

I will tell my colleagues that Ronald Reagan once defined the American taxpayer as somebody that worked for the Federal Government but did not have to take the civil service exam. Unfortunately, that is all too often too true.

The Americans for Tax Reform group actually estimates, based on economic estimates, that the average American has to work this year 193 days, well into July, just to pay their cost of Federal, State, and local taxes and regulations. That is obscene. It is a big problem.

I will tell my colleagues that P.J. O'Rourke once said that trusting your money to government bureaucrats and politicians was a little bit like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys. It is just a bad idea.

So I am delighted to join the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) and most of the Republican freshman class who enthusiastically have said we are going to come down here to the well on a regular basis every week and we are going to talk about some of the outrageous misexpenditures of our constituents' money that offend us so badly.

We are grateful for the fact that we can stand here and talk to people around the country about the fact that we want every politician that serves with us and every bureaucrat and administrator that serves with us to know one thing: They do not want to be the victim of next week's most outrageous expenditure. They do not want to be, if you are the procurement officer in a specific government agency, the topic of the major speech that week. We intend to, for example, have some awards for the most outrageous abuse of taxpayers' dollars.

Now, I will tell my colleagues that 2 years ago there was at least \$17 billion worth of expenditures for which there was no accountability. The agencies that spent the money could not tell us what happened to the money.

Aside from misexpenditures, there is the problem of duplication. We have a homeless problem in America, but there is something wrong when there are over 50 different Federal agencies dealing with the issue of the homeless. The duplication of services is a big problem.

We will regularly be coming and talking to our colleagues about the Washington Waste Watchers led by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART), led by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), led by the Republican freshman class in 2003 to talk about how we can make government more accountable to all of our taxpayers.

□ 2100

I will tell you that, finally, there is something fundamentally wrong when, for example, the National Parks Service 4 years ago purchased an outhouse, a place where people could relieve themselves, and spent more than

\$800,000. Imagine that. Think for a second about what the bears did in that park, in that forest; but we spent \$800,000 for people to relieve themselves.

We want everybody in charge of government dollars to know we will be here on a daily basis, on a weekly basis reminding them that we know spending other people's money is an intoxicating experience, but we intend to hold you accountable.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my time out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

INVESTIGATE IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Marin and Sonoma counties in California are as deeply concerned as the gentlewoman from Illinois' (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) constituents are about their sons and their daughters dying in Iraq and the rationale the Republican administration has used to put them there.

Americans are willing to sacrifice, Mr. Speaker, but only when those sacrifices are clearly justified. The lack of confidence my constituents show in our current White House results in the American people being unsure that their sacrifice in Iraq is justified.

One of my constituents, Nina, from Sausalito writes, "I believe the majority of Americans are good-hearted people who would not have supported the war on Iraq had they understood the true motivations for it. I believe that the administration knew this, and actively distorted information it gave the people in order to gain public support. We are supposed to live in a democracy, but how can we truly be a nation run by the people and for the people if our government is not open and honest in its communications with us?"

Some people think that Nina's suspicions, Mr. Speaker, are ridiculous. They cannot imagine how anyone could mistrust their leadership.

I understand that. After 9-11 we all wanted to trust our Nation's leaders completely, but now our complacency is being shaken. A Walter Pincus article in today's Washington Post reads:

"Between October 7, when President Bush made a speech laying out the case for military action against Hussein, and January 28, when he gave his State of the Union address, almost all the other evidence had either been undercut or disproved by U.N. inspectors."

The issue, Mr. Speaker, is that people like Nina believe that when you are talking about war, it is not morally acceptable to send soldiers to early graves unless the evidence is absolutely overwhelming.

People who supported war in Iraq argue that the evidence was overwhelming, but that begs the question. If the evidence was so overwhelming, why was the indisputable evidence kept secret while citing disputed evidence over and over again?

My constituents do not think that adds up.

Paul from Mill Valley says it very simply: "We, the people, deserve to know if the principal justification that was used to commit this country to war in Iraq was true or a fabrication to manipulate public opinion."

And James from Greenbrae writes that the disgust is bipartisan: "As a registered Republican, I too have had it." That is a very serious statement, and that is why we need a thorough bipartisan investigation into Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Stephanie from Sonoma had some instructions for me also: "Support an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence. The facts that have begun to come out are so alarming it would be a travesty to let this go without investigation."

Graham from Santa Rosa also had some advice about an investigation: "If there was no wrong doing, then the Bush administration should have nothing to worry about."

Mr. Speaker, it is time to get the facts. I urge all of my colleagues to support the Waxman bill, H.R. 2625, for an independent bipartisan commission to investigate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. We should not be afraid of the truth.

WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a co-founder of the Washington Waste Watchers, a project of Republican freshmen dealing not with calorie counting but with counting all of the different wasteful programs of the Federal Government. We are dedicated to bringing the disinfectant of sunshine into the shadowy corners of the wasteful Washington bureaucracy. From this point forward we will be highlighting a myriad of examples of how the Federal Government routinely squanders the hard-earned money of the American families, and we will offer reforms to end these long-held Washington wasteful practices.

Why is this initiative important now? Although we have heard some good economic news, positive economic growth, a growing stock market, a strong housing market, we have also heard some not-so-good economic news. The budget deficit is still too high.

Now, Democrats say the only way to cut deficits is to raise taxes on the American family. Does that sound familiar? It is the same refrain we have heard from them for years. We have a deficit, but it is not because we are taxed too little. It is because Washington spends too much. And in Washington we have a spending problem, not a taxing problem; and much of this Washington spending, Mr. Speaker, is pure waste, fraud, and abuse.

Recently, we passed a budget resolution in Congress asking every authorizing committee to make recommendations for eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse in their jurisdictional areas. We asked them to find savings equivalent to one percent of their budget. Something nobody ever does around here, find savings. We asked for only 1 percent and the Democrats fought us every step of the way, saying it is impossible to save money in Washington without gutting Federal programs.

Mr. Speaker, they are wrong.

Let me cite just a few examples. The Department of Housing and Urban Development made \$2.6 billion in section 8 overpayments. Almost 10 percent of their entire budget just disappeared into thin air. That is enough money to pay the down payment for 300,000 people to get into their first homes. Now, instead of using it to help families, the Washington bureaucracy just wasted it. And Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

The Medicare program paid out \$13.3 billion last year to people who did not even qualify for the program. That is enough money to pay one-third of the cost of a prescription drug benefit program for our seniors this year. But instead of using the money to help seniors, the Washington bureaucracy just wasted it. And Democrats want to pay our taxes to pay for more of this?

In another example, as you heard my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FEENEY) say, the National Parks Service spent \$800,000 on an outhouse and it does not even work. The only thing it flushes is the money of the hard-working American family down the drain. And Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

The list goes on. Social Security pays benefits to dead people. Over the past 5 years, law enforcement has arrested over 7,000 fugitives who were illegally receiving food stamps. They include 1,500 accused drug offenders, 31 murderers, 45 sex offenders and child molesters, and hundreds wanted for assault and robbery. Over a 3-year period, the illegal food stamp practice known as trafficking has cost taxpayers \$660 million. And Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for more of this?

Twenty-three percent of the people having their student loans discharged

due to disability actually hold down full-time jobs, costing the Federal Government \$40 million a year. And Democrats want to raise our taxes to pay for this?

Medicare pays five times as much for a wheelchair as the Veterans Administration does. Five times as much for the same wheel chair? Why? Because the Veterans Administration will competitively bid the wheelchair and Medicare will not.

Fortunately, the Republicans in the House just fixed this one without any help from the Democrats.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of the Washington waste, and we are just scratching the surface. One can see that many Federal programs routinely waste 10, 20, even 30 percent of their taxpayer-funded budgets and have for years.

Mr. Speaker, in the real world if you lose that much money, you will go broke or you will go to jail; but in Washington it is just an excuse to ask for even more money from the taxpayer next year. Mr. Speaker, this has got to stop. There are a thousand different ways we can save money in Washington without cutting any needed services and without raising taxes on the hard-working American families. When it comes to Federal programs, it is not how much money Washington spends; it is how Washington spends our money. And that is what the Washington Waste Watchers is about.

BE HONEST WITH AMERICAN TROOPS

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this week U.S. deaths in the war in Iraq surpassed the number of lives lost in the first Persian Gulf War, 220 Americans have died, another today, with over 740 wounded. If you recall back in February, Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki, a soldier's soldier, testified to this Congress that several hundred thousand soldiers might be necessary for the occupation of Iraq.

He was immediately attacked by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who termed General Shinseki's assessments as wildly off the mark. Wolfowitz said, "I am reasonably certain that the Iraqi people will greet us as liberators, and that will help us to keep requirements down."

Secretary of the Army Thomas White sided with Shinseki, not Wolfowitz, sealing his own fate. White announced his resignation 2 months later. General Shinseki himself stepped down as Army Chief of Staff and retired from the military about 5 weeks ago, June 11; and neither Secretary Rumsfeld nor Mr. Wolfowitz attended the ceremonies honoring General Shinseki for his lifetime of service to our country. Then

last week, Secretary Rumsfeld admitted that the Bush administration does not know how long the occupation of Iraq will last. Secretary Rumsfeld also was forced to admit he does not know how much the occupation will cost. Indeed, the costs have doubled from \$2 billion a month now to \$4 billion a month, and the costs are rising daily.

There are approximately 150,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld would say only that they may be there for the foreseeable future and the number could be increased if necessary. Mr. Wolfowitz has not been heard to say that Secretary Rumsfeld's estimate is not wildly off the mark, even though it is very close to what General Shinseki predicted.

As far as the Wolfowitz prediction that Americans would be greeted as liberators and that would keep the force level low, it bears noting that more than 30 Americans have been killed in Iraq, with more casualties every day, since President Bush landed on that flight deck and said that peace was at hand.

A close look at the record will reveal that Secretary Rumsfeld's predictions about U.S. force levels in Iraq are skyrocketing. As recently as 2 months ago, he was predicting that our force levels could be reduced by 30,000 by the end of the year; but a Time Magazine article I will include in the RECORD tonight shows that the idea appears to be shifting closer to what General Shinseki told us initially, and today General Wesley Clark warned that our U.S. Armed Forces are overstretched because of Iraq and we need to take measures to take care of our men and women in uniform. Reserves need to be called up and we need a rotation plan because, let us face it, we are going to have to sustain the force in Iraq for some time. And I would add, sending Marines trained for aggressive combat to do policing is an absolutely inappropriate deployment.

We can look back to the date of May 1 when our soldiers were led to believe that they would be coming home in June. Then they were told on May 24 that maybe they would come home in August. And then Secretary Rumsfeld said last week they would be home by September. And then Major General Buford Blount said today that troop levels must remain at the current level and all bets are off.

This is not the way to treat the men and women who are giving their lives in the interest of this country. I have a very simple statement and that is: stop jerking our forces around. Treat them with the respect that they are due.

It is very odd to me that General Tommy Franks announced his retirement with 160,000 men and women under his command in the field.

□ 2115

I can remember back to Vietnam, when General Abrams stayed the course right to the very end; in World War II, when our generals stuck it out through thick and thin.