

that will help lower this burden, especially in the area of taxes.

This week, we are going to amend the IRS code in order to simplify taxes for business. Then we are going to simplify taxes for certain individuals so they can use the 1040-EZ form. We will use the Tax Relief Simplification and Equity Act on the floor as the method of bringing down the cost of business here in America.

Republicans have a solution for the problems. It is not Benedict Arnold CEOs, it is not raising taxes on businesses or the top 1 percent in America, it is lowering taxes so that we can bring jobs back into America. That is what we need to be doing today. This is the debate we should be having, and it will be here on the floor this week.

LISTEN TO THE WOMEN OF IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, in late October, I had the opportunity to be in Iraq as part of a bipartisan female congressional delegation, and to visit there with our military men and women. Also, while I was there, I had the opportunity to visit and meet some of the Iraqi women who are taking a very strong and very decisive stand for freedom in that country.

Since returning from that trip, I have participated in the Iraqi Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, and I would commend my colleague, the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN), for her incredible work on pulling that caucus together and for her efforts in continuing to work with and supporting the Iraqi women.

We had the opportunity last week to have some of those Iraqi women here. A group of Iraqi women were here to look at how we participate in freedom, how we learn to run for office, and how we learn to take a leadership role. They had a fantastic story to tell, and it is a story that we should be listening to. We should be participating with them in celebrating the successes that they are having and the achievements that they are making over in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I find it really quite amazing that much of the liberal media chooses not to communicate the story of the great successes that are taking place there in Iraq. At a policy committee last Thursday morning, we had many of these women with us and we listened to them, and it was a wonderful opportunity for our Members to ask questions of these Iraqi women. Many of them did, and the responses were phenomenal. I wish each and every Member could have heard some of these responses.

One of our colleague's asked, what do you say, what do you say when Members and constituents will say, well, I do not think we should have gone into

Iraq. What do you say? How do you reply? And the responses from those very brave and courageous Iraqi women ranged from, well, you waited too long; to, if you leave, 25 million Iraqis will be subjected to torture; to, a mother who told us about trying to take a telephone call from her son when his tongue had been cut out by Saddam's regime; and the affliction that is felt when 48 of your relatives are killed; and the sorrow you feel when a million of your fellow countrymen are missing.

These are all stories that we need to hear, and then celebrate and support the success that these women have as they are accepting the responsibility of freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I had this article forwarded to me yesterday by General David Patrias and his wonderful wife Holly. They have just left the command at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. General Patrias commanded the 101st and is now back over in Iraq. This is something that probably we are never going to see on the front page of many of our Nation's major newspapers, and certainly on many of the networks we are not going to hear this story. It comes from a military training post in Jordan, and it is a story about not the first but the second group of Iraqi women to complete military training.

This is about 39 women who have graduated from the military training camp here in Jordan on July 8. And, listen to this, all, all, each and every one of them, all, with the hope of making a difference for their country, and none thinking about that they are making history.

And look at this, the reason they are doing this. These women are committed to freedom. They know that the terrorists are now using women more often in attacks. So these women are coming forward. One of them says, "From when I was young, I dreamed of being in the military." Dreamed of fighting for her country; dreamed of fighting for freedom. "I have some fears, but we have to control them. I'm optimistic about the future."

They have such a hope for what can happen in their country, and they want to be a part of it. They want to support freedom. Then this quote I really love. "Everything starts from scratch."

They realize it is going to be a long time in coming, but they continue their commitment.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 30 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

With Your prophet Ezekiel to guide us, You ask us to be honest with ourselves and one another while looking always to You, Eternal Wisdom, for lasting vision.

With strident tone and disturbing discord, Your prophetic words rap the beat of every human heart. "Son of man, when a land sins against me by breaking faith, I stretch out my hand against it and break its staff of bread. I let famine loose upon it and cut off from it both man and beast."

Yet You, O Lord, bring the same prophet to the banks of a mighty river and ask him to remember the vision. "Have you seen this son of man?"

"Along the banks of the river I saw trees on both sides, and every sort of living creature that can multiply and live. Fruit trees of every kind were growing; and their leaves do not fade nor their fruit fall. Every month they bear fruit for they are watered by You, O Lord. Their fruit shall serve for food and their leaves for medicine."

Leave not our land as lonely dust, O Lord, so we can plant nothing and build only on sand. Rather nourish us with Your hidden spring of life now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. WATSON led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 1572. An act to designate the United States courthouse located at 100 North Palafox Street in Pensacola, Florida, as the "Winston E. Arnow United States Courthouse."

H.R. 4380. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 4737 Mile Stretch Drive in Holiday, Florida, as the "Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith Post Office Building."

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2277. An act to amend the Act of November 2, 1966 (80 Stat. 1112), to allow binding arbitration clauses to be included in all contracts affecting the land within the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Reservation.

S. 2385. An act to designate the United States courthouse at South Federal Place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as the "Santiago E. Campos United States Courthouse".

S. 2398. An act to designate the Federal building located at 324 Twenty-Fifth Street in Ogden, Utah, as the James V. Hansen Federal Building.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain 10 requests for 1-minute speeches.

CELEBRATING SOUTH CAROLINA'S LOW COUNTRY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, since 1956, residents of South Carolina's low country have gathered around the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park in Beaufort for a Southern celebration. This year's 49th Annual Beaufort Water Festival will attract people from all over the world to come and enjoy sailboat races, sport tournaments, arts, crafts, music and other events which display the best of South Carolina's culture.

Beaufort is South Carolina's second oldest city, is a picturesque port town with a rich history. Its beautiful views of waterways bordered by oak trees with Spanish moss and pre-Revolutionary homes have been featured in countless motion pictures and have made Beaufort a world-class vacation destination.

I look forward to joining Beaufortians this weekend in the Water Festival Parade, which moves along historic Bay Street.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in thanking this year's commodore, Marvin Morrison, and his team of coordinators for their efforts in making the 49th Beaufort Water Festival a great success.

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

TAX CUTS SHORTCHANGE COPS PROGRAM

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, we are now almost 3 months past the deadline for Congress to pass a Federal budget. At this point, it is likely that Congress will not pass one at all. The cause of this breakdown is the ongoing misguided policies of the administration which have put irresponsible tax cuts ahead of the programs that Americans rely on to move our country forward.

One such program is COPS, or Community Oriented Policing Services. Since its inception, COPS has put more than 140,000 police officers on the streets. In Los Angeles, my hometown, that meant 240 new officers last year alone. But despite all of the talk about supporting local police, Republicans are starving the COPS program of funds. Because of their marriage to big tax cuts, Republicans have proposed cutting this vital program by over \$100 million. That means about half as many new police on the streets next year.

RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I would just remind the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that this body passed its budget in March of this year. We are waiting for across the rotunda as usual.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Medicare Modernization Act which we passed last year. I wanted to discuss the fact that employers have been dropping health care benefits for retirees for 2 decades. This is prior to our passing the Medicare bill. A Kaiser Foundation survey notes that the percentage of all large firms offering retiree health benefits has declined from 66 percent in 1988 to 34 percent in 2002.

Rather than worsening the situation, the Medicare Modernization Act works to stop the trend of employers dropping retiree coverage. We achieve this goal by providing incentives to employers to continue offering health care to their retired employees. Employers offering retirees coverage that at least equals the Medicare benefit will receive a tax-free direct subsidy.

The Congressional Budget Office has predicted that substantially fewer employers will drop or reduce coverage under the Medicare conference report.

KERRY-EDWARDS OFFER UPLIFTING MESSAGE

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the middle-class values and positive vision for our country that JOHN KERRY and JOHN EDWARDS are offering America.

Yesterday, Senator EDWARDS brought the ticket's Front Porch Tour to the Triangle region of North Carolina. My North Carolina neighbors are excited about the uplifting message that the Senator presents for a better tomorrow. The Kerry-Edwards ticket offers real hope to make America stronger at home and respected throughout the world.

Unfortunately, Republicans in Washington are so afraid of running on their

record, they have launched a ferocious negative attack on JOHN EDWARDS. Just yesterday, Roll Call ran an article quoting a Republican leader saying, "It is now critical to brand JOHN EDWARDS." After 4 years of running this country into the ground, the Republican regime has nothing to offer but attack politics.

Democrats offer a better alternative. Senator JOHN KERRY plans to fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act that the Republican leadership has short-changed by \$27 billion. Senator KERRY also supports school construction legislation to build new schools and get children out of trailers. As the first member of his family to go to college, JOHN EDWARDS will work to make sure that families have opportunities for higher education.

CHARLEE PROGRAM MAKES VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Marilyn March, Mary Cagle, and the entire staff of the CHARLEE Program for their valuable contribution to the abused and neglected children in my hometown of Miami, Florida.

CHARLEE stands for Children Have All Rights, Legal, Educational and Emotional. It was established in 1983 through the efforts of the Junior League of Miami, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Episcopal Diocese of southeast Florida.

It has an extensive history of providing critical services such as foster care and treatment services for Miami-Dade counties' neediest children.

As a mother of two teenage daughters, I realize the profound impact that a positive relationship with one's primary caregiver can have on the development of our most precious resource, our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work CHARLEE does, and I wish all of CHARLEE'S volunteers much future success in helping our precious children.

NATIONAL DEBT RISES

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 1,167 days since President Bush and the Republican Party embarked on their economic plan for our country. During that time, the national debt has increased by \$1,663,467,070,131.85.

According to the Web site for the Bureau of Public Debt at the Treasury Department, yesterday the Nation's outstanding privately held debt was \$4,228,533,122,486.63.

Foreign holdings of U.S. privately held debt now total \$1.75 trillion. This