

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Mr. Speaker, the other body also has had a bipartisan majority in favor of ANWR. Indeed, this Congress, if I recall correctly, actually passed ANWR in the 1990s, and President Clinton vetoed it. So this is an issue that is well known, well discussed, well explored.

I have no complaints that my friends on the other side of the aisle who oppose ANWR have been very successful, very skillful and very consistent in using the legislative process to their advantage. They have every right to do so. I am surprised at the outrage now that the proponents, who, after all, do represent the majority in both bodies, and have a President who shares their view of this issue has finally managed to use the legislative process to its advantage.

□ 0215

We would not be dealing here with ANWR if our good friends on the other side had not resorted to every single expedient to keep us from getting it passed. Having done that, I do not think they can claim with any legitimacy when we finally are able to do that.

I am very proud it is on this bill. I think it is important for the country's energy security, and I appreciate the Appropriations Committee working in this fashion to get it on.

We have also talked a great deal tonight about avian flu, and that is an interesting topic and an important topic and one, frankly, where we could face a very difficult situation in our own country.

I would just point out to my friends that we do continue to reserve the right for people to sue if wrongful action takes place. We have only appropriated, as was pointed out, half of what the President has requested so that we can come back, frankly, and consider this again. And I suspect we will look at this issue not only in terms of finance but liability and administration of the programs as we move forward. So I do not think our debate is final, but I do think it is important that we move ahead, that we appropriate these funds, that we send a signal that we are serious about this and we begin to prepare the country.

However, as important as ANWR and avian flu funds are, they are secondary to the nature and purpose of the legislation, and I regret we did not have more discussion on this tonight. This bill is fundamentally about supporting our troops in the field; supporting our husbands, wives, sons, and daughters as they prosecute a war against hardened terrorists who would not blink at killing innocent civilians and, frankly, thousands and potentially millions of Americans. This is about supporting our military while overseas, on deployment, and engaged in combat. This is a critically important piece of good bipartisan legislation. This is legislation,

frankly, that sends a powerful signal to our adversaries around the world and a powerful signal to our friends as well.

More importantly, it is a recognition and a signal to the men and women that wear the uniform of the United States that not only defend us each and every day but also spread and represent our values around the world in a way that is quite unique in world history and one which, on both sides of the aisle, I know, we are extraordinarily proud of. It is a good bill. It is an important bill. The rule allows the bill to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I urge that we support the rule and support the underlying bill.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, if anyone needed evidence that this Congress is being managed in an incompetent and corrupt fashion, tonight's debate is it.

At 2 o'clock in the morning we are finally taking up some of the most important defense bills of the year, only to find them burdened with irrelevant, special-interest measures that have nothing to do with the underlying legislation. Pharmaceutical companies, oil companies, and Lord knows what other special interests are probably smiling at this late hour, but the average taxpayer back home should be ashamed of what we are doing tonight, especially in the name of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines.

We have just learned that many of these special interest provisions were added in the dark of night, with no notice even to the conferees. What are they afraid of? Why don't they want us to read and understand the added language? Why not let the public see what is really going on? It was not enough for the Republican leadership to almost completely exclude any real bipartisan discussion or debate in conference, and to so radically short-circuit the democratic process that this year's process may mark an all-time low in the history of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, as our troops risk their lives to promote democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, we should not be degrading our democracy here at home. I strongly support the troops and the many excellent provisions in the defense authorization and appropriations bills on their behalf. We should honor their sacrifice by passing legislation for them, not using them as a shield for special interests. We should also honor them by refusing the \$4 billion cut in the defense budget that was inserted in this bill in order to fund the extraneous provisions. You didn't hear about that defense cut, did you, while the Republicans were bragging on their efforts on defense.

The only reason these special interest provisions have been added is that Republican leadership knows that they could not pass in the light of day, when the public is allowed to see what we are doing. These provisions could not pass on their own strength, in either day or night.

Given the few minutes that we have been allowed to read these conference reports of many hundreds of pages, no one on the House floor tonight really knows what is contained in these bills because all normal House procedures have broken down. Rumors are rampant that other embarrassments have been added to worthy defense bills, simply because they are viewed as "must pass" legisla-

tion. We simply don't have time to verify or debunk these rumors. The only safe vote tonight for the American taxpayer is a "no" vote. Let's stay in session a few more days, even though the Christmas holiday approaches, and do the job right. Our troops deserve no less.

Mr. SCHWARTZ of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a strong supporter of our Armed Forces, a strong supporter of our troop's efforts in the war on terror and a member who believes we can and will achieve victory in Iraq. However, the amalgamation with the DoD Appropriations Bill of the act allowing exploration and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve is an act which raises disingenuousness to an art form. There are, apparently, no limits on the maneuvers the proponents of ANWR drilling will attempt in order to despoil one of the last truly wild and un sullied wilderness areas in the United States. For those of us who are legitimately concerned about the Abysmally low opinion the people of the United States hold of their Congress, they need look only at this attempt to admix the question of oil drilling in a pristine wilderness with the funding of our armed services. If it is the sense of the Congress that it is appropriate to open ANWR for oil exploration, put the issue to an up or down vote, a vote on ANWR only, not a vote that can only be described as a murky obfuscation. Oppose this rule so we all have the opportunity to vote on a clean defense appropriations bill.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 1932, DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005

Mr. PUTNAM, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-363) on the resolution (H. Res. 640) waiving points of order against the conference report to accompany the Senate bill (S. 1932) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 640 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 640

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (S.

1932) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

Sec. 2. Section 2 of House Resolution 619 is amended to read as follows: "On any legislative day of the second session of the One Hundred Ninth Congress from January 3, 2006, through January 30, 2006, the Speaker may dispense with organizational and legislative business."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

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

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 640 provides for consideration of the conference report on Senate 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration. As a member of both the Rules Committee and the Budget Committee and a conferee on this conference report, I am pleased to bring this resolution to the floor for its consideration.

This is a historic moment for the House, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been a most unusual year for our Nation and for its government. It has culminated in this Congress being in session late into the year. We are here in the final hours of the First Session of the 109th Congress, working to complete the business of the people and ensure that our government provides opportunity and security for today and for future generations.

We are here at this unusual hour on this unusual day to bring to a close what has been a year of remarkable accomplishments for the 109th Congress. We passed major legislation such as the energy bill, the highway bill, and border security, to name just a few. Additionally, the House Appropriations Committee completed passage in the House of all funding bills prior to the July 4 recess. Chairman LEWIS kept his promise to complete the appropriations process in regular order and avoid an omnibus bill. I am impressed by and proud of the work of this House and all that it has done this year in moving so much important legislation.

Our Nation also has endured a year of unusual natural disasters. The Gulf Coast States, including my home State of Florida, have faced not one but three major hurricanes that have caused some of the worst destruction this Nation has seen, not to mention the unprecedented destruction that our friends and neighbors in east Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama

have faced. This Congress has stepped up to the task of providing recovery and reconstruction funds for the devastated areas. We have passed two supplemental appropriations bills thus far and are set to provide additional relief when we pass the Department of Defense appropriations bill. The unforeseen events in the gulf changed the focus of the last half of the year and will continue to have an impact on this Nation for years to come.

This change in budgetary focus brings me to the legislation we are set to consider when this rule passes. For the first time since 1997, the congressional budget resolution included deficit reduction instructions to authorize committees to find and achieve mandatory program savings for a more accountable government. It does this by finding smarter ways to spend and slowing the rate of growth of government. This deficit reduction provides a downpayment toward hurricane recovery and reconstruction costs and, most importantly, puts us on a path toward long-term fiscal health.

The Deficit Reduction Act fights back against the out-of-control growth of mandatory programs that are set to consume 62 percent of our total budget in the next 10 years if left unchecked. The conference report will stimulate reform of entitlement programs, many of which are outdated, inefficient, and costly. I am pleased that the legislation begins a longer-term effort at slowing the growth of entitlement spending.

In another unusual occurrence this year, those on the other side of the aisle called for deficit reduction. However, their proposals increased taxes on the American family. I am pleased to say that this House has delivered deficit reduction without raising the tax burden of the working American. Our goal is to control government spending so Americans can keep more of their own money instead of sending more to the government. The authorizing committees from both Chambers have worked hard to find savings within their individual jurisdictions. They did this using their own individual expertise through regular order. And I commend the authorizing chairman and committee members for their aggressive oversight that has yielded \$40 billion in efficiencies. The conference report allows programs and agencies to weed out abuse, fraud, and inefficiency so that we can channel more Federal dollars to programs that succeed and effectively serve their intended populations.

I congratulate Chairman NUSSLE and Senator GREGG, along with all the members and staff from the Budget Committees, for their hard worked preparing the deficit reduction package. I look forward to passing this reform bill and reaffirming sound oversight and fiscal accountability here in Washington. This conference report is a step forward towards smarter and more competent, responsive government.

I urge Members to support the rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed and sad to say that the content of the budget, and the way we are approaching it, confirms the fears of the American people instead of their hopes.

The bill the Republicans reported less than an hour ago is a bill that no one has seen, but one that will have far-reaching impact on the future of our country. We do not know everything it does, and yet we are being asked to vote on it before the ink is even dry.

Our form of government requires the trust of the people, a trust that this leadership has not earned. Being asked to take the Federal budget on faith, in a year when the majority has itself lost faith in the values that matter most to our democracy, integrity, honesty and openness, is simply asking too much.

One thing we do know about this budget is that its very foundation is fundamentally dishonest. The majority has titled it the Deficit Reduction Act when the facts clearly show that the bill, when combined with the Republican tax giveaway to the rich, will actually increase the deficit by billions of dollars. Supporters will also claim that they have addressed criticisms of the legislation, but they are not being honest either.

It is true that the leadership was shamed by the public, the Democrats, and even by Members of their own party into abandoning some of the most egregious attacks on the less fortunate. But the fact remains that the bill still takes over \$1 billion from child support services. It cuts education spending by \$16.2 billion so that our Nation's children will find it harder to go to college and to realize their dreams. And it slashes Medicaid by \$5 billion, putting health care for those who need it further out of reach.

The budget does all this while adding to the deficit and giving away tens of billions of dollars to the rich and the super rich in tax cuts, dramatic cuts that middle-class Americans will not share in, but will be asked to pay for.

Is this really what our constituents sent us here to do, to spend the holiday season taking from the needy so that we can give even more to those who need it the least?

Mr. Speaker, this year has repeatedly shown us the consequences of poor leadership. We saw a natural disaster turn into a national tragedy because of failed government response, casting doubt on our readiness to respond to future challenges. We saw self-interest run amok, as top lawmakers violated the people's trust and were indicted

and forced to step down in the wake of scandal.

We saw our troops and the people of Iraq struggle heroically to lift not just the weight of a vicious insurgency but also the burden of poor planning and unfulfilled promises from the White House.

And here again today, the American people will be made victims of unscrupulous, disingenuous leadership.

On the opening day of the 109th Congress, almost 1 year ago, the first act of this leadership was to try to destroy the House ethics committee under the guise of ethical reform.

Unfortunately, my colleagues in the majority have committed to ending this session of Congress on the same sad note with which they began it, by employing unacceptable, unprecedented tactics and trying to deceive the American people out of pure political self-interest at the expense of this body and our shared values.

We cannot afford another year like this. We need to start investing in America's future, not letting those in power invest only in their friends at America's expense. It is time for real reform, for real integrity, for real leadership. It is time for a change, and together we can do better.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), my colleague on the Rules Committee.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, our friends on the other side of the aisle asked us, Were we sent here to do this?

Frankly, I can only speak for my district and tell Members that is exactly what I was asked to do. When I talk to my constituents at home, they tell me government is too big, taxes are too high. Do something about it.

We all know the numbers here, and we are going to hear a lot of sound and fury tonight about how horrific and dramatic this bill is.

□ 0230

In reality, it is not. We are talking about a little over \$40 billion out of a \$14.5 trillion revenue stream over the next 5 years, less than one-half of 1 percent.

We will not cut spending. Spending, instead of going up annually at 6.4 percent a year, will go up at 6.3 percent. We will not cut Medicaid. Instead of going up at 7.3 percent, it will go up at a little over 7 percent.

This is, though, an important first step, where we begin to deal with non-discretionary entitlement spending. That is going to be, I think, the big challenge over the next decade. I am very proud that this Congress has begun to grapple with that problem. I look forward to the process as we continue this in the years ahead.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, and meanwhile, the Republicans are stealing from the stockings and taking away the hopes and dreams of aspiring students, slashing safety nets that help middle-income households get by, and kicking seniors to the curb with this budget package that is contrary to everything about the true spirit of Christmas as I understand it.

People of all faiths know that budgets are not just about numbers or percentages. There is no more moral document that we in Congress work on than the budget. What we choose to pay for and what we choose to cut are moral choices about how to run our country, reflections of the values of our society. And it takes a special brand of callousness, in the day or the middle of the night, to propose big cuts to Medicaid, student loans and foster care, as we believe this budget does, when the needs of our country are greater today than they were just a few short months ago.

When the need in the gulf coast rose, the need in the rest of the country did not subside. It is not the students who are responsible for historic deficits. Poor people did not cause our fiscal decline.

If we want to get our fiscal house in order, then we should start with the tax cuts that mostly benefit the wealthiest households. Millionaires are getting an average of \$103,000 in tax cuts this year because of cuts from 2001 and 2003, and next year they are going to get another \$20,000 as two more tax cuts take effect. And the Republican bills passed another \$108 billion in tax cuts this year. Tell me, who is going to pay for those?

Deficits matter. But the one we should be talking about today is the moral deficit of those who would balance tax cuts for the wealthy on the backs of the working poor. I believe, as best said by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that, "the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little."

Mr. Speaker, tonight we have a choice about the type of leaders we want to be and what our country stands for. We can decide to do the morally responsible thing. We can do what is right. Mr. Speaker, together, America can do better.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind my friends on the other side of the aisle that this is the deficit reduction package, and we will have another opportunity to consider the tax reconciliation package. But their references to the tax cuts or tax reform or tax relief, and I am very proud of the work that the Budget Committee and all the other committees have done, is not in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. RYUN), a colleague on the Budget Committee.

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, when I go back to my district, the people in Kansas want to know what we are doing to control the national debt. I tell them the Republicans are working to find savings in a bloated Federal Government. Then they hear from Democrats that we are cutting vital programs, such as Medicaid and food stamps.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if it were up to the other side, entitlement programs would continue to grow at an unsustainable rate. Within 10 years, we would see the entitlement programs taking up 62 percent of the Federal budget.

If we grow the government as our friends on the left would like us to, we will be faced with three choices: one, we would have to possibly raise taxes; or, two, eliminate all Federal programs other than entitlements; or, three, we will face an ever-expanding national debt that will threaten our entire economy.

There are no easy solutions to this problem, Mr. Speaker, but if we do not act to reform these programs now while we have time, the problem will only grow worse as the national debt will only grow larger.

Today, by passing the Deficit Reduction Act, those of us who believe in limited government are taking the first step to reverse a culture of spending. Today, we are standing behind our belief that bigger government is not better government. Today, we are making commonsense reforms that will result in less waste, fraud, and abuse.

The Deficit Reduction Act is a small step to rein in Federal spending, but I think it is an important step. As we all return home for the Christmas season, let us give Americans some good news. Let us tell them Congress acted responsibly to control Federal spending. Let us pass this rule and pass the Deficit Reduction Act.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I can understand why this budget bill is coming up at 2:35 in the morning Washington time. If I had a bill this bad, I would want it to come up at 2:30 in the morning as well. I think the American people, those at least who are watching at this time of day, perhaps out in Hawaii, if nowhere else in America, ought to know what this does in combination with everything else Republicans are doing.

This bill, along with its tax cuts, \$220,000 a year, in fact, to those making \$1 million a year in dividend income, will make a sham out of the American principles of shared sacrifice during time of war. This budget bill that the House is about to vote on will actually increase the college education costs of the sons and daughters of our Iraqi war troops in combat right at this moment by up to \$28,000, up to a \$28,000 student tax on the backs of men and women who are this morning bearing the burden for fighting America's wars. I do

not know how you could get more unfair than that.

The fact is that the Republicans' claim of supporting compassionate conservatism now comes clear at 2:30 in the morning. They are going to provide cuts for working families and the poor and cuts for the rich. The difference is the cuts for the poor and working families are going to be cuts to the Women, Infants, and Children program that helps low-income children get prenatal care. It is going to cut funding that helps disabled children get a better education. It is going to cut funding that helps local school districts pay for working families' educations.

And, yes, in just a few weeks, they will come back and also have cuts to be fairer to the wealthy. They will cut their taxes by billions of dollars. Again, this is good news for those making \$1 million a year in dividend income. You are going to get a \$220,000 a year tax cut.

What is fair about that, given that we are going to have a student tax on the backs of sons and daughters of Iraqi war troops? We are going to cut special education. In fact, this is \$4 billion short of what the Republicans said they wanted to do. No Child Left Behind, let us blow that out the window along with the phrase "compassionate conservatism."

This bill, combined with the other cuts we are going to vote on this morning, will see that 200,000 low-income children would find their tutoring assistance eliminated. This bill throws out the window help for seniors and people of all ages around the country struggling to pay their high utility bills this winter.

This bill and the Republican leadership make Scrooge look like a philanthropist. I would challenge them to show me one major religion in the world that preaches at any time of the day, whether it is 2:30 in the morning or 2:30 in the afternoon, I would challenge, Mr. Speaker, the Members of the Republican Party only the floor right now to stand up and tell me what major religion in the world asks that we take the most from those who have the least and ask nothing from those who have the most. That is what the combination of this budget bill, along with their tax cuts and their spending cuts, is going to do.

So I think what the American people, at least those that are up at this time of day, are seeing, is all the rhetoric is not matched by the record of the Republicans. Compassionate conservatism? These budgets, these bills are neither conservative nor compassionate. Leave No Child Behind, this bill is going to leave millions of children behind, along with seniors and a lot of hardworking families trying to pay their bills every month and provide a better life for their children.

As far as being strong on national defense, you know, you look at what the Republicans are doing this morning,

they are going to cut \$8.5 billion out of President Bush's defense bill. I wonder what Republicans would say if Democrats proposed that?

Republicans are hurting the American people, and this is wrong, at any time of the day.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in amongst the theology you would never know that the Department of Education programs have skyrocketed since 1994, the Department of Veterans Affairs' budgets have skyrocketed since 1994, investment in our defense continues to go up, support for our troops and their training, as well as their widows and loved ones and the level of support there, continue to go up, and overall mandatory spending in this budget continues to go up.

It is the rate of growth that we are here to discuss, and the fact that it is consuming our overall budget, something that some aspects of the other side of the aisle have expressed concern about, which is getting our arms around the budget deficit. This Deficit Reduction Act offers them the opportunity to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Florida, who could also have mentioned that spending on Federal health research has almost tripled in the decade of Republican rule in this House of Representatives. So I am proud of the accomplishments we have made in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of debate tonight about the growth in the national debt, and certainly it is something we are very interested in. In the debate on the previous rule, accomplishments were pointed out on the discretionary spending side. That is spending that is controlled by the appropriations process. But we will never get a handle on deficit reduction, we will never be able to accomplish this challenge of the growth in the national debt unless we get a handle on our mandatory spending, those entitlement programs that are on autopilot. They spend year in and year out, whether there is an appropriation bill or not.

Mandatory programs will grow this year at a growth rate of over twice the inflation rate. If we do nothing about the mandatory spending programs, they will increase from their current 54 percent of the Federal budget to an unbelievable, unchecked 62 percent of total Federal spending in a decade. So clearly this is the key area in budget deficit reduction, and that is why we have a plan to implement reforms to provide savings for the American people in the area of mandatory programs.

One example, of course, would be the Medicaid program, a program which Governors, Democrat and Republican, from around the country have come to Congress about, saying please help us

to save this valuable program by slowing the growth rate. Under the underlying bill that this rule would provide, Medicaid will grow at a rate of 7.5 percent over the next 10 years, instead of a rate of 7.7 percent. For these reasons, I support the rule and the underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is entitled the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. What it should really be entitled is the Deficit Increase Act of 2006. It reminds me of the old joke of Monseigneur O'Malley, who goes up into the pulpit on Sunday and says, "On Wednesday night in the church hall, Father Murphy will lecture on the evils of gambling. On Thursday night in the church hall, bingo."

Here tonight we are being lectured by the Republicans on the need to reduce the deficit. How? Well, we are going to cut Medicare for the poorest in our country. We are going to cut Medicaid for the poorest in our country. We are going to cut education programs for the kids who need it the most across our country. And they are going to cut out \$41 billion from the poor and the working class in our country who need it the most right before the holidays. And then their plan is to come back here in January with a \$56 billion tax break for millionaires, dividend cuts all across the board for the wealthiest in our country.

So what we are going to have here is a lecture tonight on the need to cut and to ensure that the poorest sacrifice, and then in January, bingo, \$56 billion in cuts for the wealthiest in our country, increasing, if you can do the math here, I am not sure the Republicans can do math, \$41 billion in cuts, \$56 billion in tax breaks, mostly for the wealthiest, means you have spent \$15 billion more and dug the hole even deeper.

□ 0245

The Republicans do not understand that they are in violation of the first law of holes, which is when you are in one stop digging. And so what they do is in order to cover for a tax break for the wealthiest, they cut the poorest and they simultaneously increase the deficit for subsequent generations all at the same time. And when do they do it? At quarter to 3 in the morning, when the people who are going to be hurt the most are suffering. And when are they going to tell the people who are going to benefit? Next year around campaign time when they, once again, remind them that if you want to get tax breaks for the wealthiest in America, then vote yourself a Republican in Congress, because that is what tonight is all about: a hypocrisy coefficient at historic highs. And tonight, if you want to ensure that we protect those most in need in our country, vote "no"

on this hypocritical Republican attempt to increase the deficit in our country while calling it the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), a member of the Budget Committee.

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of this rule and also the underlying bill that will come up later on. I am a CPA. I have spent 30-plus years in business dealing with clients and families and other businesses. Our family business or our family home runs by a budget; it cannot run at a deficit very long. Our businesses cannot, certainly State and local governments cannot do it. About the only one that can is the Federal Government. Simply because the Federal Government does run a deficit or can does not mean it should.

The only way to whack down a deficit is to cut spending and raise revenue. Tonight we are about cutting spending; actually, cutting a reduction in the growth in spending. The problem with spending, and I suspect even my good colleagues on the other side of the aisle use the phrase "we need to cut Federal spending." It rolls off the tongues very easily, but it is, quite frankly, very hard to do it. It is hard to get that done. We have been at this since February, and it is going to be hard.

It is hard because every single dollar that comes out of the Treasury has a constituent attached to it, has a special interest group attached to it. If we listened to much of the rhetoric here tonight, every single one of the reductions in the rate of growth that we talked about affects a program that is the single most important program in the entire Federal Government. Logic does not allow that to happen. We cannot have every single program that we do in this Federal Government be the most important. We have to set some priorities, and reducing the rate of growth that this bill does is an appropriate way to do it.

I would also like to respond to the religion issue that was brought up earlier. I cannot speak to all religions, but I can speak to the faith that I follow. I am a reasonably good student of the New Testament and there is plenty of evidence, plenty of scripture where Christ instructs me to take my wealth, resources, and benefits and help those who are less fortunate, help the poor and needy, all of those kinds of things. I cannot find anywhere where the Christ tells me to take money from everybody else and fix those programs, fix those problems for the needy in our country. So I am curious as to a religion that might have a concept like that.

So I speak tonight in favor of the rule and also the underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, a lot of euphemisms on the other side, such as the cuts in the rates of growth, suggesting that that is just a neutral act when it takes place. They have cut about \$40 billion out of this budget in this package that we are going to vote on in a little while. Twelve billion of that comes from student loan accounts, and about \$7 billion, 70 percent, almost \$8 billion of that, 70 percent of those cuts come off the backs of students and their parents.

They increase the cost of college education over the next few years by almost \$8 billion. That means that students that are struggling to finish their college education, to acquire a college education so they can participate in this economic system, will have thousands of dollars added on to the cost of the borrowing that they must engage in. They must engage in that because the cost of education is stripping the ability of middle income families to supply that money for that education for those children. So the Republicans' idea is to make college more expensive. At a time when we worry whether we will have enough students graduating from college to meet the needs of the economy, their idea is make it more expensive.

Yes, the Democrats do have a better idea, and that is to try to open up the access to college and lessen the cost of college.

Then, if that is not enough, if that is not enough, if you get to the other part of the program like Medicaid, they say they are going to reduce the cost of increase. Well, that cost of increase is done by increasing the premiums and the copayments to the poorest people in this country. Those premiums and copayments is about \$19 billion over 5 years, \$100 billion over 10 years. And if it is not enough that they increase your copayments and their premiums, then they take away the benefits. They are going to take away eyeglasses from elderly people, hearing aids from elderly people, and if Tiny Tim was here today they plan to take away his crutches. That is the Republicans at Christmastime: Take away the crutches of old people, the hearing aids of old people and eyeglasses, because those are the benefits that are listed and the benefits that they plan to cut to the poorest people who need health care.

They are going to add on billions of dollars to the States because of the changes in the work requirements, unfunded mandates. So you can talk about slowing the growth, but the growth and the costs to parents of students going to college, the growth in the costs of people who need health care who are poor, the growth in the cost of people who need those services

under health care, all of those increases. Now, maybe that does not sound like a tax increase to you, but if you are poor and you are trying to pay for your health care and it costs you more, that kind of looks like a tax increase. If you are going to add on thousands of dollars to student loans, that is a tax increase.

What we have here is one cruel, one inhumane, one insensitive budget by the Republican Party.

STUDENT AID

The Republican conference report cuts \$12.7 billion from the federal student aid programs in order to help finance tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans.

This Republican raid on student aid represents the single largest cut to the student aid programs ever.

70 percent of the gross savings generated by this bill are achieved by continuing the practice of forcing student and parent borrowers to pay excessive interest rates in and by assessing new charges on parent borrowers.

This bill puts college even further out of reach for millions of American students and families.

To make matters even worse, the Republican bill puts billions of dollars in student aid at risk by cutting all of the critical funds (\$2.2 billion) used to carry out and administer the student aid programs.

As a result, this bill puts the safe delivery of Pell Grant scholarships, loans and other aid to millions of students at risk.

In the face of rising college costs and soaring loan debt, Republicans have failed to provide any real relief for rising tuition costs.

Since 2001, tuition at 4-year public colleges has risen by 40 percent.

And now to make matters even worse Republicans are going to make it even harder for families to pay for college.

Democrats have a better idea—to make college more affordable without costing taxpayers an extra dime.

We can do it by cutting excessive government subsidies paid to banks and lenders in the student loan industry, and using the savings to make student loans more affordable than they are today and to boost the Pell Grant scholarship.

By the year 2020, the United States is projected to face a shortage of up to 12 million college educated workers, directly threatening America's economic strength.

If we want to keep the American economy strong in the face of fierce global competition, then we must not allow financial barriers to prevent even a single qualified student from going to college.

American should be investing in the skills of a new generation of students so they can prosper and make America's economy stronger.

Democrats believe in an America that works for everyone, not just the few.

That's why Democrats oppose this Raid on Student Aid.

WELFARE

The anti-family nature of this bill is also proven by its appalling treatment of the working poor.

The poverty level in America is a national disgrace.

America has more and deeper poverty than any other developed country except Mexico.

And the number of Americans living in poverty has increased for the fourth year in a row. So today, 37 million Americans—many of them full-time workers—live in poverty.

That's 13 percent of all Americans and 1 in every 3 poor people in this country is a child. This is a disgrace.

Yet the Republicans have included in this bill a welfare proposal that is clearly bad for America's poorest families by forcing states to adopt policies that will make it even harder for the working poor to become self-sufficient, to move off welfare, and to stay off welfare.

We cannot judge welfare reform primarily by the number of people on or off of welfare assistance but by how many families still live in poverty.

And studies show that many former welfare recipients remain poor and lack a steady job after leaving welfare.

Welfare reform will be successful only when families leave welfare for decent jobs and economic stability.

That's why the Democratic proposals for welfare reform have focused on giving states the flexibility, incentives, and resources to implement innovative programs and address individual needs and differences.

Unfortunately, the welfare legislation in this conference report moves us farther away from making work pay and hurts America's working poor.

The welfare provisions in this report impose massive new mandates that will force states to shift resources away from workers and their families.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates the cost to states of meeting the new welfare requirements is \$8.4 billion over the next 5 years.

And CBO expects states to try and avoid some of these costs by increasing the use of sanctioning and imposing new barriers to poor families seeking assistance.

If states do adopt such policies, the likely result is that the number of children and families living in deep poverty will continue to increase.

Matters will be made worse for states and families by the grossly inadequate child care funding in this conference agreement—even though we know that access to stable child care is essential for parents' efforts to stay employed.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the child care funding in this bill is \$11.5 billion short of what is needed to meet the new work requirements and ensure that current child care funding keeps pace with inflation.

The consequence is that even by the Administration's estimations, more than 300,000 children will be cut from this program over the next 5 years.

That's why the welfare approach in this bill has been opposed by Governors and Mayors across this country.

And why the Senate has been unwilling to adopt this unwise approach.

Yet, apparently, a backroom deal struck by the Republican Leadership in the House and the Senate is trying to hide irresponsible welfare legislation as part of this much larger conference agreement.

House Republicans have unsuccessfully tried to get this anti-family welfare legislation passed into law for 3 years and finally decided the only way they could do it was in the middle of the night when America is asleep.

That the Republican party considers themselves the party of family values is a joke and the legislation before us makes that painfully clear.

Do what's right for all of America's families and vote no.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, we have run through the gospels and now we are on to Dickens. We have heard it all. We would take away the crutches, the eyeglasses, and the hearing aids from Tiny Tim. I guess the other side would just tax him.

I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Education and Work Force Committee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, if this bill was anywhere near as difficult and as bad as my friends would have described, there would be no Member of the House who would vote for it.

Now, I think all of us realize that our Nation is going broke. You would argue that we are not taxing enough. Most of my colleagues and I would argue that we are spending too much. And if you look at Federal revenues over the last 10 years, 20 years, you will see that there is never an increasing rise in Federal revenues.

The problem we have is we have a spending problem. We are spending money that we do not have year in and year out, and we are passing those bills on to our kids and theirs. It is not fair. We decided we are going to take a bite at the apple, and we are going to try to do something about it.

Before us we are going to have about a \$41 billion deficit reduction program. It is going to reform many Federal programs to provide savings to reduce the budget deficit. In my committee we are going to take \$16.2 billion of reforms to lower that deficit, about \$3.6 billion of that will come in the form of strengthening the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, raising the premiums on employers who pay into that system, and making some other changes that will produce those savings.

The higher education side is rather unique. We are able to increase benefits for American students while at the same time reducing and reforming those programs to save \$12.6 billion. We keep the current law fixed interest rates into the foreseeable future for the loan program. The consolidation program stays at the same interest rates. We phased out origination fees for those in the Pell program from 3 percent down to 1 percent over the next 5 years. We increase loan limits for students, freshmen, up to \$3,500 per year in guaranteed programs. The second year, we increase it to \$4,500. We eliminate the single holder rule. We increase loan rates and loan volumes for graduate students. At the same time, we reform the programs and the fees that we pay to lenders. We eliminate the 9.5 percent loans and eliminate recycling. We eliminate floor income, we reduce the

insurance rate for the lenders from 98 to 97 percent, and we give guarantors incentives for rehabilitating loans rather than to put them into the consolidation program. This is a good deal for American students.

On top of all that, there is \$3.7 billion in this bill to start an academic competitive grant for Pell-eligible students who are interested in math, science, and specialized languages. We all know that we have problems with enough mathematicians and scientists in America, and this program is aimed at Pell-eligible students trying to encourage them into math and science and giving them significant grants in their junior and senior year to make sure they graduate as mathematicians and scientists.

All of this is being done on behalf of students, while saving, producing savings of \$12.6 billion to help reduce the deficit.

Now, I think all of us have a job to do when it comes to reducing this deficit. Again, my colleagues want to raise taxes. I do not think that we have a revenue problem; I think we have a spending problem. And I think reforming these Federal programs, especially in a way where we can provide additional benefits for students, is a win-win for the American people. It is a good bill. We ought to vote for it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, what irony. This is the Deficit Reduction Act. We just heard; what was the deficit in November? \$83 billion. You have the gall to come here and talk about deficit reduction? \$83 billion in one month. Your priorities are clear. You do not bring up the tax bill tonight because you are afraid to combine a bill that cuts \$20 billion, over half of which goes to people making 1 million bucks a year, with these budget cuts.

Mr. Speaker, we scared you off, some of your intentions on child support, which would have resulted in \$24 billion less over the next 10 years collected for the kids of America. You have now reduced it to \$8.4 billion. That is how much less children are going to receive. And the irony is that the States that are hurt the most are the States that are best performing. And then when it comes to welfare reform, in the 1990s, many of us worked together to change our laws. We did it in a way that provided adequate child care and Medicaid. President Clinton would not sign the bill until those provisions were in there.

You could not get an immediate welfare reform package through the Senate, so what you have done is to stick it in this bill. That is what you are doing.

□ 0300

The child care provision, only about \$1 billion. It would take \$11 billion for

the States, if the States met the work requirements, \$11 billion more in child care, and you do not help at all in terms of health care. What you do is change the formulas so that there is going to be on the States a cost in order to meet this in the next 5 years of over \$8 billion.

So you are going to hurt the States, you are going to hurt kids of a parent or parents who are moving from welfare to work, and you are going to provide totally inadequate child care for those people who are moving from welfare to work.

Your priorities are very clear, very clear, a tax cut for millionaires and hurting the kids of the United States of America. Frankly, I do not care what time of the year it is; it is bad every day of the year to do that, and I hope we will turn this down.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I share the gentleman's concern about the budget deficit. That is why I am proud to announce that the deficit is \$134 billion less than what was estimated a year ago, thanks to the strength of the economy.

I understand his concern about the ongoing growth of mandatory programs, which is why we have in place a deficit reduction package that helps us to get our arms around the fact that two-thirds of the Federal budget will be on auto pilot if we do not act.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to my friend from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON).

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

I just want to say, if we look at what our budget has done in terms of Federal student aid, for student grants it has nearly doubled in 10 years. For Federal loans, it has gone up about 30 or 40 percent. There are more tax benefits than ever before for education.

For the Medicaid that we are getting accused of slashing to death, we are debating here a difference in growth of 7.7 percent versus 7.5 percent.

The spending growth in SSI has been increasing at an annual rate of about 4.4 percent, and it has gone from \$29 billion to \$36 billion in the last 5 years.

The spending growth in foster care in 2000 was \$5.7 billion, and today it is \$6.8 billion. The spending growth in child support has gone from about \$1 billion in 2000 to \$4 billion today.

We keep hearing about tax cuts for the rich. Why do people with more money get more tax reductions when you look to change tax policy? That is because they are paying the taxes.

What are the results of these economic decisions which we are making sometimes and too often on a non-partisan basis because we do not get the support that we feel we should get from both parties on this? But what are the results of this?

Gross domestic product, we have had an increase of 4.3 percent in the third quarter. Real gross domestic product

has increased about 3 percent for the last 10 consecutive quarters.

For employment, 215,000 new jobs were added in November alone, and this year so far 1.8 million jobs. The unemployment rate was 5 percent in November. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent in June of 2003 to the current 5 percent level.

Productivity has increased at a robust 4.7 percent annualized in the third quarter. Manufacturing has been expanding for 30 consecutive months. Services have been expanding for 32 consecutive months.

Business investment from its low in 2003 has been increasing for over 24 percent, and home sales, certainly the barometer of health in the United States of America, everybody's dream to own their own home, and new home sales rose to another high in October. Sales of existing homes, which account for 85 percent of all home sales, retreated in October but remain close to record levels.

The economy is robust. These policies speak for themselves. If you do not confiscate money from folks in the form of taxes, participatory taxes, and if you do not overspend and expand the Federal Government, the economy in the United States of America works miracles because the rising tide lifts all boats. There are more jobs than ever before.

There is an old expression, when the carpenter has work everybody's employed. That is what these economic policies are doing, and I support this bill. There are things in there I do not like, just like everybody else, but overall, cutting spending and cutting taxes grows the economy and creates jobs. So I stand in support of the rule and the bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, how appropriate that we bring this piece of legislation in the early morning, deep in December, as our Nation braces for yet another cold winter.

To my Democratic colleagues I say, you know, do not be too harsh on our Republican colleagues. Take heart in what Franklin Delano Roosevelt said. Remember this, that they are not bad people. In fact, they can be very well intended, but more often than not they are frozen in the ice of their own indifference, frozen in indifference to the cries of people from the rooftops of New Orleans or to fellow colleagues who come to the floor from Bay St. Louis and New Orleans and talk about people who still live in tents, frozen in their indifference to the elderly in this country who are refugees from their own health care system and have to go to Canada to get prescription drugs, frozen in that indifference and yet come to this Chamber with the temerity to talk about spending.

We agree with you on spending. It is just that you lavish your spending on the oil companies and the pharmaceutical companies and only ask of the least amongst us to provide for the sacrifice that this Nation and you are going to place upon their backs.

Roosevelt had it right: You are frozen in the ice of your own indifference.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I noted the gentleman's lavish description of the frozen tundra that people find themselves frozen in, and I would point out to him that \$1 billion will be put into LIHEAP, something that he failed to mention, that will assist all Americans who find themselves in a low-income situation and need of assistance for paying their utility bills, to make sure they have the adequate protection they need, a record amount of money, \$1 billion. That has not been mentioned in amongst all the other comments about the cuts that people are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER).

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, there was a statement made earlier that the New Testament spoke about individuals as opposed to government, and I would be glad to enter into a colloquy with anyone who would purport to demonstrate that. I can show you for the remainder of the night a litany of scripture that would suggest almost unquestionably that government has a responsibility. Jesus authenticated government, and then Paul asked that we pray for the government.

This issue that we are dealing with, if we are going to bring religion into it, I think we have some obligation to at least deal with the Holy Writ in the fashion that it was written.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to debate a very historic bill, although I do not believe the rhetoric from the other side is necessarily historic.

We are hearing a lot tonight about cuts and compassion, but when I look at this bill, all I seem to see is increases in spending. So I am trying to figure out where the reductions in spending have actually taken place. Mr. Speaker, people are entitled to their own opinions. They are just simply not entitled to their own facts.

After this set of reforms is passed, Federal outlays are going to grow 4.3 percent. Mandatory is going to grow 6.3. Medicaid is going to grow 7.5. I am still looking for the cuts.

I think maybe, Mr. Speaker, I have found those cuts now that I look, and that is every time we increase a program of the Federal budget, we are having to decrease some program of the family budget.

This is a very historic piece of legislation because tonight we start that process, those first few steps towards reforming out-of-control government spending. We know what that future is, Mr. Speaker, if we do not do something about it.

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

The Brookings Institution has said, Expected growth in our entitlement programs along with projected increases in interest on the debt in defense will absorb all of the government's currently projected revenue within 8 years, leaving nothing for any other program. So no veterans program, no student loans, no housing programs.

Where is the compassion in this, Mr. Speaker, if we follow the Democrat plan and do nothing for reforming our entitlement spending?

The GAO says that we will have to double taxes on our children just to balance the budget if we do not begin this process of reform. Now, where is the compassion there?

And when people start to lecture us about the least of these, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the least of these are those who are too young to vote and those who have yet to be born. Who represents them here this evening? Who speaks out for them?

Let us have compassion for the next generation and let us enact this rule, let us enact this underlying bill, and let us save this next generation from a fiscal calamity.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, 3:10 a.m. The Republicans do all their best worst work at this time in the dark of night.

Well, they have done a new thing here. They have bifurcated Santa Claus. We have two Santa Clauses. We have Santa thief who is going to wriggle down the chimney and he is going to steal from the least among us. He is going to take \$16 billion out of student loans, kids struggling to get ahead. Why? So we can finance tax cuts on dividend paying stocks.

He is going to take money from struggling families in the form of Medicaid, seniors on Medicare. Oh, he is going to give another \$1 billion to the LIHEAP program, thank you to Santa thief.

He has also given \$9 billion in subsidies to the oil, coal and gas industry in the so-called travesty of an energy bill that passed this House.

But that old St. Nick, he is still alive, thank God. Republicans have kept him alive, but he is in the Bahamas with the expatriate people who are avoiding taxes, clinking champagne glasses, hopefully not French, owing to the sensibilities of the Republicans here and those French, and he is giving them wonderful benefits.

We are going to reduce taxes on people who earn over \$300,000 a year so their tax rate on dividends or capital gains is less than the tax rate paid by the checkout clerk at the supermarket. Now, that is fair. That is equitable. By God, because those people are going to trickle down on the rest of America, as they trickle we are actually creating a sea of red ink and their yachts float higher and their mansions get bigger. A few lucky folks will get to wash the decks of the yachts and to cut their lawns.

Now, this is what the Republicans say. We do not have a revenue problem. We are hemorrhaging revenue. If we just restored the tax rates of the booming 1990s, when the wealthy were doing quite well, the yachts and mansions and increasing incomes, we would gain \$386 billion if they just paid the same rate of taxes they did before you took over everything.

That is 10 times the cuts here, 10 times what Santa thief is stealing from the students, the old folks and the poor, 10 times as much. We do not have a revenue problem. No, your contributor wealthy investor class is doing very well. They just have to wait until next year for their gratification, but we are going to stick it to the most suffering among us here early this morning.

□ 0315

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT).

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the week before Christmas and here we are gathered, most of the children in their bed even in my district by now, and the elves have been working. So here we are.

The Republican Party, since the days of Reagan, have lived by the motto of Mrs. Thatcher, that there is no society, there is only individuals. Now, that is contrary, as you heard from the gentleman from Missouri, to what the Bible says. We all start the story of the Bible, the Christian story, in Isaiah. And in Isaiah the prophet is categorizing what is going on in Jerusalem and why it is failing as the injustice and the materialism and the wealth accumulated. Here is what Isaiah said, verse 23, first chapter. Right off the bat: "Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the fatherless. The widow's cause does not come before them."

For us to be here in the middle of the night taking whatever it is, \$50 billion, \$60 billion, nobody on this floor knows what is in this budget, let us admit that right up front, except about six people who wrote it. We are all taking it that we are going to take \$60 billion and we are going to tell the poor people, you know, you are so lucky to live

in America. We are going to throw you a little something.

In our history, every one of us has been raised with the Christmas story, either the biblical Christmas story or the Dickens Christmas story of the coal and the Grinch. You think about all the stories we have about what happens at Christmas time, and you have the nerve to come out here with a budget at this time of year where you cut child support, you cut food stamps, you cut Medicaid; and then you say to people, Merry Christmas and a happy new year.

That takes the height of gall, or else no feeling whatsoever. There is no way you could stand up and talk about these issues if you understood what people at the bottom really have to deal with. Most of us make \$150,000 as a minimum. The average income in this country is about a quarter of that, or a fifth of it. Those people are scraping along, and we are doing everything we can to make it impossible for them to live a decent life because of our own, as the prophet says, our own greed and materialism.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT).

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing there are all these vicious tax cuts. There are no cuts in this bill. A vote for this bill means we are voting not to raise taxes.

And it has done my heart good to hear so many religious references to Jesus and to the Bible. I would point you in that direction. Jesus never said, go ye and use and abuse your taxing authority. Take from others to give. He said, you do it. And I would offer you the example of Zacharius when he met Jesus. What did he do? He went and cut taxes.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Shame, shame, shame. You know, I am really glad that I am not a Republican. You know, Christianity is not what you say; it is what you do. And today you all practice what I call all the time reverse Robin Hood. During Christmas time you are robbing from the poor, the working people, to give tax breaks to the rich. Humbug.

The Republicans today are trying to be the Grinches that stole . . .

Not Christmas, but health care from the poor.

Republicans are practicing what I call reverse Robin Hood, robbing from the poor to give to the rich.

In this season of giving, the Republicans are taking from the poor to line the pockets of the wealthiest Americans.

Well, I say Bah Humbug!

Bah Humbug to you and your policies.

Those who will suffer will be: single mothers seeking child support; students struggling to pay their college loans, foster kids; the sick and the poor whose only access to health coverage is Medicaid; and those whose nutrition depends on food stamps or school lunches.

Christianity what you say not what you do. If you are going to talk the talk, you must walk the walk. And the Republicans today are not walking with the poorest among us.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, we have worked our way through Dickens, Dr. Seuss, and the entire New Testament. I wait to see what else awaits us.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the minority leader.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding me this time and for her eloquent presentation of this rule against this terrible, terrible, as the Congresswoman from Florida said, shameful bill.

I want to also pay tribute to Mr. SPRATT of South Carolina, our ranking member on the Budget Committee, as I rise in opposition to this rule and in opposition to this bill. Mr. SPRATT, anybody in our country who cares about fairness, about opportunity, about responsibility, about community is enormously in your debt for the values budget that you put forth and the great and excellent work that you do on behalf of the American people. Thank you, Mr. SPRATT.

Mr. SPRATT called me earlier this evening and told me, well, actually it was earlier this morning, and he told me he had just received the budget bill, 700 pages. Now, we all know one thing for sure. No one in this Congress has read that bill. So later, in just a short while, we will be voting on a bill that no one has read. But we do know certain things about it that make it very objectionable, not just to us but to the religious community in America.

Mr. Speaker, "Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, please to put a penny in the old man's hat. If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do. If you haven't got a ha'penny, God bless you."

With this budget bill, the special interest goose is getting very, very fat. Do we say God bless you with this budget when Congress leaves here without passing a budget which comes close to meeting the needs of America's families who are struggling to pay their home heating bills and pay the price at the pump? This same Congress gave obscene subsidies to oil companies that are making historic profits this year; yet we give a small token to America's families to help pay the bills to those oil companies.

Do we say God bless you with this budget when we leave here without extending the time that our seniors need to understand the befuddling prescription drug bill that has been handed to them with a time limit? Democrats have a better idea of extending the time for seniors and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. But, no, the pharmaceutical and health industry goose is getting fat off this Congress at the expense of America's seniors.

And, really, what is so sad about it is that when it comes to meeting the needs of our young people and opportu-

nities for them, we do not say God bless you, we say to them we are adding \$5,800 more to those who use student loans. How could that be right while at the same time we give tax cuts to those making over \$1 million a year; and at the same, at the same time we are growing the deficit and heaping mountains of debt onto those same young people?

Mr. OBEY calls this Scroogenomics. Scroogenomics. But, really, associating Scrooge with this Republican budget gives Scrooge a bad name. He saw the evil of his ways, Scrooge did. These Republicans are so blinded by the greed of their special interest friends that they are stuck in their cruel ways.

That is why leaders of every religious denomination have prayed in this rotunda, have prayed in churches across America, and as recently as a couple of days ago were arrested, over 100 of them and their representatives on the steps of the Cannon Building, to protest this budget.

Religious denominations prayed and lobbied Congress that Congress would do the right thing. They said that they were drawing a moral line in the sand against this budget. Democrats joined them in drawing that line in the sand between a Republican government of the privileged few instead of the government of the many, which is the American way.

Mr. Speaker, I associate myself with the remarks of the gentlewoman from Florida when she says, shame on you. It is shameful that this Congress will adjourn passing this immoral budget, meeting the greeds of the special interest friends of the Republicans instead, again, as I said, of the needs of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, as we leave for this Christmas recess, let us say God bless you to the American people by voting against this Republican budget statement of injustice and immorality. And let us not let the special interest goose get fat at the expense of America's children.

The gentleman from Washington State (Mr. McDERMOTT) quoted the prophet Isaiah. My favorite saying from Isaiah is when he said: "To minister to the needs of God's creation is an act of worship. To ignore those needs is to dishonor the God who made us."

Let us vote "no" on this budget as an act of worship and for America's children.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, obviously, I came prepared for the wrong debate. I brought the good economic news that is being told and shared and being invested all across this great land. Productivity numbers up, unemployment at 5 percent, nearly full employment for the country. RECORD numbers. Robust GDP growth quarter after quarter after quarter. The news that important reforms to Medicaid and Medicare will be moving forward, allowing those programs to continue to

grow at, in some cases, double the rate of inflation, double the rate of the CPI that most people use as their common benchmark. And the news that there is a record amount of money into LIHEAP.

We brought those facts and figures to a debate that was about deficit reduction, that was about the future of America. The other side brought Dr. Seuss. The other side brought Dickens and nursery rhymes and enough theology to field an old-time revival, but to do nothing about the fiscal health of this country; to do nothing about the fact that if we move forward with their Dickens economic plan, that if we move forward with their Dr. Seuss approach to economics that two-thirds of the Federal budget will be on autopilot; that if we move forward with their plan, these programs will continue to have the inefficiencies and the waste and the fraud that makes for an unresponsive, unreactive government that confiscates people's money and then does not even invest it back into a program that serves the very people who need it the most.

That is the crime in this, Mr. Speaker, that we have a thoughtful, long-term plan for the fiscal health of this country, something that future generations will say marked the turning point, the first reconciliation bill, the first real attempt at deficit reduction since 1997 to turn that ship of state toward a brighter tomorrow. It cannot be summed up in some cute little nursery rhyme. It is important stuff. Sometimes it is dry stuff; sometimes it is dull stuff. But, by golly, it is important.

It is important to each and every American because it impacts how much money their government takes from them and how wisely that government uses that money for the needs of its people.

□ 0330

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 639 and H. Res. 640.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.