

The assault weapons ban will expire or "sunset" today unless Congress passes legislation to renew the law. President Bush has stated his support for the assault weapons ban. Unfortunately, the House refuses to act until the President calls on Republican congressional leadership to do so.

The Assault Weapons Ban is supported by virtually every Federal, State and local law enforcement agency, including the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriff's Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major City Chiefs Association, and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers. The ban was supported by Presidents Reagan, Ford, Carter, and Clinton, and by Republicans Tom Ridge and Rudy Giuliani.

Prior to the ban, ATF found criminals prefer assault weapons over law-abiding citizens eight to one. In the 5 years before the ban, assault weapons made up almost 5 percent of ATF crime gun traces. Since the ban, assault weapons have made up only 1.5 percent of these traces—a drop of 66 percent from the preban rate.

As recently as December 2003, an NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll found that 78 percent of adults nationwide support renewal of the ban. Additionally, 57 percent of people with a gun in their household support the assault weapons ban. The ban does not include hunting rifles and shotguns, which is probably why a majority of hunters support extending the ban today. The greater the availability of assault weapons, the cheaper their price, and the more wind up on the streets.

We need to take action immediately, and I urge my colleagues in Congress to step up and do the right thing by extending this ban.

CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE URGES HOUSE GOP LEADERSHIP TO SCHEDULE IMMEDIATE VOTE TO RENEW ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN THAT EXPIRES TODAY

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, September 13, 2004, the ten-year federal ban on assault weapons is set to expire unless Congress takes immediate action to extend it. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee has continued to urge the House Republican leadership to schedule an immediate vote to renew the ban. The Congresswoman has received many calls in support of an extension by local enforcement officers and gun control advocates who have been lobbying for congressional action on the ban. Extension of the ban is supported by more than three-quarters of Americans nationwide. The Senate approved a renewal of the ban earlier this year, but the House has not voted on the matter because the House Republican leadership refuses to allow a vote.

"For ten years, the assault weapons ban has helped keep semi-automatic assault weapons off the market, off our street, and out of the hands of gangs, terrorists, drug dealers, and most importantly our children," Congresswoman Jackson Lee said. "It is imperative that the House Republican leadership schedule an immediate vote to renew and strengthen the assault weapons ban so that these deadly weapons are not allowed on our streets again. These are not the weapons people use for hunting deer or wild game. These assault weapons are designed to kill as many people as quickly as possible."

The ban, which was approved in 1994, prohibits the domestic manufacture, import, and sale of 19 types of semi-automatic assault weapons such as AK-47s, TEC-9s, and Uzis, as well as dozens of other weapons, which are designed to kill quickly and violently. Unlike weapons firing single rounds,

assault weapons are designed to spray many bullets into a single area, as opposed to a single target, increasing the chances of hitting innocent bystanders who are in the crossfire.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), there has been a 66 percent reduction in the number of traced crimes committed with assault weapons since the ban went into effect. A study of FBI data by the Violence Policy Center reveals that one in five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2001 were killed with assault weapons. "This serves as further proof that the assault weapons ban not only needs to be renewed, but intensified," Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee stated, "I am a cosponsor of a bill to renew the ban for another ten years as well as another bill to strengthen the ban by adding weapons to the prohibited list and making it permanent."

Congresswoman Jackson Lee continued, "The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution allows people to 'keep and bear' firearms. The important question is where we should draw the line. People should not be allowed to have shoulder-fired rocket launchers, nor do they need a semi-automatic weapon that can fire off 30 shots in a matter of seconds for recreational hunting. We need to renew and strengthen the federal ban on assault weapons."

The assault weapons ban is supported by virtually every federal, state, and local law enforcement agency, as well as organizations including the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriff's Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major City Chiefs Association, and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

#### THE REPUBLICANS' COZY RELATIONSHIP WITH CORPORATE INTERESTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to remind the American people about the Republican Party's cozy relationship with our Nation's corporate interests. This relationship has been extremely beneficial to America's corporate elite, but has been extremely harmful to America's middle class. It is necessary for me to remind the American people of this relationship because Republicans are now doing everything they can to run away from the relationship.

Republicans are hoping the American people forgot that Vice President CHENEY worked behind closed doors with corporate executives from the oil and gas companies to write an energy bill that benefited them with billions of dollars while doing virtually nothing to help middle-class Americans with rising prices at the gas pump.

Republicans are hoping the American people will forget President Bush misled the American people into supporting the war in Iraq and rushed to war with absolutely no plan to win the peace. Last month the President finally admitted that he miscalculated

in Iraq, but now Republicans would like the American people to forget such comments.

They would also people to forget that the war in Iraq has now cost the American taxpayer \$200 billion in which billions of dollars have gone to another corporate friend of the Bush administration, Vice President CHENEY's old company, Halliburton.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans are hoping the American people forgot that while their own Medicare director was negotiating a final Medicare prescription drug bill, he was interviewing for jobs with the very pharmaceutical companies that benefit from the new Republican Medicare law. This same director, Tom Scully, illegally kept critical information about the costs of the Medicare bill from Congress, which most likely would have killed the controversial bill before it became law. But Republicans would like the American people, particularly the 40 million seniors who depend on Medicare and who deserve a real prescription drug benefit, to forget that the new law benefits the pharmaceutical companies and only provides a minuscule benefit to senior citizens.

Republicans also would like the American people to forget that they have been doing the work of America's corporate and special interests for the last 4 years to the detriment of the best interests of America's middle class.

Mr. Speaker, Senator KERRY and congressional Democrats will take our country in a new direction and put the middle class first. Despite what President Bush and congressional Republicans promise over the next few months before the election, they will continue to put the narrow interests of the few ahead of the middle class.

Let me talk about some of these special interests this evening, Mr. Speaker, if I can. Let us just look at the record of the Republicans over the last 4 years. Republicans have accomplished many of the goals that corporate interests have set forth with no concern about how these goals would impact middle-class America. I want to just talk about the economy first, and then I will maybe yield to the gentlewoman from Florida, who I see has come down here to join me.

On the economy, the Republican mission has been accomplished for companies seeking tax breaks for shipping jobs overseas, but not for America's workers. The Bush administration needs to create more than 900,000 jobs in 2 months, over the next 2 months, in order to actually create its first net job.

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Now, one would think that the administration would be doing everything possible, looking at every creative solution, to get Americans back to work; but, instead, what we see is the Bush administration taking the side of the corporate interests. They

are not worried over the fact that in the next 2 months they are not going to be able to create almost 1 million jobs to show a net job gain.

The Bush administration would like the American people to forget that the centerpiece of its supposed economic stimulus plan was a provision to eliminate the amount of taxes paid by individuals on stock dividends. Economists concluded that this handout to the President's corporate friends would not create high-paying jobs to the middle class. Three years later, after this tax cut was put in place, it now turns out that the economists were right. Instead of creating jobs for the middle class, President Bush hit them with a \$364 billion deficit, something our children will be forced to pay off in the future. All this not to create one single job; remember, we have a net loss right now of almost 1 million jobs, not to create one single job but, instead, to help inflate the wallets of President Bush's corporate friends.

Now, one would think that the administration would be against companies moving jobs overseas. We have heard about the outsourcing, Mr. Speaker, many times over the last year. But earlier this year, we learned that the Bush administration views the movement of American factory jobs and white collar work to other countries as a positive transformation that will, in the end, enrich our economy. How many of the administration's economists said that outsourcing was a good thing?

The administration stated exactly that in the President's economic report for 2004. This was the President's own economic report for this year. Now, no wonder President Bush thinks that our Nation's economic forecast is rosy. He is not concerned about creating jobs here in the United States. As long as the economy continues to grow and the President's corporate interests continue to make record profits, that is fine with him. President Bush cannot be too concerned about his dismal job creation record since he refuses to discontinue his administration's policy of giving tax breaks that shift American jobs overseas.

Now, by contrast, if I could, Mr. Speaker, Senator KERRY and congressional Democrats want to help middle-class Americans by ending special tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs and creating tax incentives for companies that keep jobs here in America. Those are the companies that we should be rewarding, those that will keep the jobs here, not send them overseas.

Congressional Democrats have also long supported a transportation bill that would stimulate the economy by creating millions of jobs all over the Nation and provide much-needed transportation modernization funding. That transportation bill is stalled because the administration refuses to support the necessary funding that is also supported by some Republicans in this Chamber.

Now, I know the gentlewoman from Florida would like to have some time. I just wanted to say, one of the things, before I yield to her, one of the things that I cannot forget when I look back over the 4 years of the Bush administration is that 4 years ago, in January, when the President first took office, and by March, he took office in January, and by March of that year it was looking like the economy was starting to falter, and the congressional Democrats met in a caucus. We had a special caucus meeting, and we came up with an economic stimulus package, because our feeling was that if we were able to provide an economic stimulus, transportation projects, infrastructure, sewer plants, money than went back to the States for all kinds of activities, school construction, hospital construction, that that would make it possible for the economy to keep moving along and not fall into a recession.

But the congressional Republicans and the President, President Bush, absolutely refused. Their answer was, we are not interested in that kind of economic stimulus that creates jobs, that provides infrastructure; we just want tax cuts. And then by, I guess, the spring or the summer of that year, they had implemented the first round of their many tax cuts.

The bottom line is it is 4 years later, all the rhetoric about how the tax cuts were going to turn the economy around has simply proven to be false, and the only thing that would have made a difference then, and I think still would make a difference now, if there was some sort of economic stimulus package that dealt with infrastructure, particularly as I mentioned the transportation bill; but I really believe that at the time, if we had worked on a bipartisan basis and not implemented these tax cuts, but rather implemented an economic stimulus package, we would not be in the situation we are now where there is a net loss of almost 1 million jobs since President Bush took office.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for joining me tonight, and I yield to her.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the gentleman from New Jersey before he leaves. I know that he heard about the back-door announcement made by the administration on the Friday afternoon before Labor Day: the cost of Medicare for seniors is rising by 17.5 percent to \$78.20 per month. This is something that I know my grandmother and all of our grandparents cannot afford.

The blame for this increase has been put on the rising medical costs. However, it is this administration with its close ties to health care lobbyists that has failed to do something about spending. In fact, that bill that we passed, the Republican Party will finally do what they have been trying to do for 35 years to the program: destroy the program with these inflated costs. Can the gentleman address this?

I come from Florida where Claude Pepper, my mentor on health care issues, the most well-known advocate for seniors, a man who fought for years and years to strengthen Medicare and Social Security, would be rolling in his grave if he were here today.

This is a life and death issue for many of our senior citizens. The bill that was passed that prohibits the Secretary from negotiating the prices of the drugs, the bill that was passed in the House in conference, not one single Democrat was permitted to be in the room, the people's House, not one. And in the Senate, for the first time ever, the Senate leader was not able to pick who was going to be in the room.

Can the gentleman from New Jersey explain to me and to the people who are listening today about this increase and what can we do to repeal this hideous Republican bill that was pushed through by this President?

Mr. PALLONE. Well, first of all, let me thank the gentlewoman so much for not only coming here, but also for what the gentlewoman is asking. I am not leaving; I am here with you. I like to go back and forth, and I certainly have a lot more to say tonight.

Let me also say, before I start getting into the issue, I am so glad the gentlewoman mentioned Claude Pepper. I was elected the year he left, and I remember because it was a Presidential year. I think it was the year that the first President Bush was elected, and I got to meet him at the convention.

Sometimes, when we talk about procedure, people fall asleep because they figure we are going into procedure, so what does it all matter. But one of the things that I was so determined to do when I got here in 1988, because of Claude Pepper, is that I wanted to be on the Select Committee on Aging, which he had chaired for many years. And when that committee met, they did incredible oversight. They would have hearings on a regular basis, looking into the Medicare program. I would tell the gentlewoman right now, if that committee still existed today, we would never have had the problems that the gentlewoman is talking about and this misrepresenting by the Republican administration about what is going on with the Medicare program.

One of the biggest criticisms I had was that in 1994 when Republicans took the majority and Gingrich became Speaker, was that they got rid of the select committees, including the aging committee which I served on. Because even though Claude Pepper had not been there, and I think it was the father of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) who was the chairman, we did such a good job in terms of oversight. And once that committee was gone, the oversight function of the programs for the seniors just disappeared, and I blame the Republicans for that, frankly.

I know that is not what the gentlewoman is talking about, though.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, when the Republicans took over in 1994, I will never forget that they tried to take his picture down out of the room, someone who served this institution, this country, and dearly beloved. I participated in a march to that room to make sure that we reinstated Claude Pepper's position, because he deserved to have his picture in that Committee on Rules room.

I have to tell the gentleman, I remember him at the conventions and his liveliness and how he fought so hard for seniors in this country. And now this administration, with their lies and misleading people about this Medicare bill, this bill that prohibits the Secretary from negotiating the price of the drugs. We on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, along with the Department of Defense, insist, insist that they negotiate the price of the drugs so we can keep the costs down for our veterans, for our people, military families. No one can explain it. There is no discussion. When we raise that issue, they give us a blank stare, because the pharmaceuticals wrote those provisions.

What has happened here, the fox has moved into the House of Representatives, into the people's House. We see it with this Medicare bill. We see it on environmental issues. We see it over and over again. If this administration, and I do want to talk about Medicare, but if this administration that totally runs this House of Representatives, totally controls the agenda of the House of Representatives wanted an assault ban, it would have been on the floor and it would have been passed. They control. We cannot have a hearing.

We talk about homeland security. We cannot even have a hearing on railroad safety because the administration will not sanction it. I have never seen anything like it. I have been elected to the House of Representatives for 12 years. I have been an elected official for 23 years, and I have never seen such disrespect for the House of Representatives, for the people's House. I take it very seriously, because I was one of the first African Americans elected to Congress from Florida in 129 years. I take my job very seriously. And it is just, it saddens me to no end to see how the administration, which is a separate branch of government, runs the people's House, the House of Representatives. It is a disgrace.

Now, would the gentleman please tell me about the Medicare and what can we do so that my grandmother, who does not have an additional \$78, \$80. I know to these big-timers, that is nothing. But the seniors who are living on a fixed income, that is deciding whether to buy their medicine or buy food. They are going to raise the costs, and where is the money going? It is going to the HMOs and the pharmaceuticals. It is criminal.

Mr. PALLONE. Exactly.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. We can play politics on some things, but in

an area like this, it should not be any politics played.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely right. The premium increase is very significant. It is the largest one we have had in the history of the Medicare program: 17 percent.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. They want to kill the program.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, it has gone from basically \$66 to \$78, about an \$11 increase, the biggest we have ever had. President Bush says it is because of the high costs of health care. That is simply not the case. The bottom line is there are two major reasons why this increase is so high. One is what the gentleman mentioned, when they passed the so-called, and I call it "so-called" because it really is not a Medicare bill, it is a privatization bill. When they passed their so-called Medicare prescription drug bill, they increased the amount of money that would go to the HMOs, the insurers in general, but particularly the HMOs, in order to entice them to cover senior citizens. And the result is that a significant amount of this increase, and this increased premium is going to go to pay those HMOs and those insurers to entice them to get into the Medicare program which, as the gentleman knows, most of them do not want to get into any; and no matter how much money you give them, they are probably not going to get into it.

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The second thing is they have been raiding the trust fund. Just like Greenspan was saying a couple of weeks ago during the break, he got up and talked about how the Social Security Trust Fund was running dry, same thing with the Medicare Trust Fund. Why? Because the Republicans are borrowing the money to pay for their tax cut. There is a huge deficit. Where is the money borrowed from? The Social Security and Medicare Trust Fund.

Now, these funds in the last year of the Clinton administration were starting to build up the money that they had so that they would not be bankrupt at all. I mean frankly if we had not had those tax cuts I would predict within 5 or 10 years the trust fund would be so solvent for both Medicare and Social Security that we would not even have a problem for the next generation or two, but no, they could not do that because they wanted to give back those tax cuts.

If we read that, that increased premium, another significant part of it, goes into the trust fund to replenish the trust fund. So what are we talking about here? This is Republican, Bush administration policy that has caused this big increase.

As my colleague said because you are giving the money to insurers, the HMOs primarily, and also to replenish the trust fund because they borrowed from it to pay for the deficit, which has been generated by their tax cuts and

all this for a Medicare prescription drug program bill which as you went on and described is practically worthless. In fact, I would say it is a detriment to the program.

It is not bad enough, as my colleague says, that there is a specific prohibition on negotiating prices. I mean, if they did not put a specific prohibition, the Medicare administrator would have been able to do that because as my colleague knows, right now with the VA, with the veterans, with the military, the DOD and the Veterans Affairs are allowed to go in and negotiate price reductions because they have the power now of all these veterans and military. That is just a natural thing that you would do in a capitalist society. I mean, we are all about negotiation and bargain. That is what capitalism is all about, right?

But, no, because the drug companies did not want that to happen, they specifically put in a prohibition on negotiating prices so the government and Medicare administrator could not negotiate the prices.

When I hear my colleagues say, well, we had to do that because somehow it would be un-American for the Medicare administrator and others to negotiate prices, we are already doing it with the VA and the military. What is un-American about going out and trying to get a bargain? I thought that is what capitalism was all about. It is unbelievable to me.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the Republican Party, with the direction, because he definitely gives direction to this House, they do not do anything without his direction, he has done more to destroy Medicare. What the Republicans have been trying to do for 35 years, that is just where we are now. They want to bloat the bill so that next they cannot afford it, and next on the agenda will be Social Security. Coming from Florida, next will be Social Security, and he wants to gamble with Social Security. This administration wants to kill the New Deal. Let us just face it. They want to kill public education with all of their gimmicks.

I said they practice what I call reverse Robin Hood. When I was growing up, I loved that program, Robin Hood. This administration practices what I call reverse Robin Hood. Robbing from the poor and working people, poor and working people, to give tax breaks to the rich, to the top 2 percent, and it just amazes me how they say one thing and do another.

I must go to the assault weapons. The President said, I understand, and it is amazing they were able to pin him down that he said anything, but he said during 1999, because during the debates he never answered one question. I am hoping that the media insists that he answer some questions during the debate because he never answered any. They said he looked comfortable and looked like he could prop his feet up

but never did he answer a question. So to say that he actually committed one thing that he would support the assault weapons ban, to continue the ban, well, then he says, well, if it is put on his desk. I guess you say that and then someone said whatever you do, do not pass that bill, do not even bring it up for a vote on the House of Representatives floor, not even in the people's House, when the majority of the American people support it. Why can we not have a vote on this floor to send a message where we stand as elected officials on this particular bill? But if the President wants it, I can rest assured and you can rest assured that the American people, we would have that ban.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleague, when it comes to the procedures around here, I mean we could talk on. You are absolutely right. Everything is orchestrated from the White House, and any notion that any legislation that the President wants would not come up for a vote or that the President does not want, it is all orchestrated and you gave an example before of where we were talking about the Medicare bill.

One of the things that was so amazing to me was how that vote was orchestrated. One of the criticisms that I mentioned when I started out this evening is how the Medicare administrator Tom Scully orchestrated this whole vote in the House, and when his own actuary Foster said to him that the cost of this bill was going to be significantly more than what the Bush administration had told the Congress and what the congressional Republicans had suggested, the administrator told the actuary that if he revealed that information to Congress he would be fired. As a consequence, the Congress never got the information about the actual cost of the Medicare bill.

My colleague knows that there were many on the Republican side of the aisle that did not want to vote on that bill because they thought it was going to be too costly, and they did not like, for whatever reason, the cost, and now we know the GAO came out with a report last week that said that Scully's action was illegal, it was illegal for him to deny that information to Congress. He was told by the GAO that he had to refund his salary from the day he threatened to fire the actuary who had the truth about the cost. My colleague talks about procedure, I mean they are literally not giving Congress information in an illegal fashion. How can we even vote on anything around here if we cannot get the true facts about what the costs are?

Now that we know that it was illegal, well, the Department of Health and Human Services says we are not going to go after him for the money, he does not have to give back the money, and he said he is not giving back the money. Where did he go? He went to work for a law firm that represents all the drug companies that benefited from the bill. You talk about the procedure.

I will never see the disgrace that we had that night of the vote.

You know we had 218 votes on that board against the bill. There is absolutely no question that the will of this House of Representatives was to defeat that Medicare prescription drug bill because almost all the Democrats and a significant number of the Republicans knew it was a bad bill, it was not going to accomplish anything and probably suspected it was going to cost a lot more than that was represented by the administration.

I looked on that board. I have never in my life seen a situation where the majority have voted against the bill and there was not anybody left who was going to make a difference who had not voted, and we sit here for 3 hours in the middle of the night until the President gets on the phone and calls enough Republicans. He invites Vice President CHENEY to change the votes.

You try to tell me that they are not directing what goes on the floor of the House of Representatives? What kind of a democratic process is that where the House has voted and 218 people have voted and said this is a lousy bill and I do not want to vote for it and we sit here for 3 hours while the White House twists arms and who knows what they promised people. One guy, they told him what, was SMITH, I guess, from Michigan.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. His son.

Mr. PALLONE. They told him they were going to deny his son the nomination to replace him if he did not change his vote. I mean, this is the kind of thing that was going on. When you talk about procedure, I totally agree with you. They control the process from the White House. Do not let anybody tell you they do not.

Ms. CORINNE BROWN of Florida. My comment that night was a snake is a snake, no matter what color it is, and the AARP are getting in bed with a snake, the Republican Party, on this issue. I said it and I stand by it. Now I understand that the AARP is asking for some changes. My constituents constantly call me about AARP and I tell them my position. I have always supported them because they were an advocate for the seniors, but on this issue they really deserted the seniors.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, and I do not know, I do not have the information in front of me, but there was a strong suspicion that AARP was looking to sell this Medicare prescription drug policy, and again it is an example of corporate interests holding sway around here because somebody is trying to make a buck.

I yield back to the gentlewoman.

Ms. CORINNE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another issue with my colleague, and it is pertaining to the Vice President CHENEY and the package he received when he decided to run for Vice President.

My understanding, and I want to be correct on this, but I understand he got a \$34 million retirement package when he retired, but also I am trying to find the exact amount that he gets every month.

What was very disturbing to me is that his company Halliburton got a sole source contract before the first shot was fired. I have worked really hard trying to help minority and female businesses get a part of government opportunities, government business, but this is an example of sole source, no competition, no nothing, billions of dollars to your company and then say, well, you know, I had nothing to do with it. Well, who believes that? But let us go on.

I received calls from soldiers. Let us say Halliburton was supposed to provide 25,000 meals a day, twice a day. They were charging the American taxpayer for 100,000 a day. That is criminal, but yet there is nothing and we are still doing business with them, and you know it is just nothing. It is just amazing about how they are running this war.

We gave them, I want to be correct, \$89 billion for the first 6 months. Six months later, they came back and asked for another \$87 billion. Everybody talked about the second \$87 billion. No one talks about the first \$89 billion. There is no accountability. They will not even tell Congress what they did with the first. They certainly did not provide the military with the flak suits and the armor and what they need to protect the Humvees. What happened? What happened to the first \$89 billion? There is no accounting, no telling the people, that is our job of oversight, what happened to it, and then 6 months later, they came with another \$87 billion. I did not vote for it and I support the troops 100 percent, even though I know that they were sent to a war based on lies from the beginning.

I went to all of the briefings. I went to all of the discussions, and they did not show me not one single thing that they did not know in 1991.

So people said, well, why did some Democrats vote for it and others did not? Well, I come from Florida and I know they stole the election in Florida, and my grandmother always told me if you lie, you steal, and it goes on and on. So I had no trust in this administration.

Certainly, they were telling Members, please give the President the authority to go to war, he is going to use it as a hammer. I mean, I guess some people really trusted him, and I guess the American people still trust him, but I go with the facts. I knew that this administration started out based on lies.

What happened in the 2000 election was criminal and what have we gotten from that? We have a war in Iraq. Now we are taking the Medicare prescriptions, pollution, and Leave No Child Behind is just a slogan, because we

have cut funds for after school programs, Head Start programs, day care programs. A wonderful slogan, Leave No Child Behind, stolen from the children defense armor, should I say, adopted by this administration.

So there is a lot of anger in me because this administration constantly misleads the Congress and the American people.

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Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman again. She made a comment before about who represents the majority, and not that I am looking to take away from the electoral college, because I know that is the way we elect the President under our Constitution, and I am not going to get into the specifics about what happened in Florida, because the gentlewoman knows much more than I do about what happened. But the bottom line is, there is no one who can contest the fact that President Bush lost the majority. He lost the election in terms of the majority, in terms of the actual number of people who voted, by half a million people. Half a million less voted for him than for his opponent.

So I often wonder, when I come down here and hear some of the things he says, it is not difficult to figure out that he is not representing the majority, because, clearly, the majority did not elect him. Nobody on either side of the aisle is contesting that, the fact that the man lost the popular vote by almost a half million people, which is a huge amount.

Beyond that, I want to say to the gentlewoman that I did not vote for any of those appropriations, nor did I vote for the war either. We know now that the war has already cost over \$200 billion. These figures that come up about 80, or 80 here or there; it is well over \$200 billion already. And one of the biggest things that worry me beyond the actual cost of the war is this money that is being spent to rehabilitate or redevelop or whatever the term is in Iraq.

We talked earlier about infrastructure here in the United States and how, over the last 4 years, as Democrats, we wanted an economic stimulus package, whether it was new school construction or new highways or new hospitals. Well, that is what is going on in Iraq. Millions and millions of that money is being spent for reconstruction in Iraq. And I am not talking about damage that was done as a result of the war; I am talking about new buildings.

I will never forget, they did not do it this year in September, but last September, in 2003, there were a couple of my Republican colleagues who, with glee, came to the floor and brought bookbags. They had just come back from Iraq, and they had these bags loaded down with bookbags and books and pencils and paper and everything, the American eagle on the front of it. And they proudly displayed them here in the well and said, Look, every

schoolchild in Iraq today got one of these bookbags with these books and papers and pencils.

And I looked at it, and I even got on the floor, I believe, at the time and said, You know, I have schools in my district, and I am not one of the poorest in the State, believe me, where nobody has anything like that. Not only does the school not issue it, but the kids cannot even afford to come to school with the pencils or the paper.

Now, I am not trying to begrudge anybody anything, but, to me, it is an outrage that we are spending all this money in Iraq, and we are not spending it here in the United States. It is just outrageous.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will, on just that point.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. The President indicated from the beginning that they would be able to pay for the expenses. They have one of the largest oil reserves in the world.

But then the President says, Well, we do not want to burden their people down with debt. But it is okay for the American people, our children and grandchildren, to pay this debt.

And then they cut Social Security and Medicare and Housing and Veterans' Affairs. This administration has already put out a memo that, If re-elected, we will cut all domestic programs, all domestic budgets.

So it is okay for the American people to carry this burden, but yet, why are we saving the oil reserves? Why is it that part of it, a portion of it, cannot be a loan to these people? It is just amazing to me.

Mr. Speaker, when the gentleman talks about teachers, when I go to the Dollar Store, they are in there buying supplies themselves, the teachers, because the schools cannot afford it, particularly with this new provision of Leave No Child Behind. It is a real crunch to the school systems throughout. I know, Florida, in talking to the superintendents, where we put in these additional standards, standards are wonderful, but once we find out that a kid has a deficiency, what are they going to do about it? We did not put the money there to follow the standards.

In other words, it is what they call an unfunded mandate. Does the gentleman know about unfunded mandates?

Mr. PALLONE. Oh, absolutely. I remember, years ago, and it may be before the gentlewoman was here, that the Republicans, when we were in the majority, because I was here from 1988 to 1994 when the Republicans took the majority, and we would get procedural motions on a regular basis from the Republicans about unfunded mandates, how the Democrats were passing legislation and not providing the money to back it up.

Clearly, No Child Left Behind is the biggest unfunded mandate that ever ex-

isted around this place. The gentlewoman is absolutely right.

We do not hear anything about that now because they just want to talk about how wonderful the program is. But there is no money for it, not anywhere near what there was supposed to be to fund it.

I wanted to go back, and maybe the gentlewoman does not want to stress this Halliburton thing so much.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. No, no, I want to stress the Halliburton thing.

Mr. PALLONE. Well, I have to just talk a little about it, because I have some of the statistics. The gentlewoman had asked about some of the statistics concerning the money.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Does the gentleman know how much a month Mr. CHENEY gets?

Mr. PALLONE. Well, this is what I have. This is a Congressional Research Service report that was issued several weeks after he made that statement on, I guess it was on Meet the Press, and CHENEY made a statement that he severed the ties with the company, got rid of all his financial interests, has had no financial interest in Halliburton of any kind, has not had now for over 3 years.

Despite those claims, the Congressional Research Service issued a report several weeks after that Meet the Press interview, and they concluded that, because he receives a deferred salary and continues to hold stock interests, he still has a significant financial interest in Halliburton. And they said, basically, he has \$433,000 in stock options. Basically, his deferred salary is about \$200,000 a year. That is what he gets deferred, because of these stock options, about \$200,000 a year that he gets from Halliburton.

This notion that somehow he does not have a financial interest anymore is just nonsense.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Well, Mr. Speaker, my records indicate that the deferred compensation account was valued at between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

Mr. PALLONE. That is correct, if you take the whole value of it. I think it gives him about \$200,000 a year for the rest of his life. But if you take the whole value of it, that would be right.

The other thing I wanted to say is that, when we talk about Halliburton and what they have done in Iraq and the illegal activities, we are not making this up. I just wanted to give some facts. First of all, Halliburton has acknowledged, so this is not myself or the gentlewoman making this up, they have acknowledged, and I quote, "They accepted up to \$6 million in kickbacks for their contract work in Iraq." They admitted that.

Second, they are now being investigated by the Pentagon for overcharging the American Government for its work in Iraq. They face criminal charges in a \$180 million international bribery scandal during the time that

CHENEY was the CEO. They have repeatedly been warned by the Pentagon that the food they were serving 110,000 U.S. troops in Iraq was dirty. And a Pentagon audit found blood all over the floor of the kitchens that Halliburton supplies all over in Iraq.

And, finally, Halliburton is getting around an American law that forbids doing business with rogue nations. Thanks to a giant loophole, Halliburton is able to do business with Iran, of all nations, through one of its subsidiaries in the Caymen Islands.

So here we go. In World War II, they called these war profiteers. If you were a war profiteer in World War II, it was like you were the worst person on earth. People would not even talk to you. They would not have anything to do with the company. Here, they are profiting off the war in this fashion, and we do not hear anybody from the administration talking about it in terms of their wanting to sever their ties or they do not want them to continue doing their work. They continue to get all these no-bid contracts as we speak. It is just unbelievable.

So I do not know if the gentlewoman wanted to say anything else, but the other thing I wanted to mention tonight when we talk about these special interests, because it still has not been resolved, is this whole issue of this energy task force. When he first became Vice President, one of the first things CHENEY did was establish this task force that was supposed to come up with a new energy policy.

Groups like the Sierra Club and a few other groups that wanted to find out who was on this task force and who was behind this task force, because this was a secret task force, they had to go all the way to the Supreme Court because CHENEY and Bush refused to give out the information about who sat on this task force.

Now, the gentlewoman and I can speculate, but, obviously, they were trying to hide something, probably some oil and gas CEOs that were involved in this thing. And to this day, they do not reveal the names of the members and what this task force was about. And when they finally came up with the legislation from this task force, all it did was help the oil and gas companies.

As the gentlewoman and I mentioned, one of the biggest problems the average American faces right now is the rising cost of gas. I do not know what is going to happen this year with home heating oil again. These guys, both CHENEY and President Bush, were from the oil industry, and they continue to hide who was involved in this energy task force in coming up with this energy policy.

Fortunately, that bill, which passed here, has not passed over in the other body, so it has not become law. And I hope it does not between now and the end of the year. But this is just another example of playing right into the corporate interests. It just never ceases.

If the gentlewoman does not want to add anything else, I will conclude this evening, Mr. Speaker. But I just wanted to say, once again, that, if we look at the record of President Bush and the congressional Republicans, there is absolutely no indication that they are shifting in any way their emphasis away from the special interests to the middle class. They have squeezed the middle class families.

When I was home during our August break, I had open houses. I had hundreds of people showing up at my offices, and they all had the same problem: I lost my job; my job went overseas; I tried to get money for retraining, and the money was not there. The public is just being squeezed.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Just one thing, if the gentleman will continue to yield.

We constantly try to bring up an extension on the unemployment. This is money that people have actually paid into it. But this administration and the House refuses. Because of what reason? Because I am not quite sure. They do not want the public to know how many people are unemployed? What is it?

Mr. PALLONE. Well, I do not understand the whole phenomena. Somehow, in some Republican minds, and I am not saying all of them, because I know there are some that do not agree, but certainly the majority and the leadership seem to think that somehow unemployment compensation is somehow welfare or some sort of giveaway.

They refuse to acknowledge, I think, that people have paid into it while they worked, and they just seem to think somehow it is some sort of giveaway to people who do not want to work.

These are people that have tried to look for a job and have not been able to find one. You have to show that in order to get the benefits.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Well, Mr. Speaker, this whole question of outsourcing and then this administration talking about the jobs they have created, they are low-paying service jobs. And most people are happy to have a job, but we have lost the best jobs. And this administration refuses to do training programs, or they cut those programs, educational programs.

The 9/11 Commission was talking about the recommendations, and I was listening to them. And they were talking about the young people in Iraq, and they did not have jobs or training. And I said to myself, We have that same problem right here in the United States.

We have that same problem right here in the United States. And so while we are addressing other areas, other countries, Iraq, their training and education, we need to be doing the same thing here with the people that are paying the bills. It is amazing.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me give the gentlewoman an example, and I have used this example before, but I will use it again.

I mentioned all the people that came into my office for the open houses. The one thing that very much stuck in my mind was a gentleman came, and I will not mention his name, who had worked for the Frigidaire plant in Edison, my largest town. The plant closed, and 1,500 jobs went to China. Everybody lost their jobs, good jobs, union jobs, health benefits, good pension, the whole thing.

Under one of the bills that was passed here, in the event that you lose your job because it goes overseas, and I have not favored these trade bills, but regardless, it provided that there was going to be, absolutely, retraining programs for these people if a plant closed and so many jobs went to China or some other place overseas.

This guy comes into my office, and he had actually found another job. I do not think it paid as much or was as good, but it was still a good job.

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It required retraining. He went to the Federal office or maybe it was a State office with Federal dollars to do the retraining to qualify for the job. They told him we do not have any more money. Federal dollars had been cut back, and there was no money. This was something that was authorized and required under the law. There was no money from the Federal Government to do it, he was not able to get the job. He is sitting home not working.

It is unbelievable. As the gentlewoman says the promises, if you lose your job overseas, we are going to retrain you, we are going to give you a Medicare prescription drug benefit, and it is absolutely not true. When I go home, that is all I hear. I call it the middle class squeeze: Rising prices, health care, higher education costs, and gas prices. At the same time if you have a job and are not keeping up, even those people who have a job, they are getting less real dollars and the prices keep going up, and nobody in the Bush administration seems to think anything is wrong. That is reason enough why we have to have a change in November.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) for joining us this evening.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for his leadership day in and day out speaking to the American people. I hope this is a wake-up call because God knows, we need one. This administration talks the talk, but they do not walk the walk. As the veterans say, they do not rule the world. They talk about how much they care about veterans as they cut programs. There will be a cut in all programs under another 4 years of this administration.

These people on the other side of the aisle really do believe in giving the moneys to their corporate friends, what I call reverse Robin Hood, robbing from the poor and working people, to



give tax breaks to the rich. That is their agenda, and they push it through over and over again. I really hope the American people will give us some help in the next election.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman.

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4571, LAWSUIT ABUSE REDUCTION ACT OF 2004

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-684) on the resolution (H. Res. 766) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4571) to amend rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure to improve attorney accountability, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

#### HURRICANE SEASON

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, since the early weeks of August, Florida and its residents have endured the unrelenting and unsympathetic wrath of Mother Nature. Through the harsh design of fate, Florida was dealt the unfortunate circumstances of bearing the brunt of not one but two hurricanes, and it appears more dark clouds are poised to visit the Sunshine State.

This map very carefully tracks the two hurricanes that hit Florida. The first one in orange is Hurricane Charley. It was upgraded to a tropical storm at 5 on August 10, continued raising havoc in Jamaica, and in Jamaica it became a hurricane on the 11th, and it hit Punta Gorda, Florida on the 13th, exactly one month ago today, at 4:30 p.m.

Frances became a category 4 on the 28th of August. On the 2nd, it was in the Bahamas, and Frances made landfall in Stewart, Florida, at 1 on September 5. So Florida has been hit twice and based on the latest weather forecast, it appears that the Panhandle will be hit again with Hurricane Ivan.

It is not the first time that Florida has been devastated by three hurricanes all at once. The State has experienced such occurrences before. Actually in 1964, three storms hit Florida within an 8-week period. The hurricanes were named Cleo, Dora and Isabel. Regardless of what we name them, it does not make living in a State with so many hurricanes a lot of fun. Those hurricanes slammed the State. Thus, Floridians are not bewildered by the sheer numbers of hurricanes that threaten to trounce the State.

With regard to the power and force of these menacing natural disasters, well,

before Hurricane Charley came ashore the people of Florida have understood and respected the potential power that a hurricane wields. I recall in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew hit the State, and it hit the Homestead, Florida, area and had a devastating effect there.

We have a few photos of some of the examples of the kind of destruction that a hurricane can do. Obviously this house as a result of the hurricane was damaged and would have to be completely torn down. Again, we have more destruction. This is an area that certainly as we look at the picture we say, how could people go back and say I want to rebuild. But wanting to rebuild and having the courage and the strength that so many Floridians do to face the hurricane and the destruction that goes along with the hurricane and yet have the spirit, the human spirit that says we are going to stay, we are going to rebuild and make the community even stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER) from the Orlando area.

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from Florida where I took a helicopter tour of the greater Orlando area and saw firsthand the extensive damage which has literally turned upside down the lives of several hundred Central Floridians. I have empathy for those who have suffered such severe damage because my own mom, Laura Keller, completely lost her home in Hurricane Charley.

Despite these temporary heartaches, I am optimistic about central Florida's future. Last Tuesday, we passed legislation in Congress to immediately provide \$2 billion to FEMA to help our citizens in Florida recover from Hurricanes Charley and Frances. The very next day, President Bush signed this legislation into law. Together we acted with near-lightning speed to provide immediate relief. This \$2 billion will be able to help Central Florida families with things like temporary lodging, food, water supplies, medical care, and will allow roofs to be repaired. I know that I speak for all central Floridians when I say to my congressional colleagues all across the country, thank you for being there and voting for this important relief package.

But after taking this helicopter tour, I can tell Members this \$2 billion we have already provided is only a down payment, and I say that regretfully because I know how tight money is around here these days. Fortunately, President Bush agrees more money is needed. Earlier today the White House requested that Congress provide an additional \$2.5 billion in hurricane relief for Florida. I will strongly support this much-needed appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, our citizens have suffered enormous out-of-pocket costs which should be taken into account by FEMA. For example, imagine that a person has a \$300,000 home and he has

suffered \$30,000 in property damage as a result of these two hurricanes. Now some people outside of Florida may mistakenly think no problem, you have insurance, insurance will pay for it.

Actually, it is a big problem and here is why. Since many of these Florida insurance policies have 5 percent deductibles and these two hurricanes are viewed by insurance companies as two separate and distinct events, it is entirely possible that the individual will have to pay the entire \$30,000 bill himself, 100 percent out of pocket. I believe in this type of circumstance, if the person is not eligible for a FEMA grant, he should at least get a zero percent loan from FEMA to cover the out-of-pocket cost. It is patently unreasonable for us to assume that the average citizen has \$30,000 lying around in his checking account just in case he unexpectedly gets blind-sided by two hurricanes.

Mr. Speaker, these people need help, and it is up to those of us in Congress to try to help them. Rest assured that Congress, especially those from Florida, will continue to work very closely with President Bush and Governor Jeb Bush over the next few weeks to help rebuild Florida as quickly as possible and in a way that makes Florida stronger than ever before.

I urge all of my colleagues in Congress to support this \$2.5 billion hurricane relief package. It is the right thing to do and now is the right time to do it.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned Hurricane Andrew, and Hurricane Andrew came around the fall of 1992 when I was just elected to the Florida Senate. I served at the time with the very distinguished gentleman now in Congress with me, the gentleman from the Palm Beach, Florida, area (Mr. FOLEY).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for organizing this opportunity for us to come to the floor and let the rest of the country know what Florida has been living through.

I came to Florida from Massachusetts at the age of 3, and I remember waking up early one morning in 1960 to a storm that we had never known in Massachusetts, and that was Hurricane Donna. We went about putting masking tape on our jalousie windows. That is what we were told to do for safety. My, how things have changed.

The people of Florida are storm weary and they are fatigued. Their resilient nature and strong character have been tested over the last few weeks. But as we have done before, Floridians are banding together, helping their neighbor and slowly rebuilding their homes, their businesses and their communities.

Never in our Nation's history have two storms brought this much destruction back to back to one State. Unfortunately, the people of the 16th District have weathered the worst. Hurricane Charley reached landfall on August 13, 2004, and blasted its way