

day after we left Baghdad Airport, it was the bloodiest day since the end of major combat hostilities, all draw the mind to the violence.

They draw, it seems to me, the American public's focus to a very small number of Iraqis who seek to use violence to reclaim the dictatorial power they once enjoyed when this is a country of 10 million people, a sample of which we met, who were overflowing with gratitude to the people of the United States and our allies in this cause.

As this picture attests, and I hope it is on screen and, Mr. Speaker, I hope it can be seen, that you can see that enthusiasm on their faces, that enthusiasm for democracy that I encountered in Iraqi after Iraqi. And it is an enthusiasm I believe will be a foundation for a free Iraq for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for allowing me to participate. I will say a few words and yield back to my colleague to close.

The thing that struck me after all the experiences we had in Iraq, our last picture there in Baghdad we climbed on the C-130 to fly back to Kuwait and we waited outside of our plane while the ceremony was held where the body of an Estonian soldier who was killed the day before who, I believe, was trying to detonate an explosive on the street and was killed by a sniper as he was there, was placed on our plane. And we flew out with the body of that young soldier in the belly of our plane.

And it was quite a surreal experience to fly over Iraq, to fly over ancient Babylon, the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the cradle of civilization with the casualty of the latest conflict in our plane.

But it really made me think and ponder back about our time with the Iraqi people and about the experiences that we had where the yearning for freedom is strong; it is in the soul of every man and woman. And as our President has said, freedom is not a gift to the world; it is God's gift to mankind. It is something that is felt by everyone and certainly expressed in the gratitude that was expressed by people touching their heart when they would talk to us, that our country was able in some small way to bring that gift back to them to have them experience that God-given gift of freedom. It was a wonderful experience.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) for allowing me to participate in this colloquy.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) for yielding and for his participation. And I think those words especially eloquent. Because it was the gratitude and the enthusiasm for their freedom that I found most moving among the Iraqis that we met.

I close with a picture, Mr. Speaker, that I think the gentleman from Ari-

zona (Mr. FLAKE) actually took. We were visiting the second of two palaces of Saddam Hussein now being rehabilitated into a hospital for Iraqis in Baghdad. And as we were making our way, we came across regular Iraqis who were moving materials. And as you see here, and I hope it is evidenced in the picture, the enthusiasm with which we as Americans were greeted was overwhelming. People stopping, smiling, reaching out.

I did not even expect that the thumbs up symbol would be international, but it was. And you see the warmth and you see the generous spirit that is present among the Iraqi people. I say without hesitation, as I said to many people upon my return, I fell in love with the Iraqi people. They are bright, visionary, optimistic, educated, and a people that are of such strong opinions that I thought they were from the Midwest in most of our conversations.

But in the midst of all of it, I came away with an image that I had a burden, Mr. Speaker, to come back and as we consider this important resolution today, even to help finish the debate today with my colleague from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), to try and focus this debate on the real beneficiaries of Operation Iraqi Freedom, because certainly Operation Iraqi Freedom brought down a tyrant who represented, as the President concluded, a threat to the United States of America and our allies and that clear and present danger justified our decision to go to war. But the true beneficiaries are these Iraqis and the generations of Iraqis who will follow them, who will be born in a free country, that will live under not the rule of one, but the rule of law. And they will live under a constitution that is, as Ambassador Bremer said to us, not so much a revolutionary document, as for this part of the world and its torn history, a radical document, with freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and equality of the genders.

This is an astonishing accomplishment. And I am here to report very simply, Mr. Speaker, that the Iraqi people that we met with, some four or five dozen in the course of our days in Basra and Baghdad two short weeks ago know that. They understand that. They are deeply and profoundly grateful to the people of the United States, to the families of our men and women in uniform for the sacrifices that have been made on their behalf.

And they are deeply hopeful and deeply enthusiastic and deeply ambitious to see democracy and a constitutional republic take hold in this beleaguered land.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

□ 2230

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Alabama). Under the Speak-

er's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, an international consulting firm that specializes in monitoring the pharmaceutical industry released a report that showed that prescription drug spending in the United States rose 11 percent last year, and Mr. Speaker, I have heard President Bush plans to highlight his health care achievements this week, and undoubtedly he will boast about the passage of his prescription drug legislation.

However, Mr. Speaker, seniors have already done the math and realize that the President's law will not help them with the ever-increasing costs of their prescription drugs.

Just consider, a senior who now spends \$1,000 a year on prescription drugs will end up paying at least \$857 a year under the law passed by the Republican majority here in the House and signed into law by the President. Seniors with bills of \$5,000 a year will still pay at least \$3,920 under the Republican law. I do not understand how the President can tout this law as helpful to seniors when you look at those statistics.

The trouble is that both the House Republican leadership and the President are having a difficult time selling this bad prescription drug law to seniors. Back when we were about to vote on this bill last year, the President was having a difficult time selling the plan to some of my fellow Republican colleagues right here on the House floor. In order to overcome the skepticism that not only most of the Democrats but even some of the Republicans had, President Bush and his administration got involved in some questionable activities that continue today.

Now, these activities are outlined in an editorial yesterday in the New York Times which was titled "The Actuary and the Actor," and I do not like to read the entire editorial usually in the newspaper, but I have to this evening, Mr. Speaker, because I just think that this New York Times editorial says it all, about how this administration is essentially misleading the public with regard to this Medicare bill, just like they misled many of my colleagues on the Republican side who ended up voting for the bill that night when we sat here for almost 3 hours before the voting was closed.

The New York Times editorial is as follows: "An Orwellian taint is emerging in the Bush administration's big victory last year in wringing the Medicare prescription drug subsidy from a balky Congress. The plan is being sold to the public through propagandistic ads disguised as TV news reports, and it turns out the government's top Medicare actuary was muzzled by superiors during the debate about the program's price tag.

"Richard Foster, one of the government's foremost Medicare experts, says

he was ordered not to provide requested information to Congress last fall when doubts were being raised about the drug benefit's cost. The administration denies this, but a ranking former official has confirmed Mr. Foster's story. As the bill was being considered, Mr. Foster privately cautioned that its cost could amount to as much as \$600 billion, while the White House publicly stuck to the Congressional Budget Office figure of \$400 billion over 10 years. The administration eventually conceded a cost of \$534 billion, but only after the bill was safely signed into law.

"With program in hand, the administration then attempted to rally support, and take political credit, with government-produced TV ads masquerading as news reports. Actors were hired by the Department of Health and Human Services to pose as television journalists purveying faux upbeat 'news' segments about the expanded Medicare coverage."

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that was with taxpayer dollars that was done. Is that correct?

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentleman bringing it up. It is 100 percent paid for with taxpayer dollars, and these taxpayer dollars are being used to pay for these videos and these advertisements.

This is a continuation of the New York Times editorial: "Actors were hired by the Department of Health and Human Services to pose as television journalists purveying faux upbeat 'news' segments about the expanded Medicare coverage. The hope is that TV stations will air them as their own. In one version, anchors are offered a script in which they promise that 'reporter Karen Ryan,' an actress, will explain the details of the new drug plan."

"This sleight of hand openly deepens doubts about White House credibility on a complex issue. The public deserves straightforward information about the changes in Medicare, and Federal agencies should not be engaging in political spin. This is no way to run a democracy nourished by information and taxpayers' money."

Now, again, I am just reading my colleagues the editorial of the New York Times. As my colleague from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) mentioned, this is taxpayers' money. This is not political campaign ads on behalf of the President's reelection. These are taxpayer funds.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I think one of the fundamental questions here, and I appreciate the gentleman from New Jersey's (Mr. PALLONE) leading this special order tonight and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) being here, and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), all of whom have been very involved in this Medicare issue.

I think there are two questions. One is how can you justify taxpayer dollars being spent on an ad campaign in such a politically charged issue? Second, when the Medicare benefit does not even go into effect for 2 years so that you are running these ads at taxpayer expense during the Presidential election year, informing the voters and the beneficiaries of something that is 2 years away.

I think the second question to ask is, why are they having so much trouble convincing the public the Medicare bill is a great bill? The fact is the public is not biting. The public understands intuitively, the seniors overwhelmingly, and I think people of all ages overwhelmingly, understand that George Bush and the Republican leadership have sat down with the drug industry and sat down with the insurance industry, and they went into the Oval Office, and they came into this Chamber, the drug and insurance industry, and they wrote this legislation.

A \$400 billion, they told us, bill, \$139 billion of that goes to increased profits or the drug industry. Another \$14 billion of our tax dollars goes to the insurance industry. It is just clear this is another example of President Bush's very close allegiance to the drug industry and the insurance industry.

The word on the street in Washington is the President is going to get \$100 million from the drug industry for his campaign. The drug industry loves this President. They have gotten everything they want from this President, and you can bet if that \$100 million from the prescription drug industry goes to President Bush, that is one of the reasons seniors in this country are paying such a high price. No wonder it is darn near impossible to convince seniors that they got a good deal with this drug bill.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if I could just interrupt for a second, what happens from my experience is when I go to the senior centers in my district and I talk to the seniors, I do not have to say anything because essentially they have already figured it out. You know how it is. Senior citizens look at everything. They read all the material, and many of them just tell me they have calculated this is a voluntary program, it does not take effect for another 2 years, very much aware of the fact that it is not going to help them for the next 2 years. They just see it as a political ploy to get through the next election.

Then when they actually sit down and figure out how much they have to pay out of pocket versus what they are going to get in terms of benefit, they say, Why would I sign up for it? It is essentially a volunteer program. You do not have to sign up for it.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I would posit that this is a great example of

waste, fraud and abuse being perpetrated by this administration in trying to sell a pig in the poke to senior citizens who are not buying it, and it is waste, fraud and abuse in its most classical sense for at least three reasons.

Number one, it is not working. Seniors listen to this and almost laugh at it. I was at a meeting put on by the local chapter of the AARP in Edmonds, Washington last week, and there were about 150 seniors there, 150 seniors who had listened to this "gobbledy-gook" put out by the administration, trying to sell this ad to them. Not one single person out of 150 seniors, not the lobbyists who they hire, but the real seniors who supposedly need to depend on real coverage, not one person bought this as a decent plan for them. And I have got to tell you, there was fire and vigor and youthfulness in that room because they were so angry at the government trying to sell them this wasted opportunity. So first thing is the waste, because it is not going to work, because seniors are not going to buy it.

Second, it clearly is propaganda. I think the GAO has looked at this, General Accounting Office, and they cited several omissions, at least in the charitable sense of the term, of these advertisements not telling seniors what the real deal is; which is, number one, left out the fact they conveniently forgot that this legislation prohibited Uncle Sam from trying to try to get better drug prices for seniors, prohibited seniors from getting drugs from Canada, prohibiting reimportation in a safe way. Somehow they conveniently forgot that. It is waste because it is propaganda.

The third is it is simply not true. Let me tell you, it seems like every week we hear about another abuse of governmental power here. But let me tell you about one I heard about just yesterday, and that was that this administration is sending out deliberately phony alleged videos that purport to be news accounts from news reporters which, in fact, were paid models and actors who were faking like they were doing a news conference. Now if that is not an abuse of government authority, I do not know what is. Right now, the General Accounting Office lawyers are investigating this abuse and I think they are going to find a violation. I will tell you why.

This administration hired actors to pose as people. One of the people they hired, actors, who at the ending of this video that the administration is using our taxpayer dollars to send this around to all these local news stations around the country, and at the end they have this actor who says, "In Washington, I am Karen Ryan reporting." Turns out she was just an actor on the take, paid for by this administration with our hard-earned dollars. It is a fraud. It is a fake. It is being investigated, and the administration should be ashamed of itself, not only for the substance of this bill which is insulting enough to seniors, but then they pay

these people to fake seniors, to think there is cheering mobs out there. They pay these people to clap for this thing when we go out and talk to real seniors that I know think it is a bunch of garbage, politely speaking.

So this is a perfect incidence of waste, fraud and abuse that I wish my Republican colleagues would write letters to the White House and tell them to knock it off because it is our taxpayers dollars that are being wasted here, and it is not going to work.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what you said, and I just wanted to go briefly, and then I would like to yield to the gentleman from Maine, back to this story with Richard Foster who was the actuary who was basically told, do not reveal the true cost of this Medicare bill, because I think we have to mention that on the night when this bill was passed, and you will all remember, we were here in the House Chamber.

It was about 3 o'clock when the votes were first posted and the bill was defeated. The majority had voted "no" on the bill because they knew that it was basically worthless. And there is no question in my mind that if the Republicans who were wavering that night, and their arms had to be twisted and there were all kinds of things being done by the President and the administration to try to get people to change their votes, that if they had known what Foster knew and was told not to tell us, that the actual cost of this was not \$400 billion over 10 years, which was what was in the budget, but \$600 billion, essentially 50 percent more, there was no way that bill would have passed.

So this is a fraudulent effort to deny the true cost of the bill to the Congress to get those votes for the bill, and even with all that, it was almost impossible. If they had not twisted arms and basically bribed a couple of people that night, they still would not have gotten the votes. That is why the Richard Foster story is so important. That is why I think he has to be commended for coming forward and telling the truth, even at this late date.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Maine.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for leading this Special Order. And the case of Richard Foster, though his name may not yet be a household word, is one that needs some review. It is an example of what we have tried to explain to people, that the legislative process in this Chamber, the democratic process in this Chamber, has been corrupted by special interests. And those are strong words, but there are no kind words that fit what the Republican majority is doing in this House.

So let us just for the moment look at the case of Richard Foster. Back in June 2003, when the Medicare bill first

came to the floor of this House, it came with a CBO, Congressional Budget Office, assessment that the cost would be \$395 billion over 10 years. At that very time, the chief Medicare actuary, Richard Foster, had done a number of scenarios, all of which showed that the cost of the bill would be somewhere between \$500 billion and \$600 billion. He settled on around \$550 billion.

He never told any Member of Congress what that projection showed. And why did he not tell any Member of Congress? Because his boss, Tom Scully, the head of Medicare for this country, told Richard Foster that if he told Members of Congress what his numbers showed, that it would cost \$550 billion and not \$400 billion, he, Tom Scully, would fire Richard Foster.

□ 2245

So here you have the chief Medicare actuary, under an ethical obligation, at least, to convey to the Congress of the United States information about what the Medicare law was likely to cost, and he could not say it because he would be fired.

Well, now look what has happened. The bill comes back in the fall and we have the long night, the 3-hour vote held open. And the process had been corrupted before that because Democratic Members from the House had been appointed to the conference committee, they were not allowed in the room. They were not allowed to attend the conference to which they had been appointed because the Republican chair of the conference would not let them in.

Now, if you try to explain this to people back home who read their textbooks about how American democracy is supposed to work, they do not believe you. They cannot believe that one party here, that the majority party would simply shut down the legislative process, would withhold information, would manipulate information.

And it continues today, because now that bill has become a law by the narrowest of margins, a bill which would not have passed if the truth had been told about its projected cost.

Now what happens? Well, Health and Human Services goes out and runs TV ads. Many people have seen them. They say same Medicare, better benefits. And it is not true. We are witnessing a concerted effort by the administration, in close collaboration with the insurance industry and the pharmaceutical industry, to move 35 percent of Medicare beneficiaries out of the fee-for-service plan they have today into private insurance.

And why is private insurance such a problem? Well, it costs more. It costs a lot more. And Members on the other side of the aisle have come down into the well here and they have said Medicare is in financial difficulty, that we need to do something; and what we need are private insurance companies to take it over.

Well, nobody in Maine has ever said to me, you know, I am willing to give

up my choice of doctors and hospitals, which I have under traditional Medicare, and what I really want is a choice of insurance plans. Send me those brochures. Send me those insurance agents. That is the way to take care of our health care for seniors. Nobody has ever said that.

The latest projections are that the insurance companies will need to be paid 20 percent more than it costs today to deliver health care to the average Medicare beneficiary. A 20 percent bonus. A 20 percent overpayment to the second biggest lobby here in Washington.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield.

Mr. ALLEN. I would be glad to yield.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think it is intriguing what the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is saying about the whole Medicare structure and how my friends on the other side of the aisle and President Bush, in large part at the behest of the insurance industry, which sees huge profits in this Medicare bill, say that they want to privatize it.

One of the most important facts about Medicare public versus a private insurance HMO Medicare is administrative costs. Traditional Medicare, the Medicare that we know, that 85 percent of America's seniors are enrolled in, has about 2 percent administrative costs, while private insurance has administrative costs averaging between 15 and 20 percent.

So no wonder if we have privatized Medicare, it will cost taxpayers more, yet Medicare beneficiary seniors will actually get less.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to finish right now with a couple of comparisons.

The \$80 million that Health and Human Services is going to spend to advertise this law, which does not take effect until January 2006, and Secretary Thompson made it clear why he was doing it, he said because there is too much criticism of the law. People do not understand that it is really the same Medicare. Of course, the author of the law in the House was quoted on television as saying, "To those who say this bill will destroy Medicare as we know it, my answer is, I certainly hope so." He has made it clear his goal is to destroy Medicare as we know it.

But I wanted just to finish up with this: \$80 million in advertising to the American people. \$80 million. Guess how much the President proposes to cut out of rural health care? One-half that amount, \$39 million. We cannot afford \$39 million to improve rural health care, but we can spend \$80 million just to advertise a flawed Medicare bill to the American public.

The \$80 million is more than the \$58 million which the incoming FDA commissioner, Lester Crawford, says would be needed to establish a drug reimportation plan. So in other words, we are going to spend, according to the Bush administration, \$80 million to run

TV ads to help his reelection campaign out of the Federal Government, to promote a bill that is flawed, \$80 million to do that, when we could spend \$58 million and establish a reimportation plan that would allow seniors to buy their drugs from Canada without interference, and that would reduce their present drug prices dramatically.

Those are the priorities of this administration and the Republican Congress. And I do not know of anyone in my State of Maine who says those are the right priorities for the country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments; and before I yield to the gentleman from Washington, I just wanted to say when I was listening to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) and his statement about Republican abuse of power, that is essentially what this is. This is an abuse of power by the President and by the Republicans in the Congress.

And when I listened to my colleague from Maine and he talked about how the Medicare administrator, Tom Scully, had basically threatened Richard Foster that if he told the truth about the numbers that he would be fired, what the gentleman did not mention and I will add, is, of course, what happened to Tom Scully. Tom Scully during all this, while this Medicare legislation was moving in committee and moving in the House, was negotiating to get a job, which he ultimately got, with the law firm that represents the pharmaceutical industry. He actually got a waiver from the President that allowed him to negotiate for the job.

Normally, the agency rules that he worked for say that you cannot go out and seek a job and try to find yourself a job while you are still in the agency working on this legislation. So the abuse is just unbelievable, and the fact that he got the waiver and everything.

Mr. ALLEN. If the gentleman would yield just for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

There is one other finish here on this story. We are not sitting here on the Democratic sides of the aisle making all this up. Yesterday, Secretary Thompson initiated an investigation into these facts: that Richard Foster was threatened with being fired if he disclosed the true cost of the Medicare bill. So now Health and Human Services itself is investigating what clearly, at least to my mind, was an ethical and perhaps a legal breach by this administration, but one that clearly was absolutely essential, absolutely essential to getting the Medicare bill to become the Medicare law.

Here again, we see a kind of distortion and misrepresentation of information that really has no place in the House of Representatives.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I believe it is very important we bring this issue to the American people. Be-

cause in this election, the issue on which the people have to decide is if there is anything that comes out of the White House that they believe. Is there anything that comes out of the administration, anything, they can believe.

On weapons of mass destruction and connections to al Qaeda and all the reasons why we went to war in Iraq, it is clear they made it all up. Now we come to the domestic side of things; and I sit on the Committee on Ways and Means, and Secretary Thompson comes before us and admits that when they did a study on the inequities of health in this country, that they rewrote it because they did not like the way it came out. The Secretary said, well, we are going to change that. The next thing we know, the same person is calling for an investigation of his own Department on the issue of the actuary hiding the figures from the Congress.

This is the gang that cannot shoot straight. They cannot tell the truth about anything. Because if they told the truth about anything, they would have to change the way they act. They could not give all this money away in tax breaks. They would have to pay for the programs that they tell the people they are giving them.

Now, I had a very interesting experience over the weekend, and I suspect some Members will have the same experience this weekend. I went back to Seattle and had a community meeting in a retirement home with about 100 or 125 people there, and I showed them a video which has been made by the Families USA about the whole issue of the drug issue. Mr. Walter Cronkite is the narrator. Now, everybody knows Walter Cronkite. He is so believable and has so much integrity, he could tell you the sun was going to come up in the West and you would almost think it was going to because he is so believable.

Well, these 125 people, and this is an old people's home, where probably most everybody is 70 or older. So we are talking about people who are real senior citizens. They sat there and they listened to this, and they could not believe the things that are in this thing that have never come out.

So, then, we talked about these advertising statements they had been seeing on television. They said those television ads are not right, they are not telling us the truth, if Walter Cronkite says that, that we are not going to get any help until 2006, and that this drug card they are coming out with is a hoax of the first order.

These are people who some were school teachers or business people or whatever who are retired. They are now in their 70s or 80s. One of them said, you know, that drug card, I think we ought to boycott that drug card. I do not think we should even bother taking it. Why would I go and choose a card and they give me a list, and they say, now, these are the drugs that this card covers, and I pay \$30 for it; and then after I got the card in my pocket,

I am locked in for a year and they can take the drugs off the list.

The seniors were incredulous that this administration was trying to run some kind of game on them. I said to them, the reason you are going to get this card on the first of April is so you will have it in your hands when you go to vote in November. They want you to believe you have got something from them. But do not believe there is anything in that card. There is nothing guaranteed except that you have been sold a piece of paper for \$30.

And these people said, what can we do to fix this, or what can we do to stop this? Do you think there will be some change in this Congress? I said, look, we are having an election year. Nothing in here is going to be good public policy. It is all going to be about convincing the American people that the Republicans have done everything good for them. And this drug card and this pharmaceutical bill is simply the worst of the examples, but there are all kinds of others.

The video by Mr. Cronkite shows the donut hole. You could hear the audience gasp when they realized that they were going to go for a long period of time, have to pay a premium and have no benefits. They could not believe that. And the donut hole does not stay the same. It grows. Every year it gets larger.

Finally, the crowning blow of it is what they discovered. They said, you mean when we pay this once, up to \$5,100, or whatever, that we have to do it again the next year? You mean this happens every year to us? We fall into the donut hole every year? I said, yes. I said if that is what you want for public policy as senior citizens, then you ought to vote Mr. Bush back in, but I think it is a terrible hoax.

And if Members of Congress have the smarts to go out and show this video, they will have turned the whole thing around. Because these seniors watch TV, and they are being a little bit affected by those phony ads.

As I was coming over here, I was listening to my car radio. The Department admitted that they had put those out as fake news reports. They taped them in such a way that they knew if they were picked up just as they were taped, they would look like a news report.

□ 2300

They planned to fake the old folks out.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to me. The whole idea was to take this video with the actors and hope a station would use it and think it was the real thing.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. They did it, and Fox News and all of the rest of these phony news stations picked it up and put it out there as though it was real. There is nothing real about this administration. They have misrepresented from the Iraq war all of the way through, the economy, the deficit, all

these things are all predicated on misrepresentations. I try not to use the word "lie," but they have certainly misrepresented and tried to delude the people. You can fool some of the people all of the time, and some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the old people all of the time, and they are going to pay in this election for having tried to run this game on old people.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman taking the time to be out here at 11 at night putting this program on together, because it requires real dedication to come out here night after night and do this, and I thank the gentleman for what he has done.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman pointed out to me, it is only 8 p.m. in Seattle.

The other thing that I wanted to point out, we have talked about the misrepresentation and the schemes, if you will, that were being played the night when this was voted. And, of course, the numbers being wrong was certainly one of them. But one of the things was that after the vote occurred at 3 a.m. and the board was left open, and there was a majority against the bill, and we went on for 3 hours when the President and Republican majority tried to change Republican votes, one of the people whose vote they tried to change was the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH). And we heard very credible accounts from the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) and others about the chicanery that was going on, statements being made to him about since he was retiring, his son would never get to succeed him in Congress if he did not switch his vote because the money would not be there by the Republican Party to finance his campaign.

I just wanted to mention today it was announced that the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is going to investigate these allegations that were made in that regard. Until today, they had refused to take up the issue. However, they did announce today that they were going to take up the issue. I do not know what the outcome is going to be.

If we think about the way that they got Members to change votes that night and the misinformation provided about how much it was going to cost and now all of these ads being paid for by the taxpayers to convince people this is a good bill, it is just a barrage of misinformation.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, today was the second shoe. The first shoe was Mr. Foster saying, I had the figures and they told me they would fire me if I gave the figures. Then we find out with the phony figures out here, they still could not get enough votes until they twisted some guy's arm into a pretzel. I think it is very important that the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is looking at this issue.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, it needs to be said, too, that our colleague who

made the assertion that he had been offered essentially a \$100,000 bribe or something akin to that to his son's election campaign was a Republican. This was a Republican Member, a colleague, who made this assertion, and that is why it is important to find out what happened in the situation.

But I will tell Members why I am here at 11 at night and that is there is such a growing pattern of a corruption of democracy here in the Chamber that I have great respect for, the House of Representatives, the people's House. I am a relatively new Member to this Chamber, and it is troublesome to me and I can tell Members it is getting very troublesome to my constituents when they hear this repeated consistent drum beat of a corruption of the democratic process.

It is not just one thing. It is the fact they do not let Members read the bill before they vote on it, which my people believe is a corruption of the democratic process, which happened in the Medicare bill. It is the fact that when they lose, they leave the time open for 3 hours to try to break arms, like the Russians did in the Olympic Games in the 1960s when we won the game and the Russian official just put another several seconds up on the clock. My people believe that is a corruption of the democratic process. And then during that 3 hours, according to a Republican colleague, he was offered a \$100,000 bribe essentially to change his vote, which he had the moral integrity not to do, by the way, and remained a "no" vote solidly because he believed, I suspect, this is a bad bill, as we do. This is a pattern, and it is not just isolated to the Medicare bill.

Let me tell Members about another couple of problems that trouble me. I serve on the Committee on Resources, and we had the Department of Agriculture people. They supervise our national forests. We found out due to some diligence of an investigative reporter, that of our hard-earned taxpayer money, this administration has spent almost \$100,000 hiring a public relations firm to try to spin the public into accepting a forest plan that would allow more old-growth trees to be cut, which is against public sentiment in the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains, and this PR firm advised the Department of Agriculture to keep it secret. It did not want the public to find out that they had spent \$100,000 to spin the public. Their memo is a classic. He said we cannot tell the public because this is, quote, "a matter of perception." We should not be spending \$100,000 to create misperceptions or worry about perceptions. We ought to give the public the straight scope.

That is not the only one. The Department of the Interior, I picked up The Washington Post and I see we have an investigation going on at the Department of the Interior of a gentleman who works for the Department of the Interior, who, on repeated occasions, essentially was associated with bene-

ficial decisions for his former clients in the oil and gas industry to open up methane wells in Wyoming and in the Rocky Mountains when he was specifically ordered not to do it.

Time after time, we are finding incidents where common sense and good practices of democracies are being violated.

Let me go back to a fundamental tenet. We have disagreements in this Chamber, and our constituents have disagreements. They disagree on a lot of things and it is not unexpected that we would have disagreements about matters of great import. But Americans ought to be able to expect at least one thing from the administration and from the President: That is the truth. Even if they may disagree with it, they are entitled to the truth in exchange for paying their taxes, and they have not got it, repeatedly. I want to go down a list of some of those things.

The President's administration told the American public and the U.S. Congress that the Medicare bill would cost about \$460 billion. That was false; and more importantly, it was false and known to be false by this administration. To add insult to injury, not only was it known to be false, they ordered their own actuary to refuse to disclose this information to Congress. It is one thing to commit the sin of untruth and falsehood, it is a second sin to cover it up, which they have tried to do. That is falsehood number one.

Number two, they used taxpayer money to phony up these videos, acting like it is a news report, saying it is a news reporter reporting live, Sally Smith or whatever her name was, hiring actors to act like they liked the Medicare bill; and seniors all over the country are rejecting this Medicare bill. They want to hire actors. It is a falsehood to do that, and they did this consciously. They cannot do that by negligence or mistake. They made a decision. Somebody who works for the President of the United States said, I am going to hire an actor to fake out the seniors of this country, consciously, intentionally, and it is wrong.

Mr. PALLONE. And at taxpayers' expense.

Mr. INSLEE. And third, they told us their tax cuts were going to result in large surplus. We were going to have surpluses as far as the eye could see. They cut taxes wildly for the upper class. We now have the largest deficit in American history. That is falsehood number three, and they keep making the same mistake.

□ 2310

Fourth, and to me a series that I want to go through, because it is one thing to give falsehoods to Americans when it is about money, it is another thing to give falsehoods to Americans from the executive branch of this country sworn to defend the Constitution and the United States of America when it jeopardizes and takes the lives of Americans.

I just want to read some quotes that I think we need an accounting of and some responsibility from this administration. On March 17, 2003, the President of the United States told the American people, and I quote, "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." That is a direct quote. It was false. Of all the information that we have gathered after hundreds of millions of dollars, the best evidence we have is that statement by the President of the United States, "it leaves no doubt." America deserves an answer why the President of the United States told Americans that there was no doubt when the facts were at least there was significant doubt as reported by multiple intelligence agencies and the facts have come to bear that multiple statements by this administration were false and as a result of that Americans paid the ultimate sacrifice, one of whose family I visited this weekend whose children will never see their father again who died in the Tigris River trying to save an Iraqi policeman while serving in the United States Army. That family and the other 500 families and the other over 3,000 families of our wounded GIs and Marines and other proud service men and women deserve the truth, and they deserve to know why they did not get it.

On August 2, 2002, the Vice President of the United States, while talking to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a group that deserves the truth after their proud service to this country, said, "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." That statement was false. According to the best information we have after hundreds of millions of dollars spent searching for these weapons, that statement was false. Americans who served in Iraq deserve to know why that happened. We do not know why that happened. It may have been a failure of intelligence. Our intelligence agencies may have overstated the threat. They may have left out caveats in their report to the White House. Somebody in the political machinery may have stretched, exaggerated, spun; we do not know what happened and why those statements that were made were so grievously in error that cost American lives, but we deserve an answer and this Chamber deserves an answer.

On January 28, 2003, during his State of the Union address in this Chamber to us, the President stated, "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production." That statement was false. Americans deserve to know the exact circumstances that led to that falsehood being given to them leading to this war.

On March 16, 2003, Vice President DICK CHENEY on an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" said, referring to weapons of mass destruction, "He had years to get good at it. We know that he has been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons and we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons." To our knowledge that statement was false.

On January 9, 2003, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer stated, "We know for a fact that there are weapons there," referring to weapons of mass destruction. That statement was false.

On April 10, 2003, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer stated, "But make no mistake, as I said earlier, we have high confidence that they have weapons of mass destruction. That is what this war was about and it is about, and we have high confidence it will be found." That statement may be correct in the sense that he may have had high confidence. He may have had high confidence. But the underlying statement was false. With all due respect, we are hopeful about the people of Iraq; but this war was based on false information, and Americans deserve to know why they did not get the straight scoop about this situation.

On September 19, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated, "No terrorist state poses a greater or more immediate threat to the security of our people and the stability of the world than the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq."

People have been saying that, well, gee, the administration is now telling us that we did not mean to actually make Americans worried by saying this was an immediate threat. But, in fact, the Secretary of Defense gave reference to an immediate threat with his own language, and on multiple occasions they have continued to make that statement. When White House communications director Dan Bartlett was asked if Saddam Hussein on January 26, 2003, was "an imminent threat to the United States," he stated, "Well, of course he is." This is repeated references, and we have page after page after page of statements that were false. Again, I want to repeat. The people who made these statements may have believed that they were true at the time they were making them. We do not know that. I do not know that. I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. But when this country has suffered the loss of over 500 of its sons and daughters and wives and husbands and fathers and mothers, this Chamber owes it to the United States of America to get to the absolute bottom of who is responsible for these multiple falsehoods on multiple occasions with absolutely no contrition, accountability, or responsibility.

No one has lost their job over this false information except one disc jockey. Maybe it was not a disc jockey. He was a person who was involved in political discourse. Where is the accountability? Where is the personal responsibility

for these falsehoods? Where is the smallest discipline of anyone for giving Americans false information leading to the deaths of over 500 Americans? Where are the changes of procedures? Where is the joint committee in this Chamber? Where is the report of the Congress? Where is the action from the Republican Party to help us find out what happened here? It is missing in action. It is AWOL. With all due respect to our intelligence committees, and they have been doing some discussion of what is happening here, but it is sadly lacking, the type of responsibility that we need to see taken, an explanation of what happened to this information.

Let me make one suggestion when we do get to the bottom of this what we are going to find. Let me tell you about a couple of things I have found through my research. There was a statement by the administration, frankly I cannot recall if it was the President or the Defense Secretary that told Americans that Iraq had developed a drone aircraft that was capable and intended to be able to spread biological and chemical weapons, that could fly over America and spread these horrendous materials over the United States of America. Obviously, that is something we should be concerned about and we should do everything we can to prevent. The problem is that the Air Force, the experts in airplanes, had told the administration before they told Americans this information, before they told Americans the information, that these things were made out of balsa wood and almost duct tape and what they were good for is maybe taking pictures. They were not meant for this other nefarious purpose. They had that information and did not share it with us because frankly there was a lot of doubt about this. There was doubt about this. We cannot expect our intelligence service to be 100 percent, but they did not tell us that.

These aluminum tubes. The President of the United States in his State of the Union address made reference to these aluminum tubes. He said specifically, "Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production."

□ 2320

In fact, before the President made that statement, one of our agencies, and it was either the CIA or the Department of Energy, I cannot remember which, had concluded that that was not what these aluminum tubes were for. They were meant for other purposes.

If this was one misstatement, we would chalk it up to the fog of war and the need to be responsible as we need to be in the war on terrorism. But when it is a pattern, when it is a pattern of falsehood that continues to be consistent in their approach to the Medicare bill and the effort to clear-cut old-growth timber in the Sierra Nevada and a whole host of issues, it is

responsible for Members of the House to come and blow the whistle on this multiple corruption of the democratic process. And that is what we are here to do.

Let me suggest there is a simple answer to some of these things, these issues that we are calling for. If the President would really initiate a thorough investigation of this, we could find out why this information was false and why we found out. But do my colleagues know what he did or his people did? When this mistake was found out about this yellow cake in his State of the Union address, we found out that his statement that they were trying to get yellow cake from Africa was false, when the administration found out that that was a falsehood, it was pointed out by a gentleman named Joe Wilson, who was a former ambassador who was sent by the CIA to Africa to find out whether this assertion was true, and he concluded it was not and told the administration it was not; and then the President went ahead, and somebody gave it to him. I cannot believe he did it himself and put it in the State of the Union address.

I am not faulting him for that specific failure. Somebody had to give that misinformation. But when his administration found out there had been a big mistake in the State of the Union address, one might think he might want to thank the person who helped him correct publicly this mistake because obviously none of us want to make any mistakes. We like to make sure what we are saying is credible. Does the gentleman know what the administration did? Instead, they tried to destroy the career of a CIA agent, who was Joe Wilson's wife, by outing her to destroy a citizen's career in public service who blew the whistle on this corruption of the democratic process. And that is wrong.

And we are many months passed this issue, and the President of the United States, the most powerful person in the Western World, cannot find out who in his administration did that. I am not satisfied with that. I am not satisfied unless the President picks up his phone and says I want an answer by eight o'clock tomorrow morning who did this because they are fired. And he has not done that. This is a pattern that needs to be corrected.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out, and I know what the gentleman is talking about, that the war and the loss of lives is certainly more important, but we have the same thing here with Richard Foster that we talked about earlier where he was basically told that if he revealed the correct information about the cost of the Medicare bill, he would be fired. And the irony of it is now there is a statement which he made recently where he says that "I'm perhaps no longer in grave danger of being fired but there remains a strong likelihood that I will have to resign in protest of the withholding of important technical

information from key policymakers for political reasons." So this poor guy who now basically came clean and explained what happened, I do not know what his career is going to be like as well, and it is just really tragic that this administration puts honest people that want to be honest with the public in danger of being fired or ultimately losing their jobs because they are just trying to be honest and tell us the truth. And we are just seeing a pattern of this continue with this administration in so many cases.

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) used the word before when he talked about abuse of power. That is essentially what we have here. It is false information and the willingness of this administration to essentially say whatever is necessary, the means justifies the ends, in order for them to justify their ideology.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if I may, I suppose there are gray zones about conduct, but when the U.S. Congress is debating something as important as the Medicare prescription drug benefit and we are trying to figure out how to finance it so this deficit does not continue and the President knows that there are many people concerned about the cost of this and a good American patriot, in the fulfillment of his democratic responsibilities, figures out it is going to cost another \$160 billion than the President tells us it is going to cost, and he tells the administration that and the White House and HHS and everybody else and they tell him that may jeopardize our ability to win our political battle and our political battle is more important than the truth. Because that is what this boils down to. They reached a conclusion here, and their conclusion is they are so smart and they are so gifted and they are so special that they are more important than the truth. Therefore, they ordered and they threatened to fire an American who wanted to and would have shared the truth with Americans and this Congress, Republicans and Democrats, because they concluded they were more important than the truth.

And I just may add, I want to tip a hat to some of my Republican colleagues here because we have Republican colleagues that are madder than hops about this too because they were concerned about the cost of this bill because we have a \$500 billion deficit and we have a number of our Republican colleagues who want to fix that problem. So they are mad about this too. They are not quite as vocal as we are in this context with their party member in the White House. But Republicans and Democrats ought to agree on one thing, and that is let us get the facts and the truth; then let us have our debate and let the chips fall where they may, and we are just happy to have that debate. But it is time for them to stop perverting the truth.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I agree. And it is important for us to continue to point this out because again we had

a situation where this bill, which was a bad bill with prescription drugs, would not have passed if the truth had come out. That is abundantly clear. In fact, I cannot ever remember any legislation, and I have been here 16 years, where we have a vote on a piece of legislation and there is an absolute majority against it and we wait for 3 hours to try to change the vote. It is different maybe if the board is opened and there are some people who have not decided, but there was a majority against this bill, and now we understand all the things that were going on to try to basically make people change their minds about this.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding.

We are here to review today's proceedings relative to the resolution. As the gentleman is well aware, there is a group of us, and we describe ourselves as the Iraq Watch and we will be joined shortly by the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), and of course the gentleman from Washington State (Mr. INSLEE) is an integral part of our conversation. And I am sure that tomorrow morning there will be some coverage of what occurred on the floor today because we did consider a resolution that was put forth by the Republican majority without any input of course from Democrats, as we talk about the process that has become the norm here in the House. Unfortunately, it has become exclusionary. And I think we can concur that that is indeed unfortunate if we want to have an open and respectful debate. So during the course of time, during the course of the debate, sometimes passions become very fierce. But I think it is important to review this resolution today for a variety of different reasons.

The resolution was about supporting troops and respecting their professionalism and their courage. We all agree on that. It also commended the Iraqi people for these early steps towards democracy.

□ 2330

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is recognized for the remainder of the time before midnight, approximately 30 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my colleagues, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE). We have been here doing this so-called Special Order for the past 8 months, discussing and reviewing developments in the Middle East and, specifically, what has occurred over the course of the past week involving Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror.