

Free Trade Agreement. They are traveling to Miami and Los Angeles. They are going to Albuquerque and to my State, Cincinnati, Ohio, attempting to convince the American people and the American press that CAFTA is good for their countries and for their people.

Unfortunately, these leaders are not telling the whole story. Like our own President, they try to convince us that CAFTA will lift up low-income workers in Central America and that CAFTA will create jobs here in the United States. What they have not said is that CAFTA does nothing to ensure enforcement of labor provisions in their own countries. What they have not said is that the combined purchasing power of the CAFTA nations, the combined purchasing power of the CAFTA nations, is equal to that of Columbus, Ohio; or Memphis, Tennessee; or Orlando, Florida. In other words, people in Guatemala and Honduras and Nicaragua and El Salvador and Costa Rica cannot afford to buy the steel produced in Pennsylvania. They cannot afford to buy cars made in Ohio. They cannot afford to buy textiles and apparel from North Carolina and South Carolina and Georgia. They cannot afford to buy software from Northern California or Oregon or the State of Washington.

With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, to the Central American leaders, what they are not saying and what millions of us know already is that millions of their workers in Central America, like tens of millions of American workers, do not support the Central American Free Trade Agreement. What their leaders will not tell the American people, what their leaders will not share with reporters covering their junket, is that 8,000 Guatemalan workers protested against CAFTA in March. Two of them lost their lives when government forces attacked the crowds.

We have not heard Central American leaders mention the literally tens of thousands of El Salvadorans who protested CAFTA in 2002. They do not mention the 18,000 letters sent last year by Honduran workers to their Honduran Congress decrying this dysfunctional cousin of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Central American leaders do not mention the 10,000 people who protested CAFTA 1½ years ago in Nicaragua. They do not tell us about the 30,000 CAFTA protestors in Costa Rica just last fall. Hundreds of thousands of workers have protested CAFTA in more than 45 demonstrations in these six Central American countries.

Opposition to CAFTA here in the United States has been equally stalwart. More than a year has passed since President Bush signed CAFTA. Every other trade agreement the President has brought to Congress has been voted on within 6 or 7 weeks. This has been 11½ months since the President signed it because there is so much opposition from American workers, from American educators, from American social service organizations, from

Americans of both parties. Instead of supporting the President on CAFTA, overwhelming numbers of Republicans and Democrats in this body and across the country have come out against the agreement.

Last month, two dozen Democrats and Republicans in Congress joined more than 150 business groups and labor organizations echoing a united message: vote "no" on the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Under NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the U.S. has lost more than 1 million jobs. Under NAFTA the promise of a thriving middle class in Mexico was never realized. Under NAFTA, just like every other trade agreement, the administration, the corporate leaders make the same promises. They promise more manufacturing jobs in the United States. They promise growth in industry in the United States. They promise more exports from the United States. But it never happens that way.

The definition of insanity is repeating the same action over and over and over again and expecting a different result. We have heard these same promises about CAFTA, about NAFTA, about trade with China, about the World Trade Organization. We have heard these same promises over and over and over again, and the American people understand the promises simply do not work.

Now the President and his big business allies are hoping that bringing these Central American leaders on their Chamber of Commerce junket can help deliver support for an agreement that, frankly, as we look across this Chamber, is dead on arrival. Right now the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is hosting a reception for the visiting dignitaries, these six presidents, rewarding them for their lobbying efforts this week. Right now the leaders of these countries are raising their toasts to their corporate sponsors.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no more delay. We must throw out this failed agreement and renegotiate the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

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SMART AND VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, we recently passed the conference report on yet another supplemental appropriations bill for the war in Iraq, bringing the total amount of taxpayer money being spent on this ill-conceived, built-on-lies war to over \$300 billion. The longer we keep funding this irresponsible effort, the more harm we are doing, not just to the people of Iraq but also to our very own troops.

The New England Journal of Medicine recently reported that as many as

one out of four veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq treated at VA hospitals in the past 16 months were diagnosed with mental disorders. Alarmingly, this number has been steadily rising, and we can only guess how many soldiers do not come forward to get help because of the stigma that is associated with mental illnesses.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, is the most common disorder seen in returning soldiers and has been diagnosed in 10 percent of returning soldiers at VA hospitals. Other mental disorders that are being seen are drug or alcohol abuse, depression and anxiety disorders. Also phobias and panic are part of the whole diagnosis.

These are the hidden scars that young men and women who serve in combat are left with when they return home. While mental and emotional problems cannot be seen as easily as a physical wound, they are just as debilitating.

Large numbers of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are coming home, and they are showing up in our homeless population in numbers that have not been seen since the end of the Vietnam War. This is a shameful epidemic, and we must work to confront it before it is too late.

Serving in a combat zone not only affects soldiers but also their families. When service members come home, they face a real challenge in learning how to readjust to civilian life, often taking a toll on relationships with family members and sometimes leading to even more mental and emotional problems.

Every time we send our young men and women into combat, we are asking them to make a huge sacrifice for the rest of us. Their lives and their health are the real follow-up costs to any war. That is why I have introduced H. Con. Res. 35, asking for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Thirty-three other Members of Congress have signed my resolution with me, because we know that the longer we keep our troops in harm's way, fighting a war of occupation, the higher the costs in human lives. Coupled with that bill, I am also reintroducing legislation to support a SMART security platform for the 21st century.

SMART stands for Sensible, Multilateral American Response to Terrorism. SMART treats war as an absolute last resort. It fights terrorism with stronger intelligence and multilateral partnerships. It controls the spread of weapons of mass destruction with a renewed commitment to non-proliferation, and it aggressively invests in the development of impoverished nations, with an emphasis on women's health and women's education.

We must take a smarter approach to our foreign policy and homeland security measures. The sacrifices made by our soldiers are so great. We should be asking them to make sacrifices only after careful and thoughtful deliberation, not rushing to war on unreliable

intelligence and on personal grudges. We must take careful and measured steps when putting lives on the line, something that the Bush administration has not done.

As we work to protect those who protect us, instead of throwing our money into an ill-advised war, we must commit first to keeping our troops well equipped with safety gear and modern equipment, and we must provide them with real and comprehensive health care, including mental health support services, when they come home.

Mr. Speaker, war has long-lasting effects on those who serve. Let us work to ensure that we limit those effects by using our troops only when we must and treating them with the dignity they deserve when they return.

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

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CORRECTING AMERICAN FISCAL PROBLEMS AND PRESERVING SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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, once again, it is an honor to come before this House of Representatives. I can tell you that this 30-Something Working Group, Mr. Speaker, that our Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), has designated this time every week for the 30-Something Working Group to come to the floor to not only speak to the Members but also have an opportunity to share good information in general with the American people, and that is why we are here, to represent them, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say, in the last several weeks, we have been talking about the issue of Social Security. I can tell you that Social Security is not only at the forefront of the agenda in this Congress but also has been promoted throughout this Nation as being in a state of crisis, which it is not.

So, tonight, the 30-Something Working Group, we have asked a member of our caucus to come, the ranking member of the Committee on the Budget, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), to come to talk to us a little bit about this double whammy

that the American people will be going through because of the push of privatization of Social Security and the irresponsible spending by the majority side and also by the present administration.

This whole debate is about helping future generations. This whole debate is about making sure that we keep our end of the deal to the American people. I can tell you, keeping our end of the deal to the American people is saying we are going to do what we said we are going to do from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, and it is important. But I believe when misinformation or inaccurate information is given to the American people and to some Members of this House, it jeopardizes our commitment to keeping our end of the deal.

What I mean by "our end of the deal," for those individuals that have paid into Social Security over the years, and they are looking forward to the security of Social Security being there for them at the benefit level to where it is now, I think it is very, very important that we do not let those Americans down.

I want to make sure that not only the Members of this House but everyone understands that Social Security will be solvent for the next 47 to 50 years at the present benefit level of where it is right now. Forty-eight million Americans who need the survivor benefits, retirees or individuals eligible for Social Security at this point will receive 100 percent of the benefits they are receiving now. On average, they receive \$955 of monthly benefits from Social Security. Thirty-three million Americans are retired that are in that 48 million, and a large number of those Americans would be living under the poverty line if it was not for Social Security. So when we start talking about privatization of Social Security, it is a very dangerous thing and something that we should not play around with at all.

I am proud that Democrats on this side of the aisle, and I would even say some of my Republican friends, believe in strengthening Social Security without slashing benefits that Americans have earned and making sure that private accounts are not a part of the Social Security debate or reality, because there is strong evidence, not hearsay, strong evidence of major benefit cuts to Americans that are counting on Social Security.

I think it is also important, Mr. Speaker, that the Members understand that, once we can get to the point that we stop insisting on private accounts, when it really does not add up for the individual that is receiving Social Security or that will receive Social Security, I think we can get on to not only a serious discussion but action in dealing with the question of Social Security.

We should not increase the debt by some \$5 trillion and gamble on the future of Social Security. I think the American people deserve better. I

think the American people demand better, and I think the American people will continue to pay very close attention to what is being said and what is not being said in this discussion about Social Security.

I do not believe that Members of this House or the other body will take a vote where they are going to make a career decision on a gamble on Social Security privatization. It is not at that point to where one has to gamble with the retirement of so many Americans. Social Security is there to make sure that it is a guarantee for men and women that have worked in this country.

So, tonight, we are going to talk about the budget, the \$26,000-plus that every American owes to the Federal debt, and tonight, we are going to, if I could use the word, cross-pollinate, Mr. Speaker, Social Security privatization philosophy and the reality of the ever-growing deficit, that it seems that this Congress is out of control of continuing to add on to the debt without any plan whatsoever, no real realistic plan, in making sure that we take down the debt for future generations. So I think that is very, very important.

Now, some individuals will say, Well, what is the Democratic plan? Well, I would like to know what is the Republican plan? Some of my good friends in this Chamber are Republicans and want to know the Republican plan.

I would say, the Republican leadership plan, because I do not want to generalize, because I feel there are Members in this Chamber that have a genuine argument and concern when they see statistics that are given by notable organizations and even by some of our Federal Government organizations that are saying that there going to be major benefit cuts if we go to privatization, to the point that where even individuals who do not enroll in private accounts are going to receive cuts. That is not fair.

So that is the reason why we come to this floor, week after week, the 30-Something Working Group, along with others, to be able to talk about this issue.

Now, tonight only are we going to have the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), who is always here, Mr. Speaker, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and we have one of our 30-Something Working Group members, the gentleman from the Great State of Alabama (Mr. DAVIS), who will come before this great House to be a part of this discussion, along with our ranking member on the Committee on the Budget, the Democratic ranking member of the Committee on the Budget and a part of the Democratic leadership team in dealing with the issue of the deficit and the budget and responsible spending and also making sure that we do the right thing.

I would like to yield some time to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT). As you go to the well there, I want to just let you know how