

Again, we have heard the President prioritize health care for all Americans. However, creating a refundable tax credit to purchase health insurance does not ensure affordable insurance for individuals who are older and who have poorer health care. We are in the midst of a health care crisis, and the proposed tax care credit would only help 5 percent of the 44 million that are currently uninsured in this country.

The low-income families in my district do not want to hear false promises. They need to know that the programs they depend on, like Medicaid, are being supported and protected. We cannot ignore once again budget cuts, for example, that are being thwarted right now or lashed against; the Environmental Protection Agency will cut about 7 percent of their budget. We hear this administration telling us, we protect the environment; we are really doing all of these things because we want to have a safer environment, safer drinking water and cleaner air. But the majority of the funding that is being taken away at this time will, in fact, not protect our environment or public health.

We cannot make these kinds of trade-offs that we are hearing about. We cannot increase Superfund funding at the mercy of clean-water funding. We cannot steal from Peter to pay Paul. And the budget that the Bush administration is proposing cuts funding for leaking underground storage tank clean-up which is very critical in my district because you see blighted areas right now, you see gas stations that are abandoned. There are about 150 of these tanks in my district. They release toxic chemicals in our soil and in our water supply.

Our communities deserve clean air, land and water, and our children's health depends upon it. We cannot afford to ignore this.

The Department of Homeland Security might have received an overall 5 percent increase, according to this administration, but the President proposed cuts in grants to local fire, police, and emergency medical agencies which will result in about 18 percent cuts overall, first responders, public safety grant cuts by 18 percent from \$4.4 billion to \$3.6 billion. So who is really taking care of the homeland?

In my district, police departments are already feeling a tremendous strain, and many police departments are already proposing massive layoffs. In fact, one of the best programs that I can tell you about in my district is known as a community-oriented police service program, the COPS program, which is one of the very basic programs that helps provide the local cop on the beat. That is now being penciled out.

Our first responders must provide critical lifesaving services. I can go on and on, but the fact of the matter is we are talking about cuts in jobs and in education.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Under

a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FLAKE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO RONALD REAGAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight in honor of the 93rd birthday of one of our greatest Presidents. Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980 on the promise of a new America. His fearless determination in the face of the Iron Curtain gave America the hope for a better tomorrow.

Reagan's vision inspired the promise of future leaders and guided our country away from big government, high taxes, and economic stagnation towards international strength and fiscal responsibility.

Born February 6, 1911, President Reagan studied economics at Eureka College, took a job as a sportscaster, and found his way to Hollywood where he appeared in 53 films. One of the most famous films was "Knut Rockne—All American," where Reagan played legendary Notre Dame star George Gipp. "Win one for the Gipper," Knute Rockne proclaimed as he inspired his players to defeat Army for their last and only one of the season. This line later became the campaign motto for our 40th President.

Reagan embarked on his journey into politics as president of the Screen Actors Guild, and he soon realized his talents were needed in the political arena. Reagan went on to become the Governor of California in 1966, campaigned for President in 1972 and 1976, and was elected President of the United States in 1980, winning 489 electoral votes.

Amidst high inflation at home and hostages abroad, Americans longed for renewal, sweeping Ronald Reagan into office. Sixty-nine days after his inauguration, Reagan was shot by a would-be assassin. As doctors rushed him to surgery, Reagan stated, "I hope you are all Republicans," only to hear his doctor reply, "Today, Mr. President, we are all Republicans."

Reagan returned balance and exuberance to our government. Suddenly, there were two political parties working together towards meaningful legislation to renew our economy with tax cuts. Reagan's America was a place where all Americans were self-reliant. Reagan showed that big government was not the answer, but the problem. Reagan's agenda was to reduce the size of our government, cut spending, and reinvigorate our economy.

The success of President Reagan's economic strategy has given us direction on how to restore an economy recovering from a recession. In 1986, Reagan overhauled the income tax code, which eliminated millions of people with low incomes from the tax rolls. He knew that the best way to encourage economic growth was to give money back to the people. Reagan's tax cut sparked one of the most ambitious and fastest-growing economies in our history. We are beginning to see similar results under President Bush's tax cuts. Reagan proved that tax cuts could spark the necessary investment for a new economy.

In foreign policy, Reagan's motto was "peace through strength," as he embarked on a quest to end the Cold War, reunite Germany, reduce nuclear arms, and fight terrorism. Reagan is credited for winning the Cold War and setting the stage for the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although the birth of America's new economy in the 1980s is his economic legacy, people that remember the Reagan era recall a spirit of patriotism like no other. People rallied behind the banner of American ideals in the face of Communism and international insecurity.

After the threat of terrorism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, our Nation needed a reason to feel unity and security. Reagan was there to lend his wit and his hope in our Nation to all Americans. He gave us hope and promise when we needed it most, and Reagan's true legacy is the restoration of the dream that is America.

Happy birthday, Mr. President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE BUSH BUDGET IS WHOLLY DEFICIENT AND IMMORAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to discuss the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2005. The Bush Budget boasts \$521 million in deficits and takes the audacious step of increasing the budget by 50 percent in 1 year while promising to cut that same 50 percent increase in half within 5 years. Is he joking? Does he think the American public has no discerning ability to think about the state of our affairs logically? To create such a huge deficit and place it on the backs of our children is morally indefensible. The interest expense of the deficit will mean higher taxes and will also mean that future taxpayers will be hamstrung to provide for national security, homeland security, and education for our kids or healthcare for our parents. Moreover, Bush's budget represents the largest deficits in this Nation's history. To make this statistic even worse, he took office with a \$5.6 trillion surplus.

Cuts to Education: The Bush budget fails to provide \$9.4 billion in promised funding for education, which means that 2.4 million children will not get the help in reading and math they were promised. Bush's budget freezes funding for rural education and provides only half the funding promised to after school programs. This shortfall in funding means that 1.3 million children who were promised after school programs will not get them. The Bush administration has frozen funding for Pell grants at the maximum level of \$4,050 and results in a lower average award of \$2,399. The administration's budget also cuts reading programs by \$22 million, even though the President touts a new \$100 million reading program for high school students and an increase of \$129 million for Reading First, however, in order to pay for these increases, the President budget eliminates \$247 million in the Even Start literacy program. Despite the administration's attempt to highlight its community college job training proposal, the Bush budget cuts job training programs by \$286 million. These cuts total \$36 million more than the \$250 million proposed for the community college program. In addition, the budget would cut \$316 million in vocational training funding in the Department of Education. All of these cuts are on top of \$1.4 billion in spending reductions President Bush has proposed for job training and vocational education since he took office.

Cuts in Veterans Benefits: While almost all veteran programs provide medical care and hospital services, President Bush's budget for Veterans programs of \$29.8 billion is \$257 million below the amount the CBO estimated it needs to maintain current benefit levels. Over 5 years, the budget is \$13.5 billion below the amount needed to maintain benefits at the current level. Bush's budget also fails to repeal the Disabled Veterans Tax, which forces disabled military retirees to give up \$1 of their pension for every dollar of disability pay they receive. Also, the budget imposes a \$250 annual enrollment fee on non-service-connected Priority 7 (higher income, non-service-connected) veterans and all Priority 8 veterans who wish to receive medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The budget assumes 5-year savings of \$1.5 billion from this proposal. The budget also assumes 5-year savings of \$747 million from increasing pharmacy co-payments for Priority 7 and 8 veterans from \$7 to \$15. Both of these were proposed in last year's budget and rejected by

the Congress. The President's budget raises health care costs for veterans, imposing new co-payments and enrollment fees that will cost veterans over \$2 billion over 5 years.

Cuts in Healthcare: The Bush budget reflects a difference of \$139 billion, a total of \$534 billion over 10 years to fund the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act. The Bush budget cuts Medicaid spending by 23.6 billion over 10 years by curbing intergovernmental transfers and the use of the upper payment limit and by limiting Medicaid provider payments to the cost of providing services. When these cuts are combined, the total impact on Medicaid results in \$15.7 billion over 10 years. This year's budget once again proposes block grant Medicaid. Under this proposal, States have the option to cut benefits to certain Medicaid populations and to roll back benefits.

Tax Cuts: The President makes his expiring tax cuts permanent at a cost of \$131.6 billion over 5 years. Over 75 years, these tax cuts exceed the combined shortfalls in Social Security and Medicare. The budget squanders an additional \$1 trillion over the next 10 years in additional tax cuts for the wealthy, but does not expand the tax credit to cover millions of military and working families. Instead of helping small business growth, the Bush budget cuts funding for Small Business Administration by 10 percent. President Bush continues to push for tax breaks for companies that move American jobs overseas instead of helping American small businesses.

Glaring Omissions: No funding in 2005 for the ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Supplemental funding which will further increase the deficit will be required to pay for the costs of these operations. The budget avoids long-term reform of the alternative minimum tax (AMT), even though the AMT will soon force millions of middle class families to pay more taxes, contrary to the original intent of the AMT.

Record Job Losses: President Bush enjoys the worst jobs record since Herbert Hoover. This is the third budget that Mr. Bush has produced which claimed that jobs would be created. Instead, the exact opposite has occurred, over the past 3 years, the United States has lost more than 2.3 million jobs. The Bush budget cuts \$286 million from job training and employment services, these cuts come on top of the \$1.5 billion in cuts to job training and related services that President Bush proposed when he took office. The Bush budget for the Labor Department does not keep pace with inflation and cuts desperately needed programs. Two million individuals over the coming months are expected to exhaust their Federal and State unemployment benefits, due to objections from Republican leaders to extend these benefits. The Bush budget block-grants adult and dislocated worker programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), jeopardizing critical training resources just as workers look to gain new skills to compete in an increasingly tight job market. Dislocated workers will be hurt the most because there would no longer be dedicated funding guaranteed to help them find new jobs. The Bush budget also eliminates the Employment Service—the very program that connects unemployed workers with jobs. This termination comes at a time when millions of workers continue to struggle to find jobs.

Mr. Bush's tax cuts which promised to increase jobs has not come to fruition. Not only

have the losses been massive but \$1 trillion of new debt has been created. Last month, only 1,000 jobs were created by the economy. However, in his last State of the Union address, President Bush stated that "jobs are on rise." Based on this type of progress, it would take 192 years and 8 months for the economy to return to the number of jobs it had at the beginning of Bush's presidency.

Additional Domestic Cuts: Domestic appropriations are held to a 1 percent increase which reduces funding for transportation, environmental protection, and small businesses and other priority series that the American people want and respect.

The President's budget is a bad dream beyond belief. It is evasive, inefficient, poorly thought and most egregiously hurts the people who can least afford to be hurt. The Democrats have priorities and we are going to fight for them. We want to create good paying jobs and help small business to grow, to improve education, lower health care cost, support veterans and military retirees as well as to do more to protect our ports and borders from terrorism.

In another sly move, President Bush presented a 5-year budget instead of a 10-year budget to further conceal the true cost of his policies to the American public. This budget includes policies that have long-term costs that need to be looked at over longer periods of time. Examples of programs that meet this criteria include the President's Mission to Mars and the Lifetime Savings and Retirement accounts which will incur significant costs past the 5-year time frame. To further put the deficit in perspective, be aware that in 1998, we achieved the first balanced budget in 29 years. In 1999, we achieved the first balanced budget without reliance on the Social Security trust fund. In 2000, we achieved the first balanced budget without relying on either the Social Security or Medicare Trust Fund surpluses in the history of those programs.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL THAT WOULD BENEFIT ALL SENIORS

Mr. Speaker, I also rise tonight because I am concerned that while millions of senior citizens struggle to pay for their prescription drugs, Republicans once again have joined forces with HMOs and big drug companies to pass legislation that does nothing to bring down the skyrocketing costs of drug prices.

The real winners of the new GOP prescription drug law are not the seniors, but the drug companies, who will make billions in windfall profits; and the big insurance companies who will benefit immediately from the billions in HMO overpayments, and a special \$12 billion Medicare HMO slush fund.

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the GOP was more concerned about protecting the profits of big drug companies, rather than controlling the prices of prescription drugs so more seniors could afford them. Just look at the fine print of the law.

The bill explicitly prohibits the government from negotiating lower prescription drug prices from the big drug companies, and prohibits the legal importation of drugs from Canada. Mr. Speaker, prohibiting the government

form lowering the costs of prescription drugs, when Nation is experiencing a growing budget deficit, and is experiencing a sluggish economy, makes no sense at all.

Furthermore, there is a doughnut hole in the GOP bill that is large enough to drive a Mack truck through. Under the Republican bill, in the first year, millions of middle class seniors with drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100 will receive no help at all, even though they must pay premiums. This is not fair. Experts have concluded that most seniors will end up paying more for their prescription drugs in the near future, even if they enroll in the new program.

Tonight, I ask a very straight forward question: how in the world can millions of seniors citizens afford to pay, out of pocket, anywhere up to \$2,850 dollars in prescription drug costs, because of the doughnut hole in coverage in the GOP bill.

The answer is clear: seniors will continue to struggle, day after day, just as they have for decades, to figure out how they can afford to purchase desperately needed prescription drugs. Many will have to continue to endure their aches and pains because they will not be able to afford prescription drugs under this ill designed program.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is fair for senior citizens to have to go through this nightmare any more. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a moral outrage, and I urge the Congress to adopt a new Medicare Prescription drug bill that would benefit all seniors, not just the drug companies and the HMOs.

IRAQ INTELLIGENCE LAPSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the blessings of this Nation are that we are a Republic, a constitutional Republic, that the Founding Fathers were wise enough to establish three distinct branches of government. I take that distinction and that constitutional mandate very seriously and believe that the congressional legislative branch has a responsibility of oversight over the executive as the judiciary remains as an independent component.

The administration of this government, the executive, engaged in a debate in the fall of 2002 that suggested to the American people that we were about to be attacked by Iraq. It was a vigorous debate. There was great, if you will, challenge to the administration's facts; and they waged a very public, if you will, campaign to convince the American people and to convince the United States Congress that we were about to be imminently attacked. It was a serious campaign, Mr. Speaker; it was a serious moment in our history. Members of this Congress took that debate very seriously.

I recall very vividly great emotion on the floor of the House, great indecision, indecisiveness, great concern and conflictedness about whether we should go to war, whether or not the words of the President mentioned and the Axis of Evil that was then ultimately mentioned in the winter of 2003 was actually factual; but the administration was convinced. They have pushed the intelligence community to the point of representing to all of us that this information was factual.

Let me share with my colleagues words from the administration: "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction," Vice President DICK CHENEY, August 26, 2002.

"Right now, Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for production of biological weapons," President Bush, September 12, 2002.

"The Iraqi regime possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons," Bush, October 7, 2002.

"We have also discovered through intelligence that Iraq has a growing fleet of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles that will be used to disburse chemical and biological weapons across broad areas. We are concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using the UAVs for missions targeting the United States," Bush, October 7, 2002.

"We know for a fact that there are weapons there," White House Spokesman, Ari Fleisher, January 9, 2003.

"The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconsidering its nuclear weapons program. Saddam Hussein has held numerous meetings with the Iraqi nuclear scientists, a group he calls his nuclear mujahadeen, his nuclear holy warriors. Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of its nuclear program in the past," Bush, October 7, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I will be offering in the next couple of days the Protect America's National Security Act of 2004, the PANS Act of 2004. That is to demand congressional hearings by the Select Committee on Homeland Security, Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Armed Services, and Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, absolutely demanding that an inquiry be made on the question of the level of intelligence that was utilized to convince this Congress, both the House and the Senate, of the decision to go to war.

I am against the bipartisan commission that has been offered by the President. Why? Because the President will be making the appointments regardless of the fact of whether they will be Democrats and Republicans. The President, the administration, the executive will be setting the time of the start and the completion of its work. I am concerned that any report and any investigation on the question of the type of intelligence that was given at the time of the decision made to go to war be challenged and it be an oversight by the Congress of the United States.

I refuse to allow this Congress to abdicate its responsibility under the Constitution to give oversight of the question of whether or not the intelligence given was both legitimate and substantial and the basis on which it was made.

To the American public, you deserve an answer. To the American public, you deserve that your congressional representatives engage in a process to investigate where there is no time set, where there is no end set, by the very executive that presented the intelligence.

In addition, we should hurry this report. This report should be done within a 6-month period because it is time sensitive. Why is it time sensitive, Mr. Speaker? Because intelligence is a basic infrastructure of security of America. It determines how we secure our borders, it determines aviation security, it determines the difference or the different levels of alert that we propose day after day after day.

It is crucial that the Congress rises to the level of oversight. It is interesting that we wish to push this very important work off to a civilian, if you will, commission which the very entity that we are investigating will be the one that will select both the participants and the procedures. Congress needs to use its subpoena powers and its investigatory powers in order to ensure that the American people have the truth.

I ask my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to join me in co-sponsoring the Protect America's National Security Act of 2004, which will ask for the general numbers of the CIA budget so that we will know, as was suggested by a former Reagan administration official.

I would like to thank my colleagues for taking the time to speak out tonight about this issue that is critical to the long-term survival of our Nation. I do not mean to use hyperbole. However, I truly believe that so much rides on our foreign intelligence gathering system. Our foreign policy, our trade policies, how we run our borders, what level of alert we are at, how we should live our day-to-day lives—it all is based on our understanding of what is happening in the world around us. If we are continually making decisions based on false assumptions and wrong interpretations, we could face a future full of 9/11s and unnecessary wars like the one still raging in Iraq today.

In the run-up to war, top Administration officials, and the President himself, were making statements daily about the deadly weapons that Saddam Hussein was pointing at the American people. We heard that they had stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons. We heard they were trying to buy materials for nuclear weapons; they had mobile weapons labs, and programs to develop more. One by one, these claims have been refuted. Last week, we heard Dr. David Kay, our own chief weapons inspector for the past year, testify that those claims were false.

However, we went to war based mostly on those claims. The war that has taken the lives of more than 500 brave U.S. soldiers, killed tens of thousands of Iraqis, cost us hundreds of billions of dollars, and diminished our standing in the world community. We have to find