

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 compared 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

been teaching at the Little Red Schoolhouse kindergarten since 1963, and has personally taught around 1,500 students in the community of Lexington, South Carolina. Maro and her husband, Hugh Rogers, a former mayor of Lexington, built the schoolhouse in their own back yard where it stands today.

Maro has taught the essentials of learning to three generations of children. Students learned their ABCs, sang songs, listened to Mrs. Rogers read stories, and took field trips throughout the midlands of South Carolina for first-hand education.

Maro Rogers, a native of Baghdad, Iraq, of Armenian heritage, stands as a shining example of how one dedicated teacher can make a dramatic impact in the lives of our children. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in thanking Maro Rogers for her service to South Carolina's youngest students.

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

REFORM HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, like the economy the war and the United States' credibility around the world, health care is another casualty of the Bush administration.

Today, nearly 44 million Americans are without health insurance. The vast majority of those people live in households where someone is working full time. The cost to cover the uninsured is about 5 months' worth of the war in Iraq. Meanwhile, Americans who have health insurance are being forced to pay more than ever before. And the administration wants to shift even more of the burden to every American under the guise of reform.

A new study by researchers at Oregon Health and Science University put it bluntly, "We spend much more than any other industrialized country in the world on a per capita basis and we get much less in return."

Health care is a crisis that demands real leadership and real solutions. So health care will remain a crisis as long as the administration remains in office. The 2nd of November cannot come soon enough for Americans without health insurance.

BE HONEST TO OUR SENIORS

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

Mr. BEAUPREZ. Mr. Speaker, it has been 6 months since President Bush signed the historic Medicare prescription drug bill into law, and although the ink is hardly dry, there has been a steady campaign of misinformation by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

They say that these cards will not work, that they are too confusing, that they will not actually save seniors money. Mr. Speaker, the verdict is in. Medicare's new drug discount cards will save seniors money. In many instances, seniors will save hundreds, if not thousands of dollars.

For example, a senior living in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, my district, who takes three commonly prescribed drugs for seniors, Zocor, Nexium, and Fosamax, can save \$1,365 per year on their prescription drugs. I have done the math. That is money you can take to the bank, pay the rent or give to the grandkids.

The false accusations and scare tactics used by the political opponents of the prescription drug cards reminds me of something my mother used to say, "If ifs and buts were candy and nuts, we would all have a merry Christmas."

Well, Mr. Speaker, these seniors do not deserve to be lied to. They deserve the truth and they deserve a prescription drug card that will save them money.

LOAD THE WAGON

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

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the retorts from the other side, I think they must have adopted that great Republican philosophy that has kind of come back here recently, "Do not worry about the mule going blind, just load the wagon." And that sure is what we are doing right now: loading the wagon for our children and grandchildren.

I hear them talking about drug cards. You just call that 800 number and see what happens. Nothing. It is just like the drug card. You get nothing. It is another way to trick people.

We are going to be asked this week to raise the debt ceiling again, by \$700 billion, and to put our children again deeper and deeper and deeper in debt. It is insane to continue to do this to the next generations. If we are doing so frazzling good, then how come we are broke? I just do not understand that.

I hear them get up here every day and talk about how good things are. It is time to do the right thing.

MEDICARE CARD PROVIDES GREAT SAVINGS

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

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, seniors throughout West Virginia are learning about potential savings on their prescriptions because of recent reforms to Medicare. No matter what critics may say, it is very easy to find out information about the new prescription drug card. Just ask Ann Brown, one of my constituents.

I worked with Ann. We went on line together. And she was able to see very easily what her savings would be by going onto the Medicare.gov website.

But Ann is not alone. A senior living in Charleston, West Virginia in a 25304 zip code who takes Fosamax for osteoporosis, Zocor for cholesterol, and Nexium for acid reflux can save \$170 a month by using a Medicare-endorsed card, which is a savings of over \$2,000 a year. That is a real savings.

Why are they saving? Because the competition and buying power of over 40 million seniors across the country is driving down the cost of prescriptions.

Beginning on June 1, seniors will begin to realize these significant savings, and through the Medicare-endorsed prescription drug card, they will see that this benefit is significant, meaningful and hits the bottom line.

WE NEED A POLICY CHANGE

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

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, when the national Republican Party took us to war in Iraq, the average price of gasoline across the country was \$1.40 cents a gallon, and we were told that the cost of the war in Iraq would be negligible because it would be paid for by the oil in Iraq.

Now, 14 months later, the price of gasoline in America is more than \$2 a gallon and the war in Iraq is costing us \$200 billion. The Republican energy plan is to increase our dependence on foreign oil. Their plan for Iraq is more of the same.

With, now, almost 800 American servicemen and -women dead, 4,000 injured, it is quite obvious we need a different policy and a different leadership. It is time for a change.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARD A BENEFIT

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

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. On May 3, 2004, constituents of the First Congressional District of South Carolina began signing up for their new Medicare discount card. The enrollment fee for the discount card will range from zero to \$30 per eligible person.

The discount card will save the seniors and disabled Medicare beneficiaries of my district between 10 and 25 percent off the retail price of most drugs. In addition to the discounts, seniors whose income is below \$12,569 for individuals and \$16,862 for married couples may qualify for an additional \$600 credit to cover the full cost of their prescription.

Military retirees can now enroll in Medicare Part B without a late enrollment penalty through December 31, 2004.