

assets test required for the low-income benefit that will take effect in 2006.

We ask the President, why give low-income seniors help now and then pull the rug out from under them in 2 years, give them the help before the election, and after the election, the help's not there? If the Federal Government acknowledges those seniors need assistance, why are we excluding them after the Presidential election?

Ohioans can save, we found, almost 50 percent by importing prescription drugs from Canada, same drugs, same dosage, same manufacturer, from what the price is in the United States. With the cost of popular drugs rising at triple the rate of inflation, we are asking the President how he can deny seniors and all Americans access to these safe, more affordable drugs from Canada and France and Germany, when all over the world people are paying so much less.

The law creating the discount card program expressly prohibits the government from negotiating prices for prescription drugs, but the VA's price negotiation system has proven effective. We asked the President, why are America's seniors being denied the benefit of the government's buying power to leverage for lower prices?

We pretty much know the answers to these questions because this drug discount card simply will not work. The more we know about it, drug prices go up 25 percent in a year. The discount card will give maybe 10 or 15 percent. That is not price savings. That is really an insult. When we look at this, it is pretty easy to understand why.

This prescription drug bill, the Medicare bill, was written by the insurance companies and written by the drug companies for the insurance companies and for the drug companies. President Bush brought the drug and insurance companies into the Lincoln Bedroom or into the Oval Office or somewhere in the White House and let them write this legislation. It is now the law of the land that now hurts our seniors, and there is not a real surprise there when the drug industry's already given President Bush tens of millions of dollars for his reelection. The word on the street in Washington is the drug industry will donate \$100 million to the President's reelection campaign. The insurance industry is not quite as wealthy, not quite as generous, but will donate and has already donated millions of dollars to the President's reelection campaign. So it should come as no surprise that this is the kind of drug bill we get.

Then to add insult to injury, the gentleman who wrote the language in the bill dealing with the discount drug card is, number one, a friend of the President's; and, number two, he has a discount drug card company. So we have got the drug industry writing the drug bill. We have got the insurance industry helping the drug industry write the drug bill, and now we have the discount card company writing the language for the discount cards.

That is why America's seniors feel betrayed, because this Medicare bill is not for America's seniors. It is for President Bush's reelection campaign, for his fund-raising, and for those companies that are so powerful in this city.

ABUSE OF IRAQI PRISONERS

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

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, as the chairman of the House delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and currently the president of the assembly, I have frequently had to reassure parliamentarians that the outrageous and false allegations they had heard about the way detainees were being treated by the U.S. at our Guantanamo detention facility were not true. Since I had been part of a small number of Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence members to visit Guantanamo, actually the first congressional delegation to visit, since the HPSCI members and staff have made several such trips and have given oversight to this interrogation and detention facility, and since I am a former military intelligence officer, I knew I could conscientiously give such an assurance.

Now, however, from Abu Ghraib prison, and perhaps from elsewhere, we have reports, with photographs, graphically telling and showing outrageous abuses of Iraqi detainees by U.S. military personnel and possibly by military contractors. The international damage to the credibility and reputation of our country and our military absolutely cannot be overstated, especially in the Arab and Islamic communities. The alleged actions by at least a few members of our military, already confirmed by very recent disciplinary action, makes the job being done by our dedicated and courageous military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan just that much harder and much more dangerous. The extraordinary gravity of this matter, the insensitivity and the degrading abuse which has apparently been visited upon Iraqi detainees call for swift and just accountability.

What has allegedly happened is so foreign to our country's principles and traditions and those of our Armed Forces that these people conducting or condoning such abuse do not deserve to be called Americans. If the use of such tactics of physical abuse and sexual humiliation is not dishonorable conduct, I do not know what is. If supervisors of such military personnel were inappropriately unaware or unconcerned about such conduct, then this is a clear case of dereliction of duty; and this accountability should apply several levels up the chain of command. If military contractors were involved, at a minimum the contract with the firm which employed them should be immediately terminated.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to imagine a more politically damaging set of actions, hopefully by just a few individuals, for American and for coalition efforts to replace the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein and to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. We must have swift accountability, just accountability, and a demonstration that the American people repudiate such conduct and will not let it continue or happen again.

Mr. Speaker, I include an editorial at this point from this morning's Omaha World Herald.

UGLY AMERICANS

When U.S. soldiers at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison (and, some documents suggest, elsewhere) abused and humiliated prisoners of war, they committed two serious wrongs.

First, in sheer human terms, there is a code to be followed for prisoners' treatment. It exists for good reasons, starting with simple decency and progressing to the hope that rules observed by one side will be observed by the other. These soldiers trashed such considerations.

Second, they did immeasurable harm to the goals of America and its allies to bring about a peaceable and effective transfer of limited self rule to Iraqis. They rendered considerably more dubious the prospect of inculcating a stable, beneficial democracy in the Middle East. (If this is what democracy brings, who would want it?)

The six men who engaged in the actual acts (pyramids of naked detainees, false electrocution threats and more) face criminal charges. They should. In addition, six supervisors will receive a reprimand that can end their careers by rendering promotions impossible. A seventh will draw a lesser penalty.

An internal Army report in February pointed to flaws in the command structure at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. For one thing, an intelligence officer whose duty was eliciting information from the prisoners was effectively put in charge of their day-to-day jailers—a dangerous practice, as events have shown. Additionally, the military policy responsible for the prisoners appear to have had little or no training in proper handling of detainees.

Such flaws cry out to be remedied, and apparently that will now happen. But that still leaves the question, what happened to common sense? America, for all its good intentions, is already regarded with suspicion by many in the Middle East and in Iraq in particular. Who could suppose that when knowledge of these abominable acts leaked, as was bound to happen, it would do anything less than throw gasoline on an already smoldering fire?

The United States needs to find some way to make clear in Iraq that this is not the norm, and that Americans, too, are repelled by what they saw. This isn't supposed to happen. We're the good guys. But try telling that today to the average Iraqi

THE CREDIBILITY GAP AND LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, there is a new section in

libraries and in bookstores all across America. It is called the "credibility gap and the leadership problems of President George W. Bush." There are so many books being published now that maybe the Dewey decimal system will have to be revised for America's libraries.

I recommend this new section to my colleagues and to the general public.

Last week, the latest edition to this collection was published, raising again serious questions about the President. I predict that rather than directly confront the substance of Ambassador Joe Wilson's criticism in his book, "The Politics of Truth," the White House will instead, as they have in the past, attack his motives, his character, as they have done with the critics before him.

Recent history is littered with the Bush White House smear campaigns against good and brave people, all of whom share one simple characteristic, loyalty to the truth.

Let us start with John DiLulio, the White House's director of faith-based programs in 2001. He said that the Bush administration was more focused on politics than on good policy, and he is gone.

If that sounds familiar, it is because it is the same thing the former Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, said in his book, "The Price of Loyalty." O'Neill rightly warned that the massive Bush tax cut would wreak havoc with our fiscal system, and remember what the White House did after Paul O'Neill's book came out. They launched an investigation and tried to smear his credibility and his reputation. Of course, that investigation went nowhere and the book stands for what it says.

How about Richard Clarke, a trusted, lifelong bipartisan public servant who was devoted to protecting Americans against terrorism? He wrote this book, "Against All Enemies," which says the war in Iraq has diverted needed resources from the war on terror. He felt this Nation had a right to know.

Do my colleagues know how the White House responded? With a shock and awe media campaign to try and discredit Clarke. They said Clarke was just angry because he wanted a more prominent position, that he was essentially a Democrat or that he was out of the loop. Out of the loop? He was the administration's top anti-terrorist official on September 11.

If we cannot trust Richard Clarke, why not General Anthony Zinni? Zinni served in Vietnam, commanded the troops in Somalia, directed strikes against Iraq and al Qaeda, and served as the Bush administration's Mideast peace envoy. He had the audacity to agree with Clarke that the war in Iraq undermined the war on terror. He has not been asked to serve on any more diplomatic missions.

Then there was Larry Lindsey, former economic advisor to the President, who was fired when he correctly

said that the war in Iraq would cost as much as 100 or \$200 billion, but the President did not want to hear it. The administration did not want to hear it, and they certainly did not want Congress to hear it. Today, we are fast approaching \$200 billion, all of it borrowed, all of it borrowed, for the war in Iraq. Too bad for his career, because the facts were important to him. Larry Lindsey is gone.

General Eric Shinseki apparently had the same problem. He said that we might need several hundred thousand troops in Iraq to secure the peace, to secure the peace and provide for the force protection of our soldiers. The White House did not like that. Soon enough, Shinseki had stepped aside, but now we have 150,000 troops and asking for more to try and secure a peace that has been so badly compromised because of the lack of preparation by this White House. Too bad that General Shinseki decided that he had to tell the truth and was compelled to let the American people know.

But there is more. The White House threatened to fire the Health and Human Services actuary, Richard Foster, if he revealed his higher estimates of what the Medicare prescription drug bill would really cost. Instead of having an honest debate in the Congress on the real cost of the prescription drug benefit, they said, no, keep the figures from Congress. Of course, Congress voted for the bill, and now we find out it is going to cost \$140 billion more than we had anticipated. It is too bad. It is the law of the land, but it was done because of the intimidation by somebody in the administration who wanted to tell the truth.

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Are you starting to see a pattern here, Mr. Speaker? Others have weighed in, too. Historian and political analyst Kevin Phillips says that Bush's self-interest trumps the national interest in his book "American Dynasty." Kevin Phillips is not a liberal, or a Democrat, he simply wanted to explain what was going on inside of the administration in terms of the self-dealing special interests, which brings us back to Joe Wilson.

As Members will recall, in the President's State of the Union address in 2003, President Bush said that Saddam Hussein had tried to obtain nuclear material from Africa, even though he was told it was not true; but he came to the halls of Congress to tell the American people that is what happened. Wilson heard the speech and blew the whistle. Unfortunately for Wilson, his allegiance to the truth did not just result in the character assassination of Joe Wilson. In a particularly insidious and dangerous move, someone in the White house publicly revealed that Wilson's wife was a CIA agent, putting her life at risk, ending her career, and the people she worked with. That is what happens when you try to tell the truth in the Bush administration.

THE REAL MISERY INDEX

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate today to talk about the economy. Today, Chairman Greenspan is meeting with members of the Federal Reserve to determine whether to increase interest rates. Part of my talk will include excerpts from the Wall Street Journal of April 11, 2004, their editorial.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a lot of good economic news of late. In March, the economy added 308,000 new jobs. U.S. factories have expanded for the 11th consecutive month. For the first quarter of 2004, the gross domestic product increased by 4.2 percent. It is continuing the strongest growth in 20 years.

And we have seen that Federal tax cuts of the last few years have put the United States near the top, or at the top of the advanced large economies in their growth. We have offered incentives to work, to save, and invest, according to the Joint Economic Committee.

But instead, the media have done a terrific job of convincing everybody these are the worst of times. A poll, conducted by the American Research Group in mid-March, found that 44 percent of Americans believe that the country was still in a recession. That is strange when you consider that the last recession ended way back in the year 2001. And for the last two quarters of 2003, the U.S. economy grew at an annualized rate of 6.1 percent, the fastest growth in 20 years. Even more remarkable, the percentage of gloomsters was higher in March, when we created 308,000 new jobs.

By nearly every objective measure, the U.S. economy is stronger and is getting stronger. Let us look at the Misery Index, the measure created by the late economist, Arthur Okun. He added the rates of unemployment and inflation. This may not be the most sophisticated metric to use, but it does capture the two greatest threats to household wealth and security, that is inflation and unemployment. Comparisons to the 1990s' bubble years excepted, the U.S. economy is doing very, very well.

Today's unemployment is 5.7 percent, close to the level President Bill Clinton boasted about as he sought reelection in 1996. Meanwhile, inflation has fallen by a full percentage point over the past 8 years. I have a table which indicates that the economy compares favorably by reelection standards and President Bush's policies should be enjoying at least a modicum of respect.

In 1976 under President Ford, the Misery Index was 14.5 percent. In 1980 under President Carter, it was 20.6 percent. In 1984 under President Reagan, 11.8 percent. Under Bush I in 1992, it