

Mr. Speaker, I will be placing in the RECORD the letter from nine Members of Congress to President Bush and the article that appeared today in The Washington Post.

MARRIAGE PENALTY

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

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, in 2001 and again in 2003, this body passed legislation that eliminated the marriage tax penalty, saving families an average of \$1,400. Unfortunately, unless we act to permanently eliminate the marriage penalty, married couples will face tax increases starting next year. We should not discourage marriages by making couples sign on to a higher tax bill with their marriage certificate.

There is no good reason to raise taxes on married couples. In the midst of a strong economic recovery, imposing higher taxes on married couples will only create financial hardship for millions of Americans and stifle a growing economy. If we examine the consequences of the marriage penalty on the American family, we will not have to think twice about permanently repealing this particular act.

If we do not act, we will send in my district nearly 62,000 families a higher bill on January 1. Instead, let us tell them that we have finally put an end to the marriage tax penalty. I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill.

JOBS

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to not only report to the American people an unfortunate event we are going through here in the United States, living under the highest deficit in the history of the Republic and losing 2.8 million jobs since the Bush administration has been in control of our government.

I think it is very, very important for the American people to understand that Democrats in this House are looking for sensible tax relief and also reducing the deficit along with creating manufacturing jobs. I am talking about those 2.8 million Americans that are out of work and who had jobs and were paying taxes and were also providing health care, or trying to pay for health care, for their families.

I think it is very, very important the American people pay very close attention to those that are trying to push forward reasonable tax relief, student loan opportunities for the middle class, and who want to make sure we can move forward in building America and manufacturing jobs and making sure that we close the gap on the 2.8 million jobs that have been lost under this administration.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DANIEL PETTIGREW

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in paying respect to one of my constituents, Lieutenant Commander Daniel Pettigrew, U.S. Navy, retired, of Middletown, Maryland, who passed away on Wednesday, April 21. Dan Pettigrew was a 26-year Navy veteran, retiring in 1974. He served his country with distinction, and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Navy Achievement Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Navy Unit Commendation, and the Navy Marine Corps Medal.

Dan was a member of Middletown United Methodist Church; VFW Post 3285 John R. Webb, Frederick; Masonic Lodge AF&AM in Massachusetts. He also served as a national legislative director for the Uniformed Services Disabled Retirees. In his role at the USDR, he worked tirelessly on the issues of concurrent receipt, veterans health care, and VA disability compensation.

Dan's last 6 years were spent walking the halls of Congress bringing the message about the needs of military retirees, veterans, and their families across the Nation. Please join me in remembering Dan and his valiant causes that he supported so diligently for our veterans, military retirees, and their families.

JOBS IN AMERICA

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Bush administration on yet another record: 354,000 people exhausted their unemployment benefits in March, the largest number since we started keeping statistics in 1971; and yet they cannot find work.

We have 1.5 million people since the program ended in December, and the President and the Republican leadership have refused to renew the program. There are 23,000 Oregonians, people who want and cannot find work. They are the long-term army of the unemployed in America due to outsourcing and misplaced budget priorities.

But the administration will not extend unemployment benefits to them because then they would have to admit that the rosy glow they want to paint upon the economy and job prospects actually is a sunset.

So are they worried about creating deficits? No. There are \$17 billion in the Unemployment Trust Fund. Why do they not care about this army of unemployed Americans? Why will they

not help them find work, and while they are still looking for work, help them keep their families together and keep their homes with extended unemployment benefits out of the trust fund balance that is sitting unspent?

VOLUNTEER MILITARY EXCEEDING RE-ENLISTMENT EXPECTATIONS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today's all-volunteer military protects Americans every day by bravely fighting the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, and wherever terrorists attack. Despite the sacrifice and commitment service in our armed service requires, and despite the enemies of freedom who are attacking America and its allies, troops are re-enlisting at rates exceeding our expectations.

September 11 changed America's psychology. Americans know there is a real and visible threat to our life and liberty. The troops who are signing back up for service know better than anyone how important this fight against terrorism is to the future of our Nation and to freedom throughout the world to protect American families.

Mr. Speaker, we have 1.4 million men and women who are on active duty, along with 1.2 million who serve in the Guard and Reserves. These volunteers and their families are dedicated individuals who have chosen a life of honor and duty to our country. I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking servicemembers for their service.

In conclusion, may God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago President Bush and Senator KERRY received their reviews from their respective commanders.

Lieutenant Kerry, from Lieutenant Commander George Elliott: "Lt. Kerry frequently exhibited a high sense of imagination and judgment in planning operations against the enemy in the Mekong Delta. Involved in several enemy-initiated firefights, including an ambush during the Christmas truce, he effectively suppressed enemy fire and is unofficially credited with 20 enemy killed in action."

The evaluation from Lt. Bush's commander: "Lt. Bush has not been observed at this unit during the period of this report."

Now, we can debate what these two men did 30 years ago, or we can debate what this country is going to do on

June 30 in Iraq in finding a government to hand to the people of Iraq that they respect and that will give them a sense of where they are going.

It is worthy of having a debate of what happened 30 years ago, but I think it is very important to the people of this country that we debate what we are going to do on June 30.

SHADOWY CAMPAIGN

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, Congress Daily reported last week that liberal soft money groups, 527s they are called, have out-raised conservative groups five to one in 2004, and their goal is to raise \$500 million to defeat the President. These 527 groups raise unreported, unregulated soft money, unlimited donations by millionaire fat cats, with no reporting requirements, no public scrutiny, and unlimited access to candidates.

This is the kind of thing McCain-Feingold finance reform was supposed to deal with. It did not. The money just went underground. But it is not only the money that is the problem; it is that people do not know who is influencing our political process. These donations are not from small donors. The top 24 donors to these groups have given a total of \$40 million.

If we had done campaign reform right, we would not have this problem. Instead, we are stuck with this unending special interest shadow campaign, while true citizens' groups operate on limited budgets and cannot even run ads on issues that they care about.

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KERRY'S RECORD

(Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of JOHN KERRY, the Democratic presidential nominee, the only candidate who has a real plan to build a stronger, more secure America. JOHN KERRY is committed to empowering our communities by creating good jobs, improving our public schools and increasing home ownership. JOHN KERRY has the best combination of character, policymaking experience and national security credentials to get our neighborhoods and our country back on track.

Back on track from what, one might ask? From a dismal GOP economic record. This administration's economic plan has created the worst job loss since President Hoover. A whopping 2.8 million jobs have disappeared since President Bush took office, including 1 million jobs that have been shipped overseas. Nevertheless, President Bush says our economy is strong. He should

see how his economic plan has devastated hardworking families like in my home State of California where over 1 million Californians are looking for work. Clearly we need new leadership in the White House that has a strategy to create jobs, revitalize our economy and help all working families realize their dreams. JOHN KERRY is the man to do this.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE SET TO EXAMINE OIL FOR FOOD PROGRAM

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, a millennia ago the question was asked that rings through history and through governance, and that is, can a corrupt throne be allied with you? Today in just a few moments the Committee on International Relations will gather to examine the United Nations Oil for Food Program. We will begin to call for transparency and accountability in a program that the United Nations oversaw but that the evidence suggests allowed Saddam Hussein to amass and divert through kickbacks and various forms of graft in excess of \$4 billion.

As we consider moving forward as a partner in Iraq with the United Nations, now is the time and the Committee on International Relations is the place where we must begin to get to the bottom of the administration of the Oil for Food Program, find the truth, have transparency and accountability and go forward with the United Nations with our eyes open.

DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO PROTECT RETIREMENT BENEFITS OF MILITARY WIDOWS

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

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, most Americans believe that our troops should be given the opportunity to provide the services that they are entitled to and as they battle we all recognize and we are extremely supportive of their efforts. But we also need to respect them when they come home. We know that the spouses also sacrifice. But this House has refused to keep the promise and provide the military retirees and their spouses with the retirement benefits that they earned in this country. Over 225,000 military spouses are currently paying the survivor benefit penalty and it eventually will be 1.2 million military retirees enrolled in this survivor benefit plan.

Today we ask you to sign and we launched a discharge petition to force this House in a bipartisan way to reach out to end the survivor benefit penalty and change it so that our military individuals and spouses will be able to get that service that is needed.

The survivors penalty hurts military widows. We need to do the right thing. Sign the discharge petition.

EU ENLARGEMENT

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

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, 53 years ago, acting on a vision conceived by French businessman Jean Monnet and proposed by Robert Schuman, six nations of Europe agreed to create what we now know as the European Union. On Saturday, May 1, there will be yet another historic milestone toward achieving the dreams of Monnet and Schuman. Ten nations, eight of which just a few years ago were trapped behind the Iron Curtain, will become members of the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment of those 10 nations to shared values, to the pursuit of political and economic reforms and to solidarity with each other have helped facilitate these changes. The historic enlargement of the EU along with that of the recent NATO enlargement has resulted in a giant step towards a Europe that is whole and free, democratic and dynamic, and at peace.

Mr. Speaker, the newest members of the EU have done a remarkable job preparing for this day. On the eve of this historic enlargement of the European Union it is appropriate, as we did recently with the newest members of NATO, to congratulate Estonia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

HOUSE TO VOTE ON EXTENDING SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today in a couple of moments the House of Representatives will vote on extending the Surface Transportation Act. The hang-up? The President's threat to veto a bill that is not a 10 percent cut in transportation funding over the next 6 years, even though his own Department of Transportation says that we should be spending half again as much as he proposes.

Earlier the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan bill that would move us in the right direction. The Senate overwhelmingly approved on a bipartisan basis even a larger bill. This is supported by the broadest coalition in the history of infrastructure in this country, from the Sierra Club to the Chamber of Commerce.

Now is the time for the House to reaffirm its strong support, resist calls for cuts that will set America back for the next 6 years, so we will not have to play catchup for a generation.