

prefer choice in retirement vehicles, and Social Security does not offer that.

I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that current and near retirees need not fear alteration of their current benefits. But we should glean something from Chairman Greenspan's comments. As examination of the program occurs, let us consider all the aspects, lack of individual assets; noninheritability to one's children; penalties for early, partial retirement; and the taxation of one's benefits, that make it less than a truly secure choice and system.

THE BUSH BUDGET AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, finally some of my Republican colleagues are waking up and seeing the fiscal mess that they have created here in Washington. This morning, the headline in The Washington Post read: "Some GOP Lawmakers Aim To Scale Back Bush Tax Cuts."

Mr. Speaker, somebody really ought to tell the President about this. He is still running around the Nation telling anyone who will listen that he wants Congress to make all of his tax cuts permanent. These are the same tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest Americans and have turned a \$5.6 trillion surplus into a \$3 trillion deficit over the next 10 years.

The article in The Washington Post quotes my Republican colleague, CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, the vice chairman of the House Budget Committee, as saying, and I quote, "We would be foolish to extend all the tax cuts now." Again, these are the words not of a Democrat but of a Republican, the vice chairman of the House Budget Committee, saying that we would be foolish to extend all the tax cuts right now.

I ask, what is turning some Republicans against their President on this issue of tax cuts? Maybe they finally realized the true ramifications of their fiscal insanity over the last 3 years when Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said just last week that fully implementing President Bush's tax cuts would require cuts in Social Security down the line. Chairman Greenspan's comments illustrate the destructive effects of reckless Republican economic policies, policies that have led to record budget deficits, lower economic growth, and a substantial risk to the Social Security benefits that millions of seniors depend on.

Mr. Speaker, when President Bush took office 3 years ago, the projected budget surpluses were enough to cover the cost of Social Security during the baby boomers' retirement years. When then-Governor Bush was campaigning for the Presidency, he promised that any tax cuts he proposed would leave

Social Security solvent. That was candidate Bush. But 3 years later, Chairman Greenspan says that, due to the fiscal situation this Republican Congress and President Bush have created, Congress may be forced to begin cutting promised Social Security benefits.

My Democratic colleagues and I will not let this happen. Hardworking Americans have paid a portion of their wages into Social Security their entire careers, and Washington has always known that we have an obligation to pay them benefits when they retire. Instead of making American seniors pay for the Bush administration's fiscal recklessness, the President should work with Congress and get their spiraling deficit under control.

Democrats, Mr. Speaker, believe that fiscal responsibility is the way to create prosperity for America and secure the retirement of America's seniors. The government needs to get back to balanced budgets and fiscal discipline as soon as possible to ensure that we can protect the Social Security trust fund for future retirees. My Democratic colleagues and I believe that our parents and grandparents should be able to enjoy their golden years and not live in fear of poverty.

Another reason some Republicans may now be skittish toward making all tax cuts permanent would be the latest estimates out of the Congressional Budget Office. Last Friday, CBO estimated President Bush's budget for the upcoming year would generate \$2.75 trillion of additional Federal debt over the next decade. CBO also says that, despite the President's claims, his budget fails to cut the deficit in half by 2009. Could it finally be that some Republicans are realizing what many of us on this side of the aisle have known for almost 3 years, that President Bush lacks any credibility on our Nation's fiscal situation?

In order to prevent a total fiscal collapse, it is time for President Bush and my Republican colleagues to face reality and repeal the President's tax cuts for the very wealthiest Americans. It is time President Bush and congressional Republicans stand with our Nation's children who will be forced to bear the brunt of the cost of their fiscal irresponsibility. It is time the President and congressional Republicans stand with our Nation's seniors and baby boomers that need Social Security and Medicare strengthened, not raided. Chairman Greenspan and the CBO have sent a wakeup call to Washington Republicans, and I hope after reading this article in today's Washington Post that some of those congressional Republicans are finally listening.

TWELVE CONSENSUS PRINCIPLES TO REDUCE SPENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, with a \$500 billion deficit, it is clear that Congress must cut spending and reform our budget process. Like our predecessors in the 1980s, we must come together not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans to share equally in the cuts so that the Federal budget is brought back into balance.

We all support a balanced budget. It is the right thing to do, and it is also the moral thing to do. Our Founding Fathers created the Federal Government as a limited institution whose mission was clearly defined. Some things the Federal Government was to do well. Many things were left up to the States. When the Federal budget is out of balance, it calls into question our ability to sustain core Federal functions: defense, Federal law enforcement, and the retirement security of Americans under Social Security and Medicare.

I believe the Federal Government should fulfill its current promises to Americans currently in uniform and retirees before making any additional promises. Service in Congress is about making tough choices. For too long we have said, You get yours, I get mine and the kids get the bill. This must end.

Recently, Republican moderates and conservatives joined together on 12 budget principles. The Moderate Tuesday Group and the Conservative Action Team agreed on a surprising list of definitive budget proposals that will bring our budget back into balance even faster than the White House has proposed. What are these principles?

First, that we have automatic spending reductions if spending exceeds the amount in the congressional budget resolution. If we find that there is an uncontrolled debt above that which is set by Congress, we will have across-the-board spending cuts for all discretionary and mandatory accounts except Social Security and Medicare. Second, we have numbers in the budget that are enforceable. The current budget identifies 20 separate budget functions that are not enforced. They should be replaced with enforceable, one-page budget numbers that set four levels of spending: mandatory spending, spending on defense and homeland security, nondefense discretionary spending, and emergency spending.

Next, we should budget for emergency spending. Emergency spending requests should be included in a budget rainy-day account. Our budget should also have the force of law. The current budget resolution, which is not signed into law by the President, should be reformed into a joint budget resolution that is signed into law and enforceable under our code.

Next, we should have the protection of earned benefits, such as Social Security and Medicare, so that the automatic cuts do not fall on our retirees who worked hard, played by the rules, and are depending on the support of this core Federal function. Next, we

should show spending increases clearly. Under our current baseline budgeting, we automatically include inflation adjustments for Federal programs. This should be replaced by a straightforward comparison of last year's spending compared to proposed new spending.

Our seventh principle would block spending outside the budget. We need to update the pay-as-you-go rules in the budget that would allow a point of order to lie so that any Member could prevent consideration of a proposal that did not also include offsetting cuts to pay for itself. Our eighth principle is that we would review government programs and set up another Grace Commission, which worked so effectively in the 1980s, to eliminate wasteful and duplicative spending.

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Our ninth proposal is to have an enhanced rescission power by the President so that he could identify critical programs, probably pork barrel programs, that he did not support spending on, send up a package to the Congress, which would then ensure a rapid up or down vote on the President's spending rescission proposal.

Our 10th proposal is to have a clear presentation of the government's full debts and liabilities. The Federal Government must account for its full share of accrued costs of covering pensions, retired pay, and other health benefits so we make sure that we know exactly financially where we stand.

Our 11th principle is that we should have a clear presentation of the debt owed to the public. An intergovernmental debt should be separated from other public debt in disclosures.

And our final, 12th, principle is that we need to enforce the rules of Congress. Points of order raised against proposals intended to lift the uncontrolled deficit or to waive these restrictions should be unwaiverable as several other provisions in our rules allow. This would help us control the deficit. It would help us bring this problem together, and now it is our job to reach across the aisle to make this a bipartisan proposal.

MEDICAL ISSUES AFFECTING OUR SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, listening to the last speaker here on the floor, I almost had the feeling he was a Member of the minority, as though enforcing the rules was something that on his side there was not the possibility to do.

But I digress. I really came here to question the war. I have questioned the war in the past, and I really am here to stand and question what the Pentagon is saying and not saying about medical

care and about medical issues affecting our soldiers.

The Pentagon has claimed no ill effects from the use of depleted uranium. I have piles and piles of information that comes out of the Defense Department or the War Department, whatever one wants to call it, that says that there are no problems with depleted uranium. Over the weekend British newspapers reported that the British Army, the British Army, our allies, are telling their soldiers in Iraq that DU, depleted uranium, can cause ill effects. They give them a card that tells them that they can go and have their urine checked, and they have a right, they should ask about it if they are having any problems whatsoever.

Now, one has to wonder about our War Department sending our troops out there into war and continually denying that there are problems with depleted uranium in the face of the effects that we have seen among Iraqi women and Iraqi babies in southern Iraq as a result of the 1991 Gulf War. A 600 percent increase in leukemia among children, a 600 percent increase among women delivering children having deformed babies, 600 percent, and our government continues to decide that they can say there is no problem.

Now, the Brits, for whatever reason, are more honest with their troops. They are not saying there is not danger out there. They are saying there is danger and here is how they can check to see if it is bothering them.

I know as a doctor that the evidence is not conclusive. The issue needs to be studied. It needs to be directly gone after to find the answer.

Today I picked up the newspaper. One can learn a lot, as Yogi Berra said, if one reads the newspaper. If people read the newspaper today, there is a story about a G.I. from Tennessee, a nice young kid from Tennessee who went to war and got his shots like everybody else and nearly died from an anthrax vaccination. We have had arguments with sailors and Marines and soldiers for the last couple of years that there were some problems with the vaccinations. But, in fact, no, no, no, we are told they are going to war, they have got to have one of these. And the fact is that we now have the evidence that some of the fears of our troops were legitimate. Just because somebody is a corporal or a private or a lance corporal does not mean that he does not understand or that he cannot be right. One does not have to have a colonel's eagle on their shoulder or stars for a general to be correct. And we have treated our troops as though it was in their minds or, I do not know, some explanation.

This young man has not recovered yet, but his medical claim is still pending. They do not want to blame it on the vaccination even though it happened right after. And there are other stories. I could go on with stories. But they remind me of my experience since 1968 in the Vietnam War when we

sprayed defoliant all over the trees and it fell down on the troops and everybody said Agent Orange is no problem, Agent Orange is no problem, and we really did not deal with post traumatic stress disorder.

On Thursday night when I got home I finished up what I was doing, and I turned on the TV at 10 o'clock, and I caught a program called Without a Trace. It is a story of a young man who comes back from Iraq. His business has gone to pieces because his brother has not been a very good businessman. His girlfriend is having a relationship with her boss. And he is pretty depressed, and he goes out and gets involved in a couple of armed robberies and tries to straighten his life out. That, my friends, is post traumatic stress disorder, and it is coming as the 100,000 people come home. We must be prepared to deal with that and acknowledge it when we see it. It is our duty to the people that have served for us.

THE CURTAILING OF INVESTIGATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I was deeply disturbed last week when I read that the Speaker of the House may use his authority and his power in the House not to extend the investigation into what happened before 9/11, what it is we did that was right and what it is we did that was wrong, what it is we knew and what it is we did not know that led to the tragedy of the World Trade Center and the tragic loss of life there and the largest terrorist attack against this Nation on this soil. I was deeply disturbed that somehow the investigation into that would be curtailed, that the commission would not be given the time that it believed professionally was necessary to arrive at those answers, when I think about the families and how important those answers are as to what were the real circumstances under which their family members died and perished in the World Trade Center. I was deeply disturbed that the President said that he would only talk with two members of the commission, that there apparently is a concerted effort to take those members of the commission that appeared to be the most intent on getting to the bottom of these issues and these questions on behalf of our Nation and on behalf of our security and on behalf of the families, that they would not be allowed to talk with the President, to interview them, that they would not be allowed to share their notes, those who got in to see the President.

It is very troubling because the image of 9/11 and the tragedy of 9/11 is absolutely seared in the mind of every American, those images and that tragedy. And for us to suggest that in any