

of Health and Human Services to hide the fact that minorities in our Nation receive inferior health care for a wide range of diseases. In fact, the final draft of what was supposed to be a scientific study dropped the detailed descriptions of health disparities and removed a reference to national problems. This is a serious matter because studies have shown that even among patients with identical diseases and similar income levels, minorities are less likely to receive the same quality of care for diseases including cancer, diabetes, heart problems, AIDS, and other illnesses.

As our colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), pointed out, the first draft of the "Health Care Racial Disparity Report" mentioned the word disparity 30 times in the key-finding section, while the final version mentioned the word only twice and then even failed to define it.

As a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I remain concerned about inequities in education of our children. This marks the 50th anniversary of the historic *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision which banned segregation in schools. Yet, the fact is that our schools have not reached the goal of racial integration. About one-third of African American students go to schools that are 90 to 100 percent African American. About 70 percent attend schools that are composed primarily of minority students. We need strong leadership at the top to reverse this trend and to really leave no child behind and to ensure access to a quality education for all of our students.

We are one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all; and we need to make that plan and dream a reality.

Mr. Speaker, we can only make our country stronger and we are better if we are willing to examine the real state of the Union and seek real solutions to our problems.

I hope we can pull together and address these issues so that we can begin to move forward again in crucial areas including the economy, health care, and education.

FUTURE IS BRIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TURNER of Ohio). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be back here in our Nation's capital for the opening of the 108th second session of Congress.

As we start a new year, we often pray for hope and optimism to help lift the Nation, to help guide the Nation, to help give it strength and to honor the character of this Nation that we all love so dearly.

So it is troubling that when, in the first hour of the first day of the 108th

second session, the negativity ringing in this Chamber is deafening, the criticism, the constant carping, the antagonism towards this President knows no boundaries. Yet the American public remains optimistic and hopeful because that is in our core nature. That is our core; that is who we are as people.

There is a reason Howard Dean went down in ashes, in flames in Iowa yesterday, because for the last 11 months he has done nothing but characterize and criticize the President of the United States in negative tones. Consequently, John Edwards comes in second because he was at least talking about hopeful optimism, a spirit that is imbued in the character of this Nation and its people.

As we proceed in this year of trials and tribulations, you have to look back at the past year and look forward to the future and hope that, rather than fighting one another, we can join together in finding solutions to our common problems.

In the last hour and a half I have heard how bad the economy is. Yet at this time our Dow Jones Industrial Average is over 10,500; NASDAQ has passed the 2,000 threshold. Unemployment is dropping. Statistics prove it. Last month was not the best month; but anyone who follows the economy recognizes there is a lag behind employment and robust employment numbers and optimism in the sector that is gauged by Wall Street. Factory orders. Sale of durable goods. Light trucks. Look at the numbers. Real estate. First time home buyers. People's 401(k)s now back to where they were pre-1999. Their IRA's are gaining momentum again. Their financial status is better. Not perfect, not perfect, but better. And what fuels that basic surge in investor confidence? Well, that is the term. Investors' confidence.

In order to have confidence, you have to have some optimism, and you have to have some hope that times will in fact get better. But if you listen to the cacophony of voices from the other side of the aisle, woe is me, and how desperate we are.

It was telling, one of the speakers offered the President an olive branch moments ago. Why is it when they offer the olive branch, they always hand it to you with the thorns exposed?

Can there not be a generous offer of helping together, solving Americans' problems? It has to be about criticizing virtually everything this administration has done.

Look at Iraq and look at the strength of character that this President displayed in challenging one of the most evil dictators of our time. He is met with negative sound bytes and poll-driven babble about why we should not be there and why we should leave immediately. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) and Mr. Dean eloquently made that point. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) came in last and Mr. Dean was third. So clearly I think others, based on if you

are taking polling statistics, 65 percent of the American public thought it was the right thing to do to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein.

The President stood alone on that precipice trying to decide what was best for the people of this country, stood alone. And yet with the wind at his back, he has now been able to change fundamentally the way other nations look at us. Fundamentally, Libya is now in negotiations to turn over its nuclear secrets and arsenal and weaponry and technology. Libya. It was not that long ago that Muammar Khadafi was heading Libya, obviously with an eye towards destroying the Middle East. And now Libya is at least, hopefully, brokering negotiations as we speak.

North Korea is sounding more conciliatory rather than beating their chests and threatening the annihilation of Japan or South Korea or other places. North Korea is now starting to talk about containment.

Pakistan and India, who have been at odds for a long time, are talking about constructive engagement to solve their mutual problems relative to Kashmir.

Think about it. Think about just those hot spots in the world where because of the President's strength of character in pursuing the evil of Saddam Hussein have we now started to recognize that only peace can be achieved through strength. Yes, it must have been lonely for this President when the rest of the free world was saying, I am not interested; let us not do that; let us not upset the apple cart; let us not bother Iraq. They are quiet now.

To the contrary. If you are one of the 1 million people that have died in Iraq, I am not sure you consider it quiet. If you had your tongue cut out by Saddam Hussein's henchmen, I do not think you consider Iraq peaceful. If you were starved or imprisoned or murdered by the regime, I do not think you consider Iraq a place you would call home. Yet, because of the President's insistence on pursuing the course of action that would free and liberate the people of Iraq, we now have the dominoes falling in other areas of the world that are showing that the United States' strength is what is solving the perplexing and difficult challenges we face as a Nation and as a world power.

I can remember during the last administration when there was a problem in Haiti, and I believe the U.S.S. *Harlan* was heading for Haiti, and because of a band of malcontents and miscontents and misfits who were on the dock waving brooms and pitchforks, our Commander in Chief then ordered the U.S.S. *Harlan* to turn around and not head into Haiti to bring peace and stability to Haiti.

We turned around a naval vessel because we were nervous about the gathering of dissidents on a dock at Port au Prince. That visual image of our naval vessel turning around from a group waving brooms at our military power

was a shot heard round the world because people looked at that as an abject instance of failure on behalf of diplomacy and democracy and America's commitment. So why would people be fearful of the United States?

The first World Trade Center bombing was met with loud voices but no follow-up. Khobar Towers. The U.S.S. *Cole*. The war on terrorism was gathering strength for years before this President became our Commander in Chief. But only because of his leadership have we now seen progress in the theater and in the fight against terrorism. It seems like I turn on the TV every other day, and there is a critical commentary about homeland security; and yet we have not had another instance of terrorism in this country since September 11.

September 11 remains vivid in my mind as I left that City of New York that morning, minutes before the first World Trade Center was struck by that aircraft. I had passed only 4 or 5 minutes before that first plane struck and had noticed those gleaming towers in that New York glorious morning. After that strike on American soil, this President knew his obligation and his duty was to protect the public, and he has done that.

There is no perfect plan; but this President has marshaled his team, whether it be John Ashcroft or others, to help mobilize our law enforcement agencies for the fight ahead. Tom Ridge of Homeland Security and Asa Hutchinson have done a masterful job of bringing our Nation together to focus on our domestic tranquility.

The economy, as I mentioned earlier, is improving steadily. And that optimism will bring jobs for the American people. This President will talk about jobs because it is important to him. He has mentioned it time and time again. He never gets credit from those on the other side of the aisle, but he consistently believes that full employment and a robust economy go hand in hand.

This economy has improved. We were down at 7,200 on the Dow. We are now at 10,551, I believe, an hour ago. That is good news for the American investor. And it is good news for the American economy.

Medicare. People keep moaning about the bill. Most have not read it. Most of the benefits of the bill will not become effective for a while, but there is an improving opportunity for seniors through the Medicare delivery of prescription drugs to their communities.

□ 1445

I woke up this morning to the moveon.org campaign commercial with soft money. It is interesting. They raising soft money with reckless abandon. George Soros gave \$5 million to an organization headed by Democrats to destroy this President and demean him and demean the office, but they have moved on. Remember, they have moved on. They were there for the past President and they are there now as a vehi-

cle to spend soft money, that old bugaboo that was so reviled by the other side of the aisle. Now they have found other ways to move money into new different camps and run the same negative ads but just not run by the political committees here in Washington. They are just committees that are closer to home, I guess.

Health care is something we are concerned about, and the President will address that as well. He is concerned about health care. The President's concerned about health care, the delivery of health care, the availability, the affordability, and that will be discussed tonight.

He is talking about the space program, and yes, there are those that question whether the space program has, or do we have the funding to move forward in the corridor of space, and let me challenge everyone to recognize what has occurred because of the space program. Whether it is the cellular phone or the Blackberry, it is the heart pacemaker, the microwave oven, Internet technology, all has come from a genesis of discovery of space. From the scientists and astronauts, from the team leaders, whether it is Johnson Space Center in Texas or Kennedy in Florida, these have been the pioneers that have brought about incredible opportunities in technological corridors to bring about a better way of life for all America. The discovery of cells and cancerous genes and things that may stem the tide of devastating illnesses and disease have been discovered in space. So this President, true to his mission of being an innovator and a leader, is challenging us to move forward. The clarion call to all, this final frontier, as was mentioned by John Kennedy, has not been conquered and will not be given up because of tight budget years.

The President talks about immigration, and a lot of people are nervous about immigration. Obviously, again, they have not read the bill. They think there is a blanket amnesty. The President's leading on an issue that, yes, is politically polarizing but is an issue once again that he is not willing to have just out there in the abyss and not be discussed in practical solutions, rather than political sound bytes.

Education. I have mentioned many times on this floor my father was a principal and a schoolteacher. So education is important to this Member of Congress, and this President has worked to make education the hallmark of his administration.

So rather than continue to take the time of the Congress today, I just ask the other side of the aisle if rather than snappy sound bytes and eloquent rhetoric all directed to demonize this President, that if half the energy was going into developing constructive proposals to bring to the floor, we may be able to solve America's problems.

In today's Roll Call, a newspaper that is all over the Hill, David Winston has the headline "Democratic Hope-

fuls' Sniping Souring Their Images With Voters." It talks about, "Twenty-four hours after the Iowa caucus grabbed the national spotlight for the Democrats, President Bush takes center stage tonight for the annual ritual of the State of the Union address. As Bush heads to Capitol Hill with the power and prestige of the presidency behind him, the Democrats are licking their wounds and heading to New Hampshire, some on CPR."

"In contrast, the President will report to the nation as a strong wartime leader," and I emphasize strong, wartime leader, "as the economy comes roaring back, creating jobs, as his education centerpiece, No Child Left Behind, remains popular with the public, and as a President who kept his promise to pass a prescription drug benefit for seniors. As Ronald Reagan said when he left office, 'Not bad. Not bad at all.'"

"Meanwhile, the Democratic presidential contenders have gone to the mattresses in the biggest family feud since the Hatfields and McCoys. The Democratic primary has become little more than a nasty snipe-a-thon, leaving none of the candidates looking statesmanlike, much less presidential."

If my colleagues happened to watch Mr. Dean screaming at the TV today, they will realize this may not be the man we want close to the nuclear button. I added that. That is not in Mr. Winston's column.

"The endless bickering and name calling is beginning to take its toll on everyone in the race."

"The latest polls show not only that the Democratic presidential candidates are losing ground with voters overall," but they are also losing Democratic voters who have an increasingly unfavorable view of their own field.

Let me continue because I think it is important to just lay this out as an observation made by Mr. Winston.

"A comparison of the two most recent CNN/USA Today/Gallup polls, taken January 2-5 and November 10-12, spells bad news for Democrats in two key measurements. First, with all voters, every one of the six candidates tested . . . saw little or no movement with their favorables since November, while their unfavorables increased." Why? Because America rejects pessimism, negativity and nastiness, and that is what we have had hurled at those in Iowa and we witnessed through the reporting of Fox and CNN and others.

Let me finalize with this one. "Dean led the pack in this dubious category with his unfavorables increasing more than his favorables by 13 points to reach an unenviable 28 percent favorable, 39 percent unfavorable rating by all voters. But, every one of the Democratic candidates saw their favorable-unfavorable ratings get worse among the overall electorate."

They are running for the highest office in the land, and as time goes on

and people get to know them more, they like them less, not because they are not pleasant people to look at and not because they are not educated. I am sure they all qualified in their educated endeavors, but why is America rejecting them? They are rejecting them because of their nastiness and their negativity and their pessimism because America, after all, is about optimism, about hope, about opportunity, about equality, about engagement, about being part of a bigger picture, a bigger world, a bigger place.

So I do pray that as we conclude today that the minority party, that may be the permanent minority if they keep it up, rather than promising in speech to extend an olive branch, that they actually do it and give this President a chance. We will not always agree with this President as Republicans or Democrats, but I think in the final analysis, as we look at the man as a person, I have come to really admire his determination.

When I heard those comments by Paul O'Neill, I thought back of several meetings we have had with multiple Members of Congress in the Cabinet room of the White House, and one foretelling day was about the Patients' Bill of Rights, a subject that I had worked on with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) and others in this country for a long time. As we sat around the room I was really taken aback by the depth of knowledge that President Bush had relative to the Patients' Bill of Rights. The discussion with lawmakers, the back and forth, the questions, the probative questions, the responses, whether we wanted to hear the answer or not, he gave it to us with what he believed was the best course of action for this particular piece of legislation. This was a President engaged in the minutia of debate, not a scripted card that was given to him by an aide, but something that inherently he understood, both intimately and through research and through interest.

So as we hear the State of the Union tonight, as we enter 2004, let us hope that the optimism that I know will be contained in the speech becomes contagious, and let us hope that all of us as Members of this deliberate body can join together in trying to figure ways to make every American safer, Democrat, Republican or Independent, bringing together a better world where we are talking and communicating and helping each other in the Nation, whether it is the fight against AIDS in Africa or whether it is terrorism in the Middle East or whether it is freeing people from tyranny.

Let us join together in a pledge that in order to form a more perfect union, we must be organized together as citizens first and politicians second. Our political parties are not the most important credential on this floor. Our most important credential is citizens, Americans, and hopefully patriots.

I wish the President well tonight because his guidance and his expertise is

needed by the American public, and I hope as young children hopefully are allowed to watch history and democracy in action here on the floor, we will see a President whose character cannot be questioned, whose administration has performed admirably, whose people have been at the forefront of the fight. I wish him well and I wish him success, and I know together, as Americans, his leadership, his vision will help every American find work in the new year.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TURNER of Ohio). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 8:40 p.m. for the purposes of receiving in joint session the President of the United States.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 56 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 8:40 p.m.

□ 2044

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 8 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.

JOINT SESSION OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE HELD PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 349 TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The Speaker of the House presided.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Mr. Bill Sims, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate, who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort the President of the United States into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY);

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT);

The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE);

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ); and

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SANTORUM);

The Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);

The Senator from Virginia (Mr. ALLEN);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER);

The Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI);

The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE);

The Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI);

The Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAU);

The Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN);

The Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED);

The Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON);

The Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW);

The Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON); and

The Senator from New Jersey (Mr. CORZINE).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador from Djibouti.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Associate Justice of the Supreme Court entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 9 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m., the Sergeant at Arms, the Honorable Wilson Livingood, announced the President of the United States.

The President of the United States, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, I have the high privilege and the distinct honor of presenting to you the President of the United States.

(Applause, the Members rising.)