CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. CON. RES. 995, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

I rise in opposition to the Republican Budget Resolution conference report. For the first time since the Congressional Budget Act was enacted, the Republicans are bringing only a 1-year budget resolution to the floor. This 1-year conference agreement provides no plan to reduce the deficit and no commitment to provide critical resources for defense, homeland security, education, veterans, and other priorities in future years.

The budget agreement cuts funding for key priorities to help fund another round of Republican tax cuts totaling $55.2 billion. After 3 years of the Bush administration's fiscal policies, we are facing a $363 billion deficit in 2005, and that is before any new tax cuts or other policies the President is proposing. Republicans have managed to turn a project $5.6 trillion surplus into a projected $3 trillion deficit.

This budget also fails to protect Social Security. The conference agreement not only fails to attempt to restore the budget surpluses to begin to protect the Social Security trust fund, but it also spends every penny of the $1 trillion Social Security surplus over the next 5 years.

If that's not enough, the Republican budget shortchanges education and health programs. It provides $81 billion for education and training programs, which is $2.9 billion less than the Senate budget. The conference agreement provides $8.8 billion less for education than was promised in the No Child Left Behind Act. It represents the smallest increase in education spending in 9 years, cutting $1.4 billion in critical education programs, including those that improve family literacy, and provide school counselors to elementary school children.

It fails to provide any new money to help the 43 million Americans who are without health insurance. There are over 12 million Hispanic Americans without health insurance and millions more who can barely pay their premiums, yet Republicans do nothing to hold costs down.

The budget cuts spending for mandatory health programs by $905 million over 5 years. Medicaid constitutes over 90 percent of the dollars for these programs, so it is likely that disabled Americans, children and the elderly would bear the brunt of these spending cuts, if enacted. The budget also does nothing to hold down prescription drug costs. This administration and the Republican Party are failing the 2 million Hispanic seniors and all seniors on Medicare.

The budget cuts and underfunds critical housing programs. At this funding level, approximately 250,000 low-income families with children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities could lose their Section 8 vouchers.

The Republican budget leaves our veterans behind. The conference agreement provides only $31 billion for appropriated veterans programs for 2005, which is $1.3 billion less than the Veterans Affairs Committee, on a bipartisan basis, stated is needed for these vital veterans' health care programs. It shortchanges veterans' health care, raising health care costs for 1 million veterans. It makes it harder for veterans to get their disability, education, pension, housing, and employment benefits by eliminating critically needed staff that process claims for veterans' benefits. The Republicans talk about patriotism, yet how quickly they forget about the men and women who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the over 1 million Hispanic veterans.

The conference report before us is a failure of our fiscal and moral responsibility. We should reject this conference report and ask the conferees to go back to the drawing board.

I yield back the balance of my time.

TRIBUTE TO DENA SCHECHTER

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, Mr. WAXMAN and I rise today to pay tribute to Dena Schechter, a good friend and wonderful person. Dena is being honored by the University of Judaism (UJ) at its annual dinner on May 20, 2004, for her leadership in Jewish education and her many outstanding contributions to worthy causes.

The UJ is one of the leading institutions of higher education in our community. It maintains a proud tradition of academic excellence and a progressive viewpoint. Dena shares the University's intellectual and spiritual vision—maintaining Judaism's traditional beliefs and values in a way that is relevant to our increasingly complex and modern world.

In 1947, Dena's grandparents helped found the University. In the late 1950s, her grandparents endowed the University's first public lecture series. Throughout the years, Dena has continue her family's dedication and support for the UJ, serving on the Board of Directors and for the last five years as Chair. Under Dena's leadership the UJ'S College of Arts and Science, the Ziegler School of Business and the Fingerhut School of Education have seen tremendous growth and development. Dena has helped underwrite an innovative community service component to the UJ's undergraduate curriculum. In addition, she helped establish the Sid Levine Service Learning Program—a feature in UJ's College of Arts and Sciences that emphasizes the critical nature of community service.

To know Dena is to be greatly blessed. She is the sister of our good friend and former colleague, Mel Levine and we feel extremely fortunate to know her personally. We are inspired by her belief that ''participation in the community is not something you choose but something you are obligated to do.'' In addition to her contributions to the UJ, she actively works on behalf of the Federation Family and Jewish Family Services.

A native of Los Angeles and a graduate of UCLA with a degree in Philosophy, Dena successfully balances family, a career in business and a strong commitment to community service. She is married to Irving Schechter and is the mother of four.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, we ask you to join us in saluting Dena Schechter and congratulating her upon receiving this richly deserved honor.