

a guarantee that if anybody selected the option, you can stay with the old system if you want to and not have personal retirement accounts, in my proposed legislation, but if you do go into personally-owned retirement accounts, we are guaranteeing that they are going to be at least as good in terms of what they are going to contribute towards your retirement as Social Security. So you cannot lose.

Fairness for women. This is what I have incorporated in this Social Security bill. For married couples, account contributions would be pooled and then divided equally between husband and wife. So, if one spouse is earning much more than the other spouse, you add the two earnings together, you divide by two to determine what is going to be the identical amount that is going to go into both the husband's and the wife's personal retirement savings account.

Two, it would increase surviving spouse benefits to 110 percent of the higher earning spouse's benefit. Currently, it is 100 percent. This tries to encourage people to stay in their own home a little longer rather than going to a nursing home. So we have upped the minimum amount that is going to be allowed after one spouse's death.

Then stay-at-home moms. For stay-at-home mothers with kids under 5, they would receive retirement credit. So, for those limited number of years that they stay at home with those kids under 5 years old, we give them the average of their higher earnings for those outyears to fill in that best 35 years in determining their benefits.

The additional retirement security. Trying to encourage a couple of things, encourage more savings, encourage people to stay in their own homes a little longer after they retire. So these are other provisions I have incorporated in my bill that is a bipartisan bill, signed by Democrats and Republicans.

The increased contribution limits for IRAs, 401(k)s and pension plans, we would increase that contribution limit. The second blip, a 33 percent tax credit for the purchase of long-term care insurance up to \$1,000 per individual, \$2,000 per couple. Low-income seniors would be eligible for a \$1,000 tax credit for expenses related to living in their own homes and households caring for those dependents. So, if the kids are having one of their parents or both of their parents live with them, they would get a tax credit to encourage them to use their facility and care for their parents as opposed to maybe their parents going into a nursing home.

Nursing home care, of course, is now increasing dramatically as we pass more rules and regulations. On the average, in my area of Michigan, nursing homes cost from \$40- to \$55,000 a year for a senior to stay at that nursing home, and with the increased medical technology, these elderly individuals that thought they had saved enough

during their working years soon find out that if they are going to live that longer period of time, then their savings is used up, and they switch and then they are eligible for Medicaid, where the government pays the cost of that nursing home care.

The promises that Congress has made. As I summarize Mr. Speaker, I would just encourage all citizens of this country to look at the overpromising and the overspending that seems popular for the moment, but in the long run, it becomes a detriment not only to our kids and our grandkids but to the kind of pressures it is going to put on economic growth in future years.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO FULFILL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the chronicling of crisis of Social Security by my colleague, and I would simply offer to say that I agree with him. This Congress needs to be able to focus its attention on domestic issues as crucial as Social Security.

I guess this evening I will pursue for my colleagues why we have not been successful in fulfilling our responsibilities in dealing with the domestic agenda, confronting some of the crises that we are now facing around the world, and particularly confronting the crises that we are facing in the Middle East, particularly in the region of Iraq and Afghanistan.

I believe that the American people have a right to expect their government to work. It is a simple premise, Mr. Speaker. The Federal Government is the umbrella during the rainy day. It is the cushion. I might say some would say it is the wind beneath our wings. Frankly, it is the big brother and big sister in a positive way. We should be able to lean on the Federal Government.

I am disappointed because I believe this Congress, and there is not an institution that I respect more in terms of government because of the great history of this body, has failed to fulfill its responsibilities. What are those responsibilities and what has it brought in terms of where we are today?

We are faced with choices that have not been brought about by the right kinds of circumstances. We failed as a body to truly provide oversight in order for this government to work. I think it is so overwhelming to the American people, it requires a chronicling of where we are and why there should be such an outrage and an outcry to demand this government to work, particularly this Congress, because the Congress above the executive and the Judiciary, is to be the truthfinder. It is to be the fixer-upper. It is

the body that corrects the ills that have been created.

Frankly, I think it is quite dismal that in the last 4 years, when this body was controlled predominantly by one party, we have not seen one legitimate investigation started, completed and resolved. When I say that, I mean started, completed and the problem resolved.

We still have outstanding the exposure of a CIA operative. We still have outstanding the question of how the energy bill was designed. We have not yet completed a complete overhaul of our corporate structures so that we can prevent fraud and abuse. We certainly have not touched the surface of why we entered into a war with Iraq on the basis of weapons of mass destruction and whether or not this body, this Congress was misrepresented to.

So tonight, Mr. Speaker, I am simply going to draw our attention to why it is so important to decipher what the policies are in this government and to simply ask the question why and to ask the question what if. What is wrong with the body, what is wrong with this Congress who fails to ask the questions why and what if, who takes its responsibility of oversight as a major part of its duties, its oath of office, so the American people can know the truth and so that we can find ways to fix the problems and that we can restore this Nation to its high moral grounds?

Frankly, it is tragic to be able to suggest that seven low-ranking military personnel, privates and others, are the basis upon which this Nation's national and international standing has collapsed, and frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is fairly accurate. It does not take away from the very noble, valiant tasks that have been acted on by our military and our other government personnel who are on the front lines across the world.

I had the pleasure of being just last week in Afghanistan at Bagram Air Force Base where a multitude of our forces were there from many, many different branches of the United States military, and Mr. Speaker, I come back to say that our military is able, dedicated and committed; that the work that is being done in Afghanistan, though trying and difficult, though forgotten in some sense, led by very fine military officers, is persistent and determined. They are determined to stay and provide the kind of leadership and security necessary for the government of President Karzai to succeed and for the elections to proceed. They are engaged. They are working with the provisional reconstruction team, one of the best elements of the Defense Department, and the American people should know about it. Our military are engaged, yes, in Nation building, more effective than our foreign policy has been, and in visiting with those on the air force base, they are actually building schools and clinics. They are actually helping to educate young people in

Afghanistan. They are actually seeing thousands upon thousands of girls and boys going to school.

We were very proud, as members of the Afghan Caucus, with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), to be able to deliver 900 pounds of books that were collected by the Houston school children and the Houston Independent School District, that were stored by a small business by the name of A Rocket Storage and Moving Company, very proud of them as my constituents, and a very charitable Federal Express that helped get them here to Washington and then to the United States military that helped deliver them to those children. Yes, our books that taught about geography and science and how to read and stories and picture books and things that children in Afghanistan might have not have seen in years. That is a good thing and the good news to report.

Then, of course, in meetings with the Central Command, in listening to some of the success stories that were going on there and meeting with the some 5,000 soldiers on the USS *George Washington*, soldiers who are providing the support for the soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq. These sailors are very proudly, many of them from Texas, working around the clock 24 hours.

That is the good news that America should know, but at the same time that they know the good news, it is important for them to understand that this Congress has failed to provide the oversight that is necessary to get us back on track. In fact, I would be prepared tonight to say that the political inadequacies and the lack of consistency in our direction in Iraq is causing the system to collapse around the military efforts. The military efforts have been, as I said, persistent and determined, but they are collapsing because the political process is uneven, misdirected and, I believe, confused.

This war has cost us, and might I just offer to those colleagues the timeline that brought us to where we are today.

On January 9, 2002, President George Bush's State-of-the-Union address labels Iraq part of the "Axis of Evil" and vows that the U.S. will not permit the most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the most destructive weapons. That is the first pronouncement that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. We do not know if there is any truth to that, but that is what led to this whole timeline that brings us to where we are today.

We go on to a series of various pronouncements, and then finally Congress provides a resolution that says go to the United Nations. Those of us who oppose both the resolution and the doctrine of preemptive attack continue to insist that we needed to go in a multi-lateral approach. It was ignored. The U.N. Security Council provided a resolution imposing tough new arms inspections on Iraq.

□ 2300

But of course that resolution asked for the arms inspection process to continue. Soon thereafter, on December 31, this administration approved the deployment of U.S. troops to the Gulf region, almost unilaterally; and of course this persistence turned into what became the war against Iraq.

On May 1 of 2003, the U.S. declares an end to major combat operations, in essence a victory. On April 14, preceding that, major fighting in Iraq is declared over by the Pentagon after U.S. forces take control of Tikrit, which is Saddam Hussein's birthplace.

May 30, in a separate speech, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and British Prime Minister Tony Blair denied intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were distorted or exaggerated to justify an attack on Iraq. This was May 30, 2003.

The reason for this time line is to suggest that when we make choices to go into war then we choose war and we ignore the domestic responsibilities of this Nation. So as I proceed to discuss where we are at in terms of the cost of war, I think it should be with the backdrop of the limitations that we have been able to engage.

For example, we have not been able to focus on fixing Social Security or making sure that it is preserved. Frankly, I believe that any fix of Social Security should be to maintain it in its present state in order for it to be what it was intended under FDR and that is that it was intended to be a safety net. So any review of the Social Security System should be with the intent of its origins, a safety net. So private savings accounts and other such quick fixes are not to interfere with what most people have come to understand, that no matter what happens to them, no matter what happens to the economy at this point, they know if Social Security is in place they will have at least a minimal ability to provide and support themselves.

But we have not had time to deal with that, Mr. Speaker, and the reason is because this war has been costly. We can see now with our very eyes the extent of the cost. Frankly, we know that it is going to continue to cost. We have already spent over \$150 billion in supplemental budgets alone dealing with this war in Iraq. We have a very narrow coalition of allies helping with it. In fact, we have seen over the last couple of weeks and months allies leave with all due and deliberate speed because they believe the political process is collapsing down around us. The coalition of the willing is diminishing.

Again, let me remind my colleagues that I am not discussing or indicating that the work of our military personnel is diminishing, but morale is a question, and we should not, we should not attempt to cover up with accolades and high praise and suggest that anyone who criticizes in order to shed light on the fallacies or the problems that are going on are wrong. Frankly,

I think the American people need to track what is going on in Iraq and demand accountability of its government, and that is what we have not gotten.

So we are in a war that eliminates the choices that should be made to assist in the needs of the American people. As I said, we have already spent over \$150 billion in supplemental budgets. We have now a request of \$25 billion. Our troops are known to be spread too thin. There is question as to whether or not we have enough troops. We have a volunteer army, a volunteer military of which we can be very proud of, but no one has taken time to discuss whether or not we actually need a draft in order to address this question.

We know that our National Guard and Reserve forces are stretched thin. We know from conversations directly with our military that from the time they were first assigned some 6 months has been extended to their stay. Some are still there without knowing when they might return home. This is particularly hard on the Reservists and the National Guard because, in many instances, even though actively deployed and committed, they are leaving families and jobs and incurring expenses which they cannot meet. So the question of choices is being raised not only by this government but by the people we are impacting.

During my trip to the region, as I indicated, I could hear personal stories asking the question of how long we would have to be engaged. Mr. Speaker, my assessment from listening to these personal stories, though committed, dedicated, and patriotic personnel that they were, is that the American people have not been told the actual truth. The administration has not laid out the time line which we will have to stay in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I have given a modest prediction of 10 years. Frankly, it may be more. But no one has even bothered to categorize how long they think we might stay in Afghanistan and Iraq. And the time we might spend there will be costly. The bills will continue to mount. And the question is: Do we have the political will or is there any political process in place to even provide some sort of commitment to the American people that we will be successful?

It is a dilemma for those of us who have opposed vigorously this war. If you understand this process, you realize that, as you have opposed the war, it is also important to invest in some semblance of sanity and civility and stability in the region for our own good. Yet realizing that even though the war on terror, which began in Afghanistan and which was never completed, and in fact we are still in that process, and that was a unified effort with allies from around the world, you also know that you cannot leave either of these places. Yet we have not heard one administration official in this time

line that I have read from that has indicated how long we will be in this region, how long we will be in Afghanistan or in Iraq.

So what is missing is the direct information that will allow the American people to join in their governmental process and make choices. Because all that we have gotten is that we are engaged. And what we have seen over the last couple of weeks is the tragedy of the engagement, the large numbers of lives lost not only in Iraq but in Afghanistan, and the turmoil and conflict that is occurring in a number of cities and holy places around Iraq. We have seen the changed policies of falling back to security, as opposed to aggressively going after the insurgents, the conflict of determining whether insurgents are those who are just opposed to foreigners on their land or whether they can be classified as terrorists. Those are difficult questions and those are choices that are having to be made that are falling upon the shoulders of the American people.

This past weekend we paid tribute to the Greatest Generation, and we acknowledged the generation of today, who are standing on the shores of other lands fighting for us. We have laid to rest so many young people and so many military personnel Reservists and National Guardsmen that have lost their lives in Iraq. Each life is precious. Each family that has lost one mourns one.

This past weekend we also paid tribute to the Greatest Generation, those who lived and those who lost their lives in World War II. Those were liberators, but it was an enunciated, understandable need to go into World War II. In fact, many of us who reflect on history would have wanted us to go earlier.

But that is not the case here. The war in Iraq is not a clear war. There is not clarity. There is not distinctiveness in the policy. There is not an understanding of the time frame and the time line that we will be required to stay.

For those who want to challenge again the patriotism of many who question why we are in Iraq, we also understand that Saddam Hussein is and was a despot, that lives were lost. There is no doubt. But what is not told by this administration is whether or not Saddam Hussein was easily toppable, easily able to be disposed of by Iraqis and others in the region, whether or not he was weak enough to be taken without this all-out war, which has created this wall of opportunity for terrorists. A borderless Iraq is what we have now.

□ 2310

The question is whether or not we could have handled this in a different manner. As I indicated, because we have taken this route, a war first based upon weapons of mass destruction, a preemptive unilateral attack, a declaration of an end of war when it was not over, the lack of inclusiveness of

our allies, the diminishing of the willing coalition, then we are making choices and we are suffering by those choices.

Let me first start on what I have been speaking about, the military. Does anybody realize we have had to underfund the military by \$12.2 billion? This past weekend, we stood and paid tribute to the military present and past and to the future. We have thanked them for their service. We have mourned those who lost their lives. We stood next to families who cried and were crying because of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. We said our patriotic remarks and sang our patriotic songs, but what are we doing in this very Congress to support the United States military?

Mr. Speaker, we are underfunding it by \$12.2 billion. In fact, the budget of the executive is sorely diminishing some of the required priorities of this military, particularly in light of its engagement. Among the priorities left out of the President's budget are funding for arms equipment necessary in light of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Let me make it very clear, my interest is not in building up the defense budget. In fact, I am a supporter of the Department of Peace that I believe we should be looking at, legislation presented by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) where we begin to put fixtures in place to discuss world peace, not something to be taken likely and laughed at, but something to be seriously considered and engaged in.

If we are engaged in war and conflicts, as this administration proceeds to do, and then underfunds the very necessary armed equipment that our military needs, then they are speaking with a dual voice and are in essence making choices that are hurting those on the front lines. We are underfunding the military such that we are not providing upgrade of Air Force planes with modern identification and electronics to protect them from being shot down by friendly fire. That is a challenge that we have had to confront in the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. It is tragic enough to lose a loved one, a family member, a friend or neighbor, yet to be told that they were brought down by friendly fire.

The administration did not give the Army \$2 billion it asked for to protect the troops, including \$900 million to add armor protection to Humvees and other vehicles. I have visited with personnel who specifically described Humvees that were not well armored. Of course in the last couple of months, we have provided some funds, but yet those funds were not sufficient. Go into the hospitals of the wounded, and ask them how they were wounded, and they will say they were in Humvees not armored.

Mr. Speaker, these are the choices having to be made because of this ill-directed conflict and war in Iraq. The Navy lacks \$23 million needed to move

intelligence information faster and to get more linguists into countries where they are most needed. As someone who has not asked for the defense budget to consume the needs of America, but recognizes that we are now in a war that has not been fully explained to the American people in terms of the long-standing commitment and price that it will cost, and the fact that this Congress winds its way through the 108th session of this body, and we have failed to investigate why we are in Iraq, why the representations of the weapons of mass destruction, why unilateral preemptive attack, why there has been no discussion as to how long we will have to be in Iraq, why there has been no explanation as to why the political process seems to be failing as we watch it. Why, why, why. Why there has been no investigations by this Congress to determine why we are where we are today. Choices have been made that now find their way winding itself amongst our lives.

Now I ask the question as well, why we have done little to explain to the American people about the Iraqi prison incident and the human rights violations in Abu Ghraib. It seems we simply want it to go away. I will argue it cannot go away. Frankly, the investigation by the military is to be appreciated, but it is not sufficient. So I have called for an independent civilian investigation bringing over large numbers of FBI agents and other civilian support, not contractors, Mr. Speaker, because this military has been too commercialized, and there are too many private contractors.

In fact, I join in a recommendation that I have recently heard that all civilian contractors and civilian personnel, who I know have put themselves in harm's way, and my comments are not to reflect upon those civilians who have gone over to the war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan at the behest of their company who are simply doing their job and being paid, it is not to comment on their desire to serve their country as well; but it is to say we have commercialized and contracted out our defense and military personnel responsibilities. It has been dangerous. The prison is a prime example of what has generated out of that contracting out.

So a recommendation that I heard just recently, I would adhere to and agree that anyone who is contracted by the Department of Defense and going into a war zone should adhere to the United States Military Code of Justice, and they should have a provision in their contract so they are under the Military Code of Justice.

I am here to say that this tragedy at the prison cannot be swept under the rugs. We cannot be told there is an investigation. Why, if you just uncover what is going on, you will find out there needs to be more than a military investigation. There are human rights violations. They are finding out a number of deaths occurred not only in Iraq

but in Afghanistan. They are finding out that one of the major Baathist commanders whom they were trying to get information from died at the hands of those in our prisons.

They are finding out there are ghost detainees, that the CIA has ghost detainees, as the individuals were called by the 800th MP Brigade; and they were routinely held by the soldier guards at Abu Ghraib without accounting for them, knowing their identities, or even the reason for their detention. These phantom captives were moved around within the facility to hide them from the Red Cross teams, a tactic which is deceptive and which is contrary to Army doctrine and in violation of international law. Are we aware of that? The world is aware of that. The Arab states are aware of that, and we have not clarified and done anything to provide a sunshine on this tragedy.

Are we aware that more than 9,000 people are held by U.S. authorities overseas, and as well, some held in Guantanamo Bay where they are known as enemy combatants? But the crux of the problem is starting at the very top. It is ludicrous, Mr. Speaker, that we would allow scapegoating at the military level and fail to have a full and thorough civilian review and investigation. Why do I say that? Because the White House counsel provided a letter and commentary that certain prisoners could be treated in a certain way, the highest level in the administration.

□ 2320

This is because there has to be some question as to whether or not the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the military intelligence unit, the CIA and military intelligence personnel, along with contracting intelligence personnel, were at the crux of what was going on.

It does not make any sense, frankly, that we have investigations that no one knows about. That includes our own Congressional committees; briefings in secret, doors closed, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence not presenting any information that we can decipher.

I imagine that all committees believe that they are engaged. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I believe this should be investigated by the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on Government Reform, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, if that is occurring at this time, and certainly the Committee on Armed Services. But, Mr. Speaker, we have heard not even a peep.

We have held some hearings, but have heard of no resolution. We holding up to 8,000, I mentioned 9,000, the number changes as we speak, but no one has moved to investigate this and provide the kind of oversight that the Constitution requires of this constitutional body, the Congress of the United States.

In fact, since one party has been in power, we have had only investigations, if you will, of the other party, and that is the Democrats. I recall very well during the Clinton administration, I think there was an investigation a day, or maybe every other day; from Whitewater to the impeachment to Travelgate, any number of investigations that bore little fruit. But yet now with the series of, more than infractions, of outright blatant undermining of the governmental process, we have found no way, no will, no stomach to investigate. While the American people suffer and while the world suffers, tragedy occurs.

If we do not find policies that will help stabilize the region, again, Mr. Speaker, we will make choices that most of us will not like. I share this chronicling of the events in Iraq because all of us wish the people of Iraq well. But as we have watched the political process, it is simply falling down around the ears and arms and legs and feet of the United States military, struggling every day to maintain security in Iraq.

There is confrontation between the Provisional Council and the United States, the choice as to who will lead; the United Nations engaged, but not engaged, trying to provide leadership; the question of whether or not there will be civil war; whether or not this has been discussed with the American people in an announced, pronounced, clear roadmap of where we will go in Iraq; how long we will stay, as I indicated; and how we will stabilize the region.

This weekend was a clear example of the political confusion that exists. This headline in the New York Daily News today, "Saudis let thugs go, survivors say." "Captives rescue staged," they say.

These are the individuals who suffered the brutality of al Qaeda terrorists that took over a compound that was housing western offices and residential areas. Large numbers of individuals killed, murdered, brutalized; a British executive dragged through the streets; one American killed, all as a result of the tumultuous times in this region.

It is questionable whether or not the commandos from the Saudi government were sent in soon enough. As far as I am concerned, this needs investigating as well. Why? Because this occurred over a day's time, 25 hours of rampage going on and commandos coming hours into the rampage, and the violence and the outrage and the brutality; survivors suggesting that dialogue occurred between terrorists who left and the Saudi commandos.

Now, I am not suggesting that there were not maybe some good intentions, as is represented by the Saudi government. They suggested that they allowed them to go because more killing was going to occur. But my concern is, why did it take this long for commandos to arrive? Why were people

shot, brutalized, dragged through the streets until commandos arrived?

The region is in disarray, the terrorists are running rampant, and our efforts to coalesce around the war of terror is dismantling politically because we have made decisions in Iraq.

From the Financial Times, "OPEC tries to sooth fears over oil prices, all a result of the crisis in Saudi Arabia this weekend. Security worries following Saudi compound siege set to overshadow trading in New York and London today," June 1.

That is why it is crucial for the American people to understand that we must ask the hard questions and demand of this Congress its responsibility of telling you what the costs of this war will actually be; demanding that this administration begin to chronicle its exit strategy and how long we will be in Iraq; how we will fight the war on terror in Afghanistan and how we will provide for the security for the elections, not only in Afghanistan, but in Iraq; how we will provide for a cohesive Afghanistan; how we will bring warlords in through the efforts of the present government of Afghanistan; and, likewise, how we will prevent civil war in Iraq when the government is transitioned.

Choices. As I said, oversight. That is the responsibility of this Congress. Yet all we hear from this Congress is deadening silence; deadening silence.

This weekend, as I said, we touted and celebrated those men and women, our neighbors and friends and family members who served in the United States military. We acknowledged those living, who joined us in the celebration, those who are still on the front lines, and we acknowledged those who lost their lives.

At ceremonies in Houston, I recounted to those who gathered yesterday at the Veterans Cemetery that honor is due to all of those who lost their life; that there is no big or small war; there is no little or large conflict; that every life lost should be honored.

I also said to them that we should not forget the veterans, the veterans we made a promise to, and therefore that promise should be kept.

Those ceremonies yesterday were filled with veterans and their families, and I indicated that it is not our choice to deny them the promise that was given as they took the oath, because each military person who takes an oath is willing to accept the fact that they may have to make the ultimate sacrifice. Yet in the choices we are making, the amount of money we are spending in Iraq and Afghanistan causes us to make choices and to break those promises, and I will tell you how.

It is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to say to a veteran that we have no mental health services for you and your family. It is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to say to veterans who have taken certain prescription drugs in order to be in the region and find that those prescription drugs have now proven to

be debilitating, in one instance, one taken for malaria called Lariam, and to have to tell a veteran, someone coming in from Iraq, that we have no means of providing for you.

Now, I understand that the 150,000 or so Iraqi veterans that are coming home have been sent a letter indicating that they will be provided for. But, Mr. Speaker, let me ask the question: I do not know how they can be provided for in light of the fact that we are closing veterans hospitals; I do not know how they can be provided for in light of the fact that we have a means test for veterans to get care at the hospitals, and that is that they will not provide for veterans making \$30,000 or more; and I do not know where \$30,000 has gotten to be a lot of money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe there are some concerns for veterans in terms of health care and education, and we continue to turn a blind eye to the idea that we have to provide and have to make choices and have to keep our promise.

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs recommended that \$2.5 billion more than the President's budget was needed to maintain vital health care programs for veterans.

□ 2330

Nevertheless, the House Republican budget provides only \$1.3 billion less than what the committee recommended for 2005. Let me say that again. The House Republican budget provides \$1.3 billion less than what the committee recommended for 2005. So frankly, I do not know how we can send a letter to the 150,000 Iraqi veterans or returning military personnel, some of whom will not be veterans, and suggest that we are going to be able to provide for them, because in actuality, we do not have enough money to provide for veterans. That is why we are closing hospitals. That is why we do not have mental health services. That is why we cannot serve those who are making \$30,000.

Over the next 5 years, the money allocated to the Department of Veterans Affairs will not even be able to maintain these health programs at the current levels. In 2007, the budget is \$227 million less than what the Department of Veterans Affairs needs to keep pace with inflation. Over 5 years, the Republican budget cuts \$1.6 billion from the total needed to maintain services at the 2004 levels. Any of my colleagues who have encountered veterans in their districts realize the severity of the problem.

My remarks yesterday also included a challenge regarding our homeless veterans, many of them Vietnam veterans. In fact, as I came off the stage, one of the homeless veterans came up to me and thanked me. He made it out to that ceremony because he cared, because he was a veteran, because he had seen combat. But you could tell he was in need. Programs that provide for substance abuse and provide for transi-

tional living and give them an opportunity to pick up their lives, pick up the broken pieces, are being cut.

So what are we saying to our returning soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq? Again, it goes back to choices and the oversight of this Congress; and I am concerned that we are failing in the oversight, cutting millions of dollars, resulting in almost \$2 billion in cuts from the veterans resources. And what are we saying to those almost 800 troops who have lost their lives and their families, and the more than 3,000 who have been wounded? Are we going to have the resources to be able to provide for those who are in need? Mr. Speaker, I think not. Again, it goes back to choices, and we are disappointing in the choices that we are making; and we are not providing the American people a sufficient answer in order to be able to have them understand what the real cost of war is all about.

Again, I hope that this Congress will take up its responsibility and make the choices that are necessary, particularly as it relates to not working on our domestic responsibilities. Let me chronicle for my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, what we failed to do. I was pleased to hear my colleagues, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), speak of this day from another perspective. Again, it goes to my point of choices. Today, for example, was the day of introduction of the prescription drug card, June 1, 2004. This is the result of the most undemocratic vote that I believe this House has had maybe in its history, and that was the vote on the Medicare bill in 2003, a bill that allowed the vote on the floor of the House to remain open for almost 6 hours; and the kind of chastising, cajoling, and threatening that went on to secure votes for this bill will go down in history as a day of infamy in this United States Congress. There is no way to describe it, other than to say it was a disgrace.

But out of that came these prescription drug cards. Let me clarify, because I have worked with the pharmaceutical companies, and I believe that there is merit to this process of a pharmaceutical drug card parallel of costs to what we should have done, and that is to provide a guaranteed prescription drug benefit for all seniors in America. That is what should have been introduced today, on June 1, 2004. Because what our friends are finding out on the Republican side of the aisle is that it is a program that is seemingly, or obviously, not working. There is under-enrollment, seniors have not enrolled, they are disinterested, and they have not chosen to participate. Why? Because it is complex, it is confusing, it is without order, if you will. In fact, it is disorderly, because in order to make the right decision, you need to have probably the encyclopedia and the whole Internet to be able to understand what is the best choice. That confusion

provides inertia. And so if we look at the numbers of enrollment, we will see that it is less than I think; 400,000, or 40,000, I am not sure of the correct number, but it is a very small number of seniors in America.

So we know that it is not working. Unfortunately, we also know that it will cost over \$400 billion instead of the \$300 billion that it was represented to cost, and that is the Medicare bill. And in that bill, of course, was this big surprise, the Medicare prescription drug cards. Interestingly enough, there are 73 different cards for seniors to choose from, and 39 of those are available to seniors in my own district. They have annual fees ranging from zero to \$30. Each offers discounts on different drugs to different degrees.

So the reason why the drug card is not effective is because if you are a senior and your physician prescribes a number of prescription drugs that come under different pharmaceutical companies, then does that mean that you have to get 10 different cards? Yes, it does. Do you realize that you have to keep the card for over a year, or a year minimum before you can change? Probably most do not. Do you realize that there is burdensome paperwork and fees? And the final insult to injury is that even though these cards are giving a 10 to 20 percent discount on prescription drugs, the question is what are they giving it on? Choices. If a senior gets a card next week that gives them 15 percent off and prices go up 20 percent this summer, then what is the point of the card? Do you realize that the pharmaceuticals can raise their prices on those prescription drugs every single week or every single month; and when you come back with your card and you get the 15 percent discount, guess what? You are getting it on an increased price.

Mr. Speaker, this does not do well by seniors, and seniors are very knowledgeable. And although low-income seniors do get a \$600 drug allotment per year through the card program, many of those seniors have been getting similar help for years from drug manufacturers through various patient assistance programs. I would hope that we are explaining to some of those seniors that they should sign up so they do not lose the benefit, but I do not know if they fully understand what they are getting into. It was unfortunate that AARP joined in this Medicare bill, rather than stand and hold out for a real prescription drug benefit, and they are getting ready to see that there is little support for this program.

Now, I am reading a number here, and I am going to offer it and I am going to check it, but I want my colleagues to see how stark and shocking it is, because I said 40,000 and 400,000. I am reading a number, for example, that says that only 400 seniors out of 43 million seniors had signed up for it; 400 seniors out of 43 million seniors. Now, those of my colleagues, we can all check those numbers together, but 400,

even if it is 1,000 seniors out of 43 million, it is an outrage. We can see that the program is not working.

So many seniors are opting to skip these prescription drug cards after we had a 6-hour vote and we had press conferences and, by the way, I had my Senator and another Congressperson, the majority leader, come into my congressional district to have a press conference to talk about these prescription drug cards, talking to my inner-city seniors, many of them without the support that they need to be able to even have these prescription drug cards, because they might not even be able to pay for the fees. But I would just simply say to my friends who went into my congressional district to talk about a drug card, my Republican friends, that we would have all been able to stand there together if we were announcing a Medicare-guaranteed prescription drug benefit; we would have all been able to be there and stand together.

□ 2340

But, obviously, if you were selling something that clearly did not have much substance to it, you probably did not at the present time want a lot of company.

I would simply say to my good friends who visited my district and tried to convince my seniors that this was a good program, you try to convince the seniors of America that this is a good program if only 400 of them out of 43 million seniors have signed up. Basically, I am sure they are preferring to go to Canada to get drugs over the Internet where they are saving 50 percent.

I asked both the majority leader and my good friend the Senator, I have asked them whether or not, if you will, they would work to get a guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit and whether or not they would work with me to cap the cost of these pharmaceutical drugs so, in fact, we would assure the seniors that when they got the 15 percent it would be a consistent 15 percent, that it would be a 15 percent that they could realize, that it would not be a 15 percent on inflated prices. And no one can convince me or prove that that is not the case.

Choices, Mr. Speaker; and all because of how we are poised right now, the conflict and the war in Iraq and the war on terror in Afghanistan and emerging issues around the world, choices that we are disallowed in making because of the choices of the war in Iraq.

Unemployment. There is such a lot of talk about how well we are doing with respect to the economy, and I would simply say that you need to point to the large numbers of unemployed who have been unemployed for such a long period of time that they are not in the system. I would just simply suggest that I am very glad that Senator KERRY has offered a real economic policy that addresses the question of mid-

dle-class Americans in a realistic tax structure that provides for investment in their growth and opportunity. We need that kind of leadership. Because, as I started out saying, there are choices.

My colleague just discussed the Social Security crisis that he would like to solve and fix. I have indicated that we need to preserve Social Security. That is our stand as Democrats, but we cannot even discuss that, Mr. Speaker. We are not even giving the kind of airing to those issues because we are so consumed with the collapse of the political process in Iraq and the lack of support for our military that we cannot even get on to issues that we are dealing with here in the United States.

The Housing and Urban Development Department has now slashed section 8 vouchers. My community alone will be suffering. In Houston alone the cuts will lead to a \$500 million shortfall in one of the most important and time-tested programs in our Federal Government. What do you do with homeless persons, Mr. Speaker? Simply leave them to their own devices and walk the streets of every highway and byway and rural hamlet and community?

I think it is an outrage that in this economy, in times when homeless veterans numbers are going up, when the military will be coming home and maybe facing their own trials and tribulations, who knows what needs they may have, let us hope that they will not wind up homeless. We do know that some military personnel are on food stamps.

But is not it ludicrous, Mr. Speaker, that we have a situation where we are cutting section 8 vouchers? Our City of Houston will be forced to either cut 700 families off from this critical support or reduce support to all families and individuals in the program. Remember, a family of four in section 8 housing already has a total income of less than \$30,500 per year.

So this housing voucher program, which is being cut across the country, is another victim of the billions of dollars we are spending in Iraq, a political process that is collapsing, a lack of investigations to even determine how long we will be in Iraq and what is going on in Iraq, so we are not prepared to deal with our domestic concerns. We need to do better, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to our domestic concerns that we are not able to confront, we are not able to be as helpful as we should be in some of the other crises around the world.

I have been on this floor before, Mr. Speaker, bringing to the attention of this body two hotbed places where tragedies are occurring. The crisis in Haiti, where we are seeking to stabilize it with 2,000 military personnel, but we have still not answered the question of the removal of President Aristide, not so much for President Aristide, who we expect over the next coming months to be safe and his family safe, though for a while it was very questionable, we

thank the country of Jamaica and the Caribbean nations for their leadership on this issue, but what we have failed to do as a Nation is to protect democracy.

So not one committee in this Congress has taken up the legitimate issue of what happened with the removal of President Aristide in a legitimate and investigatory way. There lies a single body of government, a Republican Senate and Republican House and a Republican government, failing to provide the oversight that is necessary.

And then with respect to Sudan and the terrible genocide, let me say that the support for remedy in finding relief for Sudan is bipartisan. We passed the resolution dealing with ending the genocide and asking the governments to come together, meaning the government and the rebels. In the last couple of days, an agreement has been signed, but the bloodshed continues.

And this government, this administration, which can provide leadership in this instance, to intervene, to really provide humanitarian relief, we are so stretched with our military personnel that we are finding it a difficult way to respond. Certainly the United Nations, which is on the ground, should definitely do more.

But the disappointment that I have, Mr. Speaker, as I began this Special Order this evening, is to challenge this Congress to answer the American people's cry why government does not work. Why, in fact, are there high gas prices at the fuel pump? Why we are facing the fright of OPEC trying to soothe fears over oil prices? Why, if the Saudis collapse and terror takes over the kingdom, we could not last for more than 3 or 4 months because most of our energy resources comes from that region. Why the region is so disrupted because of the political decisions that this administration made in a unilateral pre-emptive attack against Iraq and the complete collapse now of the political process with insurgents taking over cities while the military stands bravely fighting and following orders. Why? Because this Congress has failed its responsibility. And it leaves us, if you will, in a dilemma in housing, veterans benefits, and health care.

And might I just add, Mr. Speaker, that we have done nothing about immigration reform. As a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security we have watched the border deteriorate because of the representation by the President that he was going to do an amnesty program and yet we have any number of immigration reform bills, mine is the Immigration Reform Fairness Act of 2004, where we talk about reuniting families and providing access to legalization and providing temporary status and providing, if you will, relief to the American workers by providing training for them and the retention of jobs, and yet we cannot get a hearing.

We had a hearing recently on thwarting the smuggling activities at the border, and we would hope that we would get a markup soon so that we could provide some order to the immigration process, but we have not had that leadership from this administration.

Choices. Consumed with one issue, that is the issue of Iraq. As this process collapses, it is imperative that this administration and this government begins to ask for accountability. This Congress has to be accountable.

And, if I might, Mr. Speaker, as I leave you with the idea of choices and the lack of decisions that are being made, I must add one other point, that there are numbers of thousands of men and women who are incarcerated in the Nation's prisons, who are non-violent offenders, who have yet because of mandatory sentencing been allowed to come out and support their families.

□ 2350

But when we are consumed by international policies like the issues in Iraq, we cannot dwell on trying to find relief here in America; and so I have authored the Good Time Relief Bill of 2004 to provide those nonviolent offenders in our Federal prisons, 45 and over, the opportunity to get one day of good time for every day served so they can be released, go back to their families, help build their families and help contribute to our society.

I give this litany, this long list of "what ifs" because we have not been able to function, because we have been consumed by the ills and the tragedy and travesties of Iraq, from prisons to insurgency.

I would simply say that we have to get a grip on this government, and this Congress has to begin to function as it should function. It must provide oversight, and it must question the actions of the executive, and we must investigate this long line of issues. And as we do that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we will be able to answer the American people with the question that I started out with, What is good government?

Good government, Mr. Speaker, is the United States Congress doing its job. And I hope in the coming months we will be able to do our jobs so that lives can be saved and we can ultimately provide peace and security to the region of Afghanistan and Iraq and bring our young men and women home.

Mr. Speaker. It seems that on every important issue facing this nation, the Bush Administration and the Republican leadership in Congress are taking us on a dangerous path, in the wrong direction, wasting vast amounts of money in giveaways—to the rich, to HMOs, to the drug industry, to polluters, any of their big campaign contributors—leaving almost nothing for those who really need and deserve federal assistance—seniors, veterans, schools, and first responders to name a few. It seems that at every chance, the Administration puts politics before policy, and our most important programs are unraveling. Our troops are serving valiantly overseas, but have been sent on an ill-advised mission without proper

training and equipment, and with no clear plan for success. It is no wonder we have seen breakdowns in discipline and security. We are seeing the same sorts of poor planning, misleading statements, obfuscation, and failure in many of our domestic programs as well.

I have just returned from a trip to assess the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. I was troubled by the discrepancies between what I saw and what the administration has been telling us. I have returned to a firestorm of calls and letters from angry seniors about the Medicare Prescription Drug Cards. I see nothing on the Congressional calendar that indicates that Congress is doing its duty of oversight, or proposing creative legislation to solve the numerous problems facing the American people and our allies in the world community. I want to take this opportunity during special orders to talk about some of the most glaring issues.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARDS

An obvious example came today on the first day of the Medicare Prescription Drug Card Program. This has been a sham since day one—and it is worse today. Now we know that the Medicare Drug plan, with its lousy benefit, will cost us over \$400 billion, instead of the \$300 billion the Administration had us believe before the vote. But so far, all that money is buying for our seniors is confusion.

So far there are 73 different cards for seniors to choose from. 39 of those are available to seniors in my district. They have annual fees ranging from zero to \$30 per year. Each offers discounts on different drugs to different degrees. Although discounts can change monthly, seniors only have one chance per year to pick the one card they are allowed to sign up for. Many seniors are mystified by whether the new cards will offer anything beyond what they got from the discount cards that have been around for years.

I am not optimistic that the Drug Card issued today will provide any meaningful relief to the millions of seniors and disabled Americans struggling with the outrageous costs of prescription drugs.

However, I am keeping an open mind. We will all need to look closely at the plans that are coming out, to make sure that the cards serve a purpose and don't just add burdensome paperwork and fees with minimal benefit. I have several concerns:

We are hearing that the cards will give discounts of 10–20 percent on prescription drugs—but 10–20 percent off of what? The prices of drugs are rising at an astronomical rate, much higher than the rate of inflation. If seniors get a card next week that gives them 15 percent off, and prices go up 20 percent in summer, what is the point of the card? It is just a waste of time—reading brochures, filling out paperwork, processing at the pharmacy, and a waste of the annual fee.

Although low-income seniors do get a \$600 drug allotment per year through the card program, many of those seniors have been getting similar help for years from drug manufacturers through various patient assistance programs. I am encouraging low-income seniors to sign up immediately for a card, so that they do not lose that benefit. However, for the vast majority of seniors—I am still unsure what to advise them. They seem uncertain as well. Besides the seniors that have been automatically enrolled through their HMOs, the number of seniors signing up has been spectacularly underwhelming. For example, AARP, one of

the largest senior groups in the country has issued its own card, but as of yesterday—only 400 seniors out of 43 million seniors had signed up for it. The same seems to be the case for every card on the market.

Seniors just don't know if they will save any money and be worth the fee, and the paperwork, and the hassle of carrying around yet another card every time they walk out the door.

Seniors can skip the fees and the bureaucracy and buy drugs over the internet or jump on a bus to Canada, or fly anywhere else in the world, and get a 50 percent discount today.

Our nation's seniors deserve a comprehensive health insurance plan that takes care of their needs and is easy to access. They worked for decades to make this country strong. They faithfully paid into the Social Security and Medicare systems, and our government made them a promise that we would take care of them in their senior years. Now, in return, we are making them jump through hoops, pay extra fees, join HMOs, spend hours and hours reading more confusing brochures—just to get prices that are still almost twice as high as those paid by other rich nations such as Britain, Japan, Switzerland, and Canada.

And American taxpayers are paying 100s of billions of dollars for that lousy plan.

Some people pitch this complex and cumbersome plan; saying that seniors like choices; they are Internet-savvy; accounting wizards that love crunching the numbers to find the best plans for them. There are many seniors out there that fit that bill. On the other hand, about 5 million seniors are afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and the number is rising. Five percent of adults in the United States are totally illiterate—the number that cannot read at a high enough level to comprehend stacks of health administration literature is obviously much higher. You need a Master's in Public Health to understand health insurance plans these days.

Medicare also covers the disabled, who may have other obstacles to studying Drug Card Plans. About 1 in 5 seniors is blind or visually impaired.

It is absurd to make this population struggle individually to get a decent price on the health care they need and deserve. The Secretary of Health and Human Services should be allowed to negotiate on behalf of this nation's 40 million seniors on Medicare, to get them fair prices. It is tragic that the Republican sham bill specifically prohibits such negotiation, and uses hard-earned taxpayer dollars to give massive subsidies to HMOs and the Drug Industry, instead of using it to help seniors.

I will keep fighting for a real Prescription Drug Benefit for seniors in the Medicare Plan they trust. Until we can make that happen, I will keep my mind open to every possible tool that might give some relief to our seniors. I hope that these new Drug Cards will give some benefits that aren't already available in the marketplace. Right now, all we see is confusion, and it might get worse in 2006 when the full Republican Medicare Prescription Drug plan kicks in. According to the New York Times, Brian Glassman, a senior executive at Prime Therapeutics, said the Medicare drug benefit could be even more confusing than the discount cards. He stated, "You can take this market confusion," he said, "and cube it."

VETERANS

Our brave American veterans are another group who were outraged by the President's budget and will unfortunately be disappointed with the Republican House Budget passed recently. I hear so much in this body from the majority party about the greatness of our Armed Forces, and they are right, but again it is just empty rhetoric on their part. Those brave men and women fighting on the front lines in our War Against Terror will come back home and find that the Republican Party looks at them differently once they become veterans. Almost all veterans need some form of health care, some will need drastic care for the rest of their lives because of the sacrifice they made in war, but the Republican Party continues to turn a blind eye to their needs. On a bipartisan basis, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs recommended that \$2.5 billion more than the President's budget was needed to maintain vital health care programs for veterans. Nevertheless, the House Republican budget provides \$1.3 billion less than what the Committee recommended for 2005.

The entire Department of Veterans' Affairs is going to suffer because of the Republican agenda. Over the next five years the money allocated to the Department of Veterans' Affairs will not even be able to maintain these programs at their current levels. In 2007, the budget is \$227 million less than what the Department of Veterans' Affairs needs to keep pace with inflation. Over five years, the Republican budget cuts \$1.6 billion from the total needed to maintain services at the 2004 level.

I've heard from veterans groups throughout my district in Houston and I'm sure each Member of this body has heard from groups in their own district because veterans are one group that come from all parts of this nation. These brave veterans have told me their stories of how they are suffering now with the current state of veterans affairs, I am going to have trouble telling them that not only will things continue to stay bad but if this budget passes this body, things will only continue to get worse. That is not what our returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan should have to look forward to, a future where their needs are not only not provided for, but are in fact ignored.

I know that every Member of this body had our nation's active duty soldiers and veterans in their hearts yesterday. The sacrifices they and their families have made over the years are staggering, and they continue. That is especially true for the families of the more than 800 troops killed in Iraq, and the almost 3000 who have been wounded. It is time we stopped just giving speeches, and started taking care of our veterans and their families.

COST OF THE WAR

Every time we on this side of the aisle make the point that we need to make critical investments in education, or health care, or our veterans, or homeland security, or any other program, we get the same argument: budgets are tight and we can't afford it. But it is the Republicans themselves who opted to make the budget tight, when they squandered a multi-trillion dollar surplus on massive tax cuts for the rich and an expensive and violent brand of foreign policy.

As they marched us into an unnecessary war in Iraq, experts—even those in the Bush Administration—were predicting that the war would cost 100s of billions of dollars and re-

quire 100s of thousands of troops, for years to come. People who made such claims were ridiculed and derided by the arrogant leaders of this Administration. But now it seems that even the highest estimates may have underestimated the cost of our actions in Iraq. We have already spent over \$150 billion in supplemental budgets alone. On top of that, there is the huge amount that we have put in the Department of Defense through normal budgeting, and the billions more that we have spent in foreign aid coercing the "coalition of the willing" to join the war and stay in.

Our troops are spread too thin, and may thus in fact be incapable of successfully completing the tasks they have been given. Although we do not have a draft, our national guard and reserve forces have been forced to serve overseas for much longer than they had envisioned ever being required, for wages often lower than they usually make—and they are not given the option of refusing to re-enlist.

The Administration must be honest with the Congress and with the American people if we are ever going to match the size of our military with the needs of our forces, and provide the budget required.

During my trip to Iraq and Afghanistan last week, it became obvious that American troops have much work ahead if they are going to succeed in rebuilding and stabilizing Iraq as President Bush has promised the world, on behalf of the American people. I predict that American troops will be there for at least 10 years. We must come to grips with that reality, and start making the appropriate sacrifices, that is we should repeal some of the tax cuts given to the richest one percent, and start paying our bills.

If we don't, our children and our children's children may be paying the price of our misguided foreign policy.

UNEMPLOYMENT/THE ECONOMY

Those outrageous tax cuts were carried out in the name of making jobs, but now we have proof that such tax cuts are an almost ridiculously inefficient method of making jobs. We have run up a half-trillion dollar deficit, and created very few jobs. It seems that President Bush was so eager to be anti-Clintonesque in every possible way. Now we have an anti-Clintonesque deficit, and millions of people more out of work today than were unemployed during the 90s.

An excellent editorial in the New York Times today by Princeton economist Paul Krugman describes the Bush tax policy as reverse-Robin Hood, robbing the poor and giving to the rich. He explains how the 257,000 richest Americans got more out of the Bush tax cuts than did the bottom 60 MILLION Americans combined. A recent survey revealed that most Americans don't feel they have gotten a tax cut at all. Many of those who did get a thousand dollars or so are now realizing that they are losing all of it, or even more, as they pay more for college tuition, or property taxes, or due to cuts in the other popular government programs.

We as a nation must learn from our mistakes, but should also learn from our successes. I am pleased to see that Senator JOHN KERRY has learned the lessons of the Bush and Clinton Administrations. He is surrounding himself with top Clinton Administration economists and experts associated with the brilliant and effective former Treasury Sec-

retary Robert Rubin. I would welcome them back.

HUD SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

The deficits brought about the Republican leadership, and the budget cuts being made to compensate for them have been devastating to working poor families and lower-middle wage Americans. Just today there is yet another example in a Houston Chronicle article describing how to finance the Iraq war and the tax cuts for the rich, we have cut HUD Section 8 housing funding, now known as the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

In my hometown of Houston alone, the cuts will lead to a \$5 million shortfall in one of the most important and time-tested programs in our federal government. Already there is a huge backlog in applications for federal housing support. The list will get longer.

The city will also be forced to either cut 700 families off from this critical support, or reduce benefits to all of the families and individuals in the program now. Remember that a family of four in Section 8 housing already has a total income of less than \$30,500 per year. In the Houston market, that doesn't go far. As with all Republican voucher programs, it seems the Housing Choice Voucher Program leaves little choice for the people who really need it.

ABU GHRAIB, IRAQI PRISONER ABUSE

Yet again we are seeing politics driving our policy in Iraq rather than logic, and compassion, and sense of duty. H. Res. 627, a resolution regarding prisoner abuse in Iraq, put before us two weeks ago, was political damage control. This Congress has a constitutionally mandated duty of oversight over the executive branch. We and the world have seen over the past days that some horrible deeds have occurred in Iraq—deeds that truly threaten to undermine everything that we have worked toward on the international-diplomatic front for the past century. We must be thoughtful in crafting our approach to diffusing this awful situation, bringing those responsible to justice, and protecting the honor of those members of our armed services who serve so valiantly and honorably around the world.

This resolution contained several provisions, including (1) deploring and condemning the abuse of Iraqi prisoners in U.S. custody; (2) reaffirming and reinforcing the American principle that any and all individuals under the custody and care of the U.S. armed forces shall be afforded proper and humane treatment; and (3) urging the Department of Defense to conduct an investigation into any and all allegations of mistreatment or abuse of Iraqi prisoners and bring to swift justice all members of the Armed Forces who have violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

I agree with all of that; however, is that all the duty of this Congress is? All this resolution did was say, "We read in the paper that mistakes were made. Somebody else, find out what happened. Somebody else, tell us what you find out. Somebody else, make this problem go away." That is a dereliction of our duty.

Members in this body have extraordinary experience and expertise in these issues. We owe it to the people we represent to immediately launch full congressional investigations into Iraqi prisoner abuse. After the Defense Department report was buried and hidden from Congress, and maybe even the President, for months, it is absurd to now trust that same department to police itself and purge

itself of bad actors. We are already seeing the methods by which they will approach this—blame the six-people in the pictures and maybe a couple of others, and assume that they were some sort of outliers.

We all hope that that is indeed the case, but we must make sure. Last week, I wouldn't have believed that any American soldiers were capable of such grotesque abuses. We must be objective as we delve into whether this problem goes far deeper than just a few cells at Abu Ghraib. Further missteps in the U.S. response to these atrocities could bring about a monstrous backlash in Iraq, and across the Middle East.

What message does it send to those struggling for democracy and freedom around the world, when this People's House, in the greatest democracy in the world—simply toes the majority party line?

We need bipartisan congressional investigations to be conducted immediately into these allegations of abuse, including those by U.S. civilian contractor personnel or other U.S. civilians, and into chain of command and other systemic deficiencies that contributed to such abuse. We should not only point the finger of blame. We should also be introspective—to avoid hypocrisy—to recognize and address our own short-comings. We hear the President proclaim that the abuse of prisoners and the humiliation of people are un-American. I agree that the things we have seen violate the American principles that we hold dear. But, tragically, the hatred and disregard for decency are too common in our society. I don't think anyone would be surprised if they found out that similar abuses occur in our own U.S. prisons, jails, and police stations. Hate crimes against some races and religious groups, or against gays, lesbians, and the transgender, abound. Some of the vicious, although perhaps non-violent, acts seem reminiscent of fraternity hazing rituals. If the United States is going to take the lead in promoting human rights in this world, we must lead by example and demand justice here, before we seek it overseas.

We all know that the vast majority of U.S. troops in Iraq are performing superbly. It is tragic that the behavior of a small number of American soldiers has besmirched the reputation of U.S. troops overall. The vast majority of U.S. troops in Iraq are courageously performing their duties and are living up to the highest standards of the U.S. military. They are serving our country with honor, distinction and dedication and deserve our country's deepest gratitude.

However, the grotesque abuse of Iraqi prisoners is completely unacceptable—and is against everything our country hopes to stand for. The abuse of Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison by U.S. soldiers that has been documented with photographs is abhorrent. On top of that, we now hear that there are at least 91 cases of possible misconduct by military personnel. Congressional investigations are critically needed in order to get to the bottom of this outrage. Among the questions that must be answered are: How widespread were these incidents of prisoner abuse? Were personnel trained adequately to do the jobs to which they were assigned? When did senior leadership of the Department of Defense learn of these allegations? Was their response timely and did it reflect the seriousness of this situation?

We owe it to the American people, to those around the world who are watching intently, and especially to our troops whose reputations have been called into question by this situation. We must put this Congress to work purging our military of those who encourage such un-American behavior, and restore the honor of our brave soldiers serving in Iraq and around the world.

Building a culture of peace for the children of the world while we face unfinished work to create stability and peace both in Iraq, and throughout the Middle East, the challenges we face there and the lessons we have learned there make it all the more compelling that we set upon the task of planting firmly the seeds of peace.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war but the positive affirmation of peace. We must see that peace represents a sweeter music, a cosmic melody that is far superior to the discords of war. Somehow, we must transform the dynamics of the world power struggle . . . to a positive contest to harness humanity's creative genius for the purpose of making peace and prosperity a reality for all the nations of the world."

It is with this in mind that I am proud to introduce the exhibit "Building a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World" which is being presented in cooperation with the Congressional Children's Caucus and will be on display in the foyer of the Rayburn House Office Building on Thursday–Friday, June 3–4, 2004.

This exhibit brings together the creative ideas and examples of hundreds of people, organizations and movements and focuses on the potential of the individual to build peace and security in today's world. It seeks to promote a sense among viewers of empowerment as well as an awareness of the United Nations declaration of the years 2001–2010 as the Decade of Building a culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

I also want to recognize the role of Soka Gakkai International which has created this remarkable exhibit, and the work of its president, Daisaku Ikeda a widely recognized educator and peace activist, in persisting as a voice for peace during these challenging times.

I urge each of my colleagues to not only view this exhibit; but be mindful of the example we set today for the generations of tomorrow. More important for our children than model of the brave warrior, is the example of the courageous and creative peace builder. For as the noted writer James Baldwin observed: "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them. . . ."

U.S.-AFGHAN CAUCUS

Another project I have been working on extensively is the U.S.-Afghan Caucus. I especially want to thank my co-chair, Congressman BOB NEY, for his leadership on this issue. We traveled on the first post 9/11 Codel to Afghanistan together, and I know the issue of rebuilding democracy means a great deal to both of us.

It is my goal that the U.S.-Afghan Caucus will become an arena where we can learn about the issues effecting Afghanistan, and see how Congress can help come up with a solution.

Right now there is an 85 percent illiteracy rate in Afghanistan; 80 percent of schools

have been damaged by war. Of existing schools, 30 to 50 percent have no water and 40 percent lack adequate sanitation. Although 3 million children returned to school last year, today only 38 percent of all Afghan boys and 3 percent of girls attend school. Over the next ten years, it is estimated that an additional 4,350 teachers and 1,385 schools must be added each year to meet demand.

While 6 out of 10 girls in Afghanistan attend school, only 1 out of 100 girls in the southern frontier regions of the country have access to education. For more than five years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, girls were banned from attending school in over 90 percent of the country. Right now it is imperative to invest in Human Capital, particularly in women. Women need to have a voice in the emerging Democracy, and the U.S.-Afghan Caucus can begin to take steps to ensure that women are involved in the process.

Providing education to children who are traumatized by war and disaster is just one facet that the U.S.-Afghan Caucus will focus on. I have heard of so much interest in working together to establish a positive relationship that will continue to build a better country with democratic ideals in Afghanistan. We can already see evidence that something must be done to protect the children and raise them to be future leaders of a democracy, something they have never before seen in their lifetime.

WOMEN IN IRAQ

Our support of Iraq and its fledgling democracy has been vital, and we have been able to leave a positive impression on what values a democratic society should hold. Our influence needs to go one step further, and we must indicate that women play a vital role in politics and peacekeeping.

I am a proud member of the Iraqi Women's Caucus and have been to Iraq to witness, firsthand, the brave and groundbreaking work to rebuild the country by the United States, our coalition partners and Iraqi civilians. The signing of the Transitional Administrative Law, TAL, by the Iraqi Governing Council on March 8, 2004 marks an important milestone, and an appropriate time to reiterate our support of issues facing Iraq's women and children.

Many of us here have publicly advocated for equal representation of women throughout all of society, including at each level of the new government. The Iraqi Women's Caucus was recently formed to further engage all Members of Congress on these issues. The Caucus will focus on improving the lives of women in the new Iraq by working to ensure women's access to educational and professional opportunities, encouraging women's participation in a pluralistic political process, and developing partnerships between the United States and Iraq that will further enhance opportunities for women.

I have seen positive things come from women working towards peace. I have had the honor to serve as Honorary Chair for the women's partnership for peace in the Middle East. Women leaders from government, business and religion met in Oslo, Norway to develop joint efforts to begin building trust in the Middle East region. Responding to a great sense of urgency surrounding the crisis in the Middle East, the participants have decided to mobilize women leaders around the world to join the initiative for peace.

History has offered us many examples of democratic principles at work in nations once

dismissed as unfit for democracy. As chair of the U.S.-Afghan Caucus, I am proud to say that the Afghans have recently adopted a constitution that establishes equal rights for men and women. Only a few years ago, this country brutalized and shunned from public view.

I believe that progress is attainable and I thank all of you who have come out today in support of this. As my colleague, HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON said, when she was the First Lady, "There cannot be true democracy unless women's voices are heard. There cannot be true democracy unless women are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives. There cannot be true democracy unless all citizens are able to participate fully in the lives of their country."

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BALLANCE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. BERKLEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a death in the family.

Mr. BORDALLO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and June 2 on account of official business in the district.

Ms. WOOLSEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. BEREUTER (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and June 2 until 4:00 p.m. on account of official business presiding at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. ENGLISH (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of travel delays.

Mr. PLATTS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. TAUZIN (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

Mr. WAMP (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of official business, a regional economic development conference.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BLUMENAUER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SOLIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. INSLEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PEARCE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. OSBORNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and June 2 and 3.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, June 2.

Mr. HENSARLING, for 5 minutes, June 2.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, for 5 minutes, June 2.

Mr. GINGREY, for 5 minutes, June 2.

Mr. CARTER, for 5 minutes, June 2.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PEARCE, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 2092. An act to assist the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on May 21, 2004 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 408. To provide for expansion of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

H.R. 708. To require the conveyance of certain National Forest System lands in Mendocino National Forest, California, to provide for the use of the proceeds from such conveyance for National Forest purposes, and for other purposes.

H.R. 856. To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to revise a repayment contract with the Tom Green County Water Control and Improvement District No. 1, San Angelo project, Texas, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1598. To amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in projects within the San Diego Creek Watershed, California, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 52 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, June 2, 2004, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

8275. A letter from the Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's quarterly report as of March 31, 2004, entitled, "Acceptance of contributions for defense programs, projects and activities; Defense Cooperation Account," pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608; to the Committee on Armed Services.

8276. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board's final rule — Risk-Based Capital Guidelines; Capital Adequacy Guidelines; Capital Maintenance: Interim Capital Treatment of Consolidated Asset-Backed Commercial Paper Program Assets; Extension [Regulations H and Y; Docket No. R-1156] Department of the Treasury, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency [Docket No. 04-??] (RIN: 1557-AC76); Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (RIN: 3064-AC74); Department of the Treasury, Office of Thrift Supervision [No. 2004-??] (RIN: 1550- AB79) received May 7, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

8277. A letter from the Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Ninetieth Annual Report of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System covering operations during calendar year 2003; to the Committee on Financial Services.

8278. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Sta., FDA, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Food and Color Additives and Generally Recognized As Safe Substances; Technical Amendments [Docket No. 2004N-0076] received May 17, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8279. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting as required by Section 104(b) of Pub. L. 102-471, the Prescription Drug User Fee Act of 1992 (PDUFA), as amended by the Food and Drug Administration Modernization Act of 1997 (FDAMA), a report stating the FDA's progress in achieving certain performance goals referenced in PDUFA during FY 2003; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8280. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the first annual financial report to Congress required by the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002 (MDUFMA), covering FY 2003; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8281. A letter from the Director, Office of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's "Major" final rule — Revision of Fee Schedules; Fee Recovery for FY 2004 (RIN: 3150-AH37) received May 21, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8282. A letter from the Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's report entitled, "Report to Congress on Abnormal Occurrences, Fiscal Year 2003," pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 5848; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8283. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting notification stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as expanded in scope by Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and certain other property in which Iraq has an interest, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2004, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1622(d); (H. Doc. No. 108-187); to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed.

8284. A letter from the Assistant Secretary For Export Administration, Department of