

Nation of laws and a Nation of justice. In Baghdad, Army Specialist Jeremy Sivits pleaded guilty to three charges surrounding his mistreatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison. The judge in the case sentenced him to confinement for 1 year, reduced his rank to private, and gave him a dishonorable discharge from the Army. Three other soldiers have appeared for arraignment of charges regarding their roles in these incidents.

While the outrage over the abuses at the prison are justified, I am hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that we will see greater justice for those murderers who committed the disgusting, vile act in the killing of American civilian Nick Berg. I hope the Iraqis and the Arab world realize that law and justice are universal values for all nations.

THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ECONOMY: WORSE OFF UNDER BUSH

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I look back to the year 2000 and I see a different country from the one we live in today. In 2000, we entered a new century having enjoyed a decade of unprecedented economic growth. During the 1990s we got our priorities together, erased the Federal budget deficit, and put in place the fiscal discipline that created a \$5.6 trillion surplus. That \$5.6 trillion surplus gave us the ability to tackle problems and ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

The election of President Bush, however, ushered in a new era of misguided priorities that have failed. Without a doubt, our country is worse off now than it was 4 years ago. We stand now, this administration has taken that \$5.6 trillion surplus and turned it into \$4 trillion of red ink. Their insistence on tax cuts we cannot afford has starved our States, forcing them to cut countless services. We have lost 2.8 million jobs, most of them in manufacturing. Today, 44 million Americans are uninsured. We have an administration that cuts people from overtime pay and prohibits lifesaving stem cell research.

Mr. Speaker, this administration's track record shows a derailment. The American people deserve a stable economy and a reliable health care system.

SENIORS BENEFIT FROM MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, since May 3, the first day that seniors could sign up for a Medicare prescription drug discount card, I have had the opportunity to hold workshops at senior centers in Smyrna, Cedartown, Rome,

Cartersville, Talbotton, and Thomaston, all cities in Georgia's 11th Congressional District.

Here is what I tell the people at these town hall meetings: call 1-800-Medicare, everybody can do that, or visit www.medicare.gov on the Web and find out which card will save you the most money and sign up ASAP. It is that simple. All the naysayers want to convince seniors that signing up for the card is too confusing or will not save them any money. I cannot think of any reason why any senior should not sign up for the card.

Beneficiaries with incomes of less than \$12,000 for an individual or \$16,000 for a couple, they get \$600 in addition to the discount on the card. That is a total of almost \$20 million in additional help for 16,500 seniors in Georgia's 11th District for 2004 and 2005.

Yes, we have already seen the power of market forces at work. The prices are coming down, and it is not by government price controls. For seniors who have struggled to buy drugs, they certainly are better off now than they were 4 years ago.

ARE WE BETTER OFF TODAY THAN WE WERE 4 YEARS AGO?

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

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? Let us look at the facts.

Three years ago, our country was thriving. We were running on a \$236 billion budget surplus and 22 million jobs were created between 1992 and 2000. However, today 9 million Americans are out of work and 44 million Americans are without health insurance. Gas prices are at a 23-year high, and household income has decreased by almost \$1,500. We have the largest budget deficit ever for the second year in a row in our Nation's history. Our government spends \$900,000 more a minute than it takes in, and it borrows \$1.1 billion a day. Corporate profits are up, but wages for working families are down. It is the most anemic growth since World War II.

So are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? I think it is easy to see the answer is clearly "no."

KERRY'S NEW SLOGAN—ARE YOU BETTER OFF NOW THAN 4 YEARS AGO?

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, here they go again. Candidate KERRY and the Democrats are trying to take a page out of President Reagan's handbook. Unfortunately, for the taxpayers, it is not a page dealing with tax relief. KERRY's consultants are telling Democrats to ask this question: Are you better off now than you were 4 years ago?

Four years ago under a different administration, this Nation slept while al Qaeda plotted. We were deceived by a hollow technology bubble. Our seniors had no assistance with prescription drugs. And 4 years ago, Americans paid a marriage tax, a death tax, an estate tax, and across the board Americans paid higher income taxes.

President Bush has led us through some of the most challenging times in our Nation's history. Our economy is growing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month. More Americans are working than ever. More Americans own a home than ever. Our Armed Forces have terrorists on the run.

In Candidate KERRY's world, we would treat terrorism as a law enforcement issue. Mr. Speaker, I think those advisers need to go back to the drawing board.

ECONOMIC INDICATOR?

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, on April 24, President Bush visited the Timken Company, a plant in Canton, Ohio. He touted there his economic program and his tax cuts. Just the other day in Timken, Ohio, they closed the plant, firing 1,300 employees.

The President went on to say on his visit that his tax cut would end the double taxation of stock dividends which would mean, and I quote the President, "companies like Timken have got a better capacity to expand, more jobs." He went on to say, "We can do whatever it takes to overcome the obstacles in our way. I know you're optimistic about the future of this company."

Three tax cuts, \$3 trillion in debt, 3 more million Americans without jobs, 3 more million Americans in poverty since he has been President, and 43 million uninsured Americans. I am not sure we can afford this much progress in America. After announcing his tax cut in Timken, Ohio, the other day, just 2 days ago, the executive closed the plant firing 1,300 workers.

We can do better. There is a new direction in America that puts working families at the center of our economic policies rather than dividend tax cuts for contributors who support the President's reelection.

MESSAGE TO TROOPS: WE ARE WITH YOU

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

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Abu Ghraib prison guards in Iraq betrayed their fellow soldiers and our Nation with their indefensible acts. But this past week in Washington watching some Members of the House and Senate exploit this behavior to degrade our entire military and just

score political points, I believe they betray our troops as well.

It is never wrong to seek the truth, and we will find it in Abu Ghraib. But let us not make a bad situation worse with ill-chosen words and broad accusations. I reject the claim that "Saddam's torture chambers reopened under new management, U.S. management." I reject those who malign the character of our entire military. And I reject those around the world who clamor that the prison guards reform the values of America, our soldiers, or our President. They are wrong.

The real truth is that over 130,000 American fighting men and women endanger their own lives in Iraq each day. They serve far from the comfort of their families for long periods of time. The rest of the world should be down on its knees every night thanking them for it. We are.

I have a message for our troops: Ignore the blowhards in Washington. Do not listen to the national media. You are good and decent people fighting for our freedom and security. Your friends and families know this. America knows this. We are with you.

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LOWER GAS PRICES NOW

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on this administration to take action now to reduce the price of gasoline in this country. Across my district folks are suffering painfully from the skyrocketing fuel costs to record levels. Yet this administration has failed to provide relief.

Last month, OPEC cut production of crude oil by 2 million barrels, and the national average price for a gallon of gasoline has risen to more than \$2 a gallon. Yet the administration has done nothing to get OPEC to open the spigots back up.

North Carolina's economy is hurting. A truck driver approached me at church on Sunday and complained that his business is suffering because of the record high fuel prices. These gas prices will make the administration's record on job growth even worse while the big oil companies laugh all the way to the bank.

First quarter profits for Conoco-Phillips went up 44 percent. Exxon-Mobil reported a 125 percent increase. Chevron-Texaco hit a gusher with a 294 percent increase.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the White House and the administration to get to work, to get OPEC and the big oil companies to lower gas prices now.

BIPARTISAN PROBLEM SOLVING NEEDED

(Mr. SHAW asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I have to address the previous speaker regarding the price of energy and the shortage of energy that is claimed throughout the world. I think it is important that all of us realize that for the gentleman from Massachusetts, the candidate for President of the United States in the other party, to go and complain about fuel prices is like the kids that kill their parents and then claim that they are orphans and should be given special treatment. That is absolutely absurd.

When the Senate blocked the energy bill, it blocked the administration's plan to have an energy bill, an energy bill for this country. It is time that we stop the rhetoric, we stop the bipartisan quibbling. Republicans and Democrats are paying too much for fuel. We need an energy policy in this country, and the first step was the energy bill that stalled over in the other body. It is time for us to work together to solve problems instead of just creating them.

HEALTH CARE IS NOT BETTER OFF

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

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the audience here today.

Are we better off now than when President Bush took office? When you look at health care it certainly does not look like it.

Since President Bush took office an additional 3.8 million Americans are uninsured, and for Americans lucky enough to have health insurance, their premiums have increased by almost 50 percent since President Bush took office. In fact, total family premiums have risen more than \$2,700 in 4 years, a rate four times as fast as workers' salaries. This is basically a tax increase on the middle class. It is hard to be healthy when you have to choose between paying rent and going to the doctor.

This is a real crisis. It has real consequence. Eighteen thousand people die prematurely each year because they do not have health insurance. And how do the administration and the Republicans running the Congress respond? With special interest proposals like tort reform, health savings account and association health plans.

These proposals will not lower health care costs. We are not better off in these last 4 years.

USER FRIENDLY MEDICARE DRUG CARD

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, there is no question in my mind that the avail-

ability of the Medicare prescription drug discount card this June is going to have a dramatic influence on the cost of prescription drugs in this country. For the first time, seniors are going to have an open and transparent market; and we have seen in the last 3 weeks how this has brought the price of medications down with people being able to be compare for the first time, go to a database on the Internet and compare drug prices for themselves.

1-800-Medicare, that the gentleman from Georgia pointed out, or www.Medicare.gov can take you through the process. I have done it myself. It is easy. It is simple. It is self-explanatory. Simplicity and efficiency are the keys to bringing the cost down in this market.

Liability reform is not a special interest reform. It affects everyone in this country. The embedded costs of liability in the medical justice system in this country and the results of defensive medicine that we all pay for cost the Medicare system \$50 billion a year.

BROKEN PROMISES TO STUDENTS

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, are families and college students better off than they were 4 years ago? Not when it comes to being able to afford a higher education.

In the year 2000, when candidate George Bush said we should make the path to college open for all, that was his promise. Four years later that path is covered in weeds and broken promises, and President Bush and the Republicans must accept responsibility for their failed leadership in this area.

Since 2001 a 4-year public college tuition has increased by almost 30 percent. How has President Bush responded? Each year, he broke his promise to provide a \$5,100 maximum Pell grant to all first-year college students. In fact, the Pell grant this year is worth \$500 less than it was 30 years ago, and the President's 2005 budget eliminates Pell grants from 95,000 deserving students who need that money to pursue a higher education.

Now the Republicans are rubber-stamping the President's legislation that would force the typical student borrower to pay \$5,500 more for their student loan than they currently do. I do not think those students believe they are better off than they were 4 years ago.

HONORING MARO K. ROGERS

(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, this week, one of South Carolina's most beloved educators will retire after 41 years. Maro K. Rogers has