

I want to go back to the question whether or not we are at war with terrorism, and again the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) suggested we are not at war, and that while the war has not been officially declared by the United States Congress, we have not had one since I believe the Korean War, in over 50 years, this war is a declared war. The terrorists declared this war on the United States, and they did it in a resounding, ugly, atrocious way on September 11.

But this threat is not new. In 1986 during the great Libya debate in the House of Commons, Lady Thatcher defended American's strike against Libya as she said, "Terrorism thrives on a free society. The terrorist uses the feelings in a free society to sap the will of a civilization to resist. If the terrorist succeeds, he has won and the whole of free society has lost." Like Lord Churchill, Lady Thatcher is prescient, and she issued warnings a decade before the war was launched on America, much like Prime Minister Netanyahu in his book *Fighting the War on Terrorism* warned that ultimately the target of international religious zealot terrorism is not Israel, they are the temporary target. Ultimately, the great Satan is the United States.

We were told in 1995 by Prime Minister Netanyahu that we would, in fact, be the target. But we do not have to believe our friends and allies on the topic of terrorism being a threat to our children, our grandchildren and our very civilization, if fact, it was over a decade ago that Osama bin Laden declared, "We with God's help call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans, and plunder their money whenever and wherever they find it. We also call on Muslim leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil supporters aligned with them, and to displace those who are behind them so they may learn a lesson."

We have been warned over and over again that they are coming to do us evil. We know it, and yet putting our heads in the sand is not an effective response, and hope is not a strategy.

Winston Churchill said in the 1930s, warning about Hitler's Germany, if you give into aggression, there will be end to humiliation you have to suffer.

Remember, it was Abraham Lincoln who basically said in terms of having to complete the war to put the Union back together, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.

But again, we have great leadership from our President in very difficult, very challenging times. We have wonderful support and leadership from our majority leader who came under intense attack tonight, and where is the plan of the opponents of the President, where is the plan of the opponents of our majority leader, where is the plan of the opponents of the people who want to prosecute, fight and win the war on terror and to establish a free

constitutional democracy in Iraq that is not a threat?

Well, candidly, the Democratic party is very divided. The gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) split from his own father in criticism his father leveled against President Bush for attacking Iraq. The gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) said the country is better off without Saddam Hussein. His quotes are, "I do not agree with his stance," speaking about his father. "I believe that the United Nations needs to be a viable international organization, and the only way it is viable is if its proclamations and resolutions are enforced."

Despite all that warning about the fact that we cannot wait on permission from people in the U.N. to protect ourselves, there are still people attacking the President for the preemptive war on terrorists. This is a responsive war given the fact that Saddam Hussein has tried to export terrorism at every opportunity.

It is not just the Democrats fight amongst themselves, sometimes the same Democrat is on both sides of the issue, like General Wesley Clark, depending on what day it was. Early in the campaign, he could not decide whether he was fully supportive of the President and our troops, or whether he would have voted against the resolution. It just depends on which version of General Clark's statements that we hear, now as he is running for President, and again using partisan rhetoric in trying to undermine the President in a time of war.

Governor Dean has no such problem. He has been very consistent. In that old battle of hawks versus doves, the fact of the matter is that I think it is pretty clear that Mr. Dean is in fact on the ostrich side of that debate. He opposes the war, he opposes the doctrine of preemptive war, which means we have to wait, according to the doctrine of Mr. Dean, who is apparently one of the frontrunners for nomination for President, we have to wait until the next set of bombs, perhaps filled with nuclear weapons, hits an urban center in New York or Detroit. Maybe we have to wait until poison water in Los Angeles or in Miami poisons millions of our citizens. Terrorists maybe will have to drop nerve gas on population centers in Atlanta or Seattle before we can defend ourselves, and even at that point Governor Dean regularly suggests that we need to ask the United Nations before we defend ourselves.

Let me remind Members that means that Libya, led by Colonel Quadafi, who declared basically a terrorist war on America 15 years ago, Libya controls the chairmanship of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. Maybe we should have to ask Syria, a state that sponsors terrorism on a regular basis and that serves on the Security Council of the United Nations, one of the top 15 votes in the United Nations. We should not have to ask for permission to defend ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, hopefully, this debate can return to not who said what when, but who believes we need to stand up and fight to do the right thing to protect Americans to secure our interests and to ultimately bring our men and women from Iraq home as we continue to prosecute this war on terror.

I will go back to what I started with tonight, in a great speech President Reagan gave to the British Parliament in 1982 called the Westminster Speech, he said, "During the dark days of the Second World War, when this island was incandescent with courage, Winston Churchill exclaimed about Britain's adversaries, 'What kind of a people do they think we are?'"

Mr. Speaker, all over the world, terrorists are watching to see what kind of people we think we are. Ultimately, it is the President of the United States, sometimes imperfectly, ultimately it is the majority leader and it is the leadership of the Republican Party in the United States House that the terrorists fear and know can defeat them, and the whole world is watching to see whether we back down to this terrorist threat.

Mr. Speaker, I know what kind of people I think Americans think we are. We are ready for this challenge, and it is not easy; but the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) and President Bush are our leaders.

SOCIAL ILLS SEEN AS RUIN OF NATIONS

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

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to hear British Prime Minister Tony Blair speak in this Chamber a few months ago, and one comment he made particularly caught my attention. He said, "As Britain knows, all predominant power seems for a time invincible, but in fact, it is transitory." I think what he was saying is that essentially nothing lasts forever, including great nations.

History teaches us that, most of the world's great powers are not overcome by external force, but rather disintegrate internally. And let us take a quick study of three such examples.

Rome, of course, 2,000 odd years ago, stood astride the then-civilized world and appeared to be invincible. Yet it fell from preeminence, and the reasons historians have given us, there was a general decline in morality, increasing corruption and instability in leadership, an increasing public addiction to ever more violent public spectacles, an increase in crime and prostitution, and a populace that had become more self-absorbed, apathetic, and unwilling to sacrifice for the common good.

Then, of course, the country that Tony Blair was referring to, Great Britain, had a colonial empire that dominated much of the world through

much of the 1800s, and, of course, that empire slowly began to crumble. The reasons that some have given for this demise was that Great Britain had lost the national resolve to maintain its territory, values that led to ascendancy were eroded, spiritual underpinnings were shifted at some point.

The third example would be the Soviet Union, one of two great super powers as recently as 20 years ago, and in a matter of months, Russian disintegrated before our eyes. Alexander Solzhenitsyn reflected on this fall when he observed that, "Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall a number of older people offering the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia, men have forgotten God, that is why all of this has happened."

And so, Marx and Lenin dismantled Russia's heritage and value system. Russia's foundation was broken, and it collapsed like a house of cards with nothing to sustain it.

□ 2245

These are just three examples. I think there are many others that history is replete with that show the declines of some great nations, again without any outside military intervention. I think some of the common themes that we begin to see are that in cases like these, citizens are less willing to sacrifice for others and for country, citizens become more self-absorbed, a greater desire for comfort, for the state to provide for their welfare, a weakening of commonly held values and a decline of spiritual commitment in those countries.

What does all this have to do with the United States and our present situation? I hope I am not overdrawing the case here, but I would have to say that right now we are certainly on top, we have the most powerful military, the strongest economy, the most stable government of any nation in the world and so it is easy to think, as Tony Blair mentioned, that we are invincible but also as he said, as Britain knows, all predominant power for a time seems invincible, but in fact it is transitory. I think that was a well-taken word of warning.

Over 36 years of coaching and dealing with young people, I saw some very disturbing signs. I am going to take some time this evening to develop the theme that I saw occurring before my very eyes over that 36-year period that I think certainly bode a sense of warning, at least as far as I am concerned. The young men that I worked with were more talented with each year, yet they showed more signs of stress, they had more personal struggles, and they had less moral clarity as the years went by.

This chart here to my left reflects at least one alarming trend. In 1960, which was about the time that I started working with young people, we had roughly 400,000 cases that were referred

to the juvenile courts. In 1999, that figure was well over 1.6 million. I would say today in 2003, this is the most recent figures that we have, but I would imagine that by 2002, 2003, the caseload is much higher. That represents a 400 percent increase. I really do not care what figure you look at; you will find that the chart looks about like this for issues such as teen pregnancy, teenage murder, violence, drug and alcohol abuse involving teenagers and, of course, the divorce rate for seniors and all the other social pathology that we are so familiar with. I think there are several factors that contributed to these changes that we see here. I would say the first major factor is simply some of the things that have happened to our family structure in the United States. In 1960, the out-of-wedlock birthrate was 5 percent. Today it is right at 33 percent, a 600 percent increase. So roughly one out of three children coming into our Nation today have basically two strikes against them and in most cases will not have both a father and mother to care for them. Some will, but most will not.

In 1960, the great majority of children lived with both biological parents. Today nearly one-half grow up without both biological parents. Only 7 percent of today's families are traditional families as we would normally define it, with usually a father working full-time, a mother at home full-time or vice versa, but at least one parent being at home and one parent being the primary provider. This is according to the Fatherhood Initiative statistics.

So actually in many cases, and as a matter of fact in some cases, in most cases with our children, nobody is home after 3 p.m., and between 3 and 6 p.m. we find the greatest source of problems, of criminal activity and so on with our children, because no one is home. Parents today spend 40 percent less time with their children than they did a generation ago. The divorce rate, of course, has increased 300 percent since 1960 and 24 million children today live without their biological father. Fatherless children are more likely to be abused, have mental and emotional problems, abuse drugs and alcohol, commit suicide, commit a crime and be promiscuous.

I think this is graphically driven home when we realize what a greeting card company did a few years ago when they approached the prisoners in one of our Federal prisons. It was Mother's Day. They said, we'll give you prisoners a Mother's Day card free if you'll just simply send your mother a card and they had almost 100 percent participation. And so they thought that this was somewhat gratifying. They thought, well, when Father's Day comes around, we will do the same thing. They made the same offer with Father's Day cards and as you may suppose, maybe you would not suppose, there were no takers. That shows you the devastation, particularly in some of our disaffected population, that

fatherlessness has caused and I think really is at the root of most of the social pathology that we see in front of us.

The foundation of our culture, the family, is certainly under assault and we have seen great changes over the last 30 to 40 years. Another major issue that has contributed to some of the problems that our young people are dealing with today is that the environment has changed. The environment that they live and move and have their being in is not the same as it was back in the 1940s and the 1950s and even the early part of the 1960s. In 1960, drug abuse was almost unheard of. I know in the area of the country that I lived in, I had heard the word marijuana, I had never seen any instances of it, had never heard of cocaine, methamphetamines, ecstasy and so on; and of course today those drugs are of somewhat epidemic proportion. Alcohol abuse involving underage drinking has exploded.

I would like to take a little time right now, Mr. Speaker, to develop this particular theme because so often we feel in the United States that the drug problem has to do with hard drugs, but by far the biggest drug problem that we are facing today with our young people is that of alcohol. A recent National Academy of Science study that was released, I believe 2 weeks ago, showed that alcohol kills 6.5 times more children than all other drugs combined. More than cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy and all of those drugs put together, alcohol kills 6.5 times more.

Underage drinking costs the U.S. \$53 billion annually, 2½ times what it is going to cost us to rebuild Iraq. There are more than 3 million teenage alcoholics estimated in our country today. This is by far the biggest drug problem. The average age of first drink in our country is currently 12.8 years of age, less than 13 years of age; and the discouraging thing is that when young people drink, on the average they will consume almost twice as much alcohol per occurrence as an adult will. So young people on average tend to drink to get drunk and they often do. Twenty percent of our eighth graders drink regularly. Children who drink before age 15 are four times more likely to become alcoholics because of psychological and physiological immaturity. Alcohol impacts them much differently when they are 12 and 13 and 14 and 15 years old than it impacts them when they are 24, 25, or 26. And so there is a great increase in addiction.

The thing that I would really like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is this, that young people for the most part do not start their experimentation with illegal drugs by using marijuana, they do not start with cocaine, they do not start with methamphetamine. They start with alcohol. Therefore, if you really want to stop the abuse of hard drugs, the important thing to do is start with stopping the abuse of alcohol with underage drinkers.

Yet we have really pretty much ignored this whole problem because we spend more than 25 times as much money on curbing illegal hard drugs as we do on underage drinking. We spend a minimal amount discouraging young people from drinking as underaged young people. We spend hundreds of millions to fight drug production in Afghanistan and Colombia and around the world and a fraction of that money spent on curbing underage drinking would be more cost effective. It would dry up the demand. I think some type of a national advertising program, a national education program with a fairly large infusion of dollars at the Federal level is warranted. It would probably help us cure and clear up the drug problem more than anything else that we could do in this country.

Another issue that is certainly affecting our young people as they try to weave their way through the environment that they are placed in is the violence factor. As many people know, the United States is currently the most violent Nation in the world for young people ages 14 through 23, 24. The second-place country is not even close to us. We lead the world in homicide rates and suicide rates for young people.

Pornography has exploded. We have over 1 million porn sites on the Internet. Not 1,000. Not 100,000. We have 1 million porn sites currently on the Internet. That is unthinkable. I think when the Internet first began many years ago, no one would have assumed that this was even possible or probable. And here it is and so nine out of 10 children ages 9 through 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet. Again, that is nine out of 10 children who are ages 9 through 16 have viewed pornography. Much of that is hard core pornography, which really sears an impression into your mind that sometimes you really cannot get out of it and most of that viewing has been unintentional. It has been by accident.

We have corporations such as AT&T that have been involved in hard core pornography. At one time AT&T I think was the gold standard as far as how a large corporation should be run. Yet we find some of our most reputable companies involved in this industry which yields profits of 10 to \$15 billion a year. And so the profit motive certainly supersedes any national interest that they might perceive. Such words as Barbie, Disney, ESPN, at one time my name, would pull up a porn site. And so a child who innocently wants to do research or look at some information regarding their hobby will oftentimes pull up a porn site, and we do not seem to be able to do anything about it.

Many of us are dismayed by the way the FCC is regulating obscenity on the Nation's airwaves. They are the primary arbiter. They are the ones who are supposed to be the watchdog in this area. According to the Parents Television Council as of July 23, 2003, the FCC had not fined a single broadcast station in the United States for airing

indecent material. Also they had not suspended a single license in the United States for airing indecent material. Not in the entire history of the FCC have they done anything like this, despite thousands of complaints. This is something, Mr. Speaker, that absolutely needs to change. Many of us in this body are attempting to cause the FCC to begin to take their responsibility seriously.

The Department of Justice has been focusing on eliminating child pornography but has done relatively little to enforce hard core Internet obscenity laws. Of course the Department of Justice has had their hands full, particularly since 9/11. We realize that they have a very heavy caseload. But we have really petitioned the Department of Justice to get more active. In the preceding 8 years prior to 2000, practically nothing was done to enforce obscenity laws in the Department of Justice, and we feel that we have not seen a whole lot of action in the last couple of years as well.

Another issue that has been a concern is that of the video game industry, eight- to 18-year-old children average spending 40 minutes per day playing video games. Again, 40 minutes a day on the average, ages 8 through 18. And video games, as most people know, have become increasingly violent. A recent video game that was displayed to Members of Congress showed stalking and killing activities that are used on training films in the military to teach people how to kill people. In this particular video game, if you were a good shot and you hit somebody in a vital spot, such as the head, blood spurted and everything happened; the reward was several frames of pornographic material.

This is, as far as I am concerned, off the charts. I do not think the average adult can even conceive of some of the things that our children are seeing in terms of video games. The average player of video games is 12 years of age. The Kentucky school shooter who was very effective and killed several of his classmates had never fired a gun prior to the day that he took a gun to school, but he had been very proficient in playing video games, and he had done a lot of firing and shooting in video games which translated apparently quite well into his activities on the school ground that day.

Of course much music, some television, many movies are graphic. The current content would have been impossible to present for public consumption 30 years ago or even 20 years ago. This is particularly disturbing to me because I have grandchildren ages 4 through 11. I am very concerned about the environment that they are moving into and the things that they are either advertently or inadvertently exposed to because it certainly has an impact on the way they see the world.

□ 2300

In addition to some of these issues, I would have to say that our value sys-

tem has shifted considerably. Stephen Covey wrote the book "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" several years ago, and the thing that he noted was this: he said that in the first 150 years of our country's history, success was primarily defined in terms of character traits. A successful person was honest, a successful person was loyal, a successful person was hard working, kind, et cetera, generous. And then he said something happened about 50, 60 years ago as he began to survey the literature of our Nation as it had to do with the issue of success, he noticed that success began to be defined more and more in terms of material possessions. A successful person was no longer one who had good character; a successful person was one who had money; a successful person was one who had power; a successful person was one who had celebrity. And so today we find that many people who are labeled successful are really not people of character. They are people who have material wealth, celebrity, publicity, and so on. So certainly our value system has switched a great deal. And we have seen this affect the business world, WorldCom, Enron. We have seen it in the press. We have seen it in athletics, in the church, and in politics; and so it is quite concerning as to what effect this has on our culture at the present time.

The predominant world view that I noticed today, Mr. Speaker, is something called post-modernism, and what this states, the view of the world being post-modernism, is that there are no moral absolutes. So murder is not absolutely wrong. It depends on the circumstance. There may be cases when this is justified. Adultery is not absolutely wrong. There may be circumstances in which it is okay. Everything is relative. It may be okay to dishonor one's father and one's mother. It may be okay to steal or to lie or to do all of the things that have been taboo in societies throughout history.

So we have a system of relativism that leaves our young people with nothing firm to hold on to at the present time; and particularly on the college campus we will find that post-modernism is currently almost 100 percent holding sway in terms of the minds of our young people.

So, Mr. Speaker, in view of the family breakdown, the decline in our culture and shifting values, it is an extremely difficult time for our children. We are asking them to weave their way through a minefield littered with alcohol and drug abuse, harmful video games, music, TV, movies, promiscuity games, violent behavior, and broken homes; and we are asking them to do this with little or no parental guidance in an ever-shifting value system.

So it is a very difficult time, and I think we need to pay very close attention to these changes in our family, to these changes in our environment. And as de Toqueville said, he made an observation that I thought was rather astute a couple hundred years ago. He

said: "America is great because America is good," and what he was doing was he was referring to the large number of churches, civic clubs, youth groups, and individuals who reach out and help others. This was somewhat unique to the United States at that time that we would help those who were less able to help themselves, and we had all of the different groups who were reaching out, and he had not noticed that in Europe. He said this is really the key to America's greatness. So he was referring to the inherent decency of the American people. He was referring to the strong moral and spiritual underpinning of the Nation. He was referring to the basic American ethic: "Do unto to others as you would have them do unto you." So I think the important thing to remember, that these observations were made 200 years ago, and I suppose the corollary to his observation would be this: if America is no longer good, then America may no longer be great.

I am not one who believes that we are not a great country, and I believe there is a tremendous reservoir of innate goodness in our country today. But by the same token, I think it is important to point out that some of the standards and some of the values that have made us great have slipped considerably.

So one may say, what can be done? This has been a discouraging picture that I have painted, and sometimes I even hesitate to do this, but I think it is something that we need to face, we need to talk about on this floor. So some of the things that can be done in this body and throughout our culture are as follows: number one, we can do some things to provide mentoring for some of our young children, and mentoring is simply providing an adult who cares about the lives of young persons. So many of our young kids today do not have anyone who cares for them unconditionally and to have someone who is not a father, not a mother, not a preacher, not a teacher, no one who has an ax to grind, is paid to do so, to have a person who is a mentor, who is an adult who cares enough about someone, to show up and say I care about you unconditionally, and whatever happens, I am here for you.

It is very powerful in the life of a young person. A mentor is one who affirms, who says I believe in you, I know you can do it. I think that this is something that you are capable of. I see great promise in you. And I saw that in athletics, that if they affirmed a young person, they oftentimes became that which they did not even know they could be; and on other hand if they did not affirm them, if they beat them down, if they are negative, which so many of our kids experience all the time, it would not be long before that player played down to that level, and before long he would quit.

And of course a mentor also provides a vision. So many of our young people simply have no vision of what they

could be, that they could go on to college, that they could do something in electronics, that they have musical ability. So a mentor is one who guides them in those directions. Mentoring reduces dropout rates, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence. And the President has proposed \$150 million annually over the next 3 years for mentoring initiatives. Actually, the funding will be about half of that, but it is still much better than we had in the past.

The National Mentoring Partnership says that roughly 18 million children in the United States today are badly in need of a mentor, and yet at the present time we have roughly 2 million who are being mentors. Roughly one out of every 10 has a mentor. So I think one thing that could greatly change the shape of our Nation and our future would be to provide a much more systematic mentoring program, and I think the President is behind that.

I think some legislation can help. The Internet Gambling Bill, H.R. 2143, is something that I think could be very beneficial. We have a great many young people, particularly college students, who are inundated with credit cards. And anymore all one has to do to build a huge gambling debt is to have a credit card and a computer. So we would like to shut this practice down because some kids run up a 10, 15, \$20,000 gambling debt in a matter of days; and of course their future and their credit rating is ruined. So we feel that this would be an important bill. H.R. 669, Protect Children from Video Game Sex and Violence Act of 2003, sponsored by the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA), of which I am a co-sponsor, prevents marketing extremely graphic violent video games to children. We think this would be a step in the right direction; but, again, we would worry about the courts declaring it unconstitutional. So I think we need a fundamental shift in court decisions regarding the first amendment.

I am not a constitutional expert and do not pretend to be so, but I would like to point out some court cases that have certainly shaped the course of our Nation's history and its future. In 1996 Congress passed the Communications Decency Act that made it illegal to send indecent material to children via the Internet; but in June of 1997, the Supreme Court overturned portions of the law and, get this, said in the opinion: "Indecent material is protected by first amendment." So this was one of the first times, I believe, that the Supreme Court said that indecent material is okay. The first amendment gives one the ability to do that, and we are not going to stand in the way of people sending indecent material to children over the Internet.

□ 2310

That was a landmark case. In 1996 also, the Child Pornography Prevention Act outlawed child pornography, including visual depictions that

appeared to be of a minor. So the issue at hand was this: You cannot have an actual minor involved in the production of child pornography, but if you use computer-generated images, which you can not tell whether they are real or not real, then that type of child pornography is apparently okay, according to this particular Supreme Court decision.

In October 1998 the Children On-Line Protection Act was signed into law to prohibit the communication of harmful material to children on publicly accessible web sites. The Supreme Court's refusal to rule on the 1988 law prevented the law from being enacted, so we were not able to protect children who were involved in receiving harmful material on publicly accessible web sites.

The 106th Congress passed the Children's 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. In May 2002 a Federal Court declared the law unconstitutional.

What we have here is free speech is protected for pornographers and, in some case pedophiles, while women and children are attacked. Roughly 80 to 90 percent of pedophiles and rapists report using pornography, oft times before they commit an event.

So, some people say, well, what is the big deal? Pornography is harmless. It does not really have any victim. Yet, if you think about it, we spend billions of dollars in this country on commercials, and if those commercials did not change behavior, if what you see and what you hear and what you read does not change your behavior, then we are spending billions of dollars unnecessarily. So, obviously, the pornography industry does have a tremendous impact on behavior and the environments that our young people exist in.

I would also point out that there have been some issues that have to do with prayer that are somewhat concerning in our schools. In 1962 the Supreme Court ruled the following prayer unconstitutional. This was the landmark decision. This was the particular prayer: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence on thee and we beg thy blessings upon us, our teachers and our country." It seemed relatively innocuous and relatively simple, but that prayer was ruled unconstitutional because of separation of church and state.

It would appear that many court rulings regarding separation of church and state have ranged far afield from the intent of our framers of the Constitution. The First Amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Of course, most everyone realizes where that came from, the Constitution, was that this country was founded by people who were attempting to

escape from a religious state, the Church of England, so they did not want a government-sponsored religion which took over the country.

But I think that in the interpretations that we have seen in the courts, we have ranged far afield from what the Constitution actually intended. The framers of the Constitution were assumed to be hostile to expressions of faith in the recent interpretations of the court that we have seen.

Benjamin Franklin, who was one of the framers of the Constitution, said this: "We have been assured, sir," and this is his quote, "In the sacred writings, that except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in the political building no better than the builders of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests. Our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down future ages. I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business."

What he was talking about was in this body, on this floor, he was saying we should have a prayer at the start of business every day. This is one of the framers of the Constitution. So at this point, both the House and the Senate begin their business daily with a prayer, and yet we have moved so far as a Nation away from what Franklin originally intended.

George Washington said this: "The propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained."

In assessing the writings of some of the Founding Fathers, David Barton, an historian, said this: "Franklin had warned that forgetting God and imagining that we no longer needed his concurring aid would result in internal disputes, the decay of the Nation's prestige and reputation and a diminished national success. Washington had warned that if religious principles were excluded, the Nation's morality and political prosperity would suffer. Yet despite such clear words in cases beginning in 1962, the Supreme Court offered rulings which eventually divorced the Nation, its schools and its public affairs from more than three centuries of its heritage. America is now learning exponentially what both Washington and Franklin knew to be true. We are suffering in the very areas they predicted."

I think it is important that the Founding Fathers really did not intend for the pendulum to swing as far as it has. I think that they obviously acknowledged the importance of issues of faith, and this was the foundation upon which the Nation was built.

There are some other decisions that I think are worth looking at. In 1992 a

Supreme Court decision declared an invocation and benediction at a graduation ceremony constitutional, so a preacher, a rabbi, a Muslim cleric, cannot at a graduation exercise lead any type of prayer. That was decided in 1992.

The court also has held more recently a minute of silence in school is unconstitutional, so at the beginning of the classroom day it is not constitutional for a minute of silence to be held in which a child may choose to pray in his own way. He may look out the window, he may think about his history lesson, but it is just a minute of silence. There is no formal, organized prayer, no one is proselytizing, and yet that has become unconstitutional.

Then this, one of the strangest rulings that I heard of, was the court ruled that a student-led prayer at a football game was unconstitutional. This is not inside the school building, it is not a school administrator, it is not a teacher; this was a prayer that was chosen to be selected by the students, and a student was going to lead the prayer. Yet this was unconstitutional because the football players might have to listen to it and might be offended, I guess.

Of course, most recently, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the term "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, and that will now be heard by the Supreme Court, probably within the next few months, and it appears that those are there is a very strong probability that this may be a four-to-four deadlock, which means that the Ninth Circuit Court will be upheld and that will become the law of the land, at least for that part of the country.

Certainly I am not advocating here that teachers or administrators be allowed to proselytize in the schools. I do not think that would be appropriate. I do not think that is intended. But it does seem that we have come a long, long ways from where the framers of the Constitution originally intended us to go.

The Constitution is increasingly being interpreted as a "living document." That sounds really good, does it not, because it is kind of progressive. It sounds like we are forward-thinking and the Constitution is not a dead piece of legislation, but it is currently alive and it is being changed and it is moving ahead.

Yet the important thing to realize is that the Constitution is often not interpreted as it was written, but rather as justices believe that it should be. Look at the legal decisions increasingly coming down, based not upon what the law states, but based upon the personal ideology of the jurists.

The Constitution is not based upon absolute principles, but rather the shifting sands of relativism. This philosophical bent of the Supreme Court justices and District Court justices determines the course of the Nation.

Over the last 20 or 30 years we have seen the Nation slowly but surely driv-

en in certain directions that many people would believe is not what the framers of the Constitution intended. That, Mr. Speaker, is why the activities in the other body regarding the makeup of the courts and the court appointees is becoming such an important issue, because, within the next 1 or 2 or 3 years, the shape of the Supreme Court certainly will be determined, and, with it, the direction that our Nation proceeds over the next 15, 20, 30 years I think will largely be decided.

The willingness of Congress to focus upon the pernicious influences impacting our children, the willingness of the American people to demand that those profiteering at the expense of our culture and our young people be reined in, will largely shape the future of our Nation.

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Terrorism is an ever-present threat. The economy is of concern. However, terrorism and economic distress will not prevail as long as our national character is sound. I would like to say that one more time. There is certainly no intent on my part to minimize the critical nature of terrorism, the crisis in the Middle East, the situation in Iraq, the difficulties with the economy, health care, Medicare, all of those types of things. Those are critical issues and they occupy almost 100 percent of this body's attention. But the reason I am here tonight is to try to point out the fact that we will handle all of those problems. None of those problems will overcome the United States if our character is sound, if our young people are nurtured in the right direction.

And, therefore, something that I think is very pernicious is slipping under the radar screen and something that this Congress, this body, and the American people need to address on a consistent manner. So this struggle may present the most critical crisis facing the United States today.

As Congress addresses important issues such as national defense, economy, health care, and so 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.

I would conclude by saying this our future rests with our young people and with the soundness of their character, their willingness to sacrifice, and their spiritual grounding. And I hope that we will give adequate attention to these issues some of which can be handled through legislation, some through expenditures of money, for instance, in the trying to prevent underage drinking, some in our attention to who goes on to the courts and who does not, but above all this really rests with the American people and with their willingness to persevere.

And I would like to echo what de Tocqueville said, "America is great because America is good." And I think we need to maintain our vigilance that America continues to be good.