

doubt that we are making progress. There is no doubt that there is still a tremendous amount of work to do, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, but there is also no doubt that these countries have a long way to go, whether it was 12 years under the Russians and Taliban government in Afghanistan, those governments and those regimes which destroyed what little that country had, or whether it was 30 years of a brutal regime in Iraq. These countries both now are experiencing for the first time in a long time the taste of freedom, of building a civil society, of building a country that is based on a Constitution, that is providing opportunities to all of their citizens.

There are potholes on the way to success, but there is no doubt in my mind that we need to keep moving forward; that these countries have a tremendous potential to set an example for that part of the world, especially Iraq, to set an example for the rest of the world as to the types of things that can happen. They are good people, they are moving in the right direction, and they are taking ownership for their country, the future of their country. What we need to do is we need to stand alongside them and to help guide them in the right direction.

SEARCHING FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under the Speaker'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, I come to the floor this evening basically to ask one question, and that is, where is Vice President CHENEY these days? Every once in a while he pops up at a reelection fund-raiser. In fact, he was just up in my home State of New Jersey on Monday. And last week he appeared at the Ronald Reagan Library in California, which is always a tough place for Republicans. CHENEYs went there to attack Senator KERRY's record on defense and national security issues.

Finally, this Monday, presumably on his way to New Jersey for his fund-raiser, the Vice President made time to go on Rush Limbaugh's show to attack his administration's former top counterterrorism official. Rush Limbaugh allowed the Vice President to get out his main message that Richard Clarke, the Bush administration's top counterterrorism expert, "Wasn't in the loop, frankly, on a lot of this stuff."

Mr. Vice President, I think that says a lot. When your top counterterrorism expert supposedly is not in the loop on what your administration is doing, how can you honestly say that you are giving terrorism the kind of attention that it warrants?

So, over the last week the Vice President has hung out with some Republican donors in New Jersey, Republican

loyalists at the Ronald Reagan Library, and Republican talk show host Rush Limbaugh. But for the better part of last year, the Vice President has been keeping a low profile. Why is he so afraid to step out of his Republican comfort zone?

I would suggest that the reason is that the Vice President does not want to have to answer more questions about his continued relationship with Halliburton. I have mentioned the Halliburton issue many times on this floor, along with a lot of my democratic colleagues. Back in the year 2002, Vice President DICK CHENEY said these words: "Halliburton is a fine company, and I am pleased that I was associated with the company."

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the facts show otherwise. Halliburton, a fine company? Well, let me give you some facts, Mr. Speaker.

First, Halliburton has acknowledged that it accepted up to \$6 million in kickbacks for its contract work in Iraq.

Another fact: Halliburton is now being investigated by the Pentagon for overcharging the American government for its work in Iraq.

A third fact: Halliburton faces criminal charges in a \$180 million international bribery scandal during the time CHENEY was CEO of the company.

A fourth fact: Halliburton has been repeatedly warned by the Pentagon that the food it was serving 110,000 U.S. troops in Iraq was dirty, and the Pentagon audit found blood all over the floor of the kitchens Halliburton supplied over in Iraq.

A fifth fact: Halliburton is getting around an American law that forbids doing business with rogue nations. Thanks to a giant loophole, Halliburton is able to do business in Iran, of all nations, through a subsidiary in the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Vice President characterize Halliburton as a fine company? Things are getting so bad with the company in Iraq that the Army is now considering other companies to compete against Halliburton for more than \$4 billion worth of additional contracts. But the Vice President continues to condone the actions of his former company.

From a purely financial perspective, it probably makes sense for Vice President CHENEY to lay low. After all, it is also financially beneficial for the Vice President to continue to praise Halliburton and duck questions about his continued connection with the company.

The Vice President tried to squash such a story when he appeared on Meet the Press last year. Vice President CHENEY stated then, "And since I left Halliburton to become George Bush's Vice President, I have severed all my ties with the company, gotten rid of all my financial interests. I have no financial interests in Halliburton of any kind, and haven't had now for over 3 years."

But, Mr. Speaker, despite the Vice President's claims, the Congressional Research Service issued a report several weeks later concluding that because CHENEY receives a deferred salary and continues to hold stock interests, he still has a financial interest in Halliburton. In fact, if the company were to go under, the Vice President could lose the deferred salary, a salary he is expected to continue to receive this year and next year.

Now, while the loss of more than \$200,000 over 1 year would not put a big dent in the Vice President's wallet, he clearly still has a stake in the success of Halliburton.

Vice President CHENEY also neglects to mention that he continues to hold more than 433,000 stock options with Halliburton. The Congressional Research Service report that states that these stock ties "represented a continued financial interest in those employers which makes them potential conflicts of interest."

Again, this was not the first time that Vice President CHENEY has misrepresented his role in Halliburton. Earlier this year, the Vice President stated in reference to government manipulation by Halliburton during his tenure, "I wouldn't know how to manipulate the process if I wanted to."

What the Vice President neglects to say is that Halliburton cashed in after CHENEY took over. Under CHENEY's leadership, Halliburton doubled the value of its government contracts. According to a report by the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity, the company took in revenue of \$2.3 billion on government contracts, which was up \$1.2 billion from the 5-year period before the Vice President arrived.

Now, I am not saying it is not possible that Halliburton is the right company to do this work, but then how does the Bush administration and the Republican Congress explain why there is so much secrecy surrounding the whole deal? Could it be that the Republican Congress and the Bush administration are concerned that the more light that is shed on Halliburton's use of taxpayer money, the more examples of waste and mismanagement are likely to be exposed?

Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that the Vice President continues to hide.

I want to talk this evening a little bit about the Vice President's Energy Task Force and the relationship with the Supreme Court Justice Scalia and the case that is now before the Supreme Court relative to the Energy Task Force.

Vice President CHENEY might also be staying out of the limelight these days because he does not want to answer tough questions about how he continues to abuse his power as Vice President by refusing to release documents that could significantly impact our Nation's future energy policy.

For 3 years now, the Vice President has done everything he can to keep the

records of his Energy Task Force secret. This secret task force developed President Bush's energy policy, a policy that was then made into legislation here in Congress. That legislation passed the House, but it is now stalled in the other body. Nevertheless, the end result was bad energy policy.

There is no doubt that the energy industry succeeded with its influence during these secret closed-door meetings in crafting a policy that benefited them, rather than benefiting Americans who at the time desperately needed relief from high energy prices.

For 3 years, the Vice President has refused to let the American people know who made up this Energy Task Force. For 3 years now, the Vice President has refused to let the American people now how and why the task force came to the conclusions that it did.

Finally, after 3 years of hiding the information, it appeared that we would finally get some of the information the Vice President was fighting so hard to keep secret.

□ 2310

Thanks to the Sierra Club and the conservative group called Judicial Watch who sued Vice President CHENEY seeking an accounting of energy industry participation in crafting the Bush administration's destructive energy policy, a district court ordered the Bush administration to provide information about participation from these industries, which the Bush administration refused to do. The administration's reason was they claimed constitutional immunity from such inquiries.

The district court rejected that contention, pointing out that the Bush administration was attempting, and I quote from the case, "to cloak what is tantamount to an aggrandizement of executive power with a legitimacy of precedent where none exists."

Refusing to give in to the Federal court's decision, Vice President CHENEY then appealed the decision, asking the D.C. district court to make a new law that would effectively shield the Bush administration from any scrutiny.

Now, imagine the arrogance, and I really think it is arrogance. The Bush administration actually went to a court and asked the court to shield President Bush, Vice President CHENEY, and the rest of the administration from any scrutiny. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the court denied the request.

But now, Vice President CHENEY has appealed the decision of the court to the U.S. Supreme Court, and on December 15, the Supreme Court agreed to take the case and will hear arguments next month in April.

Three weeks later, Justice Scalia and one of his children accompanied Vice President CHENEY on an Air Force 2 flight from Washington, D.C. to Morgan City, Louisiana. There, according to news reports, Justice Scalia and the Vice President were guests of Wallace

Carline, president of an energy services company, on a duck hunting vacation. Neither the Vice President nor Justice Scalia made this duck hunting vacation public. Had it not been for the investigative work of the L.A. Times, we might still not know that these two spent several days together hunting duck in Louisiana.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that this vacation serves as a conflict of interest and, because of that, Justice Scalia should recuse himself from hearing CHENEY's case involving the Energy Task Force. The Sierra Club asked Justice Scalia to do just that. But last week, Justice Scalia refused to recuse himself and attempted to defend his decision not to recuse himself in a 21-page memo that was released to the public. In that memo, Scalia describes how he enjoyed going hunting every year with his friend, Wallace Carline. And Scalia writes that "during my December 2002 visit, I learned that Mr. Carline was an admirer of Vice President CHENEY. Knowing that the Vice President with whom I am well acquainted is an enthusiastic duck hunter, I asked whether Mr. Carline would like to invite him to our next year's hunt." Scalia continued in this memo, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, "The answer was yes. I conveyed the invitation with my own warm recommendation in the spring of 2003 and received an acceptance subject, of course, to any superseding demands on the Vice President's time. The Vice President said that if he did go, I would be welcome to fly down to Louisiana with him."

Now, Mr. Speaker, just think about that explanation by Justice Scalia for a minute or so. Think about the apparent relationship these two men have, a relationship between two men who have worked in Washington for so many years and even worked in the Ford administration together, but now try and look at it the way that E.J. Dionne did in his Washington Post column yesterday. He did an op-ed in The Washington Post yesterday commenting on the relationship between Scalia and CHENEY and this duck hunt vacation, and that is what E.J. Dionne says in The Washington Post column yesterday: "Imagine you were in a bitter court fight with a former business partner. Would you want the judge in your case to be someone who went duck hunting with your opponent and flew to the hunt on your opponent's plane?" Dionne continues, "And now consider that you as a citizen have a right to know with whom CHENEY consulted in writing an energy bill that was overwhelmingly tilted towards the interests of an industry in which the Vice President was once a central player. Scalia admits that the recusal might be in order where the personal fortune or the personal freedom of the friend is at issue but," Dionne writes, "you shouldn't worry. What's at stake here are only CHENEY's political fortunes, the interests of the industry

that CHENEY once worked for, and the public's right to know. No big deal."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a big deal. Vice President CHENEY should have realized the conflict of interest and declined to join the Supreme Court Justice once he knew that the Supreme Court would be hearing the case, I should say should have declined to join the Supreme Court as a Justice in hearing this case because of the conflict of interest.

But, again, I go back, Mr. Speaker, to what I said in the beginning. What is it that the Vice President is trying to hide? I do not know that it would be embarrassing for Mr. CHENEY or to the Bush administration to have to admit that every member of the task force was an oil or gas executive. I mean, that is not going to be anything new. If that was what they were trying to hide, who would be surprised? I think it has to be something else. What is it that is so damaging in these documents? Now, could it be that somewhere within these documents there is proof that the Bush administration was looking at taking out Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in order to take control of that nation's oil reserves?

Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill stated in his book that Vice President CHENEY strongly suggested U.S. intervention in Iraq well before the terrorist attacks of September 11. Earlier this week, President Bush's former top antiterrorism advisor, again, that is Richard Clarke, also talked about how almost from day one the Bush administration was consumed with taking out Saddam Hussein. It began back in 2001, months after the new administration came to power. Richard Clarke says that he had been trying to schedule a cabinet-level priority meeting on terrorism. His first opportunity was a meeting with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Clarke said that he started the meeting by saying that we needed to deal with bin Laden. Wolfowitz's response was, "No, no, no, we do not have to deal with al Qaeda. Why are we talking about that little guy? We have to talk about Iraqi terrorism against the United States."

Now, Clarke then responded to Wolfowitz by saying, "Paul, there hasn't been any Iraqi terrorism against the United States in 8 years." Clarke turned to the Deputy Director of the CIA who agreed with his assessment with regard to Iraq.

The amazing thing, though, Mr. Speaker, is that this conversation took place 3 months after Bush and CHENEY took over control of the White House. Clarke's assessment, of course, seems to support that of former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, and Clarke goes on to detail conversations with both President Bush and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld after 9-11 when both wanted to go after Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Speaker, additional evidence exists that CHENEY played an early planning role in the war in a National Security Council document dated 3/2001, months before September 11. According to a report in the *New Yorker* magazine, the top-secret document written by a high National Security Council staffer "directed the NSC staff to cooperate fully with the Energy Task Force as it considered the melding of two seemingly unrelated areas of policy: the review of operational policies towards rogue nations such as Iraq and actions regarding the capture of new and existing oil and gas fields."

Now, the melding of two seemingly unrelated areas of policy. Think of that, Mr. Speaker: the Bush administration's obsession with taking out Saddam Hussein and a document that discusses the administration's idea to capture new and existing oil and gas fields.

My question is, Does Vice President CHENEY want to keep his energy task force secret because perhaps he does not want to admit that the administration was exploring ways of taking out Saddam Hussein before 9-11, strictly for the purpose of taking control of their rich oil fields?

Now, I do not know the answer to that question, and obviously neither do the American people, because we are not allowed access to the documents that talk about the energy task force and what they did and who served on it. We do not know it because the Vice President refuses to allow the American public to see these documents. I only can hope that when the Supreme Court hears this case next month that there are enough Justices that will do the right thing and say that these documents should be made public. But I certainly hope that we do not have a 5-4 decision, Mr. Speaker, with Mr. Scalia casting the fifth vote, because there is no question in my mind that he should have recused himself and that there is a conflict of interest. I just hope, and it would certainly be nice, Mr. Speaker, if the Vice President would finally come out of his hole, be straightforward with the American people about Halliburton, about the energy task force and other things that I have not mentioned here tonight.

□ 2320

I know that he is not necessarily going to listen to me, but I hope that if we continue to raise this issue about what he is hiding with regards to Halliburton, what he is hiding with regard to the Energy Task Force, that maybe there will be an opportunity to see what the documents are in the Energy Task Force and why they have been hidden this long.

I see that my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), is here and I know he also wanted to address the issue of Iraq as well.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr.

PALLONE). I just wanted to share for a few moments a letter that has been sent to each of us regarding the budget, because I think it is timely. We are likely to vote on the budget tomorrow afternoon, and it is a budget that is woefully inadequate.

And I know sometimes we stand up here as Democrats and people who may be watching think, well, they are just partisan or what they are saying is simply based upon their political preferences rather than on what is best for public policy.

I have a letter here from the Disabled American Veterans and it was sent to every Member of the House of Representatives and I would like to share with my colleague some of the things that are in this letter. It was written and signed by Alan Bower, the National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans.

"Dear Representative, As the National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, I write to urge you to oppose and vote against H. Con. Res. 393, the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2005." And then the letter goes on and talks about how we are short-changing VA health care.

We are at war and yet the President actually sent us a veterans' budget this year that was woefully inadequate. It called for an increase in the costs of prescription drugs for many of our seniors and our veterans. It called for an annual enrollment fee of \$250 for many of our veterans. It continues to shut out many of our Priority 7 and 8 veterans, and literally prevents those that are referred to as Priority 8 veterans from even enrolling in the VA health care system.

We continue to have a situation where the VA has literally formulated a policy that prohibits many of their health care providers from actively marketing VA services to veterans.

But I think this letter is rather devastating because the DAV is not a partisan group. It is just simply a group that was developed to advocate for the needs of the disabled veterans who have served our Nation. And so this letter that we have received says, "The inadequate appropriations provided for in this budget resolution will support medical treatments for 170,000 fewer veterans than the Department of Veterans Affairs could treat with the funding which was recommended by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee," a committee that I serve on. "It will support 13,000 fewer full-time employees for veterans' medical care. With the level of appropriations in the House budget resolution, VA will be required to delay medical care for some veterans and deny it altogether for other sick and disabled veterans, just to enable it to meet inflationary costs, including increases in employee wages."

And then the National Commander of the DAV writes this paragraph. He says, "Short-changing veterans in this budget resolution is all the more objectionable because it in no way is neces-

sitated by our fiscal situation, but rather is part of a larger objective to make deep cuts in spending on veterans' and other domestic programs at the same time far more costly cuts are being made in taxes.

"The House budget resolution is also the more objectionable because it is part of a greater plan to impose these cuts on discretionary programs such as veterans' medical care, and to impose a freeze on any improvements or adjustments in benefits programs such as veterans' disability compensation in fiscal years 2006 through 2009.

"To the veterans of this Nation," he writes, "it is incomprehensible that our government cannot afford to fund their medical care and benefit programs at a time it can afford generous tax cuts costing hundreds of billions of dollars."

Now, this letter was written not by a Democrat partisan, but by the National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans. And basically what he says is, we are giving tax cuts to the wealthiest among us, at the same time that we are limiting the funding we are providing to our VA, so that medical care will not be available in a timely manner to those who have served this Nation.

And then the letter says, in conclusion, the DAV must ask that Congress restore some sense of reason, responsibility and justice to the budget process. There must be some balance between the goal of reducing taxes and the government responsibility of meeting our national obligations to veterans whose contributions and sacrifices have made us the most secure and prosperous nation on Earth. Then they ask that we vote against this budget that is going to be brought to this floor tomorrow afternoon.

So my friend from New Jersey is talking about the Vice President and the fact that he tends to remain hidden much of the time. He does come out occasionally for a fundraiser. But I would like the Vice President to explain to us how he and the President can support a budget that wants to make tax cuts permanent for the wealthiest and yet is short-changing the medical care that our veterans need.

The fact is that we are creating disabled veterans on a daily basis. We all know that. Sadly, we have seen the loss of really hundreds of lives in Iraq, but what many people do not understand is that for every soldier whose life is lost in Iraq, we are having six soldiers seriously injured. And they are coming back to this country, many of them without their arms or legs. Some have been blinded. Others terribly disfigured, and yet we are not providing adequate resources.

I do not understand the President in this regard. I simply do not understand how a President who calls himself a wartime President and who apparently enjoys spending time with our military, we see him standing in front of soldiers with flags waving, having his

picture taken, how can this President not fully fund the medical care that is necessary to adequately treat those who have fought for our Nation in the past?

It really puzzles me. I do not understand why the administration does not say, here is the money you need, and simply provide the needed funding.

Now, tomorrow we are going to have the AMVETS, the American Veterans here in Washington. They are going to be testifying before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and we are going to be having this vote. And I just urge, I would hope that the President, the Vice President, the members of his Cabinet would rethink their priorities and would provide the kind of resources that are needed so that we can have timely health care provided, high-quality health care provided, affordable health care provided to those who have served our country.

I thank my friend from New Jersey for allowing me to speak about this subject this evening.

Mr. PALLONE. I just wanted to commend my colleague from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND). I know that not only is he a member of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs with myself, but he has often spoken out on concerns about veterans.

□ 2330

As you pointed out, I think you made references to the fact that the Democrats have a substitute tomorrow on the budget, or an alternative budget is I guess the best way to describe it, which would make sure that veterans health care receive significant funding so that we do have some significant improvements over what the President has requested in terms of the amount of money that goes to veterans health care.

I just wanted to make two remarks. First of all, I have to tell you that I get calls every day in my District offices, people complaining about veterans not having access to health care either because it is difficult to get services or they have to wait a long time or whatever. We just opened a new clinic at Fort Monmouth, an outpatient clinic, but there is just the constant need for more services, and I do not understand it either.

I am not saying that you and I disagree, but certainly Democrats and Republicans can disagree over the justification for the war in Iraq. We know there were not any weapons of mass destruction, and many of us who voted against the war feel somewhat vindicated in the sense that we realize now that the justification that was put forward by the President for the war, which was the weapons of mass destruction, clearly is not there. I mean, we know it is not.

Regardless of how you felt about the war, whether we should have gone, we should not have gone, there is just no way to justify that when people come back that they are not adequately

cared for, and again, the problems that you point out are not just with regard to Iraq, although that is certainly important, but also World War II veterans, Korean, all veterans.

It just seems to me that it is totally unacceptable to say that after people fight and are seriously injured, that they come back and are not adequately cared for, but we know that is often the case.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if my friend will yield for one more moment, I read the letter that was signed by the national commander of the Disabled American Veterans, but I have another letter here that has been signed by the national legislative director of AMVETS, the national legislative director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the national legislative director of the Disabled American Veterans and the national legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and in their letter, which was sent to each Member of this House. We all received one. There is not a Member, not a Democrat or Republican in this chamber or who serves in this chamber, that did not receive this letter from these four veterans organizations, and I would just like to share with you one paragraph from that letter.

It says, Passage of the budget resolution, and what they are talking about is the Republican budget resolution that is going to be brought to this floor tomorrow, passage of the budget resolution, as presented, would be a disservice to those men and women who have served this country and who are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world in our fight against terrorism.

Now, the President cannot have it both ways. He cannot, on the one hand, claim to be the wartime President and say we are going to do everything we can to win the war against terror and, on the other hand, fail to fully fund those medical services which will provide care for the wounded who are returning to this country in significant numbers.

As I said to my friend from New Jersey, this is not a partisan argument. This is a letter that came to every Member of this House from these four veterans organizations. These are not Democrat or Republican organizations. These are organizations which have been established specifically to advocate for the needs of veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Disabled Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the National AMVETS, and it is a pretty strongly worded letter, I will say that, and it lays it out real clearly to say that this budget will be a disservice, not only to those who have served but to those who are currently serving.

We have got men and women, as you and I stand here in the safety of this Chamber, thousands of miles from us who are facing danger every moment of every day that they are there in that

country, and the least we can do is say to them we care enough about you and we honor your service to this country sufficiently to provide the kind of health care that you are entitled to receive once you return to this country, especially if you have been terribly wounded or injured in the battle.

That is why we have been called upon by these various veterans organizations to reject this budget tomorrow, to vote "no," to force this House to go back and to do the right thing, to restore an adequate level of funding for our veterans health care.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your comments, and I kind of wanted to go back. As you were reading that second letter, I was thinking in the back of my mind about your question that you originally posed, which is how is it possible that President Bush and Vice-President CHENEY and the Bush administration, the Republican colleagues that we have here in the House can, on the one hand vote, for the war, spend money to conduct the war, advocate that we continue to be there for certainly in the foreseeable future and, at the same time, not pay for the health care benefits or adequate health care for the veterans.

I was thinking about your question, and I really think that I do not believe that anybody's cold-hearted or bad. I think the President is a good person. The vice president is well motivated. Republican leadership is well motivated. I am sure they want to help the average American if they can, but I think it is really ideology, and I have found that so many times with the Bush administration and with the Republican leadership here in the House, they are so determined to follow that certain ideology or maybe they are liked trapped by the ideology, that they cannot look at the facts.

In other words, their ideology tells them that Congress or Washington, whatever, should get out of the business of government; that the government is somehow a bad thing; that government should not administer social programs; that government should not provide health care; that that is not a role somehow of the government. The ideology says that health care, for example, is not something that the government should be doing. It should be done by the private sector.

So maybe what they say to themselves is, okay, well, these veterans fought in the war, but it is really not a good idea for the government to provide them with health care because we do not think that the government should perform that function. It is sort of an ideologic conviction on their part. So, as a result, they do not feel the necessity to help the veterans because their ideology stands in the way of the facts. The facts are these people are maimed, people need health care, they served their country so you provide them health care. It is like a commitment, but if your ideology tells you the government should not be providing health care, that that is not a

function of government, then you justify not providing health care.

I do not know how else to explain it because I cannot believe that they are cold-hearted. I do not believe that. I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the fact that we have so many wounded coming back from Iraq. I would just like to share with my friend that recently it was reported that during World War II we had three soldiers seriously wounded for every soldier that was killed. That was World War II. During the Vietnam conflict, we had four soldiers wounded for every soldier that was killed. In this war, we are having six soldiers seriously wounded for every soldier whose life is lost.

□ 2340

Now, there is some good news, and the good news is this: we are now able to save the lives of many of our soldiers who are seriously injured because of advances in medical technology, and that is good. But consequently, we are having more seriously wounded soldiers coming out of this war who are desperately in need of high-quality, adequate medical care. I was thinking, and I have shared this with the gentleman before, the young man from my district in Ohio who joined the service at 17 years of age and as he was standing guard duty in Baghdad on his 19th birthday, the morning of his birthday a truck bomb exploded, and one whole side of his face was seriously damaged. I visited him at Walter Reed Medical Center near where we are tonight.

He is going to be going through several surgeries. They are going to have to take bone from his hip and refashion his jawbone, and he is going to have to go through skin grafts. He is just one of hundreds and hundreds of soldiers who are newly wounded. This is happening in part, and I share this because we want to believe that the administration and those responsible for pursuing this war have the best of intentions. But the fact is that we sent our soldiers into battle when this war began last March without protective body armor.

I had a series of communications with Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, over a several month period of time; and I kept asking when are our soldiers going to be protected with this body armor. It took them an entire year before they were able to give me in writing an assurance that all of our soldiers in Iraq were protected. An entire year.

I have asked Secretary Rumsfeld how many of our soldiers have lost their lives because they were in danger in battle without protective equipment.

Now, I hope that when the Pentagon tells us that all of the soldiers in Iraq have this body armor, they are being accurate. But there is another problem that is every bit as serious, and that is the fact that we have vehicles over

there without proper armor. We have Humvees over there that are not armored, and so many of the wounds that are taking place over there are the result of our vehicles passing over bombs that have been placed in the roadway and exploding. We have Humvees that are not armored, and I can tell Members that the company that provides armored Humvees and the kits that can be used to armor the Humvees that are already there without proper armor is an Ohio-based company. It is in Fairfield, Ohio. That company tells me they are capable of producing 500 armored vehicles a month, and yet the Pentagon is only asking for 220 of these vehicles a month, and the Pentagon is saying that it will be the end of 2005 before the vehicles that are being used by our soldiers in Iraq are properly armored. Think about that.

We have put about \$150 billion into this war effort, and it took this administration a full year to adequately provide body armor for our soldiers, and they still have not provided armored vehicles. So many of our soldiers are being maimed and killed because they are in vehicles that are not properly armored, and we cannot produce those vehicles more rapidly and deploy them in Iraq more rapidly. Why are we not doing it? We simply have an administration that is not willing to spend the money to get it done as quickly as it is possible to get it done.

That is something that the American people need to know about. That is something that the families in this country who have loved ones in Iraq need to be aware of. And the Members who serve in this Chamber and the Senators who serve in the other Chamber need to be hearing from the American people about this. There should be no hesitancy to spend whatever is necessary to make sure that our soldiers have the best equipment, and everything that can be done to keep them safe should be done to keep them safe.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the gentleman is bringing this up. The gentleman spoke about the budget at the beginning, and it goes back to the fact that this administration continues to try to hide the cost or reduce or suggest that the cost of the war is less than it is. I am sure that has something to do with it.

The President's budget did not even include the funding for the war in Iraq. I know the Democratic budget, the alternative, certainly does; and I am not sure what the Republican budget that we will vote on tomorrow has, but when President Bush presented his budget in February, he did not include the cost of the war.

What we see is this administration constantly tries to downplay the cost, cut corners in terms of paying for what is necessary for the war in the same way that they are not paying for the veterans health care. It is an effort again to try to hide what is really going on, not only in terms of how we got there, but also the costs, and what the long-term costs are going to be.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to conclude my remarks by saying this, that there is an effort to hide the cost of this war. I think that effort is seen in the fact that when the bodies of the soldiers who have lost their lives in Iraq are brought to Dover Air Force Base, there is a prohibition against having cameras there and pictures being taken of the flag-draped coffins being unloaded. I was just told today that even the families of those soldiers are being prohibited from being there and being present when their loved one is brought back and brought off those planes, and I think that is unconscionable if that is taking place. I want to verify that, but a colleague told me that this afternoon in this Chamber that families are literally being prohibited from being present when their loved ones are brought back.

There is an effort to hide that cost and keep that away from the American people. I also think there is an effort to de-emphasize the horrendous wounds and disabilities that are being experienced by those who are coming back; and certainly there is an effort to minimize the financial costs of this war, the fact that we have spent, the estimates are somewhere around \$150 billion already, about \$1 billion or more a week, and the President is going to come back later this year, probably after the election, and ask for an additional \$50 billion or \$80 billion.

So the gentleman is right, there is an effort to hide the true cost of this war, both in the loss of human life, the serious injuries that are being experienced by our men and women, and the financial burden that is being placed upon this country at a time when we are not meeting our needs right here at home, and we are not fully equipping our troops.

To think that someone could be terribly injured unnecessarily or could lose their life simply because they are not well equipped as they are fighting this war is simply unacceptable.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) for sharing this time with our colleagues.

It is important that what we hear tonight is really the question of choices and judgment. The gentleman from Ohio was speaking about the judgment of not providing for our troops, but also not providing for our veterans. Having a veterans hospital in my district, I think one of the issues not yet included in the war cost is the long-term cost to not only the injured and maimed victims, the veterans, but also their families.

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I was with the American Association of Psychiatric Professionals. We were discussing the impact of war, the high

numbers of suicide that are occurring in Iraq. That is not taken into account, if you will, in the cost of war. My colleague spoke about not having flak jackets or bulletproof vests and humvees that were reinforced. That is not taken into account, making the right judgment on the cost of war. We still do not know prospectively how much this war will cost as it continues because we realize that even with the alleged transfer of power that is supposed to take place in June, any of us who have been to Iraq have been told by the soldiers on the ground that there is no structure for us to leave at this time. There is no, if you will, government or law enforcement or legal structure in place to secure Iraq.

And so it is a question whether this administration has made the right choices. First of all, the choice to go into Iraq and then the choice now to go it alone without our allies because we have so much intimidated them or maybe not so much intimidated them, maybe even offended them. It is a question of right choices.

In the remaining moments that I have, I wanted to join the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey to sort of emphasize this whole question of choices. I believe that what the American people want most of all is good government. If they have good government, they feel that the leaders in Washington will make the right choices on their behalf. I want to bring up just a point that was made from the distinguished gentleman from Ohio. I think it is a travesty that loved ones and others are not able to welcome home our fallen heroes. This ban on Dover Air Force Base, which I believe exists, I do not know if the families are forbidden from coming, but I recall the tribute that has been given to our fallen soldiers as far back as I can recall, the Vietnam War when they would come in to Dover Air Force Base or other Air Force bases. I know that they were welcomed in ceremonies. It is noticeable that we have not been able to welcome our fallen heroes. They are buried, of course, in their respective communities but the Nation has not seen both the price of war but the ultimate sacrifice that they have been willing to give. I wonder why that occurs? It is the judgment. It is wondering why this administration is making these kinds of judgments on behalf of the American people. Is this good for the American people not to know those who have given their life on behalf of this country?

Then I would say that as we think about this, I sat in today very briefly on the 9/11 commission hearings. Let me make it very clear, these are outstanding Americans who have offered themselves to serve on the 9/11 commission. I noted while I was in the hearing room several family members who were there. One very potent message came through those hearings and those persons who were speaking, is that we can speak in generalities and we can speak

about the conflict between administrations or even partisan tones but we have got to realize that 3,000 plus lost their life in 9/11 and this is no time to be hiding the ball. This is no time to be asking Dick Clarke is he a staff member of JOHN KERRY. This is a time to listen to Richard Clarke as to whether or not this administration did not put its fullest muscle, mind and heart against the war against terrorism before 9/11. I noted just an undertone of some of those questions in that hearing room were more interested in getting one-upsmanship on Richard Clarke than listening and trying to find out what is the future of this Nation in finding out the ways to secure the homeland and to provide for us the opportunity to discover the truth. Was this administration asleep at the wheel as relates to the war against terrorism? Did Mr. Clarke offer a report in January of 2001 speaking about the threat of al Qaeda? Did he make a report that 35 Americans had died during the Clinton administration and then trying to reinforce the importance of looking to al Qaeda during 2001? This is the question of judgment and choices. And so I am concerned as we look at the future of this Nation that we have not been making the right choices.

I held a Medicare hearing against this atrocity that was passed in the last session when the vote was held open for 4 hours. My seniors get it. My seniors understand that we cannot negotiate for the cheapest price in terms of prescription drug benefits. My seniors understand that they may be pushed into an HMO and not have the ability to choose their own physician. My seniors get it. In fact, they were asking me who should we call. I called one of our local chain pharmacies, and I am going to call the name, CVS. I am told that now CVS has a memo out saying, do not give to Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE the information she requested on the cost of prescription drugs in our respective stores. I understand there is a memorandum that I am going to secure from CVS. But that shows that we must have a conspiracy, if you will, from the ground up and from the top down to block seniors from getting the lowest price, from not giving truth to those of us who have the responsibility of oversight, and to protect the hide-and-go-seek Medicare bill that was passed in the last session that will do nothing but bust the budget, not knowing the actual cost of it, \$536 billion and growing. At least with the Democratic proposal we were guaranteeing a Medicare prescription drug benefit under Medicare. This has no guarantee.

Let me tell you about those prescription cards, which I welcome. I told my community, please use them. But there must be one for each of the pharmaceuticals and they can choose and put on that list the drugs that they want any day of the week within a 7-day period and so the actual prescriptions that you need may not be listed and

may not be covered. This is a question of judgment.

As I go back to the 9/11 hearings, Mr. Clarke made it very clear that the distraction of the war in Iraq has given a death blow, if you will, to the war on terrorism. It has been a distraction but literally it has taken us off course. I am only hoping that the 9/11 hearings will find themselves back on track and get away from partisan politics and be able to give at least a limited focus on what we should be doing to secure the homeland. I am concerned. That is why there was a very deep exchange, if you will, with some Members, including the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, not in undermining my colleagues who are investigating 9/11 and the war in Iraq but to say that this is so serious, so serious that it is important for the full Congress to investigate but as well it is important for us to know as much as we can, not to suggest that anyone is not being effective in their job or the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee on the Judiciary or Homeland Security but we cannot stand on protocol. We have lost lives in 9/11 and we have lost lives in Iraq.

Let me just close by saying this as we talk about the question of judgment. We have looked over the past couple of weeks about some of the abuses unfortunately that we have seen in this administration and I must say, my respect for the Supreme Court as a lawyer is maintained but the election in 2000 was evidence that sometimes partisan politics raises its ugly head. A decision in the Bush v. Gore case is still one that one wonders how that framework and that ultimate decision was made. How do you choose between candidates for President of the United States? How do you determine whose equal rights were denied? Al Gore who was denied his rights in the Supreme Court of Florida, denied his rights to have a full recount, or George Bush.

But in the instance of Justice Scalia on this question of recusing oneself on the ultimate decisions dealing with the energy task force that precipitated the energy bill, let me say that I voted for the energy bill and I believe that we need a real, if you will, energy policy here in the United States. But I think this is a question of judgment. This is a question of good government. I have tried to give examples of the need for good government. We cannot have good government if we do not adhere to the Constitution which says there are free separate branches, executive, legislature and the Supreme Court. And if there is any suggestion of taint, any suggestion of conflict of interest, any suggestion of abuse, then we have lost the highroad of which government should stand.

And so I believe that it is important that if a justice has any reason to believe that there may be some suggestion of conflict, then it is their obligation to recuse themselves from any decision. I think it is the obligation of

Justice Scalia and any other judge to recuse themselves in any decisions on this question of the energy task force and who should be exposed or announced and who should not. I believe in executive privilege, but I believe that there should be an ultimate review of the courts so that we in government can do our jobs. And if we do our jobs, that is all the American people can ask of us.

We have had some bad judgments. I hope that we can get back on track. I hope the American people will not perceive this to be a question of partisanship. My heart was very heavy in that hearing room today. It was heavy because I was looking for some sense that the truth would be determined and I was hoping for those families that we would step aside from who had a book or who did not have a book or who was working for President Bush and who was not working for President Bush and find out the truth for the American people and those families that lost their life and find out the truth about weapons of mass destruction and why we went into Iraq.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

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

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

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.
Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. MCGOVERN, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. CASE, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. WYNN, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. MEEKS of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.
Mrs. BLACKBURN, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. BISHOP of Utah, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. BONNER, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. FEENEY, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. CANTOR, for 5 minutes, March 30.
Mr. MCCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. PEARCE, for 5 minutes, today.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on March 23, 2004 he pre-

sented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 3724. To amend section 220 of the National Housing Act to make a technical correction to restore allowable increases in the maximum mortgage limits for FHA-insured mortgages for multifamily housing projects to cover increased costs of installing a solar energy system or residential energy conservation measures.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at midnight), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 25, 2004, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

7237. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket No. FEMA-P-7632] received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7238. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket No. FEMA-D-7551] received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7239. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations — received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7240. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations — received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7241. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations — received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7242. A letter from the Acting General Counsel/FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket No. FEMA-7825] received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

7243. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the first annual financial report to Congress required by the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002 (MDUFMA), covering FY 2003; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7244. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting The Department's Fiscal Year 2003 annual report as required by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, as amended, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 9620; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7245. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting copies of international agreements, other than treaties, entered into by the United States, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b(a); to the Committee on International Relations.

7246. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a report on the activities of the United States Government departments and agencies relating to the prevention of nuclear proliferation from January 1 to December 31, 2003, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 3281; to the Committee on International Relations.

7247. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to Section 620C(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and in accordance with section 1(a)(6) of Executive Order 13313, a report prepared by the Department of State and the National Security Council on the progress toward a negotiated solution of the Cyprus question covering the period December 1, 2003 through January 30, 2004; to the Committee on International Relations.

7248. A letter from the Auditor, District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of a report entitled, "Certification of the Fiscal Year 2004 Revenue Estimate in Support of the District's \$173,995,000 General Obligation Bonds (Series 2003B) and \$140,325,000 Multimodal General Obligation Bonds (Series 2003C and 2003D)," pursuant to D.C. Code section 47—117(d); to the Committee on Government Reform.

7249. A letter from the President, African Development Foundation, transmitting the Foundation's annual fiscal year management report for fiscal years ending September 30, 2003 and 2002, pursuant to the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-576, and the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA); to the Committee on Government Reform.

7250. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-11, Part 2, the Final Annual Performance Plan for FY 2005; to the Committee on Government Reform.

7251. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Interior, transmitting a draft bill "To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a rural water supply program in the Reclamation States for the purpose of providing a clean, safe, affordable and reliable water supply to rural residents and for other purposes"; to the Committee on Resources.

7252. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish Observer Program [Docket No. 030818203-3328-02; I.D. 071503D] (RIN: 0648-AR32) received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

7253. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Zone (EEZ) Off Alaska; Provisions of the American Fisheries Act (AFA) [Docket No. 030808196-4036-03; I.D. 062403C] (RIN: 0648-AR13) received March 19, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

7254. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Amendment