope that that is the case.

Then I think it is important that we cast a historical frame of reference on all of the recent circumstances on things that have happened.

Certainly 2,500 years ago, the Greeks were preeminent; and they, I am sure, felt that their culture would last forever and that they would be in a preeminent position until history ended; and then 500 years later, 2000 years ago, we found that the Roman empire had superseded Greece, and again, for a period of time, it was the most powerful nation in the world, just dominated the then-civilized world as we knew it.

150 years ago, the British Empire certainly was the most dominant nation in the world and controlled most of the affairs in the discovered world at that time; and of course, even the Soviet Union just 20 years ago appeared to be an almost invincible force. It was our rival. And so the United States and Soviet Union were the two most powerful nations in the world; and yet in each case, each one of these great civilizations, each one of these nations fell, and the interesting thing was that they did not fall from outside forces. It was not because somebody took them over. Rather, they fell from internal factors; and so their unity of purpose, their national resolve, the character of their people began to crumble, and as a result, they all to some degree became less powerful, and to some degree they became history.

So what is America's greatest threat today? I am sure some would say al Qaeda. Some would say it is the ongoing conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine. Some would say it is the nuclear capabilities of North Korea and possibly Iran. Others would say the biggest problem we have is the economy, and certainly all of these things are important, and certainly they are all worthy of our attention, and they certainly get it in this body on a daily basis.

I would submit to my colleagues that from my perspective the greatest threat that this Nation faces today is not outside forces, but rather, it is unraveling of the culture from within. So I am going to tonight, Mr. Speaker, document this thesis in some ways, and the reason I say this is because I have had considerable experience working with young people over 36 years.

From 1962 to 1997, I spent almost all of my time working with young people.

Most of them were ages 17 to 22, but I also spent a lot of time in high schools with summer camps where I worked with kids in the 9th, 10th and 11th and 12th grade. I coached 150 young men every year, visited 70 to 80 high schools in all parts of the country. Some were in inner cities, some were in suburbs, some were in rural areas; and I sat in 70 to 80 living rooms all around the country from wealthy to poor to rural. So I am not saying, Mr. Speaker, that I understand the whole situation that is going on in our country; but over those 36 years, I began to see some things that were of concern, some things that I think are worthy of note.

The young people I worked with were talented; and as time went on, they became bigger and faster and stronger and in some cases smarter, but they also were more troubled. I saw more personal problems. I saw more stress. I saw more young people who were off balance; and as a result, over that 36-year period, I progressively spent less and less time coaching and more and more time dealing with personal issues; and I think almost anyone in education would tell us the same thing, whether they are a school administrator or a teacher or a coach. Anyone who works consistently with young people over a period of time will tell us that things have changed. There has been a shift, and as far as stability, it has not been for the better.

I think, Mr. Speaker, there are several factors that have contributed to these changes, and the first of these that is very obvious, and I think almost anyone would recognize this, is a change in family stability. In 1960, when I first started working with young people, the out-of-wedlock birth-rate was 5 percent. Today, it is 33 percent. So roughly one out of every three children are born out of wedlock, with no stable marriage and have two strikes against them. That is an increase over that period of time of 600 percent.

In 1960, the great majority of young people lived with both biological parents. We would occasionally see a young person who was from a single-parent family, but usually if we did so, it was because one parent or the other was deceased. Today, roughly one-half of our young people are growing up without both biological parents, again, an increase of probably 3 to 500 percent in terms of lack of stable families.

Today, only 7 percent of our families are so-called traditional families. So the family that we have is generally a father works, a mother stays home with the children and is a full-time homemaker or at least if the mother works, the father stays home, and yet only 7 percent of our families are of that nature today.

□ 2100

So we often think of latchkey kids belonging in the inner city where they come home after school and nobody is there, but I can tell Members from per-

sonal experience that there are roughly 80-90 percent of the young people in the suburbs and rural areas, nobody is home at 3 o'clock and they are latchkey kids as well.

So this has been a tremendous shift in our demographics. Parents today spend 40 percent less time with their children than a generation ago. The average parent spends no more than a few minutes with each child, and a huge amount of time is eaten up with the television set and work activities. The divorce rate has increased, from 1960 to 1995, 300 percent. Currently today, 24 million children are living without their real father.

I dealt with a lot of those young people and I remember particularly one case where this young man was a good football player, and by his junior year he was being mentioned as being an All-American. One day I got a phone call from a man living in another State and he wanted to know if I knew this player. I said, I coach him. He said, "That is my son. I would like to talk to him."

So I talked to this young man and I thought he would be thrilled being reunited with his father. He said, "He left me when I was 1 or 2 years old and now the only reason he wants to talk to me is because I am somewhat famous as a player, and I do not want to talk to him."

I sensed the anguish. I saw young people time and time again who had a father who was missing in their life and they were trying to fill that void, and usually it was with all the wrong stuff; and it was not just young men, it was young women as well.

This Sunday is Father's Day, and fatherless children are in some difficult circumstances at the present time. Fatherless children are 120 percent more likely to experience child abuse, twice as likely to drop out of school, 2-3 times more likely to have mental or emotional problems, 1½ times to 2 times more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and 11 times more likely to commit a violent act.

I ran into a story recently that is true, and this had to do with a greeting card business that contacted a prison. Mother's Day was approaching and they notified all of the prisoners that they would provide a Mother's Day card free if the prisoner would use it and send it to his mother. They had almost 100 percent participation. Practically all of the inmates took the card and mailed it to their mother. They thought this was quite a success.

So Father's Day was rolling around and they thought they would do it again. And the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, in that particular prison there was hardly anyone who asked for a card to send to his father because, I would assume, because none knew their father, or their father had abandoned them.

What I am saying as far as the family is that the launching pad, the family, is not totally broken. We have some

good families in our country, but the launching pad is certainly cracked, and changes have been undertaken in our society that are going to be really difficult for us to rectify in the immediate future.

So on top of the family disintegrating to some degree, we find that the environment in which young people are living has changed dramatically. When I began coaching in the 1960s, drug abuse was almost unheard of. We had never heard of cocaine, steroids, methamphetamine. We heard a little bit about marijuana, but that was somebody out in Hollywood, and none of the young people I was dealing with had experienced it. Of course today, currently, we find that we have a drug epidemic on our hands, and that includes alcohol. We have between 2 and 3 million teenage alcoholics in our country today. So the drug issue has become one of epidemic proportion.

The thing that is really interesting to me and astounding to me and discouraging to me is at one time we assumed rural America was the bastion of the family, and that was the one place we could count on traditional values. Yet we find at the present time that drug abuse in rural areas is equal to that of the urban areas, if not greater. The greatest scourge currently in rural areas that we have is methamphetamine abuse. It is roughly twice as prevalent as it is in the cities. If you are addicted to meth, the time that you are going to have to spend in inpatient treatment to have any chance of being cured is not 3 months as it is for alcohol and other drugs, it is roughly 24-36 months, and then the odds are very good you will not beat it and meth probably at some point will kill you.

The average meth addict will commit roughly 130 crimes per year to support that habit. Imagine the cost to each community of one meth addict, and we have rampant meth abuse in the rural areas. We also have the highest rate of violence of any civilized nation in the world at the present time. The United States has the highest homicide rate. We have the highest suicide rate, and of course we have had numerous school shootings in the United States in recent years, and Columbine is almost the catch word for that type of activity. So the violence activity has escalated astronomically over the last 25 years.

Also, pornography has exploded. There are over 1 million porn sites on the Internet today. Sixty percent of all sites on the Internet have to do with pornography, and that is more than one-half. Additionally, there are more than 100,000 child porn sites on the Internet. Child pornography is illegal, and yet we have 100,000 child porn sites. So our children, our young people, are being engulfed by a wave of pornography.

It has been estimated that 1 out of 10 children between the ages of 8 and 16

have viewed pornography on the Internet, and mostly this has been unintentional. They have used a search word such as Pokemon, Disney, Barbie, ESPN, and those search words bring up a porn site, and once you bring up a porn site, you begin to get spam, which is dozens of porn sites and the child is inundated with pornography.

I was really surprised about a year ago, Mr. Speaker, to realize that my name used as a search word brought up a porn site. We were able to get that rectified, but the average young person in my district who is maybe doing a research paper on his or her Congressman and plugged in my name would all of a sudden be confronted with a porn site. In a civilized Nation that simply should not happen. I have grandchildren ages 3-10. I have four of them. I can imagine that they will someday be exposed to hard-core pornography, and this should not happen. Many people say pornography is a victimless crime. It does not really hurt anybody so what you see and hear does not make any difference in terms of how you behave.

If that is true, why do we have an advertising industry that spends billions of dollars on advertising? Obviously, if you see a soft drink advertised in an appealing ad, it changes your behavior. You are more apt to purchase that soft drink or automobile or whatever is being advertised. Obviously what we see and what we hear has a tremendous impact on our behavior, and our young people today are being inundated with these kinds of messages, and that is discouraging to see.

The video game is also a problem. Today, 8- to 18-year-old boys average 40 minutes a day playing video games. There is nothing wrong with that as long as the video games are within the lines. They might be a little bit violent, but they are probably not going to be a real problem. But we see that some of these games have gotten progressively more and more violent and more and more graphic. Many of them teach stalking and killing techniques that are actually used in training military personnel, Special Forces, to go out and kill people.

One particular video game that we saw recently here in Congress was such an example. It was one in which the young person would engage in stalking someone and shooting them, and if you hit them in the right place in the head and the blood flew, you were rewarded by a series of pornographic images. That was your reward. So people say that is for adults and those were adult-rated games, but the average person who plays those games is 12 years old. The marketing is beamed directly at young people who are teenage and preteenage children.

There is no way, Mr. Speaker, that you can play these kinds of games for any length of time and not have it impact you in some way in the depths of your psyche.

There was a school shooting in Kentucky a couple of years ago, and the

young man who did the shooting went 9 for 9. He shot at 9 young people and he hit all 9. Many law enforcement people said that was amazing. Hardly any law enforcement individual could have done that, but the amazing thing was this particular shooter had not fired a gun before. He had played a lot of video games, and in playing those video games, he had shot lots of people. Apparently he got very good at it because he was almost perfect in his score. That shows you what video games can do.

We have much music, some television, many movies, some talk shows are very explicit and very graphic, and all of these things, if you think about it, simply could not have been put on the airwaves 30 years ago. It would have been impossible to present this kind of material, and yet we have drifted so far that this becomes commonplace and nobody objects. And obviously, this is impacting the minds and hearts of our young people.

The family is less stable. The environment young people are growing up in is more threatening, and also I would submit that our value system has shifted and shifted considerably. I would point to a study that was done by Stephen Covey who wrote the "7 Habits of Highly Successful People" and what he did was research everything that he could find that had to do with success. He said that he noticed a marked shift. He said in the first 150 years in our country's history, success was defined primarily in terms of character traits. A successful person was honest, a successful person was hard-working, a successful person was faithful, was loyal, compassionate. And so really it had to do with qualities of virtue, and that is what success was.

Then he said about 50-60 years ago he began to notice a shift in the literature that he was reading. He noticed that at the present time and for the last 50 years or so that success is now defined in terms of material possessions, in terms of power, and in terms of prestige. So a successful person has money. He may not be an admirable person, but if he has enough money, he is successful. He may have influence and power, and if that is the case, he may not be a good person or an admirable person, but he is a successful person. He may be very popular. He may have people wanting his or her autograph, and he may not be a very good role model, but if he has popularity, he is labeled successful.

So success is no longer linked to character and that is an interesting shift in the way that our value system has come about.

In 1998, there was a poll done that indicated a very high approval rating for the President who was in office at that time. Even though that particular President had misbehaved rather badly with an intern in the Oval Office and had lied to the American public, he still enjoyed a very high approval rating.

□ 2115

The thing that really grabbed my attention was that there was a poll that was done and the question that was posed to the American public was this: Is there any correlation between job performance and private behavior? In other words, what you do in your private life, does that have anything to do with your job performance? Seventy percent of American adults say it has no connection, that there is no relation. You can be a bank president and do all kinds of unscrupulous things in your private life, and it does not affect your job. You can be a very unscrupulous coach, and it would not make any difference in how you did your job. It was amazing to me that this many people in the American public would say that there is no correlation between job performance and private behavior, because what we are saying here is that character really does not count, because what you do in private essentially is an issue of character. The value system has certainly changed in that regard.

In the business world, we have seen some changes. I would submit that WorldCom and Enron and Global Crossing were not isolated instances. These were not accidental happenings. It was simply a reflection of the shift that we have had in this culture to an all-out infatuation with material success. And so anything goes in those types of situations. The Great Wall of China, Mr. Speaker, was breached twice. It was several thousand miles long. It was believed to be impenetrable. As a result, it was built to keep out the barbarian hordes. Yet twice it was breached. In neither case was it a situation where the barbarians overran the wall, knocked it down or had a military victory. It was because they bribed the gatekeeper. What I would submit at the present time is that a lot of our gatekeepers at the present time have not been responsible. As a result, we see a lack of trust in our country today that is almost unprecedented. Many people no longer believe that some of the leaders that we have in various industries and politics and athletics and the business world can be trusted. Of course, the alarming thing here is that democracy is based on trust. When trust evaporates, then it is very difficult to run an effective democracy.

The predominant world view today, Mr. Speaker, is something called postmodernism. Postmodernism is a belief that there are no moral absolutes, that nothing is absolutely good or bad in and of itself. As a famous individual recently said, the Ten Commandments are irrelevant. And so everything is relative. Theft is justified at times. If you need what you are stealing bad enough, it can be justified. Everything is relative. Murder certainly could be justified if you happen to kill someone who is really not an admirable person. You can rationalize that it is okay. Adultery is certainly something that is acceptable if nobody

is going to find out. Even treason would be okay if you were angry enough or hated your country badly enough. Postmodernism has dominated our thought and I think has had a tremendous amount to do with the way our young people and our country begin to see things.

In view of the fact that we have had a family breakdown, we have had a decline of the culture and a shifting of values, this is an extremely difficult time for our young people. They are being asked to weave their way through a minefield. In this minefield, there is alcohol and drug abuse over here, there is harmful video games over here, there is wholesome music and television over here, there is promiscuity over here and gangs here, violent behavior and broken homes and all of those things; and somehow we are saying, you have got to get through this thing and you are probably going to have to do it by yourself because you are not going to get much parental support or adult support. And so we are asking our young people to do something that is very, very difficult and in some cases almost impossible. What we find is that our children's feet are not set on a rock but they are, rather, set on sand.

I think it is important we pay attention to these issues because a culture is never more than one generation away from dissolution. There is no permanence if the next generation coming up cannot pull it off. And so we need to think about this. De Tocqueville said something that was very interesting. It was a powerful sentence. He said, America is great because America is good. He said this probably 100, 150 years ago. He did not say that America was rich or powerful or perfect, but he said America was good and that is why America was great. I think America still is good, and I think America is great; but I would say that there are some signs on the horizon, some storm clouds that would lead us to wonder a little bit where we are headed and to cause us to sit up and pay attention.

What can be done? It is easy to state the problems, we hear that all the time, particularly around here, what is wrong. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that you do not leave an issue without at least setting out some possible solutions. One thing that I would submit that makes sense to me is the issue of mentoring. We cannot legislate strong families, we cannot legislate morality; but one thing that we can do is provide a mentor in the life of a young person who badly needs it. It is assumed that at the present time in our culture there are roughly 18 million young people who lack a stable, caring adult in their life and badly need a mentor. What is a mentor? A mentor, number one, is someone who cares, someone who has no ax to grind, someone who simply cares enough to show up and spend time with that person. He is not a father, not a mother, not a grandparent, not a preacher, not a teacher,

no one who is paid to do this; but it is someone who simply cares enough to be there with that child and provide stability and a caring environment and a stable relationship in the life of a young person who probably does not know what that looks like.

The second thing that a mentor does is he affirms. I guess I saw that very clearly in athletics. If you told a player that you really believed in him, that you really thought that he could amount to something, that someday he had a future with you, oftentimes he would grow into that which he did not know that he was even capable of being. On the other hand, if you said, you know, I really do not think that you are going to make it, son, we do not really think we have a place for you here, his performance would begin to tail off and pretty soon he would play down to that level of expectation and he would be gone. So affirmation is critical. No one can live without some type of affirmation, whether you are 50 years old or whether you are 30 or whether you are 10. A mentor is someone who says, I believe in you. I really think you can do this. And you are important to me. A mentor is one who affirms.

Also, thirdly, a mentor is one who provides some guidance. So many young people that we have today have never seen anyone in their immediate family or their immediate life who has graduated from high school, maybe no one who has held down a steady job, no one who has a concept of what it is like to be a good parent. A mentor is someone who provides some guidance and says, I believe in you. I think you can do this. I think you can graduate from high school. I think you could make it in this college, or I think you would be really good at this. Guidance is critical. Mentoring works. It reduces dropout rates by roughly 100 percent, reduces drug and alcohol abuse by 50 percent, teenage pregnancy by 40 percent, violent acts by roughly 30 percent, and improves relations with peers and parents, improves self-esteem. Even though it is not perfect, it is the best thing that we know of, the best opportunity that we have to begin to rectify some of those relationships that have been so badly broken and have damaged those young people so badly.

The President has proposed currently \$450 million over the next 3 years for mentoring. That is \$150 million a year; \$100 million would go for mentoring for all children and \$50 million would be designated for children of prisoners. If that program is enacted, and I hope Congress will do that, I hope it will be funded, that will reach 1 million young people. That still leaves 17 million that are not being reached. But mentoring is cost effective, because a good mentoring program will cost \$300 to \$500 per child per year. It costs \$30,000 to lock somebody up. As we mentioned earlier, a meth addict, someone who commits 130 crimes, would be almost difficult if not impossible to total up

the dollars. What we are doing in our society today is we are spending huge amounts of money on the back end, and we are losing person after person after person, the recidivism rate is about 85 percent, and we are not spending the money on the front end where we can really make a difference. Mentoring is something that we think is a possible solution, at least a partial solution.

The President has been talking about the Call to Service Act. This is legislation which encourages volunteerism in our country. One of the greatest resources that we have in this country today is our senior citizens. We have so many people who have retired in their late 50s or in their 60s, and they are going to live until they are 80 or 90 years old and they are still healthy and they are still vibrant. The greatest need that we have in our country today is extended family. Our kids growing up do not have grandparents, some do not have parents at all; and so we feel that the Call to Service Act can certainly be used to hook up people who will volunteer, who have some life experience to help our young people, to mentor them, to tutor them, to be supportive; and we think this is a tremendous opportunity.

The Internet gambling bill was passed today on this floor. I hope that it will have some success over in the other body. As a culture, we are trying to gamble our way to prosperity. The difficult thing is that it impoverishes those who can least afford to gamble, breaks up families, directs money from children's needs. It is tied to organized crime, and students are particularly susceptible. One thing that we noticed on Internet gambling is that the most high-risk group of people in our country is students. All you need is a computer and a credit card. Most college students and an awful lot of high school students have that and the more times that you gamble in a short period of time and the less troublesome it is to do it, which Internet gambling provides the optimal situation, the more addictive it becomes. For some it has the same addictive effect as crack cocaine. So a certain percentage of our young people are getting addicted very quickly. This is a powerful issue, and I believe that the Internet gambling bill if it is passed in the other body can certainly be a tremendous help.

We eliminated the marriage tax penalty which was certainly countercultural to tell people that if you live together, you are going to have less tax consequences, it is going to save you \$1,000 or \$1,500 a year as opposed to if you were married just makes no sense, because marriage is the basic family unit in this country. We have rectified to some degree that particular marriage penalty.

I think it is really critical that we fund drug prevention programs. Let me just mention one here, Mr. Speaker. Byrne grants. Byrne grants go out to fight meth. It is amazing how much

methamphetamines cost. If you find a meth lab, to get that dismantled and all the chemicals disposed of costs thousands and thousands of dollars. So if we do not fund this, and right now it is not scheduled to be funded, this is a tremendous blow to our culture and particularly to our rural areas where most of these meth labs occur. We need to make sure that we are giving people the tools that they need.

H.R. 669, the Protect Children From Video Game Sex and Violence Act of 2003. I am its cosponsor. I think this is certainly one that can correct some of the problems of video games. H.R. 756, the Child Modeling Exploitation Prevention Act, addresses the issue of some people trying to get around the child pornography statutes by having children pose as models in provocative poses, and so this addresses that.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, we need a fundamental shift in the way that we address first amendment rights in the courts. This is a dangerous statement for somebody to make, that we have got to watch out for the first amendment. Everybody is in favor of free speech and the first amendment, and I certainly go along with that as well; but I would like to point out some things that have happened in the courts in recent years that I think have been very damaging to this culture.

In 1996, Congress passed the Communications Decency Act that made it illegal to send indecent material to children via the Internet. Listen to what happened to that, Mr. Speaker. In June of 1997, the Supreme Court overturned portions of the law and made this statement. They said, indecent material is protected by the first amendment. And so what we are saying is those who produce indecent material have protection, and yet those children who receive that material and are influenced by it have no protection.

In 1996, the Child Pornography Prevention Act outlawed child pornography, including visual depictions that appeared to be of a minor and so it may not actually be a minor involved; but it could be a computer-generated image, or it could be an adult posing as a minor and how do you know? The Supreme Court ruled that unconstitutional and overturned the law banning computer graphics showing child pornography.

In October 1998, the Children Online Protection Act was signed into law to prohibit the communication of harmful material to children on publicly accessible Web sites. It makes sense that you should not be able to on publicly accessible Web sites send pornography to children. Yet the Supreme Court refused to rule on the 1998 law. As a result, it was never enacted; and it still sits there today and is void.

The 106th Congress passed the Child Internet Protection Act to require schools and libraries that receive Federal funds to use Internet filtering to protect minors from harmful material on the Internet.

□ 2130

In May of 2002, the Federal court declared the law unconstitutional. Free speech is protected, while women and children are attacked.

It is important to note that 80 to 90 percent of rapists and pedophiles reported using pornography usually right before they commit the act, and they will admit that this has shaped their behavior and made a difference. It seems to me our women and children ought to have rights and freedoms as well, and yet it seems the way we have phrased the argument that they are being victimized, whereas others who are perpetrators are being given freedoms to do so.

The Court has often ruled against school prayer. I would not do so necessarily, but some have traced some of the cultural decline I have mentioned tonight to the absence of school prayer, which began I believe in the 1960s. But there have been some decisions that really caused me to wonder. I will mention some of these.

In 1992, the Supreme Court declared an invocation and benediction at a graduation ceremony unconstitutional. On the floor of this House, every day we start with a prayer. In many public places, prayer is used. And yet at a school graduation it is not legitimate to have a minister, a priest, a rabbi, a cleric say a prayer. Again, this seems to fly in the face of the way our country was founded.

The Court also has held that a minute of silence in school is unconstitutional. Now, a child may spend a minute of silence and may say a prayer, may look out the window, may think about the upcoming test. He is not forced to believe in any doctrine. He is not forced to pray. Yet the Court said that a minute of silence is unconstitutional.

The Court also ruled not long ago that a student-led prayer at a football game was unconstitutional. The students voted in this particular student body to have a prayer. They wanted a student-led prayer before the game. The Court said this would really violate the rights of the football players who had to be there and also some of the cheerleaders required to be there. Yet this violated the rights I think of those who chose to have the prayer, the students themselves.

As most people understand, the words "under God" were struck from the Pledge of Allegiance by the Ninth Circuit court. Most of the framers of the Constitution obviously mentioned time and time again their dependence upon God, and yet we are trying to strip this away also from our Pledge of Allegiance.

I am not going to get into the abortion issue at any great length. It is very controversial. I realize there are many people on both sides of the issue. But I will mention one thing.

Just recently Congress and this House passed the partial-birth abortion ban. The reason I do not think this is

particularly controversial is that this particular ban I believe drew something like 84 votes in the affirmative on the Senate side, and we had a fairly large majority here, and we saw a great many people who are for abortion, who are pro-choice, in quotes, vote for this ban. They were beginning to get the idea of how barbaric it really is.

So this was something where there has been a real shift. Currently 70-some percent of Americans do not favor partial-birth abortion; and many of them, as I said earlier, are in favor of abortion. Yet this particular law, I am sure, will be challenged in the courts, and there is a fair chance it may be overturned as somehow being unconstitutional.

So we have seen a steady erosion of the culture by some decisions that have been made in the courts. The reason I think this is so important to bring up today is that some people cannot understand why there is so much controversy over in the other body regarding the appointment of judges and justices; and the reason is that what is at stake, I believe, is the future course in many of these issues, particularly in moral issues, that our country is going to take. So these are monumental issues, and the shape of the Supreme Court, the shape of our district courts, our courts of appeal, are going to go a long ways in deciding what this country abides by in upcoming years.

Mr. Speaker, this country was founded upon principles of dependence upon God, a recognition that life is sacred, the importance of sound character, and the fact that children are our most important assets. There is no question that we are involved in a cultural and spiritual struggle of Titanic proportions. This struggle may present the greatest crisis facing the United States today, as I have outlined I think fairly clearly.

As Congress addresses critical issues such as national defense, the economy and health care, which we certainly need to spend a lot of time on, it is critical that we not lose sight of the fact that our Nation's survival is directly linked to the character of our people, and particularly our young people. I say it again, our Nation's survival, long-term, will rest primarily upon the character of our people.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. TOOMEY (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of personal reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

The following Members (at the request of Mr. RANGEL) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material: