

over \$800 billion potentially back into our economy for American jobs and helping people with their career.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, there are two things that I have stressed in my time in Congress, and they are national security and economic security. My friend pointed out that on September 11 incredibly insane people flew three airliners, used them as missiles, flew them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. National security is critically important to our future. Fighting and winning the war on terrorism, which our brave young men and women are doing every day, is happening because of the commitment of America, the patriotism of these fine young men and women; and our commitment and our support of them is crucial for the future of our young people.

Economic security comes from education, childhood, families, middle school, high school, secondary, post-graduate. Economic security allows us to maintain the financial integrity of this Nation. Financial integrity and the things that go with it enable us to equip our military which liberates countries like Iraq and Afghanistan from terrorists, thugs and murderers.

So those are the two important issues.

To give you some firsthand information and experience from my district, we have seen how important this is. In August of this year, we had the largest single layoff in North Carolina's history. As this tragedy occurred and many people were dramatically, drastically and terrifyingly affected, retraining, education through the community colleges, through high schools, through other means, has been pointed out how important it is, and this majority and this administration has stepped in to provide the help and the guidance in every possible way that we can so these folks could be retrained so that they could be skilled for new careers.

A wonderful example is a lady named Barbara Price who worked at Pillowtech. She went back to school and I remember meeting with her at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and hearing her describe how all of a sudden she is a 57-year-old mom who was having her high school students, who were extremely proud of her ambition, her willingness to go back to school, but they were helping her with her homework. They were encouraging her to adapt, to learn and to get these new skills.

So that is just one of many, many examples where lifetime learning continues. We are retraining for next generation, highly skilled jobs.

The question becomes, what are those jobs going to look like? Well, my answer is simply that America, with the ingenuity, the resources and the talented people we have, we can create those 40 percent of new jobs which have not yet been created, and that is what this majority is working to do with in-

centives, with tax cuts, with letting people keep more of their own money. Just a few of the ways that we can help do this.

In education, we are working with all of our schools, trying to find out how do we keep young people in school today. Because manufacturing jobs are not available when people drop out of school early. We have a program with the Dell Computer Company called Dell Techno, targeting at-risk and other young people in middle school, giving them the encouragement and also the excitement they need to see the connection between education, learning and earning. It has been very successful.

They come to school after hours. They learn how to take a computer apart, put that computer back together with the latest technology. After completing the course, they own that computer; and they can take it home and increase their skills.

BizWorld, teaching entrepreneurship and financial accountability. Teaches youngsters how to strive for making jobs, creating jobs, not just taking a job, teaching them the basic skills of creating a product, marketing that product, selling it and taking the profits, which not only are not a bad word but that is an imperative, taking the profits and expanding and making jobs, not taking jobs.

Congressional scholars bringing the remarkable assets of the Library of Congress into their high or middle school or college. Giving teachers additional tools. Because the way to show appreciation to these hard working teachers is, again, to give them the flexibility, the tools, the assets and resources they need.

Technology is not the only answer. We need stronger families. We need discipline in schools. We need the kinds of things and the cooperation that we have talked about tonight. This is the kind of America that we envision for our children and our grandchildren, an America that is learning, that is earning, that is taking the greatest that we have and expanding it, creating, maintaining and expanding freedom, opportunity and chances for others to enjoy the blessings that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) and all who have participated tonight, and I thank all of my colleagues who are interested in lifelong learning.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Earlier this evening, remarks in debate included improper references to the Vice President. The Chair endeavors to take initiative to admonish such improper references to the President or the Vice President, to acknowledge candidates for those offices, or to Senators contemporaneously with their utterance.

Although in this instance no contemporaneous initiative was taken, the

Chair nevertheless is constrained to remind all Members that remarks in debate may not engage in personalities toward the Vice President. Policies may be addressed in critical terms. But personal references of an offensive or accusatory nature are not proper.

ARE YOU BETTER OFF TODAY THAN YOU WERE THREE OR FOUR YEARS AGO?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

□ 2230

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to be here tonight along with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus as we begin to look at a very critical issue, and it can be simply titled: Are you better off today than you were 3 or 4 years ago?

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 7 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FEENEY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but comment on the comments that were just made by my Republican colleagues. As I listened to them very carefully, I was struck by, and I know it is their good intent to make America better, but one of my colleagues talked about how he had lost jobs in his district and how he now is trying to figure out ways to make sure that people who may have lost their jobs will be in a position to get jobs in the future. I think that is a very noble objective.

But the one thing we must keep in mind is that there are millions of people who have lost their jobs since January of 2001, and it is nothing like being in a position where you have lost your job. No longer are you able to buy tennis shoes for your children, no longer are you able, in many instances, to put food on the table. And if you were in Baltimore, no longer were you able to afford to take a vacation to Disney World, let alone a faroff distant land.

So when I listened to my colleagues, I could not help but ask myself the question, What have we done and what have they done to make sure that this country does not hemorrhage jobs? And then I heard the astounding argument that I did not think I would be hearing again since our President made it not long ago, in that there is something right about outsourcing jobs; that is there is something right about, according to my colleagues on the other side, about being able to make a call in Maryland for a Maryland service and possibly ending up with an operator

somewhere in India or in some far distant land because jobs have been outsourced.

I would simply come to this floor, Mr. Speaker, and say that it is time for us to change the leadership in this country, because the jobs they talk about having been lost are jobs that did not have to be lost. Over and over again members of the Congressional Black Caucus have come to this floor and talked about so many issues with regard to jobs, with regard to education; and then I hear my colleagues talking about lifelong learning. And I shall comment in a moment on what this administration proposes to do, and that basically is to cut back on the very training that they say that their constituents need after they lose the jobs; but, Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that something is awfully wrong with the picture that they paint.

Unfortunately, America has suffered and America's people have suffered tremendously over the course of the last 3½ years. So we ask the question tonight as a Nation, Are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? This question may sound familiar to you. If you will recall, it is the same question that former President Ronald Reagan posed to the Nation during his 1980 run for the Presidency. Now, I must admit that although I probably would not agree with President Reagan on many things, I definitely agree that Americans must assess whether or not their government is working for them; and if not, they must figure out what to do about that.

I would submit that if government is not working, we should have common-sense solutions. In an employee-employer relationship, if the employee is not doing the job, he or she is fired. And I would submit this evening that we need to look at that course for this administration, and it is our plan to lay out our case tonight.

Mr. Speaker, we should never forget that this is still the people's government. We are public servants of the American people. It is no accident that the first line of the Constitution reads "We the people." And it is no accident that the people's money funds the operation of our government. Yet, Mr. Speaker, this Congress, led by Republicans in both bodies, has failed to fully provide for the people in every single way that matters.

As stewards of the government's purse, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have run up deficits and debt to the highest levels ever. At the same time, on issues from education to health care to the cost of basic goods and services, the average American is worse off under this administration than they were 4 years ago. And now, Mr. Speaker, the administration is already making plans for further cuts in services to the American people for the next fiscal year.

We have often said on this floor that we understand and are definitely committed to our troops, but we also are

committed to having a balanced approach to the problems of this country and the problems of the world. There is absolutely no doubt that anyone using common sense would make sure that you protect yourself from outside forces. I would agree with that, and I think most of my colleagues, if not all in the Congressional Black Caucus, would, as would probably all 435 Members of this Congress. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have to balance that and make sure that the people in this country are taken care of too.

In other words, what good does it do to go outside of this country and defend this country and go to Iraq and go to Afghanistan seeking out the terrorists while at the same time the very people that we are supposed to be making sure that they have benefited are falling by the wayside. In other words, our children, I have often said our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see.

But as I listened to my colleagues on the other side a few moments ago, it is interesting they never talked about the fact that children are indeed being left behind every day and every moment of the day. While they talk quite a bit about how great the No Child Left Behind legislation is, and I would agree with them to a degree that it is good legislation, and if I recall correctly most Members of this Congress voted for that legislation. It was pretty much a bipartisan effort. But the thing they did not mention is that it has been substantially underfunded.

If you go to any school district throughout this country, you will talk to teachers and you talk to people who are on the front line, and they will tell you that this underfunding has caused great grief and has put them and State and local governments in a very bad position.

I saw a recent Washington Post article revealed a secret White House budget memorandum which detailed severe cuts in a range of Federal programs that are essential to the lives of millions of Americans. Everything from Head Start, again talking about children, and homeownership programs, to Department of Veterans Affairs, yes, I said the Department of Veterans Affairs. And if I might just put a footnote here, here we are with the President just dedicating America's World War II memorial the other day, yet still the Department of Veterans Affairs is on the chopping block if this administration is reelected in November.

It is not about what is said; it is about what is being done. I would ask the American people to keep their eye on what is being done, not what is being said. And after celebrating Memorial Day and honoring our veterans, I cannot imagine how some people in this town could even propose to cut veterans benefits.

On Memorial Day, when I had an opportunity to talk to so many of the veterans in my district, one of their number one complaints was that they

are not able to get the kind of medical care now that they need. They cannot even get the medical care for their spouses. And these are men and women who have given so much to their country believing that there would come a time that they would be able to get the type of benefits that they needed.

But this administration, while making wonderful, wonderful speeches at the new World War II memorial, at the same time is cutting benefits. It is unconscionable to think that the men and women who served this country would have to endure their elected officials turning their backs on them when they return home and need services.

And so it is, Mr. Speaker, that we have a situation where this administration has decreased Federal revenues, raised deficits through poor policy decisions, and is now telling the American people that they must sacrifice their children's educations or veterans benefits to pay for it all. Something is glaringly wrong with this picture when we ask our elderly veterans to take a cut, when we ask our children, now that it is their chance to get an education through Head Start and other programs that will support them and allow them to be all that God meant for them to be, it is simply not right that we would cut those things that would help our children get to where they have to go and cut the things that would help our veterans not only survive but thrive and live meaningful lives.

Mr. Speaker, I think the American people must put all of this in context of the budget conference that recently passed this House of Representatives. In order to pay for the President's prized tax cuts and to get the most political gain, this House agreed to a budget resolution that only extended out for 1 year. Traditionally, Congress considers budgets that take into account 10 years' worth of Federal spending. But knowing that a 10-year estimate would reveal their fiscal mismanagement, this administration and the Republicans in Congress chose to pass a 1-year budget that would mask the true cost of the tax cuts, a poorly crafted Medicare bill, and the war in Iraq.

Over and over again, members of the Congressional Black Caucus have come to the floor and not asked the American people but begged them to look at what was happening in this Congress and look at what this White House is doing and use a very simple common-sense measuring tool, and that measuring tool would simply be how, if you had a similar circumstance in your home, how would you handle that.

In other words, if you had an increase in problems in your home, if you had emergencies in your home, would you then go to your employer and say cut my pay? Well, basically, that is what has happened here. Here we have a war in Afghanistan, here we have a war in Iraq, here we have also a situation where we now have to have something

called homeland security; and so our costs are increasing to the tune of \$25 billion, the most recent request from the President. But at the same time, the President makes a decision, and my Republican colleagues agree, to cut taxes on the richest of the rich. Something is simply wrong with that picture.

□ 2245

There are many people that sit and they say to themselves, it is good that I get my money back, and I can understand that, but one of the things that we have to realize is that most of the middle class get very few funds back on this tax cut. The fact is that we have a situation where in Maryland, for example, those middle-class folks who got a tax cut of maybe \$600, \$700, they saw the tuition of their students at State colleges go up some 30 percent in some instances. In Baltimore, sewer taxes have gone up, and there are proposed taxes with regard to property. So taxes are going up. They are also seeing that their services are lessened because there is not as much money coming through the State coffers.

So the question is: Is this a shell game or what? Is it a shell game that on the Federal level you tell me I am getting a tax cut and at the same time tax cuts are taking place for the richest of the rich? The fact still remains that services are reduced.

Mr. Speaker, the American people should truly take a look at their household finances and their general well-being and ask themselves, is my family better off now than we were 4 years ago? I would submit that they would have to answer no. Further, will the Nation be better off 4 years from now if we continue on our current course? I would guess that the average American would answer no to both of these questions.

In 2 days the Department of Labor will release its monthly unemployment situation report. For the good of the country, I hope the numbers reflect a positive change in the unemployment situation. But, regardless, we cannot allow ourselves to forget about the unemployed people that those numbers represent. I have often said that so often what we do is we look at statistics, and we get so caught up in numbers that we forget that there are faces and there are families behind those statistics.

Although the President and others in this administration are traveling the country touting job growth, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that the economy has yet to create a single net job under this administration, not one, no, not one.

So I ask, Mr. Speaker, what should all of the millions of people who have lost jobs, the 150,000 workers who are joining the workforce every month and the college graduates, like the ones I spoke to recently at Shaw University and Carnegie Mellon University, do to find work in an economy that has not

created a single job since January, 2001? Real people, Mr. Speaker, are struggling to supply the most basic needs to their families and continue to pound the pavement every day in desperate search of a job.

If I were to ask the more than 120,000 unemployed people in my home State of Maryland if they are better off than they were 4 years ago, I believe the overwhelming majority would probably say no. Not only are they without work, but this administration continues to cut the social services that are supporting their very survival.

Mr. Speaker, if you look closely, you will find that among the 2006 cuts that the administration is secretly planning to make are job training and small business programs. As I listened to my colleagues a few minutes ago on the other side talk about retraining people for jobs when they lose a job, I wonder if they are communicating with this White House which is, at the same time as they are talking about trying to train people for jobs, here we have a White House that is submitting a budget to literally cut the training from underneath those people who are unfortunate to lose their jobs. It is counterproductive and, frankly, disingenuous to talk about job creation publicly yet cut every program that will create jobs when no one is looking.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I must say tonight that something is wrong with this picture. Our President continually talks about being a compassionate conservative, but, as many people have said, the only people he seems to show compassion to are conservatives. Everyone else just simply seems to be out of luck and out in the cold.

Mr. Speaker, the American people cannot afford 4 more years of this President. For one, our country will be bankrupt and the domestic programs that are the life-line for tens of millions of Americans, not just African Americans but all Americans, will be decimated. This is a risk we simply cannot take. This is a risk we simply cannot afford.

That is why, just as we saw yesterday in South Dakota and all across this country, Americans are exercising their civic duty to vote. We saw record numbers of people coming out during the Democratic primaries. Why? Because they are frustrated, and they want a change. They are the ones, as they march to the voting booth, who have already answered the question, am I better off today than I was 3.5 years ago, and they are saying, no. They are saying, yes, I will vote.

They ask themselves another question as they walk into the voting booth, and that is, will we be better off if we ask this question 4 years from now than we are today? And I think clearly their answer is no. I believe that after January 20, 2005, there will be new leadership in the House of Representatives, the United States Senate and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. This

new leadership will take charge to put America back on track, will take charge to put America back to work. It will take charge to make sure that our children, whose gifts are already wrapped up in them, have an opportunity to display their gifts and be all that God meant for them to be. They will take charge to make sure that college students have an opportunity to get an education and that the Pell Grants that now have level funded, basically, are expanded so that young people can have their opportunity.

In closing, I am always reminded that we just celebrated the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. I will never forget a young lady named Kayla from the John P. Sousa School when she came before one of our programs celebrating *Brown*. She came with some very simple words, but they were very profound. Here was this little girl standing on her tiptoes, very frail but very healthy.

She stood up, and she said my name is Kayla. She said I am a student at the John P. Sousa School here in Washington, D.C. She said 50 years ago my school was segregated, and she said today my school is segregated. She said 50 years ago my school was all white, and then she said, 50 years later, my school is 98 percent African American and 2 percent Hispanic. She said I have seen the pictures of my school, the John P. Sousa Middle School, from 50 years ago. She said it was a beautiful place, one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. She said now it is much different.

Her words were so piercing and left almost everybody in the room in tears when she said this. She said, today, when I go to school, I have no library because the adults tell us we cannot afford a librarian, so we have no library. She said I have had an opportunity to look at a few books in the place they call a library, and I noticed that many of them are the same books which existed on the shelves back in 1951.

She went on to say that so often she comes to school and it is damp because rain is coming through the roof. She talked about the bathrooms and how she refused to go so often and waited until she got home to relieve herself because the bathrooms were in such bad shape.

But then she asked the question which I think we must all confront. She said, as adults, I just ask you to do this. It is now my chance to get an education. It is my chance to have a decent childhood. It is your responsibility to provide me with that so that I can grow up to be who I want to be.

So it is not just the Kaylas of the world who suffer. It is our veterans. It is our students. It is all of those people who simply want an opportunity to get across a bridge that will allow them to turn back and help others across the bridge of this great society. Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to cut the services to them and at the same time cut the taxes for the richest of the rich.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), who has worked so hard on these issues and has been constantly at the forefront of trying to make sure that we do have balance in our country, trying to make sure that we deal with our economy, that we deal with our welfare with regard to this country in a balanced approach, but at the same time one who sits on the Committee on Armed Services and makes sure that our soldiers are supplied with the kinds of equipment that they need, that they are given the kinds of uniforms and the kind of support that they need.

I applaud the gentleman for his many, many efforts. Not only has he been at the forefront of our domestic issues and certainly those with regard to war, but he has also been one who has stood up over and over again with regard to peace and that is trying to bring peace to a foreign land called Haiti. The gentleman has spent countless hours in that country meeting with people, trying to make sure that humanitarian assistance is brought to those 8 million people who suffer.

Recently, the gentleman has spent a phenomenal amount of time trying to make sure that those flood victims in Haiti get the kinds of supplies that they need. A true leader and a true friend, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK).

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for those very kind words. It is always an honor to address not only the U.S. House of Representatives but the American people.

I think it is very important when the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) was talking about many of the issues happening to Americans versus for Americans, and I think it is important that we speak from the position of fact, not fiction.

What we are talking about here is actually fact. This is the President's budget that he has put forth. This House on the majority side has passed a budget that in some instances undercut the President's budget. I thought tonight I would share with the American people some of the things that have taken place in this budget that is really jeopardizing our national security.

I think it is very, very important for this time after Attorney General Ashcroft had his famous press conference last week unveiling potential terrorist attacks on our country, possibly these terrorists could be in the continental United States, information that even the Department of Justice admits that they have known for the last 30 days, 30 days prior to that but failed to share with the American people.

Also at that press conference, I thought it was very interesting, we have the largest Federal agency in the history of the Republic and the history of the world called the Department of Homeland Security. I thought it was something fundamentally wrong. I am

looking at this great announcement taking place, and there was no Secretary Tom Ridge at the Department of Homeland Security because he did not know that this press conference was taking place.

I will share with Members that Homeland Security is a very, very important agency in communicating with local government, giving them the kinds of direction and intelligence that they need to be able to fight the fight on the front end. We call it Homeland Security. I would say front-line security when it comes down to cities and counties and even all of the way down to the school boards of things that they have to do to protect the citizenry in their area.

But I can tell Members that the budget as we look at it and look at the COPS program that the President has cut, words are inadequate to even describe it.

□ 2300

The cut in the COPS Program, which is the community policing program that so many Americans appreciate, so many young lives have been diverted from a life of crime, so many crimes have been prevented in local communities and States, all to have enough money to be able to allow individuals that are making an enormous amount of money to get a larger tax cut, I think that is unfair. I think it is unfair to our men and women that are wearing blue; I think it is unfair to firefighters that are out there where the fire program was cut. We are opening fire stations in Iraq, but we are closing fire stations in New York City. I think it is important as we say that we honor our first responders, that we do not dishonor them by cutting the very funding that they are looking for.

The Firefighter Grant program was cut by \$246 million. That is a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. It was cut for the sake of making sure that individuals that are well, well, well off have an opportunity to receive their tax cut. Then, on top of that, they try to make it permanent.

Also when you look at local law enforcement, for State and local law enforcement, also \$959 million was slashed from the budget by the President. As we look at interoperability, when I used to be a State trooper in Florida, sometimes you would show up on an emergency scene and you will have a city or county law enforcement officer there. Many times, because in my particular area we had what we call interoperability, we were able to talk to one another to be able to save lives. Now this has been cut out of the budget.

In so many places in America, they do not have that opportunity to be able to talk to one another. In this time of terrorist threat and living under this new threat that we have right now of individuals possibly being on U.S. soil, individuals that wake up and go to bed every night with the thought in their

mind and their heart that they want to carry out some level of harm to an American, no matter who you are, if you are a woman or you are a man or you are a minority or you are not a minority, if you are Native American, as long as you are an American, there are people that wake up in this world and in the continental United States saying, how can I carry out terror on these individuals? How can I disrupt their lives?

So these cuts that are being made, we are not just talking about school lunch programs. That is important. We are not just talking about hopefully trying to get a health care plan that the 43 million people without health care can have health care one day, affordable health care. That is important. Medicare, being able to make sure that we have an affordable prescription drug program that works for the individuals that need it versus for the individuals that are making the drugs. That is important.

But I will tell you what is very important is to make sure that we do not see a disruption in the way that we live our lives day in and day out. And the way this White House, and then the Congress, turned around, the majority turned around and even made it worse in cutting the very programs and the very funding that local governments need.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that we are clear on this, because I want to make sure the American people understand what I am saying. If a terrorist was to carry out or attempt to carry out an act in your local town, community or city or State, Members of Congress are not going to run down there and try to take care of things. It is going to be that first responder. It is going to be that police officer, it is going to be that firefighter, it is going to be that paramedic, it is going to be the individuals working in the hospitals, it is going to be the nurse that you look at every day, the doctors that you look at every day that will respond to that act.

Guess what? If they do not have the equipment to respond appropriately, if they do not even have the radio equipment to be able to communicate with a number of agencies that they must communicate with, to be able to hopefully contain the situation or prevent it, the penny will outweigh the pound in that instance.

So one wonders why the law enforcement community has found themselves running to Senator JOHN KERRY for support or help. They are running there because they do not see it in the budget. They do not see what we are saying in the budget reflecting our real purpose here and making sure that they have what they need.

This hits right here, because I was a State trooper for 5 years; and I will tell you, equipment is important, to be able to not only make sure I was able to go home to my family, but to make sure that many others, from the State I am

from, Floridians, were able to go home to see their families. If I did not have what I needed to protect them and prevent crime or accidents or what have you, then it is for naught.

Now, let us look at this. When we cut the budget here, Mr. Speaker, it is a trickle-down effect. It is something we call here in Washington "devolution of taxation." We say, well, we will cut your taxes here. We will send you a \$32 check in the mail, and maybe you can go out and get a Number 2 or Number 3 at Burger King or McDonald's for you and the kids. But in reality we are passing that down to the State government.

I have shared this on the floor before in the past, but I want to make sure the American people understand what is happening right now in real time. It goes down to the State, your local State. The State does not have the prerogative that we have.

We have the opportunity to take out a credit card, swipe it and just put it on the Federal debt, which I must say right now, Mr. Speaker, is the largest debt in the history of the Republic, in the history of this country.

I am not proud of that debt, and we did not get there by providing the dollars that we provided, minimum dollars we provided to local and State law enforcement to say we are putting it out there and we have given some money here and there and had a couple of check presentations on your local television station.

But this debt came from the tax cuts for the very wealthy individuals in this country. This debt came from going into war unplanned, which I must say you pull out Time magazine and the individuals that are writing about this and have been following what has been going on in Iraq, and read about mistake after mistake after mistake that have cost American lives, that have cost the taxpayers money. We called ourselves going with the willing. We went with individuals that we helped fund to make it to Iraq.

For those individuals that have served, rotated in and out of Iraq, those individuals that are watching us right now missing a limb, have facial scars from shrapnel, those individuals' families that are watching that never made it back, we honor and appreciate them every time we get an opportunity.

But there are some individuals that are in suits and ties that are making decisions that are not only sending this country into further debt as it relates to the effort in Iraq, but also because we did it the way we did it, did not provide the troops with the very things that they needed, going back to equipment and going back to following up on our responsibility of making sure that they have the equipment that they need, the armor that they need, of making sure these Humvees have armor around the doors, making sure we are able to head off these bombs that are detonated by cellular phones, we are just catching up.

It was a DOD report that said almost 25-plus percent of the injuries that took place could have been avoided if they had what they needed.

So when you hear individuals, and I heard the chairman speak when we started talking about devolution of taxation, and I just wanted to go there with the troops for a moment so that individuals know this is not just local government, this is throughout the Federal Government, that when it goes down to the State, they have to balance the budget.

And how do they balance it? Well, they cut the resources they would ordinarily give to taxpayers and your local city or town. So when that happens, that means that the local government, they have to turn to the family. That is where the buck really stops.

Think about it in your community. How many bond referendums have taken place recently to be able to raise money to run your schools or build your schools?

□ 2310

How many opportunities where someone has said, well, you know, we no longer have the feeding program for your grandmother or your aunt or even yourself who is watching right now; we had to cut that because the funding ran out.

Let me tell my colleagues, there was a lot of money to work with before the President took office. We were around here, Congress was around here talking about how are we going to spend, how are we going to manage and spend appropriately the surplus, of making sure that we are able to make sure that Social Security was not bankrupt, make sure that we are able to get a health care plan, where we do not have individuals that are punching in and punching out every day at work, working the midnight shift, some working two jobs and still do not have affordable health care. How do we help small businesses provide that health care to individuals? How do we help our young people prepare themselves to be able to be our leaders and Members of Congress and business owners in the future? How do we do that?

How do we make sure that we raise the education commitment from the Federal Government to the State government and local governments to make sure that we have a quality early childhood education program? How do we make sure that every troop who goes into a theater of war to put his and her life on the line, every Reservist that goes on active duty, how do we make sure that they have the equipment that they need to be able to defend this country; the very freedom that veterans have provided us right now, the democracy that we live under, the flag that we stand under? How do we make sure that those individuals are not sent in? And we are saying we are right behind you and we continue to drop more and more back as we look at show me the money. Show me the

commitment. Show me that you are going to stand with me.

We have individuals right now, and this is not the Kendrick Meek report, you can read about it, you can ask a Reservist, you can ask someone who has gone into theater. Yes, they used to write letters and asked to be sent cake or sent candy or sent a picture. Now they are writing letters back home saying, send me a bullet-proof vest. Send me something for my radio. Send me some duct tape because I am having to make sure for my uniform. Send me an extra pair of pants. Send me a cap. Go down to the Army Navy store and buy this canteen for me.

Mr. Speaker, individuals are sleeping right now with sand in their teeth. The last thing that they should have to do and the last thing that their loved ones should have to do is to have to worry about equipment. But, better yet, when the question is asked, who is paying on some level or experiencing some sacrifice with what these men and women are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting the war against terrorism, trying to set forth a democracy in Iraq?

So I think it is important, I say to my colleagues, that we remember that it is not all about press conferences and talking about how we support the troops. On this floor, every time something flares up in Iraq, someone wants to put forth a resolution supporting the troops. We support the troops. The troops know we support them. We do not have to every time something flares up, well, let us divert, let us see who is going to vote to support the troops and who does not support the troops. Supporting the troops is making sure the troops have what they need. And as we look at it right now, I say to my colleagues, they do not, and we are still talking about how we can get more of them there.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up, I just want to say that what this administration has done has not been a proper response to a post-9/11 experience. Harvard University had former Senator Sam Nunn, who is an outstanding patriot and a member of the Committee on Armed Services for many years in the other body, well-respected from Georgia, and they had an opportunity to look at nuclear weapons and what is the picture right now? What has happened in the last 4 years? We secured more nuclear stockpiles 2 years prior to 9/11 than we did 2 years after 9/11. And what we are hearing publicly from the CIA, they are more concerned about a nuclear weapon coming on a freighter or a container that can shut down the economy in New York or Miami or any of these major port cities, Los Angeles or one of the 361 ports we have here in this country, but, better yet, they are more accessible.

So it is important. This is serious business when we start talking about national security. It is serious business when we start talking about men and women in a forward area, and it is very serious when it comes down to the fact

that we are making tax cuts permanent for individuals that are out buying Hummers and things of that nature, out with major disposable income saying that we are hurting and we need another tax cut; better yet, we need to make it permanent in the light of cutting the Federal commitment to State government, cutting the Federal commitment to local government, cutting the Federal commitment to local schools, cutting the Federal commitment to our troops when it comes down to what they need.

So someone can get on the floor and they can go and talk for 2 or 3 hours talking about how much they love the troops, but it is not reflected in the budget, and it is not reflected as it relates to the equipment that they need on the ground there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is very appropriate that we share with the American people every week that this is not a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent issue. This is an American issue. This is an issue that Americans are fed up with, this continued lack of responsibility when it comes down to the Federal commitment to their local, State and local government.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his excellent statement. I am going to sum up and just reemphasize some of the things that he has said.

I think a Thursday, May 27, article by Jonathan Wiseman of the Washington Post, I just want to quote part of it, and the gentleman may have a comment on it. But the gentleman started off by talking about how real, we have to deal with real facts. And the gentleman said that the fact is that the President does submit a budget, and so we speak from that budget tonight and its devastating effect on so many Americans.

I had spoken earlier about the fact that this budget affects so many of our young people. I just want to quote from Mr. Wiseman's article. He says, "The Women, Infants and Children nutrition program was funded at \$4.7 billion for the fiscal year beginning in October, enough to serve the 7.9 million people expected to be eligible." But he goes on to say, "In 2006, the program would be cut by \$122 million." He says, "Head Start, the early childhood education program for the poor, will lose \$177 million, or 2.5 percent of its budget, in fiscal year 2006. The \$78 million funding increase that Bush has touted for homeownership programs in 2005 would be nearly reversed in 2006 with a \$53 million cut. The National Institutes of Health spending would be cut 2.1 percent in 2006 to \$28 billion after a \$764 million increase for 2005." That brought the NIH budget to \$28.6 billion.

"Finally, a subject that is near and dear to all of us: homeland security. A centerpiece of the Bush reelection campaign," says Mr. Wiseman, "would be affected. Funding would slip in 2006 by \$1 billion to \$29.6 billion, although that

would still be considerably higher than the \$26.6 billion devoted to that field in 2004, according to an analysis of the computer printout put out by the House Committee on the Budget Democrats."

So we have this situation where we are simply talking about balance, and we have often said, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, let us deal with the Nation's problems like we would deal with our most serious family problems.

Basically, what we have called for was common sense, understanding that whenever we have a family problem, we pause, we analyze the situation, we are flexible, we come up with solutions that are appropriate for the problem.

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I seriously question whether or not we are dealing with solutions appropriate to the problem, because everything seems to be out of balance. And so it is tonight, the Congressional Black Caucus comes and simply says that we are looking for balance. Yes, we must address the issue of terrorism. Every single one of us never wants to see planes flying into any building. None of us want to see chemical weapons released out into places where they could do harm. We do not want that. We want to fight terrorism, but at the same time we fully understand that we have got to make sure that we take care of the people here in the United States.

And if I have to say it a million times, I will say it over and over again, so often when people hear members of the Congressional Black Caucus or even hear the words "Congressional Black Caucus" they assume that we are only talking about and for African American people. And, ladies and gentlemen, I am here to tell you that the people that we speak for are Americans, no matter what their color may be. We want to make sure that every American has the opportunity to be all that God meant for them to be.

One of the things that I often say, as I yield to my friend, is that when I get up in the morning, after I pray for myself and my family, I ask God to give us as a Congress, give us the opportunities and the wisdom and the discernment to increase our constituents' opportunities to be blessed so that they can live the best lives that they can.

And so that is what this is all about. Not only our constituents, but as we well know, what we do in this body not only affects the constituents in our district, the constituents in our country, but, I would submit, our constituents of the world. It is not just limited to this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would now yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the gentleman is 110 percent right. I am so glad you shared the article with the American people and the Congress.

Today I wore the World War II pin they gave us when we were there at the

dedication. I went with my uncle, King Pitman, and my mother, Congresswoman Carrie Meek. It was a very proud moment in their lifetime, the experience of the time of World War II. My uncle is a Korean veteran and he is a part of the VA. He is injured. He is disabled. He is in a wheelchair. I could not help but look at the other patriots that were out there. They asked for all the veterans to stand up and those that could stand, they stood. Some just put their hand up because they could not stand. These are the individuals that fought such a wonderful, wonderful war on behalf of our freedom. There was a lot going on during that war. There was a lot going on in Congress during that war.

But I will tell my colleague this, that I could not help but think on that day we did honor them. And, yes, they were without a place in our Mall for their service. And now they have a memorial that is outstanding. And I commend those that put forth the private sector dollars and also the Members that put forth the legislation to make that happen.

But I could not help but think the reality on Tuesday morning that if they went to the VA the line and the wait would have been almost as long when it comes down to health care as it took for them to be recognized by this country.

I will tell you this: we say that we love them, we say that we appreciate them, but when it comes down to being able to provide just the simple health care that they were promised, they have to wait weeks and months. VA hospitals are being closed throughout this country. And we are adding more and more veterans as we fight this effort in the gulf, as we fight this effort in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. More and more veterans are being added to the rolls. I will tell you if veterans are having it hard now, I will tell you, if this Congress, if the American people do not do what they need to do in November to make sure that we have leadership in this House, that we have leadership in the White House, and that we have leadership in the other body that is going to set that as a priority, that we need to make sure that these veterans get what they deserve. And that is respect, number one, and to make sure that they get the health care that they were promised when they signed up. They did not sign up to wait in line, especially every day.

My son, we have an American flag outside of our house in Miami. It flies. We keep the light on it. We make sure no matter what is going on in the world that we appreciate and we honor their patriotism and we honor this country. But it is just a sad commentary that we can go and say, fine, you are a wealthy individual, and I am not upset with individuals being wealthy, maybe one day I can maybe in another life. But when we have veterans that are waiting in the lines and

not receiving the kind of health care that they deserve and not being appreciated in the way they should be appreciated, I think we can do better things with that money to be able to make sure that we honor them.

I thank my colleague for allowing me to be here tonight. I look forward to the Congressional Black Caucus continuing to come to the floor to share with the American people about what is going on under the dome here in Washington D.C.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman again for his leadership. The gentleman has been here for less than 2 years now, but has made a tremendous impact on so many of us. We are very proud of his leadership.

As we close, Mr. Speaker, I assume we have about a minute, let me just say this, that the gentleman did make a point that I want to reemphasize. We want to make sure we have a strong military. But young people, if they are listening to what we are saying and they are informed, a lot of times young people will go into the military, they are looking forward, they have a vision of their future, and they want to serve this country, they want to give it their best; but they also look beyond their service. They are saying what benefits will come to me? What benefits will come to my family? So I think probably one of the best recruiting tools for a strong military is for us to keep our commitment.

When they see their grandfathers doing what the gentleman just said, waiting in long lines for their relatives and friends, that does not say very much for us.

So I think as we are in this war and as we stand up for our soldiers, we must also stand up for our veterans.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The gentleman is 110 percent right. Veterans should not get the voice mail when they call the VA. They should get the person that is going to treat them the way that they should be treated and make sure they are scheduled for whatever appointment they need in a reasonable time and not wait 3 or 4 months just to see an optometrist.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I think it is very appropriate that we end on that note, Mr. Speaker, a note about the people we just spent a day saluting and letting them know how much we love them; but now it is not only time to salute them and tell them that we love them but it is also time to make sure that we do for them as they have been promised.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise as Member and First Vice Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus to warn our great nation. The current Administration—one that has made promises, one that has amassed tremendous debt, and one that has gotten us into a war and subsequent occupation that can be characterized as a financial abyss has put government agencies on notice this month that if reelected, the 2006 budget may include cuts for virtually all agencies in charge of do-

mestic programs, including education and homeland security.

In the Administration's "accidental" memorandum proposing potential budget cuts fails to realize that when cuts are made across the board, vulnerabilities are created in each area, and we then have a homeland security problem.

A Washington Post article (May 27, 2004, Page A01) entitled "2006 Cuts in Domestic Spending on Table," a budget analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation tried to rationalize the Administration's proposed 2006 cuts in stating, "I think the public is ready for spending cuts . . . not only does the public understand [sic] there's a whole lot of waste in the federal budget. However, the public is ready to make sacrifices during the war on terror." There is something troubling about that statement, something that is endemic to the entire Administration. The public's supposed willingness to sacrifice is obviously in respect of the need to conserve and enhance our domestic homeland security policy. Why on earth would the public not want to spend more money on improved homeland security? National Institutes of Health (NIH) spending would be cut 2.1% in 2006, to \$28 billion, after a \$764 million increase for 2005 that brought the NIH budget to \$28.6 billion. We won't be worrying about improving our biodefense programs, apparently.

This is good news, bad news situation. The good news is that President Bush has hurt his chances of being elected again by letting people know that, if he is reelected, his budget for 2006 will include spending cuts for virtually all agencies in charge of domestic programs, including education, homeland security and others that the President backed in his campaign year. That will hurt his chances of being reelected. The bad news is that if he is reelected, his budget for 2006 will include spending cuts for virtually all agencies in charge of domestic programs, including education, homeland security and others that the President backed in his campaign year.

J.T. Young, a spokesman for the White House Office of Management and Budget, said in a memo that, "Agencies have asked for this sort of direction." Maybe that is true, but the rest of us didn't ask for such a negative policy. We need domestic programs, including education, homeland security, and others that the President backed in his campaign year.

The funding levels referred to in the memo would be a tiny slice out of the federal budget—\$2.3 billion, or 0.56 percent, out of the \$412.7 billion requested for fiscal 2005 for domestic programs and homeland security that is subject to Congress's annual discretion. It will not offset the enormous expense of the war in Iraq, an expense that we cannot even begin to estimate. But it will hurt the American people. We depend on these programs.

I am amazed by some of the items on his chopping block: The Education Department; a nutrition program for women, infants and children; Head Start; and homeownership, job-training, medical research and science programs all face cuts in 2006. This is very difficult to understand.

It also bothers me that the administration may have to make cuts in key government services to pay for the tax cuts that have gone to the wealthy members of our society. But with the budget deficit exceeding \$400 billion

this year, tough and painful cuts are unavoidable, said Brian M. Riedl, a budget analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation, and this may be true. As I have said in the area of immigration law, we need to work together to solve our problems. If we have to cut expenses, the decision on what should be cut needs to be made on a bipartisan basis.

Another approach to offsetting our deficit would make more sense to me. We presently have between 8 and 14 million undocumented aliens living in the shadows of our society. If we brought them out of the shadows and made it possible for them to obtain good employment, they could contribute to our ability to pay off the deficit with the income taxes that they would pay.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving us time to discuss these important issues.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. BERKLEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today before 5:00 p.m. on account of a death in the family.

Mr. BALLANCE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and June 3 on account of personal reasons.

Mrs. EMERSON (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and June 3 on account of attending daughter Katharine's graduation from Washington and Lee University.

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 Mr. MCDERMOTT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WYNN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. PENCE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GILCHREST, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KLINE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BONNER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TERRY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today and June 3.