

want to stop terrorism. Yet, time after time after time, we see terrorist activity taking place, and who has been involved? It is the Saudi people, and it is people who have been taught in the madrassas, who have been taught that radical fundamentalism that is called Wahhabism.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my colleagues tonight that this government, the Government of the United States through the State Department, must continue to tell the Saudis that they must take these people on, they have to stop this terrorist activity emanating and originating in their country, and they have to stop this type of teaching of the children. They have been allowing this teaching to go on for 25 to 30 years now.

It is high time that this stopped, because the children who are growing up today are going to be the terrorists of tomorrow; and if they continue to let that happen in their schools, we are going to have to face this not only now, but our children and our grandchildren are going to be facing this kind of terrorist activity down the road.

Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, all of them have to be defeated. We are in a world war against terrorism, and we need every government of the world that believes in freedom and democracy and the things we believe in to be on our side. That includes the Saudis. They are going to have to take a hard line.

MEDICARE PREMIUM INCREASE SQUEEZES SENIORS' BUDGETS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday President Bush got up on his \$2.5 million podium and crowed about how his Medicare reform bill was making health care more affordable for seniors. But less than 24 hours later, this administration announced the largest increase in Medicare premiums in history.

Beginning in January, retirees and the disabled will see their Medicare premiums rise by \$11.60 per month, to \$78.20. That is an increase of 17 percent. It comes on the heels of last year's whopping 14 percent increase. The Bush administration deliberately tried to bury this bad news, releasing the information late on Friday in the midst of a hurricane and leading up to a long holiday weekend. They did that in the hopes that seniors would not notice.

The Social Security COLA will not be generous either. That is why the Bush administration needed to stifle news coverage about the Medicare premium increase. The Social Security trustees have predicted a 1.3 percent COLA for 2005. For a retiree receiving the average benefit of \$895, that amounts to a monthly increase of \$11.64.

After Medicare's premiums go up, seniors will be left with an additional 4

cents per month to handle rising expenses. Seniors have increasing housing costs, high gas prices, rising grocery bills and the prospects of record heating bills this winter, just like everyone else. Does 4 cents a month sound like enough of a cost-of-living increase to cover inflation and expenses?

The retirees I know pay very close attention to information about their health insurance costs because they need to watch every dime. But the same cannot be said of President Bush and the Republican Congress. The so-called Medicare reform bill that they are so quick to praise is largely to blame for the premium increases and Medicare's ongoing financial difficulties.

The Medicare reform bill, with a price tag of \$549 billion, spends more money to pad the pockets of corporate executives than it does to pay for prescription drugs or for more comprehensive medical coverage for seniors. More than 60 percent of the bill's cost is attributable to \$139 billion in overpayments to pharmaceutical companies, \$70 billion in subsidies to corporations and \$130 billion in overpayments to Medicare HMOs. These expenses do nothing to improve the quality of health care that seniors receive, but they certainly have a negative impact on the affordability of that care.

Today's retirees will not be the only ones to pay the price for the short-sighted, irresponsible agenda of President Bush and the Republican Congress. We all will, in today's budget deficits and tomorrow's skyrocketing Medicare costs.

None of the Medicare bill's \$549 billion price tag was paid for, which means it only adds to the Federal budget deficit. The growing budget deficit in turn means that we will not be able to put any money aside to shore up Medicare's finances for the impending retirement of the baby boom generation. Under this leadership, today's seniors and tomorrow's retirees can expect many years of outrageously high increases.

This is just another example of the Bush administration and the Republican Congress saying one thing and doing another. It sounds nice to say that you have added a comprehensive, guaranteed prescription drug benefit; but you did not. It sounds nice to say that you have made seniors' health care better and more affordable, but you have not done that either. President Bush and the Republican leadership have done just the opposite.

When seniors get their Social Security checks in January and those checks are only 4 cents more than what they got last January, they will know the difference between your words and your deeds.

HONORING THE FIRST RESPONDERS OF THE ELEVENTH DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I have been a Member of this Congress, of this body, the House of Representatives, I have come to expect a good measure of partisanship and partisan rhetoric that occurs on the floor of the House, especially during this, a Presidential election year. I have come to expect that, but not to enjoy it.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to my colleagues, that the past hour I have sat here in this Chamber and seen a great measure of bipartisanship as our chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), and the ranking member, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), came together to bring us this emergency supplemental appropriation to help the people in Florida who have been devastated by Hurricanes Charlie and Frances with this \$2 billion stopgap measure to get money to FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Administration, to help the people of Florida in a bipartisan way, and to have us have this discussion led by the delegation from Florida, both Republicans and Democrats.

This is the kind of bipartisanship that the people of this country and the great State of Florida deserve to see more of. In fact, it reminded me that we are coming up pretty soon, this Saturday, in fact, on the third anniversary of a tragic event in this country. Of course, I am speaking of 9/11, when this body again was at its finest moment when they came together and there was not that level of partisanship, and we pulled together for the benefit of all Americans.

So, Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to rise and pay tribute to the first responders whose selfless service and hard work keep the citizens of the Nation, but particularly Georgia and my eleventh district, safe and secure each and every day.

Just as the moniker suggests, our Nation's first responders are the first to arrive at the scene and usually the last to leave. They are the brave souls risking their lives to prevent catastrophe and healing the wounded and broken when disaster strikes, just as they are doing in Florida today. They are always vigilant and ever ready, and they deserve our heartfelt thanks.

Since the tragic events of September 11, we have all learned that terrorists are not just looking at New York City and Washington, D.C. Rather, they have undertaken a vast effort to survey potential targets across this country. Should Metro Atlanta, the capital of the South, suffer an attack, you and I know that the brave first responders from West Georgia's Eleventh Congressional District will be among the many who will answer the call to duty.

I also know how much new equipment and technology means to the first responders of the Eleventh Congressional District of Georgia, and we in Congress are working hard to continue to provide it.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the privilege of visiting with the volunteer fire department in Woodland, Georgia, in Talbot County, to inspect their new fire truck; and I left very impressed with their operation. I was also struck by how much of a difference a piece of equipment like a new fire truck can have on a great community like Woodland.

So whether it is a fire truck, HAZMAT equipment for biological threats, or a communications network upgrade in northwest Georgia, I remain committed to doing everything I can to ensure that Georgia's first responders receive the necessary funding to ensure the safety and security of our communities in Georgia.

We must never take for granted the bravery and commitment of our true first responders. We in Congress must provide them with the tools necessary to conduct their vital service.

Mr. Speaker, the eleventh district's first responders are on the front line every day, and they deserve our support and appreciation. I want to take this opportunity tonight to thank each of them as we approach the third anniversary of 9/11 for their work to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia and the Southeast.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN MUST NOT EXPIRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, over 200 days ago I started speaking about September 13. That is the day when the assault weapons ban that we have in place now is going to expire.

Over the last couple of years, and then even this week when we saw the tragedy that happened in Russia, we saw what terrorists could do when they put their minds to having destruction. They do not care about human life. We are told that we have terrorists here in this country waiting to do their destruction on us as American citizens. We are told that when they can, they will do as much destruction as possible.

Come September 13, at midnight, your local terrorists, the gangs that are in our streets, the drug dealers, will be able to buy assault weapons at your local gun store.

I do not understand this. We hear the rhetoric all the time that the assault weapons bill has not worked. Well, you talk to the police officers that are coming down here tomorrow to try to convince the President to expand the bill. We have seen a 60 percent drop in killings with the guns that have been banned.

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Our local police say they are not prepared for this. The bulletproof vests that we give our police officers are no match to the guns that are going to be back out on the streets. The large-capacity clips, right now we hold it at 15, 10, and yet in our States when our hunters go out shooting for deer or hunting, they are only allowed 6 bullets. But we are going to give people anywhere like the killer today in Ohio that used 50 rounds. Where is the common sense?

We have the majority of the American people wanting to keep this ban in place. We have 56 percent of gun owners, NRA members that say, keep the ban in place. Yet there is total silence here in this House. The bill is not going to be allowed to be brought up even for a vote. But by the way, on Monday there will be a suspension vote to allow guns back into the D.C. area and not to punish anyone that is carrying an unlicensed gun.

Is this where we as Americans want to be? The rhetoric that we hear constantly, as if this is a slippery road, we are out to take away everyone's right to own a gun. Well, that is not the slippery road. We are trying to save lives.

Ten years ago we put this bill in place because too many of our police officers were being killed and outgunned. Come Tuesday morning of next week, September 14, when our kids are going back to school, our police officers are going to be in harm's way once again. The President of the United States has said that he would sign the bill if it got on his desk. Well, you cannot have it two ways, Mr. President. You have to make the phone call here. You have to tell DENNIS HASTERT, we want the bill up here. And like your father before you, make phone calls to say, get this bill passed, as Ronald Reagan did, as President Carter did, and as President Clinton did.

We cannot save every life. There is no bill in the world that is going to be able to do that. But when we have something in place that has saved lives, why would we just let it go? The NRA, are they that strong? Where are the voices of the American people? Where is this House, and where is this President? Whose side are they going to be on? The police officers that we talk about that are so heroic from 9/11 and through the convention and through all of the terrorist threats that we have, where are the voices that are going to protect those police officers? We are just going to let it go? Who is going to face the families? Who is going to talk to the surviving families when the first police officer is mowed down? Who is going to do that? It always seems that I am the one who has to talk to the victims' families.

We have several days left. We have all of the police and the police chiefs coming in tomorrow. Mr. President, I am begging you, get on the phone. Make this happen. We can pass it in

the Senate, and we can pass it here in the House, but we need your help. Mr. President, I am begging of you. You talk about our police officers. How about protecting them now?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KING of Iowa). Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair rather than to the President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

SMART SECURITY AND ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, in November of 2000, America witnessed the breakdown of its electoral system. Four years later, as far as I can see, nothing that was broken has been fixed. Many Americans believe the same injustices to democracy that we witnessed 4 years ago could occur once again this November.

The very security of our democracy is at stake. For all of the Bush administration's talk about securing our Nation from the threat of terrorism, no discussion of security would be complete if it did not address the need to secure our national election system.

After the controversial election in 2000, one would think President Bush would do everything in his power to ensure the integrity of America's election system. I know that is what I would have done had I become President of this United States, particularly after having lost the national popular vote by more than half a million votes. But unfortunately, despite some Democratic efforts here in Congress, this administration has failed to win back the trust of our Nation's voters.

The Help America Vote Act, which was signed into law in the year 2002, was designed to assist States in upgrading their fragile election systems. I supported this legislation because it took steps in the right direction to make our election system secure. While some improvements have been made because of this act, its most useful reforms, the reforms that would actually ensure security, will not be in