There is still one Member of the freshman class to introduce, Madam Speaker. I am a little biased. It happens to be my favorite Member of the freshman class. He is a Hoosier. That is not the only reason that he is my favorite Member. He is also a businessperson, someone that has actually created jobs, has actually learned how to seize the opportunities of economic growth and has contributed greatly to his local community before being elected to Congress.

He also ran for Congress in 2002 and was unsuccessful and ran again in 2004 and proved that persistence pays off, and that is a very admirable quality.

I am talking about MIKE SODREL. MIKE SODREL comes from his small business, his family business, called Sodrel Trucking. I see his trucks on the roads of Indiana every single day. He expanded that business in 2000 when he founded Sodrel Logistics.

He has served as a past chairman for the Southern Indiana Chamber of Commerce. He has also been recognized as the Southern Indiana Small Businessperson of the Year.

Service to his Nation is nothing new for MIKE SODREL. He served in the Army National Guard and continues service as a member of the American Legion. He is a community leader in many respects, and he leads many organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America, his Rotary Club, Junior Achievement, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Boys and Girls Club.

MIKE is a native of New Albany, Indiana. He lives there today, and he has been married to his wife Marquita for 36 years. Together, they have two children, Noah and Keesha, and they are the proud grandparents of six grandchildren.

I know that MIKE will serve this body well, and I certainly look forward to working with him and all of his colleagues of the freshman class to serve Hoosiers and every citizen of this country.

Madam Speaker, we have just introduced a great class, and this great class will take the oath in the next coming months, and they will become part of the 109th Congress. I fully expect that the 109th Congress will be an historic Congress because it was the result of an historic election and, indeed, is an historic time for our Nation.

We did more than just keep our majority. We received a mandate from the American people. In the last 2 years, we delivered on health care, we delivered on security, cutting taxes and much, much more.

Our constituents recognized that. As the NRCC chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS), stated, ''The only people that think the GOP needs to be repudiated are two Democrat leaders from California, while the whole United States obviously disagrees.''

What the United States wants and what the people of this country want is a Congress that keeps working on their behalf, and as we have seen from the headlines, America has spoken. What America has said is they want Members of Congress that will get over the bickering and work on their behalf and do things like have budget process reform to make sure that we have more clarity and responsibility in how we spend the taxpayers' money and reduce the deficit.

America has spoken that says we want to have lawsuit abuse reform, to make sure we lift the burden of frivolous lawsuits off of our economy, which really hurts the creation of jobs and economic growth.

We have also heard from the American people that we need to have things like tax reform, to make sure we have a fair and flatter tax system that helps grow our economy as well.

We have also heard that we need to make sure that every generation of American gets the Social Security benefits they have earned and they deserve; and, most of all, we have heard from the American people that we have to make sure that we keep this Nation and our families and our communities safe and secure.

So, Madam Speaker, this has been an extraordinary hour where we have met an extraordinary class of incoming freshmen to the Republican-controlled Congress. So it has been my honor to have my colleagues join me. I thank them and I look forward to working with them in the 109th Congress, as well as all of the Members of this body.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 4794. An act to amend the Tijuana River Valley Estuary and Beach Sewage Cleanup Act of 2000 to extend the authorization of appropriations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5163. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide the Department of Transportation a more focused research organization with an emphasis on innovative technology, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5213. An act to expand research information regarding multi-disciplinary research projects and epidemiological studies.

H.R. 5245. An act to extend the liability indemnification regime for the commercial space transportation industry.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills and a concurrent resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2280. An act to establish a coordinated national ocean exploration program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

S. 2283. An act to extend Federal funding for operation of State high risk health insurance pools.

S. 2489. An act to establish a program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to integrate Federal coastal and ocean mapping activities.

S. 2526. An act to reauthorize the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education Program.

S. 2618. An act to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to extend medicare cost-sharing for the medicare part B premium for qualifying individuals through September 2005.

S. Con. Res. 145. Concurrent resolution to correct the enrollment of H.R. 1417.

INCREASING THE DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MUSGRAVE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, 4 years ago, the Bush administration was just getting started. They sent us their first budget, then told us, based upon a projected $5.6 trillion in surpluses over the next 10 years, that there could be huge tax cuts, between a trillion five and $2 trillion, huge tax cuts and still a budget surplus, and that they would not have to even come back to Congress to ask again for an increase in what we call the debt ceiling until the year 2008, 7 years later.

The debt ceiling is a statutory limit, a limit that we impose by law on the total amount of debt that the United States of America can incur. It currently stands at a level of $7.384 trillion.

We did not buy into this argument. We did not vote for the tax cuts, and we on this side of the aisle were not surprised, disappointed, bitterly disappointed, because we had strived mightily to put the budget in surplus for the first time in 30 years during the 1990s. We did not vote for it, but we were not surprised when in the year 2002, not 2008 as predicted, but in the year 2002, the Bush administration came back to Congress and said that the statutory debt ceiling is about to be hit. In other words, we have run up so much debt that we are right at the ceiling of the total amount of debt that the government of the United States can incur, and, therefore, we need a $450 billion increase in the debt this year, 2002.

The next year they were back asking for more, and now they are back asking for still more, this time $800 billion. It is phenomenal when you consider that the last increase occurred 18 months ago and amounted to $984 billion. That was the largest increase at any one given time in the fiscal history of this country. As a matter of fact, $984 billion, the amount by which the debt ceiling was increased in May of 2003, $984 billion is more than the total indebtedness of the United States when Ronald Reagan came to office in 1981, and how long has it lasted, this $984 billion increase in the debt service? Eighteen months.

In fact, right now, this administration, under its fiscal policy of the budgets passed by the Republican majorities in this House and the Senate, has run up a debt of $1 trillion over the last 18 months. That is a rate at which we are accumulating debt right now, $1 trillion every 18 months.

If we add together the increases to date since 2001, it was $450 billion in 2002; $984 billion, May 26, 2003; and then a request which must come to the floor sometime this week in one form or another, because the Treasury Department tells us they cannot continue to incur debt or meet their obligations unless we raise the debt ceiling, allowing them to borrow still more money, $800 billion will have to be passed some time this week. Those three increases for the last 4 fiscal years total $2.234 trillion. That is the amount of indebtedness that has to be accommodated by increases in the debt ceiling in order to allow room for the Bush budgets over the last 3 fiscal years.

We think at the very least an increase of this magnitude, $800 billion, requires an unambiguous yes or no vote, a straight up and down vote under a clean bill that only deals with the debt ceiling, with one exception. We believe that it is unconscionable to continue incurring debt at this rate, $2.3 trillion over 4 years, without doing something to stop this juggernaut, this headlong descent into debt.

So we propose that at least we be offered an amendment on the House floor to amend the debt ceiling increase to reinstate something we call the pay-as-you-go rule. The pay-as-you-go rule provides, quite simply, that if you want to increase an entitlement, liberalize an entitlement payment, you have to identify new revenues to pay for the increase or decrease another entitlement by a commensurate amount. On the other hand, if you want to cut taxes, you have to raise revenues elsewhere or cut an entitlement by the same amount so that the effect is neutral, has no effect on the bottom line of the deficit.

That rule was in play in this House for at least 12 years during the 1990s, and it accounted for a phenomenal effect upon other measures we took up and the deficit of the United States.

As this chart shows, when President Clinton came to office in 1993, the deficit the previous year was $290 billion. We passed a Deficit Reduction Act here sent to us by the President on February 17, passed it within 3 months. Every year thereafter the bottom line of the budget got better, until the year 2000 when we had a surplus of $236 billion. Four short years ago, we had a surplus of $236 billion.

Every year since the onset of the Bush administration, the bottom line of the budget has gotten worse and worse, to the point where in the year 2002 we were back in deficit by $158 billion, and the year 2003 we had a record deficit, $377 billion, and this past year, which ended September 30, 2004, we booked a deficit of $413 billion in the Federal budget, $413 billion.

Now, what happened? I mentioned earlier the big tax cuts passed by the Bush administration passed in 2001. There were more in 2002, still more in 2003.

□ 2015

And instead of having a rebounding effect, a sort of supply-side effect so that the pick-up in the economy resulting from the tax cuts sort of replenished the lost revenues, instead of that happening, as projected, this was the curve that was projected, that there would be barely any loss of revenues, instead taxes have followed this particular actual curve, dropping from $1.73 trillion back in the year 2001 to $811 billion this year.

Now, there are other sources of the problem. Terrorism is taking its toll on the budget. The war in Iraq and Afghanistan has cost over $150 billion thus far. No question they have had an effect on the bottom line. But the tax cuts, based on this miscalculation, have had a substantial impact, and this is a course that was chosen by those who voted for it.

Here is where we were in the year 2001 when President Bush came to office. This was the statutory debt ceiling, the limit on the total indebtedness the government could incur, $5.950 trillion. It was raised to $6.4 trillion, then raised again May 2003 to $7.384 trillion. It will now be raised again to $8.200 trillion, by $800 billion. And, folks, that is not the end of it. That is the hard part of it. That is what has happened thus far.

Let me just summarize, though, where we are right now with the debt ceiling increases that have had to be adopted to accommodate the fiscal policies of this administration. Here we see it. In the year 2002, $450 billion, the next year $984 billion, now $800 billion, it comes to an increase, the amount I mentioned just a while ago, $2.234 trillion. That is the amount in 4 years by which the debt ceiling of the United States has had to be raised in order to accommodate the budgets and fiscal policy of this administration.

As I said, the last increase, $985 billion, was the largest in our history. Not only that, that amount, $984 billion, exceeded the total indebtedness of the United States in 1980–81, when Ronald Reagan came to office. The total debt of the United States then was $908 billion. We had one increase that has lasted 18 months, that is all. We have already run through $984 billion on the watch and under the policies of this administration.

As I said, it does not stop here. It would be bad enough if it did, but it does not stop here. This is what we really have to be concerned about and why we think at the very least there should be one single solid step taken in this debt ceiling increase to slow down this head-long descent into debt. This is the level of the debt ceiling in 2001 when President Bush came to office.

The Congressional Budget Office, at our request on the Committee on the Budget last year, projected the Bush budget through the year 2014, from 2005 through 2014, for 10 years, and came back and told us if we follow this course, by 2014 the United States will have accumulated $14.545 trillion in debt. This is where the Bush administration started, this is where they would end in 2014, projecting forward on a current services basis, the tax cuts and other policies that they have.

Let me make one final observation about this. As serious as it is, and anyone can look at this and realize the gravity of it, everybody understands the economics, everybody understands the fiscal effects, but the real issue here is the moral question. Is this the kind of legacy we are going to leave our children: $14.545 trillion? Because that is the course we are on right now.

And let me give one other aspect with this second poster here. One other aspect of this problem, before turning to my colleagues, that everybody knows simply cannot be sustained. This lower line, the black line, is the gross domestic product of the United States from 1980 through 2014, slowly rising, growing every year. That is the GDP. This is the debt of the United States during the same period of time. And you can see that the debt of the United States is growing faster than our income.

Everybody, every household, every business, and every government, State, Federal, or local, knows that you simply cannot sustain that kind of increase in your debt over and above your annual income for a prolonged period of time. But that is the course we are on right now.

Madam Speaker, I wish to recognize at this point the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Ways and Means, who will be our floor person on this issue when and if the debt ceiling increase comes to the floor.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) not for what he does for our party or for the Congress, but what he does for our great country.

I would like to talk about the question of morality, the responsibility of government. And some may say, well, what has that got to do with the debt ceiling? Well, it would seem to me that if people would look at the responsibility of our government as relates to spending, to believe that we have a credit card, because that is what we do, we are borrowing money, and that the head of our household was borrowing money but not letting anybody know what he was doing, that would be irresponsible and immoral.

It seems to me that if we had a head of a company that inherited a $5.6 trillion surplus and then when we went to look at the books found out that he wasted $9 trillion and had a $2.6 trillion indebtedness, that that person may not be impeached but certainly would be fired from the job.

Some might say that they do not really feel the pain of borrowing. And I guess irresponsible heads of households really do not feel the pain of borrowing. Imagine how good it might feel to somebody to be given a credit card and to be told they do not have a limit on what they spend; or to feel that they do not have to tell the American people what they are spending and what they are borrowing; or to be able to say, well, it does not make any difference, I will hide it in a bill and they will not ask me any questions; or to believe that the best way to run the country is to give a $1 trillion or a $2 trillion decrease in taxes to those people who are in the highest income tax bracket. Suppose those people knew that in order to do this that you would have to borrow the money in order to please a small group of people?

To get back to the questions of moral values, is it morally right to spend money, to give tax cuts, knowing that the Social Security System, where we made a moral and political and legal contract with the American people, promising that if they lived long enough or if they had disabilities or if they survived a tragedy that that system would be there for them? Is it fair to leave that system so insecure that young people now have no idea whether it is going to be there for them, when that money could have been used to shore up the Social Security System so that we would be fulfilling a moral promise to these people rather than fulfilling a political obligation to supporters?

To talk about moral values, if you knew that 45 million Americans, most of whom work every day and had no health insurance, what would be more important morally, to provide for the health care of human beings, Americans, or to give a tax cut?

Let us talk about moral values in terms of education, to make a person more productive, to make a person have self-esteem, to make a person want to get married and have a family. Is that not moral values? Is it more important to give a tax cut and to borrow money to do that than to make certain that every kid in America has a chance to fulfill whatever their brains would allow them to do because they had access to education?

What about our old folks? Getting old is getting to be a problem just in maintaining one's health because of the cost of prescription drugs. They let you get to a doctor, but you cannot even afford to do what the doctor is suggesting that you do. You do not have to be religious to understand that if you had the money to provide national health care prescription drugs, the moral thing to do is to help those who have not got and to say God already blessed the wealthy. Those are moral values, to be able to do that.

It just seems to me that the most irresponsible thing to do is to borrow the money and to know that you will never pay for it, to borrow the money and to know that the interest rates are going to fall on your children, not you. You will enjoy the benefit of supporting the war and giving the tax cuts and rewarding all of the lobbyists, but the people who pay for it are not just today's taxpayers, not just today's children, but the unborn are born with this debt on their heads. It will be hard to explain to them what happened in this Congress, what happened in this Presidency, what happened in this era that caused us to believe that we knew so much about the economy that we could go into debt $14 trillion and say, let our kids pay for it. Is that the moral thing to do?

Madam Speaker, it is not the political thing to do, it is not the moral thing to do, but that seems to be what is so important. The President would have us believe that he may not be right all the time, but we know where he stands. How are we going to know where he stands if his party does business in the middle of the night? How are we going to know where he stands if we cannot even find out what the interest on the debt is going to be?

And let me say this. Every household plans for what they have to spend, and it is difficult to explain this in terms of trillions of dollars, but what if you knew as the head of a household that you had this credit card, that you could buy anything that you wanted on this credit card and not pay for it? But every month the credit company will be sending you a bill, and it will show you what the service charge is going to be, what the penalty is going to be, or in our case what the interest is going to be.

And what would happen in this household, I ask the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), if you looked at your bill and you looked at what you had to pay and you found out that in 10 years the interest that you are paying on the money that you borrowed exceeded all of your budgetary responsibility for clothing, for health care, for rent or mortgage, except for one issue?

And that is where in 10 years this great country of ours will be; that the interest that we are paying on the debt that grows 50 percent faster than the economy will reach the point that it would exceed all of our discretionary expenditures, with the exception of defense.

☐ 2030

Which means what? It means that Republicans and others can say I supported Social Security, but the money was not there. I wanted to do more with education, but the money was not there. I want health to be improved, but the money is not there. And at the end of the day they may have succeeded in breaking our responsibility as a government for every social program that we have and the only item that would receive priority would be defense and supporting the war.

Madam Speaker, I think that this type of thinking really violates our national security because Americans should know who are we borrowing the money from, who do we owe this money to, and how mean can we be in disagreements we have with people whom we owe money to. How angry can we get with the bank if we know they can foreclose? And the people who are lending this money are foreigners. It is not as though in the last 4 years we have made a lot of friends with foreigners, but they thought they were making a lot of money off our interest. And as the interest goes up, we would like to believe that we can borrow more money from them.

But, guess what, one of the biggest purchasers of our debt is the People's Republic of China. A large chunk of the money that we owe to foreigners is to China. And whom do we have a problem with in terms of trade? The People's Republic of China. So what do we say as a great nation and lead organization of the World Trade Organization? We told China if they do not do what we tell them to do in terms of fairness and equity as relates to international trade, we will not do business with them. We want them to reevaluate how they deal with their currency. We want them to be fair and not dump their goods and have us lose jobs.

And China would say to us, suppose we do not do any of those things? What are you going to do? What are you going to do to the bank that you owe money to? Suppose they unload that debt and let it flow out in the market, suppose we cannot borrow any more money, then we have to appease the people that we owe.

Madam Speaker, it would be ironic that because of our hunger and our thirst to borrow, our irresponsible need to support tax cuts for the rich, our complete disregard for the health, education and welfare of our people, who brings us to our feet is the communists, not because of their guns, weapons and power but because they understood the capitalist system so well that they defeated the strongest capitalistic country that God has ever seen.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) for just sharing with the American people the economic and fiscal policy that we are directing. I hope that some of the people who are as concerned as we are with moral values would recognize that far more important than just fiscal policy is how do we treat the American people that have needs. We owe them an education, a place to live, aspirations and health care, and it would be a shame if we are paying China more than we are paying for health care.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) for giving me this opportunity to say what a moral pleasure it is for me, with the Committee on Ways and Means, in working with you in trying to get the people to understand that we are not trying to beat up on Republicans. We just want them to tell the American people what they intend to do, not in the middle of the night, not locked up in some omnibus bill, but to come here and challenge anything that has been said tonight. We will not see them, because too many people are watching. I hate to believe this will follow the pattern where at 2 in the morning they will have a bill and it will pass by one vote.

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for eloquently expressing the moral dimensions of a swelling debt, $8 trillion today, growing to $14 trillion in just 10 years.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) for yielding me this time and for organizing this Special Order to highlight the outrageousness of the administration's demand that Congress raise the debt limit for the third time.

Remember, my colleagues, when President Bush took office, the administration said that the debt ceiling would not be reached until 2008. But, instead, the majority has led the country so far into debt that we have had three huge increases in 4 years. The last raise, only a year ago, of $984 billion was far greater than any in United States history.

Remember, in February of 2001, the Bush administration was predicting that the publicly held public debt would be paid down to $1.2 trillion by 2008. In its latest midsession review this summer, the administration itself was now projecting that the debt would be $5.5 trillion in 2008. In fact, the $800 billion increase the administration now demands under threat of default would raise the debt ceiling to $8.2 trillion and give the administration the greatest increase in debt of any administration ever. What a terrible distinction. What an appalling legacy for future generations. And under President Bush's policies, the CBO and other economists predict that the debt will continue to rise to at least $14 trillion and as much as $14.5 trillion in the next 10 years. What have the Republicans done to our economy?

Remember, when President Bush took office, the CBO was projecting a 10-year baseline budget surplus of $5.6 trillion. A surplus. That was the result of President Clinton's policies that paid down the deficits and reduced the public debt. But after only 4 years of Republican leadership CBO is now projecting a cumulative 10-year deficit of $2.3 trillion. That is a swing of almost $8 trillion after only one term. Dare we ask my colleagues how bad will the next term be?

The budget deficit reached a record 3.5 percent of GDP this year. As a share of GDP, the deficit is larger than it has been at any time since 1993. And let us not blame the war on terrorism. This is the direct product of their fiscal policies, the President's tax cuts that have left this Nation reeling.

In the private sector, there is a bipartisan consensus that the deficit is killing the U.S. economy. Last week, the Wall Street Journal released a November survey of 55 prominent economists on what the top priorities of the President should be in his new terms. These are conservative folks, financial leaders in our country. Their top item was narrowing the budget deficit.

I quote from Peter Hooper, a former economist with the Federal Reserve Board, ''If we do not get a narrowing of the budget deficit, it will slow the rate of the growth of the economy.''

It is not just our financial leaders in this country that are worried. This morning, the Associated Press reported that a pressing concern of the EU finance ministers at their meeting this week is the U.S. budget deficit and the resulting weakness of the dollar, which was at a record low today against the Euro. The ministers called on the U.S. to reduce its deficit and said that action, not just words, were what is needed. But what do we get from the administration? An increase in the debt ceiling, the largest ever in the history of the country.

Secretary Snow responded that the deficit was, ''unwelcome.'' Unwelcome? We are not talking about an unexpected dinner guest but a monster of this administration's making that our children and our grandchildren will have to suffer under and will have to pay for.

Where has the administration been as the deficit has continued to mount? A recent paper by William Gale and Peter Orzag of the Brookings Institute put the situation very clearly: ''The United States has never before experienced such large, long-term financial imbalances. Sustained chronic deficits will gradually reduce national income and living standards and carry with them the risk of a financial crisis.''

A recent New York Times editorial spelled out what this financial crisis might be.

This is extremely troubling, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) touched on this very eloquently earlier. Almost all, 92 percent, of the huge increase in publicly held debt that has occurred in this administration is held by foreign nations, with Japan and communist China the two largest shareholders. In particular, China has almost tripled its holdings since Bush took office and now holds almost $175 billion in United States treasuries.

The Treasury figures which came out this morning show that China is one of only four nations that is buying significant amounts of U.S. debt, increasing its holdings by close to $20 billion since the beginning of this year alone. The Chinese are not buying our debt to advance freedom and democracy. They are buying it to advance themselves at a competitive advantage. By maintaining the dollar at an artificially high rate against the Chinese currency, they keep the price of their products low in the U.S. In other words, our budget deficit enables the Chinese to hold down prices of Chinese goods and makes them more competitive in the U.S., at the expense of U.S. companies.

In short, the American taxpayer is subsidizing Chinese manufacturers, and the American worker is paying the salary of a Chinese employee.

But what if the Chinese changed their minds? What if they dumped those Treasuries? Perhaps because, as the Times suggests, and I quote, of ''dismay over the United States' long-term fiscal disarray'' or for whatever reason they feel would advantage them.

That is not an unrealistic scenario. Recent articles note that the Chinese policy of pegging its currency at a fixed rate to the dollar has been creating great imbalances in that country's economy and putting pressure on the Chinese government to let the dollar fall. Then we would have a crisis. Dumping dollars would almost certainly cause an abrupt spike in inflation and interest rates.

All I can say is that these economic policies are dangerous. I came to Congress in 1992 and we had a $290 billion deficit, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) pointed out. In 6 years, we had what was projected to be a huge surplus. Under this administration, we have lost that surplus. They have created the largest deficit in history, and they are now calling to increase the debt ceiling to the largest amount it has ever been in the history of this country. And who is buying that debt? China is the prime purchaser of that debt. This is not a valid policy. It is wrong-headed.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this issue.

□ 2045

Mr. SPRATT. I thank the gentlewoman from New York.

I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for yielding, and I thank him for his leadership.

We have heard that we have had to increase the debt limit. This chart shows why the debt ceiling had to be increased. It shows the deficit from the Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, the Reagan and Bush administrations, the deficit changing into a surplus, and then the massive red ink in this administration. It shows that it may get a little better for a couple of years, but unless there is a profound change in direction, it just keeps getting worse.

When you run up this kind of deficit, we talk about increasing the debt limit, but one thing you have to do is pay interest on all of that debt. We have heard that the surplus projected at the end of the Clinton administration would have virtually paid off the debt held by the public by 2008. Instead, by 2008 we will have almost a $300 billion additional interest on the debt that has been run up. $300 billion increased interest to be paid.

We talk about No Child Left Behind underfunded by $9 billion, veterans' health care underfunded by a couple of billion dollars. We have got other things, a couple of billion dollars here and there. We are squeezing here and there. By 2008, interest on the national debt, money just down the drain, $300 billion additional because of the fiscal irresponsibility.

We hear that they want to privatize Social Security. This is the Social Security cash flow which my colleagues will notice, in 2017, instead of a surplus, we are going to be starting to run a deficit, huge deficits approaching, by 2037, $1 trillion. One wonders how could we ever have paid this surplus and why we should be running up as much of a surplus as possible now to be able to accommodate this.

This chart shows that if you look at the tax cuts that this administration has enacted and has in store, the present value of all of those tax cuts is $14.2 trillion. We could have paid all of the Social Security benefits without increasing the age of retirement, without reducing benefits, for $3.7 trillion in present value.

Medicare's deficit, the same kind of chart, $8.2 trillion. $11.9 trillion is what it would have cost to make Social Security and Medicare both financially solvent for the next 75 years. $14.2 trillion in tax cuts. We had a choice: Tax cuts or make Social Security and Medicare solvent for 75 years. We made the wrong choice.

This chart responds to the adage, if you don't change directions, you might end up where you are headed. This chart shows where we are headed at our present rate and present policies. This shows that right now we are borrowing money to pay for some of the green which is Federal spending. Unfortunately, by 2040, unless there is a profound change in direction, we will be able to pay interest on the national debt and a little bit of Social Security and have to borrow the rest of the money for Social Security. We will have no money for Medicare and Medicaid and no money for government spending like defense, education, transportation.

Obviously, there has to be a profound change in direction. Otherwise, interest on the national debt will start eating up virtually every penny that we have.

We are going in the wrong direction. We have to change directions back to the period of time when we made the tough choices, eliminated the deficit and created the surplus. We can go back to that era if we make the tough choices, make the right choices, but we are not doing that now. When we start talking about increasing the debt ceiling, this is one of the symptoms and one of the consequences of all of this red ink.

I thank the gentleman from South Carolina for yielding, and I thank him for his leadership on fiscal responsibility.

Mr. SPRATT. I thank the gentleman from Virginia.

I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank my friend from South Carolina for yielding.

Let me thank the gentleman from South Carolina for his leadership on this issue because, as the gentleman from Virginia has just shared with us, this is an issue that deserves more than just an hour Special Order in the evenings. This is an issue that deserves the attention of every Member of this Congress, and it deserves the attention of the administration.

We had a wedding this weekend in our family. Our last child got married. Come January, we are expecting to be grandparents. I am looking forward to that with a great deal of anticipation. But after what we have heard tonight, I am sorry to say that when that child is born he will inherit the largest debt and his generation of any group of young people in the history of this country. That is wrong, and this Congress and this administration has an obligation to do something about it. That is wrong.

I heard today on the radio, I do not have it in writing, that the inflation increase that we are just facing, and they announced it today, is the largest we have seen in 14 years. That means we have to go back to 1990 to see the inflation increases now being built in the economy. If this is correct, what this is going to mean is the cost of that debt is going up, because interest rates will go up with inflation and it will start to squeeze everything. Sure, it has something to do with the price of oil, but the price of oil is going to keep going up if we keep devaluing the dollar. And the dollar gets devalued because we have a huge debt, and the cycle gets worse and worse.

That is basic economics. You do not need to know a lot. You just need to understand that we have got to get our house in order to pay our bills and turn that red back to green. It can be done, but it cannot be done under current policies.

Let me ask my friend from South Carolina a question, because he knows an awful lot about this when we are talking about budgets. When we are spending the dollars for the debt, and we have seen the numbers this evening, of how that is continuing to expand with no solution in sight, share with me what this does for our squeeze on the need to invest in education and in research and development, to grow our economy to get out of this problem.

Mr. SPRATT. There are certain items in the budget that are obligatory. Clearly, one of those obligatory items is interest on the national debt. We have a sovereign responsibility to pay it, and if we do not pay it or if we ever default in payment of it, the cost of credit for the United States of America would skyrocket. Consequently, that comes first, has to be paid, and when it has to be paid, then other things have to yield to it, education, the environment, the basic operation of the government. These other things have to yield to the payment of interest. Obviously, the more debt you stack on top of debt, the more interest we will have to pay.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Let me ask this question as if I am sitting at my kitchen table and I get my credit card. In effect, I am paying only the interest on that credit card month after month. That is what we are doing. We are not paying any on the principal. I keep building that principal larger and larger, so it goes on my credit card from $1,000 to $5,000, to $10,000. It stands to reason my interest is going up.

Mr. SPRATT. Surely. If the principal is going up, your interest is going up.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Here is my question. If I keep building this big enough, pretty soon the bankers are going say to me, ''Mr. ETHERIDGE, if you can't pay some of the principal, we're going to have to sit down and work out a plan for you.'' Normally, people do not do that with a country, but I think earlier the gentleman from New York touched on this when he was talking about the challenge we face with our international friends owning our debt. How do we deal with them diplomatically when we owe them so much money?

Mr. SPRATT. It narrows our options, that is for sure. If we put too much pressure on them at the WTO, for example, trying to get them to unpeg their currency so that their exports are much more fairly priced vis-a-vis our imports, then they could get stroppy. They could simply retaliate by not buying any more debt and by making it difficult for us to sell our debt at a higher price.

Let me yield to the gentleman from Tennessee because he is bringing us back to this whole question of principal accumulation, how much debt in a short period of time this administration has amassed.

Mr. COOPER. I thank the ranking member for yielding.

It is a shocking amount of debt that the administration has accumulated in a relatively short period of time. As this chart illustrates, three times in the last 4 years we have had to increase our national credit card limit, as the gentleman from North Carolina pointed out. Three times in the last 4 years. We have increased the debt limit by a staggering amount. In the year 2002, we increased it by $450 billion. In the year 2003, by $984 billion. Now we are being asked to increase it by an estimated $800 billion, for a $2.2 trillion total just in 3 or 4 years. That is a burden placed on the backs of our families, on our kids and our grandkids, as the gentleman was describing. These are truly astronomical numbers.

To put them in perspective, look at this chart. What is $984 billion? That is more than our Nation borrowed from the years 1776 through 1980. Through all those years of our Nation's history, 200 years, we only borrowed $908 billion. Here in the last few years, 1 year to be exact, $984 billion extra. That shows how out of whack our finances have become.

I thank the gentleman for raising this important question.

Mr. KIND. My colleague from Tennessee has been a real voice of reason on the committee as well as the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget for trying to inject a little voice of reason in this whole fiscal responsibility debate that we need to have in this Congress and throughout this Nation. Because it is staggering, looking at these numbers and what the administration is coming back to Congress and asking for this week, another huge increase in the debt ceiling limit.

There are a lot of ramifications to what the President is requesting us to do this week in increasing the debt by addressing the symptom but not addressing the cure that we need to get out of the fiscal mess that has been created in this Nation over the last few years. It is a mess that is spiraling out of control. We see the increased costs and what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan right now. We are also butting up against an aging population in this country, the so-called baby boomers who are about to begin their massive retirement in a few short years, putting in jeopardy Social Security and Medicare solvency for future generations. And we are not addressing a cure to the solution, one of which the ranking member and those of us on the Committee on the Budget here tonight have been advocating for the last 4 years, and that is reinstituting the budget tools that were in effect in the 1990s, the pay-as-you-go rules, so we maintain balance in the budgeting decisions.

If you are advocating a spending increase or a tax cut somewhere, you have got to find an offset to pay for it to maintain that balance. It worked well in the nineties. It gave us 4 years of budget surpluses, a couple of years in which we were not even touching the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, and all that has been reversed under the current administration and with the leadership of the current Congress.

One of the more disturbing aspects about this whole debt ceiling limit and the fiscal irresponsibility is who we owe it to. Right now, a majority of the debt is owed to foreign interests, Japan being the largest purchaser of government debt today, soon to be surpassed by China as the number one purchaser of our debt in this Nation. I do not believe it is in our best long-term economic interest to be so dependent on China, to be financing our red ink in this country for years to come, because it can wreak havoc on the financial markets in this country if they decide to take their investments somewhere else. That really has not received the attention I think it deserves, given the long-term implications of our dependency now on foreign countries in order to finance the debt that is being accumulated because the current administration is not willing to make the tough decisions to maintain fiscal responsibility around here.

It is going to be an important debate we have this week. There is going to be an increase in the debt ceiling at the end of the day. Those of us who want to reinstitute these rules do not have the votes to do it today, but hopefully with the help of the American people, some who are watching perhaps tonight, we are going to create this synergy that is necessary in this Congress in order to start making these tough decisions again that worked very well in the 1990s and gave us incredible economic prosperity and job growth and an incredible dynamic to help grow the economy which is being lost now based on the decisions that we are seeing.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. COOPER. I appreciate the gentleman's excellent points.

I think most Americans want to hear a solution to the problem. It is one thing to know the dimensions of the problem. They want to know an answer; and pay-as-you-go, as the gentleman described, is not only an answer that we think will work, it is proven to work. It was in place, and I think the ranking member of the committee would know better than I, I think it was in place from 1990 to 2002.

Mr. SPRATT. The Budget Enforcement Act of 1990.

□ 2100

Mr. COOPER. Madam Speaker, so it was in place while we had Republican Presidents, the first President Bush, Democratic Presidents, and the Republican Presidents. It was in place when we had a Democratic majority in Congress and a Republican majority in Congress. And above all, it worked. It enabled us to build the surplus that we enjoyed in the Clinton years. It enabled us to reverse the flood of red ink that we saw in the Reagan-Bush years, to completely reverse our Nation's fiscal policy, only, sadly, to have it plunge back into an even deeper sea of red ink. So pay-as-you-go, the policy of only allowing new spending or new tax cuts if we can find the savings somewhere else, that is a proven remedy to our problems; and that is really what we are asking for.

The Blue Dogs have a policy statement that was issued today encouraging Members to only vote for the debt ceiling increase if it contains the essential budget reforms of pay-as-you-go.

So I hope all Americans will watch this debate carefully. Sadly, as the Members know, this debate is only taking place after the election when it is too late for many of our fellow citizens to cast their vote based on these facts, and they will probably have this vote not as a separate vote but rolled into a larger issue.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for one final point.

Mr. SPRATT. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, this literally is the ticking time bomb sitting beneath Social Security and Medicare. They do not want to talk about it. They do not want to talk about fiscal solvency and fiscal responsibility that will help shore up Social Security and Medicare for the next 75 years. But this really gets to the crux of it. And later, next year perhaps, in the next session of Congress, we are going to have a serious discussion about Social Security reform. I think the best reform measures we can start taking today is instilling a little more fiscal discipline in the budgetary decisions so that this $160 billion annual raid on the Social Security trust fund stops and we have that ability to deal with the baby boom generation's retirement, which is about to explode in future years. But, again, it is the lack of leadership right now that we are seeing from the administration and here in Congress that is preventing us from really shoring up Social Security and Medicare as viable programs for many generations to come.

Mr. COOPER. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, I agree with the gentleman. It is essential to prepare for the pending retirement of the baby boom generation and for all of our seniors so that Social Security and Medicare that they count on will in fact be there for them.

The gentleman made a point earlier about the Chinese becoming our largest creditors. That is an amazing situation for the average American back home to realize because not too long ago we referred to the Chinese as the Communist Chinese, and I remember a statement made by a Russian leader years ago, Nikita Khrushchev, who claimed that Americans would one day sell them the rope by which they would hang us. That is a pretty tough statement. But right now we are in effect selling the Chinese the notes by which they could hang us financially because we are asking them to lend us so much money to finance our spending habits.

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me just wrap up by saying that this is our concern: $2.2 trillion of additional debt in 3 fiscal years, and what is waiting in the wings is a reform in Social Security which is likely to propose that a person not on Social Security can take 2 percentage points or 3 percentage points off his payroll tax and put it in a private account. If that happens, that will increase the debt by another trillion dollars over the next 10 years, and that is our great concern that this will be followed with policies that will actually worsen rather, than improve, this.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me and appreciate the chance to join my colleagues.

The voters have spoken. They have elected us to return to Washington to get the job done. And one of the first things we are getting ready to do is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing. We are getting ready to charge to future generations this massive expenditure that we are enjoying the benefits of and ought to be paying for ourselves.

One of the things I would like to add to what has been discussed here tonight is folks at home say to me, Jim, what does this mean to me? These are a lot of numbers. This sounds like a fight about people in Washington. Where do I fit into this?

And one of the ways, I think, to sum this up is that today, because of the reckless spending habits and reckless decisions on tax cuts without regard to the debt and deficit, each American's share of the Federal debt today is $25,000. $25,000. Every American in this country, Democrat, Republican, man, woman, child, grandfather, grandchild, $25,000 each. So instead of facing up to this fact and having a debate about how we develop a roadmap to pay-as-you-go as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) has been advocating with the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), we are going to bury deep in a bill, try to hide from the public, try to pretend this does not exist. And in my State, Florida, and in the States we all represent, these historically low interest rates are going to come to a screeching halt. We have been warned by all the experts that it is inevitable that interest rates are going to begin to rise. In my community where people have a mortgage on a home, they are trying to pay a student loan, they have got credit card debt, this is going to be taking money out of their pockets, not to mention the horrific interest payments we are now paying, I think $157 billion in interest we have paid in the last fiscal year or so, money that we could be spending for tax cuts to help everybody, money we could be spending to make sure our troops are better armed in Iraq and we take care of them and their families when they come home.

So I want to salute my colleagues for calling attention to this compelling detail. It is our job to make sure that the country knows that even if someone tries to hide this in a bill, this debt limit is going up to historic proportions and we need to stop it as soon as we can.

Madam Speaker, as this body considers another federal debt limit increase, I rise with a warning for my colleagues and the people we represent back at home. For the third time since President Bush took office, Congress is preparing to drive our country further into debt with no road map to get our nation back on track to balanced budgets.

If Congress doesn't change course, this fiscal recklessness will begin to eat away at America's economic prosperity and leave a legacy of financial hardship for future generations.

Madam Speaker, this Congress has talked a lot about family values, but where I grew up, bankrupting our children and grandchildren's future doesn't count as a family value.

Today, as parents across our nation are working hard to save money for their children's college education, the federal government has run up a $7.4 trillion bill, and they are expecting our kids to pick up the tab. That's more than $25,000 worth of debt per American resident—a tremendous burden to place on the backs of future generations.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, if we stay on this path, the debt held by the public will reach $13 trillion by 2014.

The figure doesn't even take into account the financial troubles we will face when the first of 77 million baby boomers begin to collect Social Security in 2011. So while we baby boomers are enjoying our Social Security benefits, our kids will be paying for our irresponsible financial choices.

Madam Speaker, my mother taught me at an early age that if you make a mess, you have to clean it up yourself. Well this federal debt is a disaster, and I'm not about to tell my kids that they should clean up their mess when Congress can't even clean up its own.

What kind of example will we be setting for our kids if we don't take steps to pay down the debt? How can we teach our kids about the negative consequences of running up a credit card debt and at the same time ignore the consequences of running up the federal debt?

The truth is Americans are already beginning to see the effects of their government's poor fiscal policy decisions. Peter Hooper, chief U.S. economist with Deutsche Bank Securities Inc. notes, "The bottom line here is, if we don't get a significant narrowing of the budget deficit, you're going to have increasing upward pressure on interest rates. (WSJournal 11/12/04)"

In fact, according to Freddie Mac, just this week the 30-year mortgage rate came in at 5.76 percent, an increase from 5.7 percent a week earlier. Rates on 15-year mortgages, meanwhile, climbed to 5.26 percent from 5.08 percent over the same time span. Finally, the one-year adjustable mortgage rate rose to 4.16 percent this week, up from 4 percent a week ago.

Higher interest rates hurt more than just the economy—they take money right out of the pockets of young people struggling with student loan and credit card debt. And for families buying a house, higher interest rates could add literally thousands of dollars a year to their mortgage.

Furthermore, the federal debt drains funds away from investment in a better future, better education, a better environment, or scientific research. In 2004 alone, U.S. taxpayers wasted $159 billion on interest payments on the federal debt—thats more than two times the amount the government provided in financial aid for college students.

The $159 billion in interest payments combined with $163 billion in interest paid to the Social Security Trust Fund and other government trust accounts averages out to a staggering $1,100 "debt tax" for each American. For Americans facing lower paying jobs, higher housing costs, and mounting student loan and credit car debt, federal fiscal mismanagement just adds to their burdens.

And this problem will only get worse. By 2014, the interest alone on the public debt will reach $348 billion under current law (that's $1,081 per person), and will reach $418 billion under the President's policies.

It is shameful for Congress to even consider increasing this limit once again without including some sort of plan, such as enacting Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) rules, to ensure a brighter future for our children.

The road to fiscal responsibility is paved with sacrifice and tough choices, but the reward—a stronger, healthier economy for Americans of all ages—is well worth the journey.

I urge my colleagues to take up the responsibility thrown off by our leadership and vote against this debt limit increase.

Mr. COOPER. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SPRATT. I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. COOPER. Madam Speaker, if I could just clarify one of the gentleman's points, we are not trying to bury this in any other bill. We are not trying to hide anything. The Democrats would like a clear up-or-down vote on this issue so that the American people can see what is at stake. And that is what the Republican majority here is jeopardizing. We do not know for sure yet, but it is extremely unlikely that there will be a clear up-or-down vote because really we should have voted on this before the election, not now.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, the Republicans have once again squandered opportunities, from international goodwill following the terrorist attacks on our soil, to managing the federal budget. The House leadership has compiled an abysmal record in the 108th Congress. Their fiscal performance, I regret to say, is the worse in recent memory.

This Republican leadership has presided over an historical reversal from record surpluses to now record deficits. Their lack of fiscal discipline has placed our economy in a precarious position and straight-jacketed future policy options.

The most troubling aspect of this policy is that we are giving the current generation a free lunch and running up debts that must be paid for by our children. Each newborn child now inherits $85,000 in debt. This so-called "baby-tax" will rapidly increase unless we restore some sanity to our budgetary policies and practices.

The lack of a surplus makes it even more difficult to solve the impending bankruptcy of Social Security and Medicare, or even to enact a Republican tax reform agenda.

PATTERN OF FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT

Time and time again, this leadership has chosen to disregard its fiscal responsibilities and ignore signs of impending fiscal crisis in the hope that the problem will fix itself, or disappear altogether.

Clearly a policy of avoidance doesn't work, and it's certainly not what the American people expect from its elected leaders. You can't simply stick your head in the sand and expect market forces to balance the national budget. That's the Congress' responsibility. I can cite example after example illustrating how this leadership does not care about our nation's fiscal state of affairs.

The pay-as-you-go rule, the budget enforcement mechanism devised to reign in deficits, worked very effectively in the nineties to bring the budget into balance and restore surpluses.

Then the 108th Congress is sworn in, PAYGO expires, and the House leadership makes no serious attempt to restore it. It's no coincidence that we've seen record high deficits in the last two years.

And now this Congress is backed into a corner and forced to take action to raise the debt ceiling for the third time, another record.

WORRISOME SIGNS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CURRENCY & DEBT MARKETS

The Bush administration and leadership in the House say deficits don't matter, but in truth they do matter, and we are now staring crisis in the face. There is near unanimity among economists that our Nation's fiscal imbalance could put us in real economic peril.

In a study published just 2 weeks ago, well-known economists Maurice Obstfeld and Kenneth Rogoff warned of what they called "current account collapse" sparked by withdrawal of funds from international investors. They said that this issue should be "problem number one on the President's international financial agenda."

We must heed these warnings and get our financial house in order or the delicate house of cards constructed by this administration and congressional leadership will come tumbling to the ground, and all Americans will pay a hefty price.

Already there are signs that the dollar's value is declining and other currencies, primarily the Euro, are slowly replacing the dollar as the favored currency among international investors. This week, the dollar reached an all time low against the Euro—one Euro is now worth $1.30.

Our Nation needs to borrow around $2 billion a day, and 92 percent of debt sold over the last 4 years has gone to foreign countries. So obviously we rely heavily on foreign investment. The question is what happens if those countries abandon the dollar for another currency?

If foreign governments like China decide to divest its U.S. currency holdings; the consequences would be serious, especially considering the massive purchases by the Chinese Central Bank over the last few years. In 2003, the dollar purchases by foreign central banks were $617 billion, compared to $352 billion the year before. Total reserves of the emerging Asia countries rose by more than $350 billion between March 2003 and March 2004. Japan and China alone currently hold close to a trillion dollars of U.S. debt.

Many countries are now beginning to favor the Euro, which puts us in a major dilemma and raises national security concerns. Foreign governments are now our largest creditors. We may be the most powerful nation in the world, but China, as the largest investor, has genuine financial leverage. This poses a real threat to our national security because the American economy now depends on the financial decisions of foreign governments.

Unlike in years past, we cannot assume that no other currency comes close to rivaling the dollar's strength. The emergence of the Euro substantially changes the international currency market, because, despite the relative soundness of the dollar, the Euro has become a true alternative, backed by reasonably sound monetary policies. So the largest holders of foreign currencies in Asia could change their preference purely on the basis of financial, not political considerations.

This scenario is unraveling right now. Asian countries believe that our exceedingly high deficits are untenable and threaten the American economy. They worry that more buying could in turn destabilize their own economy. Another very real concern is that their financial leverage could translate into political and diplomatic leverage.

Consequently, we increasingly find ourselves in a precarious negotiating position. We have to convince these foreign governments that the dollar is relatively strong and they should continue their purchasing.

I would conclude by saying that in tonight's special order my colleagues have discussed issues that need to be addressed in an honest debate on the floor of the House. The election is over. It's time to put aside wedge issues and start talking about fiscal problems that could have a devastating effect on the American economy for years to come.

The leadership has apparently backed away from its initial plan to include the debt ceiling increase in an omnibus appropriations bill. Hiding the debt ceiling increase in a larger bill would be a mistake because it would undermine the purpose of the statutory requirement—accountability. Members of Congress should explain their decision to increase the national debt. The American people deserve to know what's going on.

We've heard plenty about cultural values in the last few weeks, and I think we get it now. But Congress cannot continue to simply ignore mounting fiscal problems, and expect they will go away. Because they will not. And I promise you that when the "you know what" hits the fan and we're facing a crisis, the American people will put aside their cultural differences in favor of one overriding value: economic security.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MUSGRAVE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Carolina?

There was no objection.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, I come to address the House this evening on an issue that has some similarities to the issue my colleagues, my Democratic colleagues, just addressed on the Federal deficit. The Federal deficit is this long-term, rather insidious challenge to our Nation that sort of is something that can sneak up on us and over the long term can cause us great grief. And the issue that I am compelled to address the House on tonight is a similar issue with even larger global concerns that has the capability of causing major changes to the way we live and our kids live and our grandchildren live, and that is the issue of global climate change, which is being precipitated by our enormous contributions of carbon dioxide and methane into our atmosphere.

And as I come here tonight, this is the first night we have been in session since the election, and a couple things have changed relatively dramatically actually since the election. And one of the things that has changed when it comes to the atmosphere we are going to leave to our kids and our grandkids is that there was a major scientific announcement made last week that basically should send off red lights, alarm bells, and whistles in the United States Congress which indicated that the problem of global warming is much more acute and is happening much more quickly than many of us anticipated. So tonight I would like to address the science that has now become available to this body in the House of Representatives, which I hope that we would act on fairly shortly.

Unfortunately, the U.S. House has been somnambulant when it comes to global warming to date. This Chamber, for all its virtues, basically has not acted at all in the face of what has been very rapidly accumulating scientific evidence about this problem. But after the report came out last week, which I am going to address, there really is no longer any excuse for inaction by the House; and that is why this evening I would like to address the scientific report that became available to us.

Last week, eight nations that have been working for 4 years now to try to get a handle on the scientific information that is now available to us issued a report called the ''Impacts of a Warming Arctic,'' and this was a report issued by the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. This is a group that has been working of the best scientists in the United States, nonpartisan, no ax to grind. These people, a diverse group from the National Oceanographic Administration, from the University of Fairbanks have been working in conjunction with seven other nations on this report. Those other countries are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Canada, and six indigenous groups in Canada.