

Defense to address critical shortfalls of equipment. That, Mr. Speaker, is our job. That is our job. Congress is charged with oversight of the executive branch, and I am deeply concerned that we have not been fulfilling that critical and institutional role. As a result, our troops are riding into battle in vehicles that are not adequately protected or are jury-rigged with so-called "hillbilly armor" lifted from scrap heaps.

Last May, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, the Republican chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, expressed his unease about the lack of oversight in Congress and admitted that legislative oversight was better when the Democrats controlled Congress. The majority in this Congress, Senator GRASSLEY acknowledged, "has delegated so much authority to the executive branch of government, and we ought to devote more time to oversight than we do."

The critical need for oversight is underscored by a new Government Accountability Office report outlining and updating its high-risk list. The new report lists 25 Federal programs that are vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Increasingly, the GAO also identified high-risk areas to focus on the need of broad-based transformations to address major economy, efficiency, or effectiveness challenges.

Of the 25 government operations and programs that comprise the GAO list, 8 are associated with the Department of Defense, the government's largest department. These include inventory management, weapons systems and acquisition, financial and contract management, personnel security clearance, management of military bases and other infrastructure, and modernization of computer systems.

The Comptroller General, David Walker, noted at a news conference yesterday that DOD's failure to rectify many of these problem areas results in billions of dollars of waste every year and inadequate accountability to the Congress and the American taxpayer.

I am not surprised to see a large number of DOD programs on the GAO's list. As an assistant U.S. attorney, I prosecuted defense contractor fraud. It was true then that if you throw enormous amounts of money at any department without adequate oversight, you would get tremendous amounts of fraud and abuse. Given the hundreds of billions of dollars in the DOD's annual budget, the potential for waste, the reality of waste, fraud, and abuse is enormous.

No amount of oversight and investigation will eliminate all instances of fraud, but that does not excuse our failure to try. I urge my colleagues, and especially my colleagues in the majority who alone have the power to call hearings, to subpoena witnesses, to take our oversight role more seriously. The American taxpayer and, more importantly, our men and women in uniform are relying upon us.

#### IN LOVING TRIBUTE TO JUDSON DANIEL "JD" DAVIS

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is worthy of note when someone lights up the world with his or her own sunshine and gives us a glimpse of such a beautiful soul that it is more understandable why our Creator would endow us with the blessings He has. Such a person was a young man named Judson Daniel Davis, known to his friends as JD. He was 23 years old, after having experienced life fully every single year he was alive.

He was born in Tyler, Texas, on September 17, 1981, and he left for heaven on January 19, 2005. He was active in high school and in his church, which was Green Acres Baptist. He was constantly looking for ways to help others and to improve himself. Even at his young age, he had found that helping others somehow made him a more complete person. My own daughters knew him well, and even my wife and I felt quite comfortable when we knew one of our daughters would be with JD.

He graduated from Whitehouse High School in Smith County, Texas, after which he attended Tyler Junior College, earning an associate's degree in business, and then proceeded to Texas A&M University, obtaining a degree in finance. After Texas A&M, this unusual individual studied kinesiology and earned a degree at the University of Texas. It does take a rather unique individual to be both a Texas Aggie and a Texas Longhorn, and that is what JD was.

While at Texas University, he did not merely study, he also utilized his talent for playing musical instruments. He played the trombone in the Longhorns' basketball band in addition to performing with the Big Bertha crew. He began studying sports management in the UT program in Austin, and, during the Christmas break, he had talked about the potential for substitute teaching, because he loved to help others. His mother, Linda Davis, said, "He always had a smile, a kind word for everyone, and was always sensitive to the needs of others."

The Longhorn band was excited about coming to play for the President's inauguration this month, and none was more excited than JD. He had run a fever the week before the trip, but he told the university health personnel he did not want to miss the President's inauguration. He was coming. He did feel ill on the plane ride and did not get off the bus when the other students did here in Washington. They got off physically, but he had proceeded ahead of them in spirit. He was pronounced dead shortly thereafter.

He was looking forward to being an intern at Lake Hills Church in Austin, a position of which he had just learned about before he came to Washington. He was to start rehearsals when he re-

turned from Washington for a leading part in the play, "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." Just as he had been active in his work at Green Acres Baptist Church, he was determined to try to make as big an impact as he could, wherever he could. As if to subconsciously follow the admonition of David to number our days aright, JD numbered and filled every one. As a sign in his room said, "Life is short, so fish hard." His mother Linda said the picture and sign that most exemplified JD's life says, "The value of life lies not in the length of our days, but in the use we make of them."

JD brought life and hope and good news to so many. He truly lifted spirits by his presence and leaves us much in his physical absence. He loved his neighbors, he loved his President, he loved his country. He loved the visible and auditory beauty given us by the Creator. May others be inspired by the life, living, and giving of Judson Daniel Davis, and may his loved ones be comforted in that knowledge.

#### SEVENTY THOUSAND VICTIMS OF GENOCIDE IN AFRICA

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring terrible news from Africa. Seventy thousand people are dead, and more are dying every hour. This would be tragic enough if the deaths were caused by some natural cataclysmic event like a tsunami. But the truth is the 70,000 in Africa have died because they were killed by a regime bent on genocide.

In a region of horrific tragedy, of violence and death, millions have lost their lives, but many have not lost their hope. These are the notes handwritten by members of the Sudanese refugees in the camps. They gave them to us when we were there 2 days ago and asked us to read them; pages upon pages of handwritten requests to Members of Congress, to the American people. I accepted them directly from these people walking away, because we could not spend all day there. They said, would you please take them home and read them? Their words, their hopes, their calls for help are being translated at the moment, and I will share them with my colleagues when they are done.

But I want to share my thoughts about Africa with some of my colleagues in the House, and with the American people. In the past week I was invited to join a congressional trip to the Sudan region by a Republican, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE). I say this because this House and the American people need to know the depth and the breadth of a man who serves his constituency with distinction and his country with honor. The gentleman from California (Mr.

ROYCE) knows how to reach across the aisle, and I applaud him for his leadership and his humanity. He knows of my love and interest in Africa. That transcended any label of Republican or Democrat.

As chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, Mr. ROYCE put together a trip so that we could see firsthand what was happening. It was done in a 5-day period. The wheels never stopped rolling. There were a handful of House Members on the trip and also someone that the gentleman from California brought along by the name of Don Cheadle, who was recently nominated for a Best Actor Award for his part in the movie "Hotel Rwanda." It is galvanizing when one sees that movie, because it is so reminiscent of what is going on today. It went on 10 years ago in Rwanda. But in that film one sees with their own eyes with chilling accuracy what we saw on the ground in Chad. It will become an instrument of good, and for that we should be grateful.

I have been to Africa many times. I have seen the pandemic of AIDS. I lived in Africa as a doctor and as a psychiatrist. I know about the suffering and the emotional trauma from a tragedy of global proportions.

What we saw there was an old story. Here are 18,000 people living in makeshift houses in an area. There are 250,000 of them in Chad, having come across the border from Sudan. They have no running water. They have no toilets; they have latrines. Water has to be brought in by truck. You see old people, you see young people with amputations from having been bombed by the Sudanese Government. You see people who are there sick, crying, having no schools for the kids and no health care, or very little health care, all created by a regime that refuses to deal with the issue.

Now, we sat, many of us, on the floor of this House during the whole Rwanda experience. We watched it happen, but we kind of closed our eyes. We would not see what we were seeing. It could have been prevented. Everyone in this body ought to have to see that movie and see what happens when the United States, rather than leading, sits on its hands. We say we are a leader in the world. Well, there is a situation out there today that requires us to act.

Now, unfortunately, Chad is almost the poorest country in Africa. Sudan is a little bit better because they have oil. But these people living in Darfur are not involved in the oil. They are hundreds of miles away from it. So they become sort of irrelevant to the strategic purposes of this country.

If we are going to be a humanitarian country, and we want people to understand that we care, we have to act when we see things like this in spite of the fact that it has no economic value to us.

In the days ahead I am sure others will talk about this. America has been a leader and will be again. It is the right thing to do. We should act now.

□ 1400

CONGRESS WILL NOT ACCEPT A SOCIAL SECURITY FORMULA BASED ON RACE OR GENDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, if any of my colleagues were watching Meet the Press on Sunday, they may have seen a truly remarkable thing. The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) proposed that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. If we take the distinguished chairman at his word, he is proposing overt race and gender discrimination by the government.

Apart from raising serious constitutional questions, this shocks the conscience. My colleagues can read excerpts from the transcript of his statement on Meet the Press in press clippings across the country and in Tuesday's Roll Call.

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) said, Congress "needs to examine how many years of retirement you get based on your race and you ought not to leave gender off the table because that would be a factor."

Tim Russert, who seemed a bit taken aback by this, asked THOMAS, "So if someone is a woman and they live longer, they would get less per year?"

The gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) confirmed that is what he wants Congress to consider.

Then Russert asked, "Do you think Congress, Mr. Chairman, would accept any formula that said that people should be treated differently because of their gender or race?"

I can answer that question and I believe that I speak for many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that the answer is a very strong no. We will never accept a Social Security formula based on race or gender.

I am confident that many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this issue find this idea as repulsive as I do. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. It goes against fundamental constitutional principles of equal protection. Congress must, and I believe will, repudiate it.

Social Security is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age; and all workers are entitled to its benefits, regardless of gender or race. Its formulas currently are race and gender neutral and must remain so for all time, I believe.

Regardless of what projections we each believe in for the long-term outlook of the trust fund, we must surely agree on the basic proposition that all retired workers are entitled to this essential government safety net without regard to gender or race. The chairman's proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us, those who need Social Security most, and that is wrong.

He proposes to cut every woman's annual Social Security benefits because

statistically women live longer than men, and that is just plain backwards. What are retired women supposed to do, live at a lower level of income payments than men?

On the contrary, women need Social Security even more than men do. We are a long way from closing the wage gap. We are currently 79 cents to the dollar, and that translates into an even wider pension gap. Retired women workers are twice as likely as men to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support and to depend on Social Security benefits to keep them out of poverty.

According to Joint Economic Committee figures and the National Women's Law Center, women are 60 percent of Social Security recipients at age 67 and three-quarters of the recipients at age 85 or older.

Hispanic women, for example, live the longest of all as a group. The gentleman from California's (Mr. THOMAS) logic would cut their benefits most. Yet more than half of retired Hispanic women depend on Social Security for 90 percent of their income and without it would live in poverty.

The chairman also proposed to adjust benefits based on race, and this is mindboggling. I am at a loss of words to explain how outrageous it is to propose basing any government benefit based on race.

Let me just remind the distinguished gentleman from California that the Constitution requires the Federal Government to treat persons of all races equally. His proposal raises very serious constitutional questions and undermines our moral commitment to our society in which all are treated equally, regardless of race.

I wish I could call the chairman's statements on Sunday ill considered and not serious, but that was not the first time the chairman has proposed such a policy, and I call on my colleagues to not accept it.

I am circulating a letter to the President of the United States. I will place it into the RECORD. I urge my colleagues to support it and to send a strong message that basing any type of Social Security benefits on race and gender is unfair and just plain wrong. I will also add in the RECORD additional statements and some comments from around the country that have been in major papers.

JANUARY 26, 2005.

NO, MR. PRESIDENT, CONGRESS WILL NOT ACCEPT A SOCIAL SECURITY FORMULA BASED ON RACE OR GENDER

DEAR COLLEAGUE: We expect you were as shocked as we were to hear Ways & Means Chairman Thomas again propose on "Meet the Press" Sunday that Social Security benefits should be allocated based on race and gender. Cutting Social Security benefits to women and minorities—the retirees who need them the most—is wrong, unfair, unjust and fundamentally anti-American. We will not accept a formula that has such unfairness as its centerpiece.

We will be sending the attached letter to the president asking him to repudiate Thomas' proposal by taking his outrageous proposal to base Social Security benefits on