

Government Accountability Office recently revealed that over 60-percent of large corporations do not pay any taxes. In fact, a recent study of 275 of the Fortune 500 companies revealed that those companies alone have avoided paying over \$175.2 billion in owed taxes.

The Republicans claim the tax cuts for corporations in H.R. 4520 will not add to the large deficit our country has ever faced. However, a study by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities reveals that once all their cost-hiding gimmicks are stripped away, this bill will put us at least \$80 billion more in debt than we are today. The increase in debt will mean more cuts to vital programs, such as children's health care and homeland security. This new round of tax cuts is a continuation of the failed Bush economic policies that turned a federal surplus into deficit. We do not need more of the same, we need a new direction.

We have lost a net total of over one million jobs since President Bush took office. With the passage of H.R. 4520, we are at risk of losing even more American jobs. H.R. 4520 adds even more incentives for corporations to ship jobs overseas. But, not only are Republicans intent on aggravating our already dismal jobs picture, they are also acting to severely undermine the quality of jobs that do stay in our country.

The few new jobs that have been created in the past few months pay an average of \$9,000 less than the jobs they are replacing and many lack affordable health benefits. Yet, the Republican conferees rejected a Senate provision in H.R. 4520 that would have restored six million workers' right to overtime that the Administration took away earlier this year. The Republicans have total disregard for the fact that costs for basic necessities, like health care and energy, have skyrocketed and that families must make do with much less income.

What H.R. 4520 did include was a \$10 billion bail out for the Big Tobacco—that is equal to the tobacco industry's advertising budgets for one year. In another win for the tobacco industry, the Republicans refused to include the Senate to allow the Federal Drug Administration to regulate tobacco products. According to recent statistics, more than 400,000 people die each year from tobacco-related diseases and, if action is not taken, more than five million children living today will ultimately die as a result. We cannot afford this loss of life or the \$89 billion in annual public and private health care costs attributable to tobacco. The passage of H.R. 4520 shows that not only do the Republicans have complete disregard for our fiscal health, but our children's physical health as well.

H.R. 4520 is a shameful bill that will make millions of Americans pay through cuts to vital programs, like health care for children and heating assistance for seniors, cuts to U.S. jobs, and cuts to workers' protections in order to subsidize big business and special interests.

9/11 RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 2004

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 10) to provide for reform of the intelligence community, terrorism prevention, and prosecution, border security, and international cooperation and coordination, and for other purposes:

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Chairman, in November 2002, Congress authorized the creation of a bipartisan 9–11 Commission to prepare a report on the status of our intelligence prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the effectiveness of our response to those attacks, and to make recommendations to strengthen identified weaknesses. I applaud the work of the commission and support their recommendations to strengthen our country against attacks at home and abroad.

It is critical to our national security that Congress act quickly and thoughtfully to implement the 9–11 Commission's recommendations. I was hopeful, therefore, that the Republican leadership would put the interest of the country ahead of political considerations and bring to the floor a bipartisan bill that would protect our country from terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, the bill before us, H.R. 10, as currently written, fails to meet this standard, and I must reluctantly oppose it.

H.R. 10 is full of extraneous provisions that have nothing to do with the 9–11 Commission recommendations. The Republican leadership has added highly divisive immigration-related provisions which have been criticized by the chairman and vice chairman of the 9–11 Commission, the families of the 9–11 victims, and even the White House. For example, the bill seeks to deport people without due process, punish those seeking asylum, return victims of torture to cruel governments, and prevent hardworking individuals from obtaining basic forms of identification.

The serious problems with H.R. 10 could have easily been avoided had the Republican leadership written this bill in a bipartisan manner. Instead, they removed provisions that were passed in committee on a bipartisan basis. At a time that our country is at war and we are threatened on a daily basis by potential terrorist attacks, it is unconscionable that the Republican leadership has turned the bipartisan recommendations of the 9–11 Commission into a politically divisive piece of legislation.

The Senate has proceeded in a bipartisan manner and passed, by an overwhelming vote of 96 to 2, an intelligence reform bill that follows the framework recommended by the bipartisan 9–11 Commission. It is my sincere hope that the serious problems with H.R. 10 will be resolved when the final product emerges. Americans are trusting that Congress will push partisan politics aside and unite in support of legislation that will truly make this country safer.

FREEDOM FOR FIDEL SUÁREZ CRUZ

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Fidel Suárez, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Suárez Cruz is a farmer and pro-democracy activist in totalitarian Cuba. He is a member of the Party for Human Rights in Cuba. Mr. Suárez Cruz also heads the private library "San Pablo." Because of his admirable beliefs in freedom, democracy, and human rights, Mr. Suárez Cruz has been the target of the nightmare called the Castro regime.

According to Amnesty International, in 2000 Mr. Suárez Cruz was sentenced to 6 months of restricted freedom for "disobedience" for fishing in a restricted area; however, this sentence was changed to imprisonment in the totalitarian gulag because he was arrested for carrying out peaceful political activities.

On March 18, 2003, as part of the dictator's condemnable crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy activists, Mr. Suárez Cruz was arrested because of his belief in freedom and human rights. In a sham trial, he was "sentenced" to 20 years in the inhuman, totalitarian gulag.

Mr. Suárez Cruz is currently languishing in an infernal cell in the totalitarian gulag. These depraved conditions are truly appalling. The State Department describes the conditions in the gulag as, "harsh and life threatening." The State Department also reports that police and prison officials beat, neglect, isolate, and deny medical treatment to detainees and prisoners, including those convicted of political crimes. It is a crime of the highest order that people who work for freedom are imprisoned in these nightmarish conditions.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Suárez Cruz is suffering in a grotesque gulag because he believes in freedom. My Colleagues, we cannot allow peaceful pro-democracy activists to languish in the depraved prisons of tyrants. We must demand immediate freedom for Fidel Suárez Cruz and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

9/11 RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 7, 2004

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 10) to provide for reform of the intelligence community, terrorism prevention and prosecution, border security and international cooperation and coordination, and for other purposes:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Chairman, this is a historic moment for our Nation as we take a giant step forward in national security by reforming our intelligence community to make our citizens and our communities safer. These reforms include the establishment of a National Intelligence Director and the implementation of new information sharing strategies to

break down old barriers between agencies. While no legislation is perfect and I believe the Collins/Lieberman version of Intelligence Reform legislation passed in the Senate this week is a better solution, I stand in support of H.R. 10 and vote for this bill today. These reforms move us towards a safer and stronger America.

In the course of the House debate of H.R. 10, many concerns have been raised about immigration and I would like to speak about this particular component of the bill. I remain convinced that illegal immigration is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by the Congress. People who circumvent our Nation's laws and enter this country illegally should not be here. I believe this is central to our national and economic security for hard working Americans and others who come to this country legally.

But I also believe it is important that we remember the purpose of this bill and what brought us to this historic point in time. The purpose of this bill is to reform our Intelligence Community; to lay the foundation we need to protect Americans today. The 9/11 Commission specifically addressed Intelligence Reform. With five Republicans and five Democrats, the Commission spent 20 months on an exhaustive examination of millions of pages of documents, countless interviews and hearings, and hundreds of hours of debate—and produced a bipartisan, unanimous list of 41 recommendations. This report provided the Congress with a real, workable and effective blueprint that became the foundation of the Collins/Lieberman bill that passed the Senate 96–2 on October 6, 2004.

So while I applaud some of the measures in H.R. 10 and have ultimately chosen to vote for this bill because it provides many measures to protect all Americans and our communities, I remain concerned about some of the extraneous provisions it includes like immigration. There are enormous differences between illegal aliens and legal immigrants. There are enormous differences between immigration and terrorism. All of these issues are incredibly important to the fabric of our Nation and deserve to be considered in full and separately.

CORRECTING THE WASHINGTON POST RECORD ON THE VA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to set the record straight on what is happening to recently-separated veterans who seek benefits and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs. There has been significant progress made in the last 3 years; some of that progress was reported correctly in a Washington Times article this past Sunday, but the headline in a piece from the Washington Post that appeared on the same day and was quoted by one of my colleagues on Monday made it seem that VA is totally unprepared to provide disability, compensation, rehabilitation and other benefit to America's veterans.

It is inaccurate to describe the current inventory of 323,000 claims for VA benefits as

a "backlog," if by that term you mean to imply that veterans are waiting unnecessarily for an answer from VA. The truth is that at any given time, the VA is actively processing more than 250,000 claims while receiving more than 70,000 new and reopened claims each month. It's normal for the VA to have a working inventory of at least 250,000 claims.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, at the request of this President, Congress provided additional funding to increase the number of VA claims processors by more than 1,300 since he took office. When we authorized these new employees, we effectively overstaffed the VA so that experienced employees would be available to train these new employees without an adverse effect on the timeliness of claims processing. These new employees are now fully trained and productive, and there should be no reduction in services to veterans.

With respect to meeting veterans' benefits needs, the Washington Post article cited recently one of my colleagues failed to mention any of the documented improvements in VA claims processing. In the past four years, the VA has reduced the average time to decide disability claims from a high of 233 days to 160 days, reduced the percentage of pending claims for over six months from 48% in 2002 to 21% now, reduced rating-related claims from 432,000 in 2002 to 323,000 currently and is on track to meet the VA goal of 250,000.

Most importantly, VA has increased the number of claims decisions from an average of 40,000 per month in 2001 to nearly 70,000 in 2004. These are significant accomplishments by the Bush Administration on behalf of veterans, and all of us should be proud to have supported the increased funding which the Administration requested to make this possible.

Mr. Speaker, the Washington Post article lead readers to believe that there was some delay in providing benefits to a soldier on active duty, and that the VA is unresponsive to America's veterans. In fact, I am advised that VA has already evaluated this particular soldier's disabilities and will begin awarding benefits on the first day he is discharged from the Army. As all of my colleagues should know, VA cannot provide veterans benefits to a soldier until he or she is discharged from active duty.

The Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense are working hard to ensure that military members have a "seamless transition" from active duty; this means prompt decisions on claims for disability benefits and quality health care when needed. Even before servicemembers are discharged, VA provides transition services at 136 military bases so that servicemembers can ask questions and be briefed about their VA benefits and how to file for those benefits as they approach discharge. The VA has even assigned its own professional staff to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda and the Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany to ensure our wounded American heroes will be aware of their VA health care and benefits long before they are discharged.

Mr. Speaker it is often said that you shouldn't argue with an entity that buys ink by the barrel, but the Washington Post has its facts wrong in this case. This is not that surprising since the Post has not reported on any of the hearings—and we've had many—on

these issues held by either the House Committee on Veterans Affairs which I chair and the House Armed Service Committee during the past year. Had they done so, their readers could have learned about the problems which have faced separating service members in the past and what is being done today to prevent those problems from occurring in the future.

Both the Armed Forces and VA are working more closely together than in any previous conflict to ensure that the benefits which service members earned by their faithful service are delivered in a timely and compassionate manner. Members who attended those hearings learned that while mistakes have occurred, no one is more dedicated to ensuring that these deserving veterans than the current VA Secretary Anthony Principi and his able staff. The VA, the Congress and the President are all working together to make sure that our newest generation of combat veterans are taken care of. They deserve nothing less.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, if I had been present for the vote on the conference report for H.R. 4200, "The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2005," and conference report for H.R. 4567, "The Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for FY 2005," I would have voted "yea" on both.

H.R. 1047, MISCELLANEOUS TRADE AND TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1047, the Miscellaneous Trade and Technical Corrections Act of 2004. This important, bipartisan legislation is long overdue, and I am pleased we have the opportunity to consider the conference report this evening.

H.R. 1047 is a compendium of trade provisions drawn largely from legislation introduced by individual Members. The bill contains provisions involving the temporary suspension of duties on narrowly defined products, miscellaneous trade items, and technical corrections to the Trade and Development Act of 2000.

There are a number of provisions in this bill that are noteworthy, including several that I have long championed. For instance, I am pleased that the legislation follows in the tradition of both the 2000 and 2002 Trade Acts, by including a reduction of the tariff for certain types of wool used in the production of men's suits.

This reduction in tariffs is important not only as a matter of trade policy, but also to suitmakers across the country, who not too long ago saw their industry decimated by high tariffs. Reducing these tariffs has stabilized the domestic industry, and nowhere is this more apparent than at Hart Marx, the only publicly-