

exploit America's gun laws to obtain the weapons they intend to use to kill Americans.

Next, the United States had a proven and effective law on the books that made it difficult to purchase these deadly weapons, and this law needed to be renewed.

Finally, President Bush, who claims to be a huge homeland security supporter, stayed silent. Why did he remain silent? Why did the President not act? I believe the answer is really pretty simple.

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The National Rifle Association, the NRA, refused to support President Bush's reelection bid until after the renewal date for the assault weapons ban came and went, that was today, came and went untouched by the White House. This President has been cowed by the NRA. The sad irony is that last week Vice President DICK CHENEY made the outrageous claim that it is absolutely essential on November 2 that Americans make the right choice because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we will get hit again. I quote that from the Vice President's remarks.

This misleading connection in addition to insulting the intelligence of the American people wrongly asserts that a vote for JOHN KERRY and JOHN EDWARDS is a vote for terrorism. Instead, al Qaeda will be poised to hit us again because in large part on September 13, 2004, today, the Republican leadership has allowed Islamic militants and others to once again purchase American machine guns, all for the reelection of the President. How very, very shameful that is. If we truly want to secure our homeland, we need to pursue policies that are smarter than those that would decriminalize deadly weapons to elect someone to office. By the way, virtually every major law enforcement organization in the United States of America supports extending the ban.

That is why I have introduced a new SMART security platform for the 21st century. H. Con. Res. 392 is legislation to create a sensible, multilateral, American response to terrorism. SMART security is stronger on national security than President Bush claims to be. SMART security will stop the sale of weapons to oppressive regimes and regimes involved in human rights abuses. SMART security will pursue enhanced inspection regimes and regional security arrangements to ensure that state sponsors of terrorism do not get ahold of more light weaponry, or even deadlier chemical or biological weapons.

Let us talk for a moment about presidential flip-flops. When it comes to keeping assault weapons out of the hands of terrorists, George Bush speaks out of both sides of his mouth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES ON MEDICARE REFORM

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the President spent some time recently taking, and I concede this, well-deserved credit for last year's Medicare bill, for foisting last year's 678-page, \$534 billion Medicare law on seniors and the rest of the American public. The fact that he is proud of this law, a law that hands HMOs \$12 billion in bonus payments, HMO insurance companies get \$12 billion in bonus payments while raising seniors' premiums by 17 percent, a record amount, raises a larger issue: How have seniors fared under the last 3½ years of the Bush administration? It is not a difficult question to answer. The facts speak for themselves.

We remember several months ago the President actively lobbied for the Medicare overhaul that would treat seniors without drug coverage like second-class citizens, forcing them out of traditional Medicare and into private insurance company HMOs.

Members will remember that vote. It took place in the middle of the night. It was a 3-hour vote, the longest in congressional history. There was more campaign payoff money on that vote from insurance companies and drug companies to Republican Members of the Congress. We all remember that. The President put his weight behind that new Medicare law that lines the pockets of HMOs to the tune of \$12 billion, that lines the pockets of drug companies to the tune of \$182 billion, and explicitly blocks seniors from access to competitively priced prescription drugs. The insurance companies, as I said, got a payment of \$12 billion. The drug companies' profits went up \$182 billion and Republican leadership and the President did very well in this campaign year with contributions from the drug companies and the insurance companies. They could certainly afford it after legislation that will create and bring to them those huge profits.

After that, the President spends millions of dollars of our money, of taxpayer money, of dollars that could have gone to a prescription drug plan, could have gone to seniors to reduce the cost of seniors' drugs, but the President spends millions of dollars of our money on ads touting the new Medicare bill with the slogan "same Medicare, better benefits," even though the President and his advisers knew his handiwork would be directly responsible for the largest premium increase in Medicare history, 17 percent,

the largest premium increase in Medicare's 38-year history, not to mention deductibles that will for the first time that seniors have to pay increase year after year after year.

Do not believe anyone that tells you the Bush administration is not responsible, in spite of the ads the President is running, is not responsible for the 17 percent premium increase just because he says premiums are calculated by a formula. Yes, they are calculated by a formula written in the bill that the drug and insurance companies wrote that the President pushed through. That is like pouring gasoline on a campfire, then blaming someone else when the forest burns down.

The President's Medicare law, inflated by a \$12 billion HMO slush fund and an outright prohibition on bulk rate prices, bringing the price down, swelled the overall cost of Medicare which in turn increased the premium that seniors pay. America's seniors know it. You and I know it. Everyone in this Chamber knows that is why premiums went up, because of the deal the President made with the drug companies and the insurance companies.

In his budget proposal this year, the President recommends cutting \$60 billion from the Medicaid program, \$60 billion, even though Medicaid covers 70 percent of the nursing home care provided in this country. Without Medicaid, two-thirds of America's seniors in nursing homes would have to find some other source of care. For many of those seniors, there is no other source of care. For others, families have to patch together the care any way they can, even if it means they become impoverished.

Medicaid provides health care, nursing home care and home health care to nearly 5 million seniors living below the poverty line, 149,000 people in my State of Ohio alone. The recession and massive job losses have left States struggling to finance their full financial obligations to Medicaid. If the Federal Government does not do its part, the Medicaid program is in jeopardy. The Bush administration is simply not doing its part because of its budget cuts to Medicaid and because of the tax cuts which have gone overwhelmingly to the 1 percent wealthiest Americans.

The President's hand-picked Social Security Commission came up with a privatized plan to drain \$1.8 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund over the next 5 years. Privatizing Social Security, privatizing Medicare, cutting Medicaid is no benefit to seniors. It is the wrong direction for our country.

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

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

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

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

SPLIT PERSONALITY

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Ohio has shown one of the hallmarks of this administration, its ability to spin a tale. Say it often enough and the American people may actually begin to believe it. In fact, they are so good at it they may have begun to believe their own press releases.

The other day, Secretary of War Rumsfeld delivered a major speech at the National Press Club. Along the way, terror got a new name, Osama Hussein. Or was it Saddam bin Laden? In English, the rule is I before E except after C but in this administration I equals A. Iraq equals al Qaeda because they say so, not because there is a shred of evidence. There is not.

Mr. Rumsfeld appeared to link Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein in the same breath. He has got them all confused in his head now. He has said the story so many different times and they still are trying to connect the al Qaeda with what happened on 9/11. Or maybe it was just a stumble compounded later in his appearance by another gaffe. Or was it reading too many spin memos that your head begins to turn and spin and spin and you do not know where you are. At the very least, this shows the effect of a PR campaign that began well before the invasion of Iraq. The separation between the rhetoric and the reality has blurred into one and the same. Over and over again, the administration has exaggerated the tie between Iraq and al Qaeda. When questions from the Congress and the American people outstripped the rhetoric, the administration's rhetoric got louder, a lot louder. Today it is so loud that it is hard to hear the quiet truth. But it is there.

It has been over a year and a half since the President ordered the beginning of hostile action against Iraq. It has been over a year since the President declared "mission accomplished." Absolutely no one on the planet believes that the mission has either been accomplished or will be anytime soon. Even some Republicans are now talking about a presence in Iraq over the next two decades. Is that the plan for winning the peace? Is that the plan or the consequence of going to war in Iraq?

Today, U.S. military commanders are using more air strikes in Iraq. If that

helps save American lives or keep soldiers safe, out of harm's way, I am all for it. If this is a new military strategy, then it raises the question, why can we not get a lot of American soldiers out of Iraq and get them out of harm's way? It has been almost 3 months since the so-called handover. In those 90 days, 150 soldiers have died and 900 have been wounded. We cannot ask what we are going to do to win the peace because U.S. soldiers are still fighting and dying in a war. This is not the time to ask how the administration plans to win the peace, because there is no peace in Iraq today.

Colin Powell came out yesterday and said we have a secret plan that sometime soon we will roll out so we can get stability at the time of the election. What is he waiting for? The election? Or the fact that he does not know what he is doing? U.S. forces managed a weekend without a military death but the death count of innocent Iraqi citizens is up dramatically over the last 48 hours. In another day of war, there can be no peace.

Today, the American people have a fog of war, reality obscured by an administration which would prefer that we merely accept their version of reality or versions when the story needs to change. While it may have been a slip of the tongue the other day at the National Press Club, one wonders whether Secretary Rumsfeld inadvertently expressed publicly what he thinks privately. Are bin Laden and Hussein two different faces of evil, or are they some kind of split personality? Spin the rhetoric around enough and it gets hard to separate it from the reality on the ground, here or there.

The administration has wrapped itself in the mantle of fighting the war on terror. Just today this administration could have struck a major blow against terrorism simply by extending the ban on assault weapons. These are bona fide weapons of mass destruction. We know where they are and we know how to keep them out of the hands of the bad guys. The President said he favored the ban, but then he did absolutely nothing to make it happen. You think he could not get the leadership in the House of Representatives to act on this if he meant business? He never meant anything close to that.

The administration did not need weapons inspectors from the U.N. or air strikes from the military to find and isolate weapons of mass destruction that will threaten police officers and our security officers and our homeland security. All the President needed to do was tell his surrogates in this body and the other body to extend the ban. That did not happen, despite overwhelming support from the American people, despite overwhelming support from law enforcement officers. Instead, the administration used empty rhetoric to disarm a true weapon in the war on terror.

The regime is coming to an end, Mr. Speaker, in 49 days.

FLORIDA WEATHERS THE STORMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes, my other colleagues from Florida will be speaking on the horrible disasters that have befallen our State. I am proud to stand with my Florida colleagues in a bipartisan manner to congratulate and thank all of the men and women who have helped to make our fellow citizens be better able to cope with this crisis.

I want to express my condolences for the victims of Hurricanes Frances and Charley and the victims of Hurricane Ivan in the Caribbean. These storms have caused a great loss of life and property, but it would have been far worse had it not been for the sound planning and the quick response from Governor Jeb Bush and President George W. Bush. Governor Bush organized an effective plan and ensured that the National Guard would mobilize in the areas that were hardest hit.

I also would like to commend President Bush for his quick declaration of an emergency and his handling of the disasters. Thanks to President Bush, Floridians were able to quickly receive the essentials that they needed. President Bush traveled to Florida to inspect the disaster and was handing out water and ice to those affected and he spoke to Floridians who had lost everything in this disaster.

Here in Congress, we acted last week to pass an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to help FEMA pay for the disaster relief of Hurricane Charley. Soon our colleagues in Congress are once again rising to the same challenges as we prepare to pass another supplemental appropriations bill for Hurricane Frances.

□ 2000

I am proud to represent both Miami-Dade County and Monroe County. Miami-Dade experienced the loss of electricity in many areas as well as a shortage of fuel, and the Florida Keys have been evacuated twice, leading to a huge economic loss to that area. Today for the third time in a month, another part of Florida braces for a disastrous storm. All of south Florida prays for the safety of those in the path of Hurricane Ivan, and I am confident that if it were to strike our State, Governor Bush and President Bush and all of the emergency workers will once again be ready to quickly respond.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring to the attention of this Chamber the economic losses which the Florida Keys have suffered as a result of the two mandatory evacuations imposed in less than a month. Tourists had to leave, which meant a huge economic loss for the area. The Florida Keys badly depends on the thousands and thousands of tourists who come to enjoy south Florida. My good friend, the colorful commissioner of Key West,