

denying them college tuition, and then the parents borrowing for a vacation and having the child have to pay for it out of their allowance.

Many reports and the Washington Post even in an editorial last month pointed out that the Republican post-Katrina budget plan would add to the deficit, not reduce it, because the required spending cuts do not come close to paying for the at least \$70 billion in new tax cuts provided for in the budget, cuts that mostly benefit the wealthiest Americans and that apparently remain sacrosanct no matter what other expenses pile up.

I think the American public needs to know what the Congressional Budget Office said about some of those cuts. That office said last Thursday that the House Medicaid cuts would save more than \$30 billion over 10 years. However, that office, the Congressional Budget Office, also pointed out that these savings will not come from the premiums and copays the Republicans say will create the savings, but they will come because those cuts would keep our most vulnerable communities and residents out of the health care system.

Many of those people dropped would be the hard-working poor. The majority of those dropped, like those in Tennessee like I visited with last week, would be African American and other minorities. But there will be large numbers of people with disabilities, children, people living in our rural areas and the poor of every race, ethnicity and nationality.

So instead of closing the health care disparity gap, which causes close to 100,000 premature, preventable deaths in this country every year, this body, should it pass the Republican budget package, would by that act be increasing those deaths and continuing the health care inequality which the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called the most shocking and inhumane of all.

The poor folks, the folks in our rural areas, people with disabilities, seniors, people of color, immigrants, and our children should not be made to carry the burden of the war and pay for the luxuries of the rich. At the same time the Republicans are proposing such spending cuts, they are preparing to move forward with \$106 billion in additional tax cuts this year that will largely benefit the wealthy.

Will it save money? No. The net result of the GOP budget plan is \$100 billion of debt over the next 5 years.

As I said to my American Legion this past weekend, America is being transformed by the actions of this administration and this Congress into a country I do not recognize, one that has gone far astray from the values and principles on which it was founded and on which this United States became the leader of the free world. What this budget reconciliation will do and what it says about this country is not what they fought for and laid their lives on the line for. It dishonors their service

and that of the men and women who are fighting for this Nation even today.

So it is my hope and prayer that my friends on the other side of the aisle will abandon the irresponsible and heartless budget plan. Now is not the time to cut programs that are vital to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and to our most vulnerable citizens who, like those victims, also face smaller but just as devastating socioeconomic hurricanes every day, while they have cut taxes for the most fortunate and add to the deficit.

These are not the actions of a people who value life as Americans do. These are not the right priorities for our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mr. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CUTS AND BLOOD

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, since Hurricane Katrina and Rita and the budget reconciliation talks began, practically all that we have heard in this House about budgets has been cut, cut, cut, and cut. And of course, Mr. Speaker, where I come from back in Chicago, if all that you do is cut, cut and cut, all that you get is blood, blood, and more blood. And, of course, the blood will be on the hands of those who have the knife.

Much of the debate in this House during the past 2 months has been around the majority's proposal to cut mandatory programs by \$35 to \$50 billion over the next 5 years. Just the idea of some of these Draconian measures is enough to send chills up and down one's spine because we are talking about programs that provide basic assistance to vulnerable, low-income families and individuals.

In essence and in reality, we are talking about Robin Hood in reverse; that is, take from the poor and give to the rich. We are talking about programs that provide help to people with disabilities, people who make use of the earned income tax credit, people who use Supplemental Security Income programs, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and individuals who are indeed elderly.

□ 1945

Some of the proposed cuts include \$11.9 billion to Medicaid, and I can just imagine what this will do to the more than 20 hospitals, health centers, private physician practices in my district. Imagine the large number of children and poor people who will not be able to access adequate health care.

Student loans, \$14.3 billion. Look at the number of students who will not be able to go to college, to get the education that we all know that they must have if they are to compete and survive in a highly technical, service-oriented economy. We think of all of those who would not be able to go to law school, medical school, who would not be in a position to provide the services that our country will need.

Child support, \$4.9 billion. Imagine what will happen to the large number of children in my district being raised by single mothers and how difficult it will be for them to receive child support payments.

Foster care, \$577 million. My district has one of the highest percentages of children in foster care in the Nation. Any reduction in these funds will seriously imperil our ability to provide and care for these children.

Food stamps, unimaginable. I mean, how can you think of cutting food stamps, with all of the individuals who are homeless, hungry, in many instances hopeless and helpless, individuals who are unemployed, laid off from their jobs and having difficulties with acquiring the basic necessities to sustain life.

Mr. Speaker, I am strongly in favor of our government operating on sound fiscal policies. I am in favor of reducing the deficit to the extent prudent and possible. I am in favor of rebuilding the areas damaged by Katrina and Rita, but I am not in favor of continuing to throw money away on a war that we never should have been in in the first place. I am not in favor of giving huge tax breaks and cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of the population. I am in favor of budget reconciliation, but not on the backs of the poor, needy, and most vulnerable sectors of our society.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I could do nothing less than oppose. As a matter of fact, it would be a dereliction of my duty and responsibility if I were to vote for the Budget Reconciliation Act that is before us. I will vote prudently and sensibly.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, you know, there is an age-old drama that Americans have seen play out time and time again here in Washington, and I

know that some nights as they are watching TV and they click across C-SPAN and they watch individuals come to the floor, they might think this is a rerun or they might think same song, second verse because they have to think that they have heard this before.

I think probably their thoughts go something like this, that taxpayers are tired of seeing their hard-earned paychecks wasted by Big Government, and so the taxpayers say we are going to demand some spending reductions. The Republicans agree and the Republicans propose some spending reductions.

Well, the Democrats just cannot stand to see those spending reductions. So they start the name-calling, and they come down and they say that any reduction that we want to make in spending, anytime we are going to slow the growth of spending, well, you know what, it is draconian, it is mean-spirited, it is cruel, it is heartless, it is cold-blooded. We all hear all the descriptive adjectives. They start telling virtually every man, woman, and child in America that these reductions will do terrible, awful things and that the Republicans are just mean, nasty people.

Mr. Speaker, it is like clockwork. It really is like clockwork, and I think that I know why many times our colleagues across the aisle fight our efforts when it comes to fiscal responsibility, when it comes to reining in the size of the Federal Government, when it comes to reducing spending, when it comes to getting government off your back and out of your pocket. I think I know why the Democrats fight it time and time and time again.

This government, this big, Washington-focused bureaucracy that spends your money out of your pocket, that you go to work and you earn, this government, this bureaucracy, is a monument to them. They spent 40 years with an iron grip on this U.S. House of Representatives; and in that time, they constructed a vast monument to themselves called Federal Government bureaucracy.

It is expensive, it is old, and it is a mismanaged monument that forces you, the taxpayer, the average, hard-working American family, to spend 6 months every year paying for it. Tax freedom day, look at some of the dates we have had in years past, July 4, June 30, June 28. You are working half the time to pay for government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you something right now. This Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives is working to change that. We want to change that. Democrats do not. It is that simple.

So, tonight, we are going to talk a little bit about the budget savings we are working to pass in this House in a bill that is called the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a good, solid plan from the Republican leadership. It is a plan that will put this government on track to reform;

and in the end, the goal is to yield a savings for the American taxpayer.

The bill that my colleagues are going to join me in discussing tonight is finding \$53.9 billion in spending reductions over the next several years in a \$2.4 trillion-a-year budget. Mr. Speaker, I want everybody at home to hear that: \$53.9 billion, that is billion with a B, in savings, over several years of a yearly budget of \$2.4 trillion, and that is trillion with a T.

Mr. Speaker, we are not asking a lot. In fact, we should be asking for a whole lot more. The constituents in my seventh district of Tennessee want to see us reduce Federal spending more. They want to see more of these programs that have outlived their usefulness put on the table, reviewed, put into sunset, deauthorized, scaled down, or taken away.

But I will tell you, I think that for many of the Democrats what we are proposing is too much. They cannot commit even to that. So tonight we are going to talk some about why we need to reform this government and why we need to make these spending reductions.

At this time, I would like to yield to one of my colleagues who has joined us. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is going to join us and talk for a few minutes about Medicaid. We are hearing so much about Medicaid. We have heard the left say that we are slashing it, that we are cutting it; and you know what, in spite of all this talk, Medicaid will grow. We are not talking about cuts. We are talking about reducing spending, and I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee for yielding, and I do want to speak a little bit about the Medicaid program.

The gentlewoman from Tennessee and the struggle that that State has had with their Medicaid program and TennCare, the cutbacks that have been necessary, she understands as well as anybody how important it is to make sure that these programs work the way they were intended to work, Mr. Speaker.

As the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) points out, we are not talking about cutting anything. We are talking about reforming government. I mean, this Republican majority has a plan to reform government, to effect savings for our taxpayers and to spend their money wisely and efficiently and to spend it for those who have the need and to eliminate all this waste, fraud and abuse that is so rampant in government and certainly in the Medicaid program.

But as the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) points out, this is no cut. The reduction in the growth rate is what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. Medicaid, over the last 5 years and in this current fiscal year, is growing at 7.3 percent a year, 7.3 percent a year growth rate. So we

have in this plan to cut that growth rate by three-tenths of 1 percent, cut it from 7.3 percent to 7 percent over the next 5 years.

Today, in fiscal year 2006, before this cut, we are spending \$200 billion with a B on the Federal part of Medicaid. Over a 5-year period, in 2010, because of that 7 percent rate of growth, we will be spending \$260 billion. So our colleagues on the other side, they want to say, oh, you are cutting, you are cutting to the bone, you are taking away. They call it Robin Hood taking away from the poor and giving to the rich.

This program, Mr. Speaker, will continue to grow at a healthy 7 percent rate, but we are talking about cutting waste, fraud, and abuse. Yes, we are going to cut that. We are going to cut out this situation where people are gaming the system and it happens. It happens in every State, including my own.

What is so tragic about that is that then you end up taking money away from those people, those pregnant women, those young children, those aged and infirm that really, really need our help. With this plan and these savings that we can effect, that is who the help will go to, exactly where it is needed.

I want to take a little time to explain one thing that I think is so important that my colleagues and anybody who might be listening to these proceedings tonight understands very clearly.

With long-term care in this country, we have a huge problem; and it is shocking when you find out that probably 70 percent of nursing home care is paid for with Medicaid dollars. Some of those people who are in long-term care facilities, a skilled nursing home is what I am referring to, they clearly are low income. They do not have the financial wherewithal once their Medicare benefit runs out, and it does pretty quickly; and they need to have that Medicaid benefit.

But 70 percent of all expenditures for skilled nursing home care is coming out of the Medicaid program. Something is wrong with that, and what it is is people and maybe it is not the individual so much as a smart lawyer figuring out a way to game the system.

So in this reform, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that if a person, an individual, has more than \$500,000, I believe that is a half a million if my math is correct, if an individual has more than \$500,000 equity in their home, then they are not going to be eligible for Medicaid to pick up the tab for nursing home care.

□ 2000

What is happening, and we are going to eliminate this, is that families, and I guess in a way I can understand their thinking, but it is just not right, they do not think about the fact that it is taking needed dollars away from people that really need this benefit.

As an example, say mom or dad needs to go into a nursing home, a skilled

nursing home, and is going to be there for a long time. They may have \$750,000 in equity in their home. So all of a sudden they figure out a way to transfer the ownership to a son or a daughter or a first cousin and let mom or dad rent the house and live in the house or pay out of their Social Security check.

That is totally wrong. I think my colleagues understand that, and I think the American people understand that.

So we, again, are not talking about cutting benefits to people that really need them. We are trying to make sure that in this reform we get the dollars where they need to be. That is really what it is all about, cutting out waste, fraud and abuse and spending the money efficiently and effectively. That is what we are doing.

I really appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee for leading this hour and giving me the opportunity to talk about this. You see, I spent 30 years practicing medicine and seeing some of these patients and writing prescriptions for those who need that Medicaid benefit. So I know how important it is to do it the right way, and I commend my leadership in the Republican majority for facing up to the problem we have.

I can remember, and I will say this in closing, Mr. Speaker, when we were trying to bring some sense in solvency to the Social Security program for our needy seniors, the other side of the aisle said, Well, you know, you do not need to be doing this because the need is in Medicare and Medicaid. It is going to run out of money much quicker; you need to reform that. Why are you all spending your time on Social Security?

So here Social Security seems to have been pushed off to the back burner, much to their satisfaction, and we are trying to deal with the problems of Medicare and especially Medicaid.

Every one of our 50 States is suffering. Governor Huckabee, Republican Governor from Arkansas, and Governor Warner, Democratic Governor of Virginia, both agreed with a bipartisan governors' report that we need to do this. So this is what we are talking about.

And with that, I will yield back to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments, and he is exactly right. Medicaid needed reforms that would address some of the waste, fraud and abuse; reforms that would deal with the processes and procedures of the delivery of the program. Once we go through achieving these efficiencies, there will be individuals who truly need it, who will see a better delivery of service.

These are flexibilities that the governors, the nonpartisan National Governors Association, have asked us to make. They are things we have worked with them on, and we are pleased to bring forward the type of reforms that will yield the efficiencies that are needed.

Mr. Speaker, another colleague who is joining us this evening is the gen-

tleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP), another member of my delegation who is a member of the Appropriations Committee. He has brought wisdom and expertise to the appropriations process and being certain that we are wise stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

I yield to Mr. WAMP out of Chattanooga, who is going to talk with us for a few moments about the work they have done in the Appropriations Committee as we work toward a Deficit Reduction Act that is going to help put us on track to achieve some savings for the American people through the reform process.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me and for her leadership and for all my colleagues on the floor tonight. I am encouraged as a member of the class of 1994, the class that came in with the new majority for the first time in 40 years, to see the passion and the focus that we now see again in the House with that same vigor for reform and responsibility that actually brought us here years ago. You can feel it every day here building steam, because the American people demand it, and we are carrying out an agenda now of reform and responsibility.

Interesting for me, I do not come to the House floor to speak much except for specific legislation, but today you kind of hear mixed messages on the minority side. Half of them say, you are spending too much and the other half says we are not spending enough. What we see over here now is a very consistent message that we cannot spend this much, that we have an \$8 trillion debt.

Now, when we first came in in 1995 in the new class, our goal was to hold the growth of spending below inflation and let the economy grow, it was strong, so that revenues would surpass expenditures. And that happened and the budget got balanced. Seems like a long time ago, but it happened. For 3 consecutive years we held the growth of government spending below inflation, below the family's budget growth; and then revenues passed expenses.

Then we were dealt a difficult hand. September 11 happened, challenges beyond our control, and spending escalated. And for several years in a row, it averaged 6 percent growth per year in discretionary spending, which was twice inflation, and it started slipping away.

Sometimes it is easy to forget when something like Katrina happens, what was going on before Katrina hit, but we need to think back. I remember this spring I put out a press release after the House passed the budget and we then passed our 602(b) allocations for the appropriation bills to match that budget. I put out a press release that said, this is the most austere budget in the 11 years I have been in Congress, because it only grew nonsecurity discretionary spending by 1 percent. Well below inflation, this budget. Not only did we pass it, we passed all the appro-

priations bills out of the House within that agreement by July 4, the first time in a generation that that had happened. We were marching towards fiscal responsibility with vigor.

And then we went home for the August District Work Period, and Katrina hit towards the end and everyone focused on what the government did not do and we became insecure. But I think it is easy for some to forget how responsible we were going into that catastrophe.

A little primer on this whole process for folks that are outside the Beltway, because sometimes we forget their language, is that the budget is broken down between discretionary spending that the Congress annually appropriates and annually oversees and mandatory spending, sometimes called entitlements.

When my wife, sweet Kim, was born in 1964, two-thirds of all Federal spending was appropriated by the Congress with annual oversight, and one-third was mandatory, which is really made up of Medicare and Medicaid and pensions, mandatory spending programs, and interest on the debt, things that are fixed by previous law. And unless the Congress acts again, they automatically go out. They are indexed to inflation. People either qualify for them or they do not, but they automatically get the money. In 1964, that was one-third of all spending and appropriations was two-thirds.

Today, it is the other way around: Two-thirds is mandatory and one-third we still have discretion on. But if you take out national security and homeland security, the part of the discretionary budget that is left is only one-eighth of the \$2.4 trillion annual budget that the gentlewoman referred to. So discretionary spending is now a small portion of it.

That is why it is so important to have this budget reduction act. Because the mandatory spending is where fraud and abuse and waste creeps in over time because the Congress does not annually oversee it. It sets in, and people back home do not like it when people are cheating the government. But if we fail to act and they win, the status quo has prevailed and it gets worse.

When we act, they say you are mean and cruel, but the people want us to tighten the belt of government, which creates efficiency. Any government program that has to tighten its belt will become more efficient because somebody has got their fingers on the buttons to make it more efficient to live with what they have.

We have done well on discretionary spending, but we can do more and we will do more. But I come as a member of the Appropriations Committee to say that this majority is doing it. We are doing it like we were when we got here, again with vigor and commitment. I am excited.

We have just been joined by another member of my class, and he was shaking his head as he walked across the

floor, because he can feel it. He knows it. We are focused on being responsible and reforming this government so that it works better and so that people can see us acting on what they would like to see us do.

So I thank all of my colleagues that have come to the floor tonight, and the gentlewoman for hosting this hour. It is important that we unite and we bring people to this most important cause at this critical time. And I yield back to her.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his wise words and for joining us in this debate and reminding us we do hear a lot of rhetoric, as he mentioned. We have the Blue Dogs from the Democrat side, who have been coming to the floor demanding spending increases. Suddenly they are not so fiscally conservative.

Well, it is like the story I used to read to my children, the Three Little Bears. It is almost as if you have to have it just right. Just right. And they are going to let the perfect be the enemy of the good, because these are good, solid reductions and a good, solid plan for moving forward, a great first step.

As we have worked through this process, we have heard from the gentlewoman from Virginia several times in regard to military issues and veterans' issues. She has such a heart for this and works so diligently on these issues, so at this time I yield to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) to set the record straight about the appropriations and the funding for our veterans' programs.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for hosting this event tonight and for inviting us here to tell the American people exactly what is in this bill that we will all vote on tomorrow. I know that she joins me as a Republican in our belief in smaller government, personal responsibility, and accountability.

This deficit reduction bill is an example of this philosophy. This bill creates a planned reform and savings for taxpayers. It is important that we set priorities and that we make tough choices.

I also know the gentlewoman from Tennessee would agree with me that how we spend taxpayer dollars is one of our greatest responsibilities as Members of Congress, and that we need to spend smarter and wiser.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that this plan is being misrepresented. Just Monday of this week it was represented on the House floor by Mr. MEEK, and this was in regards to veterans' care, who said, and I quote, "because the majority side has made a 5-year cut of \$14 billion." That same night Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ said, and I quote "There is a proposal to cut \$600 million in veterans' health care."

Mr. Speaker, the reality is in this deficit reduction bill there are no cuts proposed for veterans' health care. In fact, in the last 5 years, funding has in-

creased by 50 percent. In fact, the Veterans Committee was not asked to participate in spending reform. We recognize, we appreciate, and we value the service of our military members and our veterans, and we know that their health care and their benefits are critical and very, very important to them.

On November 2, this House unanimously approved H.R. 4061, the Department of Veterans' Affairs Information Technology Management Improvement Act. This Act combines three information technology programs into one. Currently, benefits, health, and burial claims are handled by three separate IT departments. This was common-sense reform to turn these into one and will save the Federal Government \$1.7 billion simply by turning three programs into one. This is exactly the type of example which shows we are re-designing government, reforming programs, and saving taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, billions have been spent on IT systems by both the VA and Department of Defense, and these agencies still cannot share medical information. This is corrected in H.R. 4061.

□ 2015

The result of this reform is not only to save taxpayer dollars, but it provides a seamless transition for our servicemembers and makes the process easier. I know the gentlewoman from Tennessee is happy to hear that: save money, do it easier, and do something that makes sense. The Department of Defense and the VA will be able to share information on health records and claims for disability benefits.

Also understand that these necessary responsible reforms are critical to be sure that important programs remain in place and are able to sustain themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for sharing her time with me today and being able to talk just before Veterans Day about the wonderful service of our veterans and our military.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I join the gentlewoman in a heartfelt thanks to our veterans, as she speaks about the fiscal stewardship and the common-sense reforms we need to put into these programs. It is so frustrating to veterans in my district when they get the runaround and cannot get a proper answer and go from one bureaucracy to another bureaucracy. To take three programs and roll it into one, as H.R. 4061 has done, that is common sense.

We hope to achieve efficiencies and save money on that program and the administration so it goes into programs and we get that money into programs that are so needed and so deserved by our veterans.

Again, God bless those veterans. And I say God bless the gentlewoman from Virginia who has worked so hard on these issues.

A leader on agricultural issues is the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING). He is

going to talk about the agriculture bill and then will return to the floor to talk about what has been done through the agriculture appropriations process.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for organizing this Special Order and her leadership.

At this time I would like to address the Deficit Reduction Act. It seemed like it was heavy lifting for a lot of people in this Congress; it should not be. It should not be when you are going to reduce by one-half of 1 percent the trajectory of the increase of Federal spending down range 5 years. I do not find that heavy lifting. I find that a piece of cake for somebody who has had to balance a family budget, a business budget, and meet payroll with my own employees for over 1,400 consecutive months. We had to find a way to make it work, and we did not have a budget like this to work with, and we made it work.

I want to talk about the agricultural aspect of this. First, we brought this package before the Committee on Agriculture, and we went for approximately 3 hours in debate, listening to demagoguery about how painful it was to squeeze down some of these categories within the agriculture budget. And this is over 5 years.

One of those subjects is the commodity programs direct payments. We reduce that, the projected spending, by 1 percent. That is \$1 out of \$100. The actual effect out in the field is approximately one-twentieth of the payments going into a region like I represent where we raise corn and soybeans.

The people that I represent there are fiscally responsible people. They watch their budget. They invest their dollars wisely and do a good job of marketing and managing, all because it is good business. That is what it takes to have black ink on the bottom line instead of red ink.

I am very confident I can take this back and look my neighbors in the eye and say we did the best we can for the agriculture economy. We did the best we could for our agriculture producers. We pinched that down by 1 percent on direct payments.

We are looking at WTO trade negotiations coming up in Hong Kong in December. We are talking with the rest of the world about how we want to really eliminate export subsidies, and we can do that without great pain to this country and reduce domestic subsidies and be able to get access to the developing world so we can sell our products.

Our agriculture producers know they can compete with anybody in the world if they can get access to the markets without having punishing tariffs at every developing country in the world. We brought some of those people in as trading partners. We are going to expand that. But if that 1 percent here is a painful thing, then I am going to say

we are going to have one difficult debate when the time comes to adjust our long-term trade trajectory.

By the way, there was not a single Democrat that would support any of this reconciliation package, and it became a partisan issue just to pass CAFTA. People in sugar said, no, it might take a teaspoon a day out of our markets. Possibly so. Aside from that, there was not even an argument that CAFTA was not good, but it became a partisan issue. I am watching trade become a partisan issue. I watched budget responsibility become a partisan issue, and I listened to criticism after criticism from the other side of the aisle about what we are doing to our producers during a time of need. It is always a time of need.

But it is also a time where we have just pulled in the best 3 years in agriculture ever where I live. We have harvested the best crops in the last 3 years. Their overall accumulated value is more than it has ever been. We raised more corn and soybeans this year than any time in history, except last year, which was a record. That came upon a good crop for 2003. It is a good time to be responsible in agriculture, and I believe the producers will stand up and take this just fine.

We minimized some of the damage to agriculture as well. Some money was left over in the watershed rehab program, and so we put that in our Deficit Reduction Act. The Conservation Security Program, I like that program. I spent my life in soil conservation. I have built more terraces than any Member of Congress, and I do not have to wonder who is second. More waterways, more watershed dams. I have spent my life protecting soil and water. I like those projects. We took no money out of any one that was qualified today, but were required to pull some money out down range in order to come with these savings that we needed to get, which is \$3.7 billion out of agriculture.

Skipping across some of these, the food stamp program, that probably consumed, out of 3 hours, probably 2 hours of the apportioned demagoguery for the day. It was how we could take food out of the mouths of babes, pregnant mothers, senior citizens, everybody you can imagine. I sat there and listened to that, and if I did not have a brain of my own to work with, I would have felt so guilty I would have crawled out of that room after they got done with me. The truth is when you look at it, we did not take any food out of anybody's mouth. We saved overall \$844 million up to the year 2010.

I went back and looked, how much waste do we have in food stamps just for the last year we have records. Well, \$1 billion in food stamp waste. That is fraud.

Mr. GINGREY spoke about how we will cut waste, fraud and abuse. We did that in the food stamp program, and we did not do it randomly. We realized there are States that grant food stamps to

people who do not qualify for any other benefit. That is a pretty good sign it is a fraud. We conditioned it if they need another benefit, like TANF, it will qualify them for food stamps. Unless they do, we are not going to give them a bunch of food stamps because, likely, they are not qualified. Most of the States are that way. Iowa is that way. It works for us. We do not hear complaints because it is a responsible way to manage.

The other side of the food stamp piece was we extended the period of time. When people come into this country legally, they pledge they are going to be self-sufficient. We say to them, under current law that means you do not get these benefits for 5 years. Then you can be unself-sufficient and we will help you out. We extend that time on food stamps from 5 years to 7 years. That picked up \$275 million. We found our \$3.7 billion without a lot of pain.

I will not say it was easy, because I had to listen to 3 hours of demagoguery; but we did not hurt anybody, and we helped people and we helped the taxpayer.

We have another way we can help this country. I have got to say this because agriculture is so susceptible to energy, but we have 406 trillion cubic feet of natural gas out there under the Outer Continental Shelf. We are paying \$14.50 per million Btus here in this country. In Venezuela it is \$1.60 compared to our \$14.50. The same with Brazil, Argentina, and most places on this continent; and we have got 406 trillion cubic feet of natural gas right there next to the pipeline. All we have to do is move our drill rigs a little further to the east, sink them in the ground, hook the pipes up, and go to the same refineries and we can drive this price down. If we do so, we can cut fertilizer prices down and gas drawing prices down for our grain as well.

Go up and drill in ANWR, fix the energy piece in all of this, and we are going to see a big difference in this country. This is not all of the work we need to do, but this is a bunch of the important work we need to do. I am looking forward to getting on with it.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Iowa truly is a great conservationist not only with the soil and the land in Iowa, and we love to say he gets his best information on the back of his tractor working his pastures, as we hear his good, conservative philosophies put to work in this House, as he talks about being a conservative and a conservationist in his spending, in his farming and in his love of the land and in his love of freedom. We are so pleased that he has reminded us and shown us how the Committee on Agriculture, again practicing fiscal stewardship, practicing what they preach, living it out to be certain that every single committee looks at their programs and says there is a better way for us to do this. There is a way to reduce this spending, and the American people are going to benefit.

We have heard many times over the past several months from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) who has come to the floor and has talked with us about having respect for families and the family budget, about how important it is that we realize that taxes and fees are the largest part of a family budget and how the Federal Government should be sensitive to that and work to reduce that burden.

I have asked Mr. HENSARLING to join us tonight and talk with us for a few minutes about what happens if we do not pass the Deficit Reduction Act, where will we be if we do not pass this act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership in the area of government reform.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard how important it is that we have a plan that is going to reform government, that will help achieve savings for the American people. It is so sad that the Democrats on the other side of the aisle, not one, not one has risen up to join us in this effort to try to reform government.

We know that our Nation faces a number of challenges. We have Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security. We have important programs, but they are growing beyond our ability to pay for them. Now we have had the devastating hurricanes hit. We know there are only three ways we can pay for all of this: one, we are going to pass debt on to our children; two, we are going to raise taxes on the American people; or, three, we are going to find smart ways to hold government accountable and decrease the rate of growth in spending and bring about reforms.

Well, the Democrats have attacked all of our reforms. They claim that somehow these are massive cuts, notwithstanding the fact that the Federal budget is going to grow next year over this year in what we call mandatory spending that has most of the welfare programs growing next year over this year. TANF is going to grow. Medicaid, Medicare, it is all going to grow. But they attack all of our reforms, and they claim that they do not want to pass debt on to our children. Well, what does that leave us? That leaves us with tax increases.

They do not like to talk about it, but it is the only other option on the table. In this case, massive, unconscionable tax increases that, if imposed on the American people, will leave the next generation with a lower standard of living than we enjoy, because the government we already have is growing beyond our ability to pay for it.

Chairman Greenspan of the Federal Reserve recently said, "As a Nation, we may have already made promises to coming generations of retirees that we will be unable to fulfill."

The Brookings Institute, which is no bastion of conservative thought, says expected growth in these programs,

speaking of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, along with projected increases in the debt and defense, will absorb all of the government's currently projected revenue within 8 years, leaving nothing for any other program.

That is the Democrats' plan. That means no veterans funding. That means that beloved Pell grants are gone. All of this is gone because they refuse to join us in any of these reforms. The Government Accountability Office said in order to balance the Federal budget in the next 30 years, total Federal spending is going to have to be cut in half or Federal taxes doubled.

Mr. Speaker, we have a chart that shows what is happening to the size of our government. This shows here the percent of our economy that we are devoting to government. Right now it is about 20 percent. Our revenues, which is this line here, runs pretty consistently between 18 and 20 percent of our economy.

□ 2030

But the government programs that are in place today, not all the ones that the Democrats want to add, but the government programs that we have today that are on automatic pilot, without the reforms, if we do not reform them, if we do not achieve success in our vote for reform, in just one generation we are going to go from 20 percent of our economy devoted to government to 40 percent, Mr. Speaker, in just one generation.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the cost of it. Here we have the year 2005, and look at the tax increases on the average American family as the years go by. Again, what does that mean? It means in just one generation we are going to end up doubling taxes on the American people. And, Mr. Speaker, I just believe that that is absolutely unconscionable, particularly for a party that continues to want to preach compassion to us.

Right now, right now, they want to cut the child tax credit in half. And that is their idea of compassion? That is what they are telling us. That is what their tax plan is. They want to reinstitute the death tax so that people have to visit the undertaker and the IRS on the same day. And that is their idea of compassion, Mr. Speaker? They want to bring back the marriage penalty. They want to punish people. They want to tax people extra because they choose to fall in love and marry somebody. And that is their idea of compassion? That is just what they want to do today.

But what they want to do to my children and your children, my 3½-year-old daughter and my 2-year-old son, they want to double taxes on them. An average family of four, what that means to them is that as they spend \$11,000 a year in housing today, under the Democrat doubling of taxes plan, that will go down to \$8,500. That means that although you may own a home, your children will not be able to afford one.

When it comes to transportation, this average family of four spends

about \$5,300 today. But under the government plan where we double taxes, that will go down to about \$4,000. Mr. Speaker, people are struggling to fill up their cars now. I suppose under the Democrat plan they will not have to worry about it because Americans will not be able to afford to buy cars anymore.

Let us talk about food. The average family of four is spending about \$5,300. That goes down to \$4,000. The Democrats in their so-called compassion plan and fighting our reforms just took 3 months of groceries away from the average American family because they have their plan to double taxes on the American people. And, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on.

We have a common-sense plan, a common-sense plan, to reform government and achieve savings for the American people. I mean, who is going to argue with the fact that we should not be giving food stamps to illegal aliens? Who is going to be arguing with the reform that we ought to quit paying twice the market rate for student loans? These are common-sense reforms. And, Mr. Speaker, as this debate continues to unfold, we have to remember what the Democrats really want to do, and that is massive tax increases that are going to leave the next generation with a lower standard of living than we enjoy, and that is unconscionable.

Compassion, Mr. Speaker, ought to be measured by how we treat the next generation and how many paychecks we create, not how many welfare checks we create. Our reform plan will help create paychecks. We have already created 4 million new jobs in this economy. Theirs is more of the same: more government, more spending, tax increases for future generations. There is no compassion there, Mr. Speaker. No compassion whatsoever.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his comments.

And he is so correct. If we do not take these steps to rein in spending, to reform government, to get on this plan that is going to reform this government and begin yielding a savings for the American people, we will see it go from taking 20 percent to 40 percent of our resources. Fiscal stewardship demands that we work to find a way to restrain the growth of government, to begin to roll it back. And it is not easy, as I said earlier. The Democrats spent 40 years building a monument to themselves, a great big bureaucracy; and it takes time to begin to break it apart.

As the gentleman from Texas was talking, I was looking over a chart that had the 12 largest post-war deficits that we have seen in this country. Of course, one of them was 1946, when we were hard at war and fighting and coming back from World War II. Mr. Speaker, these other years, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1984, 1992, 1991, 1976, 1982, 1993, 1990, Democrat control. It is time for us to put this Nation on a track to reform

government, to reduce the bureaucracy, to be certain that money is going into programs to meet needs at the local level; that money is not being soaked up by the bureaucracy that sits in these buildings around Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), who is a leader in education on the Education and Workforce Committee, and she is going to talk with us for just a few moments and dispel a couple of myths pertaining to education funding and talk about what we are trying to do to be certain that young people have the opportunity to dream big dreams, dream big dreams and have great adventures and look forward with hope and opportunity to a future.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for organizing this Special Order again and for helping us bring the facts to the people of this country.

She used a very nice word, "myths." Some people could use much stronger words about the things that are being said about this Deficit Reduction Act. So I think she is being very kind. We need to set the record straight about what is being said about this bill and about what we are actually doing.

The Education and Workforce Committee was given the task to find \$18.1 billion in net savings. Of that \$18.1 billion, we generated \$14.5 billion by making the Federal programs dealing with higher education more efficient and effective.

I did serve many years in higher education. I was a community college president, a university administrator, dealt with higher education programs, with financial aid. So I understand these programs a great deal. And let me tell the Members just in summary what we did. We are helping the students and the families of this country tremendously by what we are doing. We are going to continue to increase student financial aid as college enrollment increases. We are going to see financial aid going up through increases in loan limits and reductions in origination fees. That is going to help students and families. We are going to end the practice that allowed some lenders to collect the minimum of 9.5 percent rate of return on some student loans.

And yet the Democrats have fought these tooth and nail. They all voted against these measures. They do not want to help make access to higher education better for low- and middle-income students like we do. And that is what this is going to do. It is going to generate savings for taxpayers by eliminating waste and inefficiency, trimming subsidies paid to lenders, and place the aid programs on a stable financial foundation. We are going to put a complete and permanent end to practices that have allowed some lenders to collect the minimum 9.5 percent rate of return on some student loans.

That is just simply unfair to the students who are having to borrow money.

It will also reduce student loan fees by 75 percent over 5 years. Student loan borrowers today pay up to 4 percent in loan fees and a 3 percent origination fee. We are going to reduce that origination fee to 1 percent. It also is going to expand student loan borrowing by increasing the amounts for first- and second-year college students. This is going to be a tremendous boon to those students.

It is also going to protect borrowers' credit by requiring lenders to report to all national credit bureaus to ensure students and graduates will be able to take full advantage of the good credit history they have earned through repayment of their Federal student loans. They cannot do that now, and it is a shame because they cannot build a good credit history.

We also, through this bill, improve consumer protection and awareness by eliminating unfair rules that limit options for consolidation borrowers and providing borrowers more information about their loans. We want students to be responsible. We are going to help them be responsible.

The Democrats are opposed to that. It is really mind-boggling to understand why they would oppose all these reforms that we are putting in. One would think they would want to help moderate- and low-income people get a higher education, but they keep throwing stumbling blocks up and saying we are reducing money; we are increasing the amount of money. We make it easier for the neediest students to participate in these programs by simplifying eligibility.

I know when I conducted programs with financial aid, it took a college degree to fill out the forms. So it was a real problem. We are going to improve that.

Taken as a whole, CBO estimates these reforms will save \$14.5 billion over 5 years. That is money going into the pockets of the students and the families that we want to help and other taxpayers.

Spending is out of control, Mr. Speaker. We cannot afford to keep increasing Federal spending at astronomical and unreasonable rates. Contrary to what our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are purporting, we are not finding these savings on the backs of college students. We are going to help college students. These reforms will strengthen student aid programs and expand student benefits.

Everybody needs to support this bill and know that they can go home and say to students trying to get an education, We are helping you with this.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for her comments.

She is exactly right. Reforming the process, reforming the way government does business, making it simple, being certain that we find another way to get

government off people's back, out of their pocketbook, simplify the system so that the money gets to where it is needed, in this case, in education, getting that money into the student loan programs so that students are in the classrooms, so that they have access to those classrooms.

We have been joined by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SCHMIDT), and she is new as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. She comes with a State legislative background from the State of Ohio where she has worked on so many of the health care programs, the reform programs that were needed, and working with Governors. At this time she is going to spend just a couple of moments and talk about some of the reforms that were needed by the Governors and are addressed in this bill.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to keep this very brief. I just came here 64 days ago, and I served on the general assembly and I served on the appropriations committee. And I can tell the Members most States are seeing their budgets being crippled by Medicaid, and Medicaid is tied to the Federal programs. What we have done in this bill is we have a plan to reform government, to reduce spending, not just at the Federal level but at the State level as well.

The gentleman from Texas's (Chairman BARTON) program that addresses the eldercare with Medicaid will really help States initiate programs that truly take care of the elderly who are in need, but force people who are not in need who try to circumvent the system from circumventing that system. And that is so important. That is reforming government. That is reducing spending. That is getting rid of waste, fraud, and abuse. And that is a plan.

Chairman BARTON also has a plan for Medicaid savings on prescription drugs. That is important, because when I came from Ohio and when 85 percent of our budget is crippled by Medicare and education, we need to have help at the Federal level to enact reforms at the State level that will allow us to feed our poor, feed our elderly, educate our children, and not bankrupt our system. That is what this act does.

I am going to vote for it, and I want to applaud the leadership on the Republican side of this aisle for giving us a plan to reform government, reduce spending, and save our future.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), who is going to talk with us about the food stamp program and address some of the myths that we have been hearing about this program. This gentleman has done so much work in the agriculture programs, looking to be certain that we

address the stewardship requirements that our constituents and citizens have for us.

□ 2045

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for holding this special order tonight.

Mr. Speaker, John Adams once said very simply, "Facts are stubborn things." Somebody else once said that you can ignore the facts, you can deny the facts, but in the end, there they are. Tonight we are talking about the facts.

I want to just share with my colleagues some information according to the Office of Management and Budget, because this is pretty shocking. Some of our friends on the left are saying, Well, it is because we are wasting all this money fighting terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, maybe they are right, I do not know. Some of them say, Well, the reason we have a deficit problem is because of tax cuts. Well, I think we can dispel that myth, because let me just share with my colleagues some numbers from the Office of Management and Budget.

Since 2001 through 2005, the inflation rate here in the United States has averaged a little more than 12 percent, total. We have increased spending on science, space, and technology by 21 percent. This Congress has increased spending on transportation by 24 percent. We have increased spending on unemployment benefits by 26 percent; general government, 32 percent; income security programs, or what we would call welfare and other programs we are going to talk about in a minute, have increased by 39 percent. Now, that is at a time when inflation has been a little over 12 percent, so it has increased at triple the inflation rate.

Health care programs, we have increased by 42 percent just since 2001; community development, 71 percent; housing and commerce, 86 percent; international affairs, what some people call mostly foreign aid, has increased by 94 percent.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this area that we are just slashing and burning, education, has increased by 99 percent. The facts are right here, and if anyone would like a copy of the article, if they call my office, I will be happy to send them one.

We talked about facts, and the gentlewoman mentioned food stamps. Now, listen, I think I speak for everyone on both sides of the aisle here in the U.S. House of Representatives and, frankly, I think I speak for all Americans, it is something we take pretty seriously. We do not want anybody to go to bed hungry here in the United States. But I am happy to say that this House, this House leadership, this Budget Committee and the chairman and the members of the Republican Caucus have a plan that will reform government and provide savings for the American taxpayers. Spending has been going up too fast, and we propose to do something about that.

I came here in 1994, and earlier my colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) talked about what we did in 1995 and 1996. One of the things we did that I will always be proud of is, we reformed the welfare system, and we put limits on welfare. We heard some of the same arguments back then, Oh, my gosh, people are going to be thrown into the streets, people will go hungry, this is going to be terrible. Well, let us look at what happened. We cut the welfare caseloads by 50 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I always said, and I really believe this, welfare reform was never about saving money. It was about saving people; it was about saving families; it was about saving children from one more generation of dependency and despair.

Unfortunately, our friends on the left still believe in big government. They somehow believe that big government programs can really solve problems.

Mr. Speaker, we believe people should not go to bed hungry.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his time tonight. I will remind everyone that facts are stubborn things. We know we do not balance the budget by raising taxes and balancing it on the backs of hard-working Americans. You get this deficit under control by cutting spending and promoting economic growth and creating a bright future for future generations.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is once again an honor to come before the House, and we want to give thanks to the Democratic leadership for allowing us to be here one more night.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know, the 30-Something Working Group and hard-working members on this side of the aisle have come to the floor repeatedly, night after night, in some instances, 2 to 3 hours, to inform not only the Members, Mr. Speaker, but also the American people on what is happening to them under this budget. I will tell my colleagues something for them.

As I stand here now on the floor, Mr. Speaker, the Rules Committee is meeting. They are not meeting under the lights of the American people or even in the daylight. They are meeting here at almost, close to 9 o'clock at night to try to figure out how they can come to the floor and put forth a budget that is going to increase lines at veteran hospitals and clinics in rural areas, decrease services to veterans, and also bring up a higher copayment and premiums for veterans to be able to receive health care.

They are meeting now trying to figure out, Mr. Speaker, how poor chil-

dren, who do not have to pay a copayment to get health care, they are trying to figure out how they can explain that to the American people and how they can bring it to the floor and package it in a way that even some moderate Republicans can vote for it.

They are trying to figure out now, Mr. Speaker, they are going to be able to ask Members of this Congress, who have been federalized by the fact that they have been elected to Congress, to watch out for the well-being of the country; and drilling, having oil rigs just miles off the coast of Florida where so many of us here in this country go to these destinations for relaxation.

And also as it relates to even helping our own U.S. economy, people fly from overseas to come over and try to enjoy themselves and, at the same time, bring dollars to the United States. They are trying to figure out how they can go to pristine areas throughout our country and national parks and how they can stick an oil rig in the middle of a national park because special interests want that to happen, not that the American people want it to happen.

They are also trying to figure out, Mr. Speaker, how they can save face, and when I say "they," I am saying the Republican majority, how they can come to this floor and ask Members to vote to increase fees for students, which is going to be handed down to the States and they are going to have to increase fees to students for college education as it relates to loans.

They also are trying to figure out how they are going to say that their budget is better than the Democratic alternative, and it is all about priorities.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason why we are here on the floor tonight. This is the eve of the budget vote. I will tell my colleagues this: I just do not know how, on the majority side, they can swell up about the troops, how they can get teary-eyed, how they can talk about the War on Terror, how they can talk about all of the things that they talk about as it relates to defending our country, and then those very individuals that are defending our country, as we speak, Mr. Speaker, will come back only to have to wait 6 months to see a specialist at the VA.

Where is the money going to come from and the services if you are pulling the rug out from under the veterans?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this is about third-party validators. This is not KENDRICK MEEK, TIM RYAN, BILL DELAHUNT; this is not just us spewing out rhetoric to the American people, Mr. Speaker.

I want to read a letter that I think may be of some interest to the Republican majority as they are all deciding right now how they are going to vote. It is about time you get on your knees, you say your prayers before you go to bed tonight. The Republican majority needs to remember this letter:

"The absolute folly and moral bankruptcy of this plan is apparent." He is

referring to the budget reconciliation package that the Republicans are about ready to pass out of this Chamber.

This gentleman says, "The absolute folly and moral bankruptcy of this plan is apparent to the United States Senate, who voted to bar funding for it from the appropriations bill now in conference.

"The VFW," I say to my friends, "urges the Congress to put a stop to the wartime assault on past and present warriors who have fought for and continue to defend our country."

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is from the VFW.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. "Understand that this situation is totally unacceptable to the VFW and its 2.4 million members and auxiliaries. We will do what is necessary to protect, in Lincoln's words, 'He who bore the battle, and his widow, and his orphan.' These words are marked on the front of the VA headquarters building. I urge you to take them to heart. Sincerely, Robert E. Wallace, Executive Director, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Washington Office."

We are not making this up. This is the VFW.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, will the gentleman from Ohio give that to the Clerk so that we can enter it into the RECORD.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I will enter the letter into the RECORD at this time.

NOVEMBER 7, 2005.

ALL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: The absolute folly and moral bankruptcy of this plan is apparent to the United States Senate, who voted to bar funding for it from the appropriation bill now in conference. We have heard, however, that the House Leadership fully intends to strip this provision from the bill, and require the VA to execute this witch-hunt of a review.

The VFW urges the Congress to put a stop to this wartime assault on past and present warriors who have fought for, and continue to defend our country. Understand that this situation is totally unacceptable to the VFW, and its 2.4 million members and auxiliaries. We will do what is necessary to protect, in Lincoln's words, "He who bore the battle, and his widow, and his orphan." These words are marked on the front of the VA headquarters building. I urge you to take them to heart.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. WALLACE,
Executive Director,
VFW Washington Office.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen is that historians are going to look at this moment right now in the U.S. Congress; they are going to look at this very moment, as we are on the floor right now, and the Rules Committee, they are meeting behind closed doors, at night, in the dark, making decisions that are going to affect the American people, the everyday American people. It is going to affect them.