

Americans without health insurance, \$1 trillion dollars worth of foreclosed corporate assets, poverty rolls increasing, you would change direction. What are we about to do with this budget? Put our foot on the accelerator and do the same old thing that will result in the same policies.

In 3 years we have added \$3 trillion to the Nation's deficit, and nearly 3 million Americans have lost their jobs. Three wars, three tax cuts, \$500 billion in deficits. That has been the result of the economic policies of this administration; and this budget that we are going to vote on will continue the policies that have given America woefully inadequate services on health care, college education, jobs, retirement security, and also economic security.

This budget and the President's economic vision is really the tale of two budgets, one for America, one for Iraq. We have spent well over \$100 billion on Iraq's occupation but without promising the same future that we are promising the Iraqi children and families.

Let us just go through it.

When we talk about universal health care in Iraq and free job training to Iraqis, 44 million Americans go without health insurance and 8.2 million Americans are without jobs.

In the area of health care, 2,200 Iraqi health officials are being trained by the United States, and 8,000 volunteers in Iraq are receiving free training. In America, under the budget being proposed, we have cut health training funds by 64 percent here at home.

One hundred fifty clinics and hospitals in Iraq have been rebuilt, serving 3 million Iraqis. One hundred percent prenatal and infant coverage in Iraq. In America, community health clinics cut by 91 percent. Maternal and Child Health Care, Healthy Start, family planning, all frozen resulting from cuts in those budgets.

In the area of jobs, in Iraq \$60 million is being spent to train Iraqi veterans for past wars; and yet in this budget we gut veterans and veteran health care, resulting in every veterans organization opposing the budget we are going to vote on.

In the area of education in Iraq, we have built 2,300 schools for the Iraqi children but have underfunded Leave No Child Behind by \$8 billion here at home. Iraqi universities are getting \$20 million for higher ed partnerships. In America, we have cut \$91 million from the Perkins loans and frozen Pell Grants for college education.

In the area of police and security, \$470 billion is being spent, \$500 billion is being spent for Iraqi police. Yet the COPS, Community Police Program, \$659 million in this budget is cut from the police that we put on our streets here at home.

In the area of housing, \$470 million is being spent for Iraq public housing. Yet we have cut in this budget that the President proposes and the Republicans are going to vote on \$791 million from section 8 public housing vouchers.

In the area of environment, in Iraq, \$3.6 billion in waters and sewer improvement; in America, a \$500 million cut from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund that provides drinking water for every American.

In the area of ports, the Port of Umm Qasar in Iraq was completely rebuilt for economic development. The Army Corps of Engineers here in the United States, a 63 percent cut for port security upgrades.

Roads. We spent \$240 million on roads and bridges for the Iraqi infrastructure, and yet mass transit here in the United States in the budget will be frozen.

As the President seeks reelection he will be running on a pledge that he kept. He was opposed to nation-building, and he has kept his pledge. The problem is he is opposed to nation-building here at home in America. We can do it in Iraq, but we should not leave America behind.

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly this morning about what is happening with Medicare. We are approaching a time when seniors will have an option for the transitional card that allows them to have immediate help with their prescription drug benefits.

At CMS they are working right now on a plan where seniors will be able to call in, talk about the drugs that they personally are taking, and for that 18 months or so of transition receive the help that they initially can get as we are putting this first major change since 1965 of Medicare into place.

Seniors across the country have been waiting for too long for Medicare to cover life-saving prescription drugs, not the fault of this House which for three Congresses now has tried to solve this problem and has voted to solve this problem.

In 1965, when President Johnson signed Medicare into law, prescription drugs were not a big part of health care. In 2003, President Bush understood that they had become a big part of health care. The Congress understood that as well, and we have strengthened that program for millions of seniors to be able to rely on new coverage in the future.

□ 0930

For the first time in Medicare's history, a prescription drug benefit will be offered to all 40 million seniors and disabled Americans to help them afford the cost of their medicines. No senior has to take this benefit, no senior has to make a choice about changing their Medicare if they do not want to, but this offer is available to all seniors and, again, available to all who have

Medicare coverage because of a disability.

Americans of all ages can benefit from the creation of health savings accounts, which will give individuals more control over the cost of their health care and access to affordable, flexible coverage; and for the 888,126 beneficiaries in my State of Missouri who will have access to a Medicare prescription drug benefit for the first time in history, help is on the way.

In fact, 214,754 Missouri seniors will have drug coverage they otherwise would not have, and almost 270,000 beneficiaries in Missouri who have limited savings and low incomes, generally low income in that case would be for individuals with income below \$12,123 a year or for couples with income below \$16,232 a year, those individuals have even more benefits.

Initially, they get the card for free. They get \$600 of credit toward their drug bill on the card that they will receive this year and another \$600 next year. They will pay no premium when it comes time for the prescription drug coverage, if they opt to take that coverage; and they will be responsible only for a very small copayment, no more than \$2 for generic drugs, \$5 for brand-name drugs.

For people who have been struggling to pay for the drugs that their doctors told them they needed for their own health, this makes a huge difference in their ability now to have the kind of health care that they deserve, the kind of health care that is available, the kind of health care that will be covered under Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, all these numbers add up to savings. They add up to access to life-saving drugs. They add up to better health care for seniors of this country. This is a huge and important change.

I am pleased that this House could be part of it, that our friends on the other side of the building would join us and that the President signed this important legislation into law.

HONORING JOSEPH FORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BRADLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to the life and the memory of a great American, Mr. Joseph Ford. Following a brief illness, Joe passed away on March 16. His death, a loss to us all.

As the veterans community in New Hampshire and throughout the Nation celebrates the life of this exceptional person, I would like to take an opportunity to honor a beloved New Hampshire resident.

Joe served our country valiantly in the United States Air Force and retired after more than 20 years of service. Following his service, Joe became an

active member of the New Hampshire chapter of the Disabled American Veterans and was to be installed as the next DAV commander at the State convention in June.

Recently, Joe received letters of encouragement and appreciation from President George W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and New Hampshire Governor Craig Benson for his work within the veterans community.

Mr. Speaker, we are all at a great loss because of Joe Ford's passing, but can be comforted by knowing he made a lasting impact through his life's work. I am honored to bring his life to the attention of this body of Congress and to our Nation today.

My thoughts are with Joe's wife, Lillian; his two children, Paul and Mary; and all those who knew Joe, especially those throughout the veterans community during this difficult time of bereavement.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 35 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m. today.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, You speak to Your people through prophets and leaders as of old. Be with Your people now and guide the leaders of this government as You did in the days of Habakkuk, the prophet.

When the cry for help was raised, You did not seem to listen. When the shout of violence was heard in the streets, You seemed not to intervene. But then You, O Lord, answered and said through the prophet, "The vision still has its time. Press on to its fulfillment and it will not disappoint. The just man because of his faith shall live."

Help us never to lose vision which provides hope. The value of such faith does not depend on fulfillment of expectation, but gives power to transform the lives of the faithful, to wait, to work with faith both today and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. THOMPSON of California led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SALUTING CITIZENS OF PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA, ON THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING

(Mr. GOODE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, Prince Edward County is marking the 250th anniversary of its founding on January 1, 1754, by act of the Virginia General Assembly. Prince Edward County played a vital role in the early days of the history of this Nation as an agricultural and major shipping distribution center.

Prince Edward County is the home to two premier institutions of higher learning, Hampden-Sydney College and Longwood University. Prince Edward County counts among its most honored natives two men who held governorships of other States, Henry Watkins Allen in Louisiana and Sterling Price in Missouri. Also, General Joseph E. Johnston of the Confederate Army is a native son as well as civil rights leader Dr. Vernon Johns; J. B. Fuqua, philanthropist; and the first African American United States Senator, Blanche K. Bruce; as well as Lieutenant General Sam V. Wilson, former president of Hampden-Sydney College.

Prince Edward County has also been called home by such noted persons as Virginia Governor Phillip McKinney; civil rights leader Reverend L. Francis Griffin; president of Tuskegee Institute, Robert Russa Moton; and medical researcher D. Walter Reed.

Prince Edward County also played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s as part of the Brown v. Board of Education suit.

In closing, I salute the citizens of Prince Edward County in recognition of their 250th anniversary.

KICKING THE RECOVERY INTO HIGH GEAR

(Mr. DELAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, during this final week before the spring break, the House will cap off a strong winter of work helping the American people grow the economy and create jobs. With positive economic news continuing to come in, we can be sure times are good, yet equally sure they are not perfect.

More Americans are working today than at any time in our history. Unemployment and interest rates remain low, the budget we passed last week is pointing the way toward fiscal accountability, and every day that passes brings us another day closer to victory in the war on terror.

But, Mr. Speaker, our manufacturing industry continues to feel the squeeze of outsourcing; and certain segments of the population have not yet come to fully enjoy the economic recovery evidenced in all this economic data. People are still hurting. But thankfully, more help will soon be on the way. This week the House will consider the long-awaited Federal highway reauthorization bill, which will set and deliver on the highway transportation investment priorities for the rest of the decade. It is estimated that every billion dollars spent on highways creates 47,500 jobs. The TEA-LU bill we will take up this week will authorize \$275 billion over the next 6 years.

This is a jobs bill, plain and simple. When a new highway is built, new neighborhoods follow, then businesses to serve those neighborhoods, and then businesses to serve those businesses. A highway does not just mean asphalt. It means families and car pools and schools and office parks and grocery stores and shopping malls. It means more new jobs, from waiters and convenience store clerks to doctors and stockbrokers. Added to the tax relief Congress passed in 2001 and 2003, the highway bill will further grow the American economy, creating jobs, expanding opportunity, and changing lives along the way.

Less than a week since we passed one of the strongest, most pro-growth budgets in history and less than a week before we receive March job creation numbers, now is the perfect time for us to move on the highway bill. It is time, Mr. Speaker, to help the American people kick our economic recovery into high gear.

WE HAVE REASON TO BE SKEPTICAL OF RICHARD CLARKE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)