

and we are taking money away from them in order to pay for them to do the job that they are supposed to do.

It discloses that the Medicare prescription drug benefit costs \$135 billion more than we were told it would cost just 2 months ago. This unexpected cost of \$135 billion totals more than the budgets of Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security, HUD, Interior, State, and EPA combined.

It calls for \$1.2 trillion in new tax cuts, \$65 billion in health tax credits, and \$43 billion in other new spending; but it claims that we can cut the deficit in half by 2009. These are all new costs, new expenditures that this budget does not pay for.

It is not credible, Mr. Speaker, to say we have presented an accurate and honest budget when it includes no funding for a war we are in the middle of fighting. It is not credible to say that cutting domestic spending by \$118 billion will pay for a \$1.2 trillion tax cut. It is not credible to say that you are strong on budget enforcement, but only apply the PAYGO rules to mandatory spending programs. It is not credible to say that deficits do not matter when you are spending over \$349 billion a year just on the interest payments on our \$7 trillion national debt.

Democrats keep getting told that we need to be tough on spending and that if we are tough on spending, all the other problems will take care of themselves. Well, that is another example of this great credibility gap. Blue Dog Democrats are tough on spending, as you will hear from a number of us today who are speaking. We voted for budget alternatives that do not exceed the President on spending. We are tough on spending. And as important, we are responsible on revenue. We do not pretend that you can have a tax cut without paying for it. Rather, we work with what we have got: a war that needs to be paid for, a budget that needs to be balanced, and an American public who looks to their leaders for credibility and for truth.

Right now we are faced with a choice. We can continue buying on credit, or we can begin budgeting with credibility. Our constituents want and our constituents deserve a credible budget. It is incredible that this administration has refused to submit one.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART).

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

There was no objection.

MAKING MEDICARE RUN BETTER

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I have a good friend that bought a brand-new Mustang, and he loves that car wonderfully; but every once in a while parts of it will break, and he has to fix it. He tries to improve it every once in a while, not with changing its looks or its purpose. But without servicing that automobile, today it would be simply a rusting hulk. Its glory days evaporated. In fact, quite frankly, it would not run.

That car was built the same year Congress established Medicare. And with Medicare as well, if we did no servicing, if we did not slightly fix those few things that are broken, Medicare today would not run. We are not changing its looks or its purpose. Indeed, people today who are satisfied with Medicare as it is may keep the program as it is. In fact, incentives were put in the bill that we passed on Medicare to ensure just that. But we actually did try to improve the program in its prescription drug component to meet the needs of the most vulnerable of our senior citizens.

Let us face it, if you are over 65 today, it is almost impossible to buy a private health care policy dealing simply with prescription drugs. The most vulnerable segment of our seniors whose income is being dangerously compromised by prescription drug needs has grown over the past decade by 600 percent. In fact, every year almost a 60 percent increase of those personal economies are being endangered simply by prescription drug needs.

This Congress serviced the program for that portion that was not working to make it run better, and they did so free of government price controls, free of government mandates, free of government rationing at the same time. Let us face it, in the 1960s our effort in health care was basically reactive. We were paying for hospital costs.

Today, health care is preventative. Efforts use prescription drug to keep people out of hospitals, hopefully decreasing the overall health care spending that we have. Our medical needs will change. Our desires will also change, and we need to change to meet those particular needs in the government programs.

Sometimes you can tell something about an individual by the company he or she keeps. Those who complain the loudest about changes made to Medicare usually are the status, those who like mandates, the one-size-fits-all government-knows-best approach to the world. Those who are the most supportive are those who truly believe

that choice is good and options ennoble the spirit of America.

There are areas of health care today where the price and the cost is actually decreasing, but always in areas where choice is maximum and options are there, and no third party is limiting those options. As part of our health care change in Medicare, we have provided for health savings accounts, allowing for individuals to put pretax dollars into an account that would grow with tax-free interest that would belong with them, would go with them from job to job. Afterwards, when the needs were greatest, there would be an element of money that was there so that truly Americans could finally individualize their needs, make their own priorities without being filtered through a third party, and invite into the American system the opportunity for options that are no longer there in the health care field.

We are not finished with Medicare. It was not the final bill. As our lives change, our life experiences and expectations change; and the government needs to meet to change also, to meet those changing needs. What this bill did is provide an opportunity to fix an area that needed servicing, not to change the program but to simply make that program better.

We move to have more opportunities to have greater flexibility in the system. It is part of a long struggle that will continue on, a struggle to make medical care cheaper in the future, a struggle that will try and make it so that we can work to make modern market-based medicine a reality for all Americans. That is the option that was given to us. We did not change its looks or its purpose. We simply did some servicing to make it run better.

A SERIOUS ECONOMY

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

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, this is very serious business. If this was not so serious, I think it would be easy for us to make jokes about some of the things that have been said on this floor this evening.

As I listened to the gentleman from Oklahoma describe this wonderful economy, I could not help but wonder where in the world he was coming up with this idea. We have lost over 2 million jobs in this country. We may have created some, but we have lost a lot more. It does not do any good to distort things or make these things up or make it look like something that it is not.

Come to the First Congressional District of Arkansas and tell someone that does not have a job and does not have health care and their unemployment has run out that things are great in America and they are going to get better because we are going to cut taxes on the wealthiest people in this country some more.

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We may have to reduce Social Security and Medicare benefits to do that, but we are going to do it. Things are great in America. People that do not have a job just do not believe this.

It is time for this country and the leaders of this country and this administration to develop some integrity and credibility.

Back in January of 2001, the Blue Dog Coalition reached out to the new administration; and we said, if you want to cut taxes, we will work with you; we would love to do it. Let us work together and cut spending by an equal amount, and let us not get back in the deficit ditch. They sent Vice-President CHENEY over to see us and he said this: we think you are nice people, but we do not need you. We are in the majority in both Houses, and we are going to do what we want to do, and they did.

That very year they projected that the budget would have a \$262 billion surplus in 2004. It has, in fact, a \$521 billion deficit. In 2005, they said we will have a \$269 billion surplus. Now they say we are going to have a \$364 billion deficit. They said the Medicare bill will cost \$400 billion, but now it is going to be \$535 billion. They said the war is not going to cost that much; it is going to be real quick, and it is going to be over with. Now it is \$50 billion now and \$50 billion in a few months, and they do not include it in the budget. They do not even really acknowledge that it exists, but we are still borrowing these moneys from our children and grandchildren.

It is time for some integrity. If we are doing so good, why are we broke? Why are we going in debt by the trillions of dollars? Why are we borrowing this money from our children and grandchildren when they face the perfect economic storm? RECORD budget deficits and a national debt exceeding \$7 trillion, one more than one-third of our debt held by foreigners and growing every day; a trade deficit of \$400 billion that contributes to the exporting of jobs; and the approaching retirement of the baby boomers. This is the perfect economic storm; and yet the administration continues to refuse to sit down in a realistic, rational way with both sides of the aisle and let us face this thing that has been created by the Bush administration.

Let us face what has really happened to our country. Let us face what has really been put on our children and grandchildren. Let us not continue day after day to live in a fantasy land and make up an economy and make up the idea that everything's wonderful, when we know, in fact, there are nearly 9 million people that do not have a job in this country. There are 44 million that do not have health care, and that situation gets worse every day.

Most of all, Mr. Speaker, we must be honest with the American people and tell them what is really happening and not continue to deceive our children and grandchildren and put them in a

position where they are going to wake up and inherit this great Nation or what was once a great Nation, and it is going to be so far in debt they cannot even pay the interest; and not only that, but the infrastructure will have crumbled. The education system will have been underfunded so long that they cannot fix it, and then we are going to just dump that on them. What responsible person would do that to their own?

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to give my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

NATIONAL GUARD

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

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, we hear many outrageous claims and public discourse today on the floor of this House and outside of this House, and the integrity of the President of the United States is impugned over and over again, and we simply do not have time to address all of those issues; but today I rise to address an unacceptable offense against the men and women of our National Guard and the Commander in Chief of the United States military.

As my colleagues may know, Mr. Speaker, last month the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Mr. Terry McAuliffe, attacked President Bush by claiming he was AWOL, AWOL from the Alabama National Guard. He also cheapened the service of the men and women of the National Guard by saying that President Bush, as a member of the Guard, never served in our military.

In the time that has passed since Mr. McAuliffe made his unfounded charge, the President has produced military records which reflect his service and honorable discharge in the National Guard.

Mr. Speaker, the President has had the opportunity to exonerate himself; and I believe the men and women who have served their country, our country, as members of the National Guard deserve to be exonerated as well. Mr. McAuliffe's comments discredit, discredit the sacrifices of tens of thousands of National Guardsmen and -women and is a slap in the face to their service, to their families.

I believe the men and women of our National Guard serving this very moment in Afghanistan, Iraq and throughout the globe, including many Minnesotans serving in Bosnia, would disagree with the sentiment that they are not serving their country. More than

193,000 National Guards members and Reservists are currently serving in the war on terror, and over 129,000 are overseas.

While in Iraq last fall, I had the good fortune to spend time with members of the Minnesota National Guard who provided transportation in and out of Baghdad, and I would say it was the best transportation in and out of Baghdad. These men and women are steadfast servants of our military and our country who have given up their own freedom to ensure liberty for others. Whether on the front lines or serving in support roles, these brave Americans are the difference between terrorism and freedom. If that is not service to our country, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is.

This week, yet another National Guard unit from Minnesota will depart to serve our country, another National Guard unit will depart to serve our country; and I challenge anyone to question the sacrifice of these Guardsmen and -women and the families they are leaving behind.

As a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, I take offense to Mr. McAuliffe's demeaning the characterization of our National Guard. His baseless insinuation diminishes the National Guard as an institution, and he owes an apology to the Guardsmen and -women in uniform serving our country and protecting their fellow Americans.

Mr. McAuliffe's comments represent the worst of election-year politics. It is deplorable for anyone, much less the leader of a national party, to denounce, degrade, and dishonor a fighting force that is at this moment fighting for freedom and democracy around the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the men and women of our National Guard and say thank you. We love you; we are with you.

ADDRESSING THE FISCAL PROBLEMS OF OUR NATION

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

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, good evening and aloha.

Today, I stand here as a proud member of the 37 Member-strong moderate, independent Democrat Blue Dog Coalition. These Members come from all parts of our country and they are dedicated to these three basic propositions: first, the budgetary and fiscal integrity of our country is of paramount importance; second, our country's finances are royally messed up; third, there is a way out of this cesspool if we are honest about why we are here and what we all must do together to fix it.

I have served here for 15 months now, and when I go home I am asked two questions. Number one, what is our biggest challenge in our country? Number two, what is the biggest surprise in my mind from having served here? My