

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, we all know about the axis of evil. Iran and North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons is frightening, and we need to do everything we can do to stop it.

But now there is a new axis of evil, apparently, and it starts right here in Washington. The axis of evil for this administration is bull's-eye, square one, the United States Senate and the 45 members of its minority. Because while not yet a nuclear State, that is exactly what the Republicans want to make it by eliminating the filibuster rule.

Not only does the Republican Party demonstrate yet again that when they do not get their way, they do not believe in playing fair, they want to change the rules. When they cannot change the rules, their leadership bullies judges and pushes legislation that has no business being in the United States Congress and is left best to the States. When that does not work, they eliminate the voice of the minority and appoint, for lifetime appointments, to the Federal and supreme Court.

Let us remember that Democrats in the United States Senate combined represent more Americans than do their Republican colleagues.

We have a proud history of an independent judiciary and checks and balances. That is something that Iran and North Korea cannot say. If Bill Frist gets his way, it is something we will not be able to say, either.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, today we mark Israel Independence Day.

Israel has stood as a symbol of perseverance and courage for the entire world from its birth in 1948. It has struggled constantly to maintain its independence and to ensure its survival amidst military attacks from hostile neighbors and prolonged terrorist campaigns. Even while at war, Israel's democracy and its vibrant, diverse and free society has remained strong. Its doors have been opened to victims of persecution and intolerance around the world. It has been said that the strength of a nation is determined by the caliber of its people, and there is perhaps no better example of this than the State of Israel and the Israeli people.

Today, as the State of Israel marks its 57th anniversary, we reiterate our commitment to its security and its stability.

I extend my best wishes and congratulations to the Israeli people and to the Jewish Nation.

REPUBLICAN CHANGE OF FILIBUSTER RULE IS ABUSE OF POWER

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, Republicans have become so arrogant with their absolute power here in Washington that whenever they do not get their way, they try to change the rules of the game. In January, House Republicans ignored protocol and weakened the ethics rules in order to protect one of their leaders, and now Senate Republicans are preparing to change the filibuster rule which has been in place beyond anyone's memory.

Republicans say Senate Democrats are preventing President Bush's judicial appointments from taking the bench, but let us set the record straight.

During President Bush's first 4 years in office, the Senate confirmed 204 of his 214 nominees; that is a 95 percent confirmation rate.

□ 1015

The Senate has been so productive in approving Bush's nominees that the Federal court vacancy rate is at its lowest point in 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, the filibuster has been used by Democrats and Republicans for 200 years to protect the rights of the minority party. After 2 centuries, it would be a mistake and an extreme abuse of power by Senate Republicans to change the rules now and eliminate this important check and balance.

EMPLOYEE PENSION PRESERVATION AND TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, did you hear the news this morning? The U.S. Bankruptcy Court allowed United Airlines to default, to end four pension plans. They will be transferred to the Federal Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation and ultimately the American taxpayer. Unless Congress acts, other major airlines will follow the same path and end their pension plans, the cost of which will ultimately be borne by the taxpayers. We need to act now. Hard-working taxpayers are already on the line for nearly \$10 billion in unfunded pension liabilities from just two airlines that are in bankruptcy.

There is a solution: H.R. 2106. This bill limits taxpayer liability and allows responsible companies to manage their pension liabilities. It makes certain that airline carriers meet their current obligations with no subsidy from the Federal Government, the taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, when major airlines file for bankruptcy, taxpayers lose, employees are out of jobs, retirements are jeopardized, and the economy suffers.

We should act now on behalf of the American taxpayer. More bankruptcy headlines are coming unless we move responsibly, and I ask my colleagues to join me in this important and vital

matter to save jobs, retirements, and taxpayer money. Support H.R. 2106.

PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS FROM OHIO

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to announce and commend the 2005 winners of the Pulitzer Prize and take particular notice that four of this year's winners are graduates of Ohio's public State universities.

Walter Bogdanich, with the New York Times, won the Pulitzer for National Reporting, getting a master's degree in journalism from Ohio State.

Julia Keller, with the Chicago Tribune, won the Pulitzer for Feature Writing after earning a doctoral degree in English from Ohio State.

Nick Anderson, with the Louisville Courier-Journal, won the Pulitzer for Editorial Cartooning after graduating from Ohio State with a degree in political science.

And of course I am most proud of my wife, Connie Schultz, of the Plain Dealer in Cleveland who won the Pulitzer for Commentary. She graduated from Kent State with a degree in journalism and was editor of the Daily Kent Stater.

The Pulitzer defines excellence in journalism, and it is personally gratifying to me that Ohio's public universities helped these talented individuals achieve this extraordinary honor.

DR. CALVIN R. FREMLING

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, the Mississippi River is called the Father of Waters.

I rise today to honor the work of Dr. Calvin R. Fremling of Winona, Minnesota. For nearly 50 years, Dr. Fremling has been a student of the Mississippi River. He has shared his passion as a teacher, researcher, historian, and photographer.

He received his bachelor's degree in biology and physical science from St. Cloud State University in 1951 and his Ph.D. in zoology from Iowa State University in 1959. After brief service as a teacher in Motley High School and with the U.S. Army's Ecological Research Unit, he returned to SCSU to earn his master's degree in biology.

Dr. Fremling then joined the faculty at Winona State University where he taught and conducted research for 32 years until his retirement in 1991. He just released his book, "Immortal River: The Upper Mississippi River in Ancient and Modern Times." The book is a record of lifetime of work dedicated to protecting the ecology of the Mississippi River.

I thank Dr. Fremling for his work with one of our national treasures and

for his commitment to our young people.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY AND THE SECURE ACT OF 2005

(Mr. CLEAVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my condolences to the victims and their families of Tuesday's school bus accident in Liberty, Missouri, just north of my district in Kansas City. That tragic accident killed two adults and injured 23 children, some critically. The tragic accident of which I speak, Mr. Speaker, has generated a great deal of trauma in our community, understandably, because these injuries could easily have been prevented had the school bus in question been equipped with safety belts. Over 23 million children ride school buses every day, and almost none of them are equipped with seatbelts. While no one anticipates a tragedy like that which occurred in Liberty, we do owe it to our children to do all we can to ensure their safety while traveling to and from school.

Yesterday, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA), my good friend and colleague, introduced the SECURE Act to equip school buses with safety belts. By supporting this common sense measure, we can help ensure that our children's ride to school and their safety is assured. I have cosponsored the SECURE Act, and I urge all Members to do the same.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share good news with the American people.

Last week, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that 274,000 new jobs were created in April. That means the economy has created nearly 3.5 million jobs since May 2003. We have seen steady job gains for each of the last 23 months, and more Americans are working than ever before.

Another indicator which shows that we are on the road to recovery is home sales. A recent report by the Commerce Department indicates sales of new homes grew by 12.2 percent in March to the highest level in the history of the Nation's housing market.

Clearly, the economy's growth is a direct result of the pro-growth agenda of the President and this Republican Congress.

By encouraging fiscal responsibility in the budget and passing pro-growth bills such as the Death Tax Repeal and the Bankruptcy Bill, Republican Members continue to show their commitment to America's economy.

However, there is still work to do to continue to grow the economy and get more Americans working. I look for-

ward to continue working with the President to find ways to lower the prices we pay at the pump and will continue to urge my colleagues in the Senate to pass the energy bill that would put more than 500,000 Americans to work.

WAKE-UP CALL FOR AMERICA

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is a simple pronouncement this morning. This is a wake-up call for America. In today's headlines we have: "United gets okay to drop pension funds." Earned pension funds, earned benefits now on the chopping block of America.

I have great concern for America's airlines, and I will work with them as we have worked in the past after 9/11 to shore them up. But is it not a shame that America cannot invest in its pension fund and believe when it is time for retirement that fund will be there?

Wake up America. Social Security is now falling to the same axe. This President wants to cut your benefits, the major social safety net of Americans. An invested process is now under siege.

We think it is a divided question. It is not a divided question. It is a question for the middle class. It is a question for working Americans. It is a question that Democrats have stood fast. We will not see Social Security denied or destroyed. And wake up America, because the pensions of America are now under the vulnerable chopping block that anybody who needs a dime or a dollar will go into your pension fund, whether you are a private corporation or the public sector. Wake up America.

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, with the specter of fiscal collapse facing our children and grandchildren's public retirement, Social Security reform is an idea whose time has come. And President Bush, never one to flinch from a good fight, is to be commended for taking it on.

Social Security reform means keeping its promise in tact for seniors and all who choose to remain in the system. But Social Security reform also means offering a better deal to younger Americans in the form of voluntary personal accounts.

And we can do it all, Mr. Speaker, without raising taxes on working families, small businesses and family farms. So let us get on with it. Let the House lead on Social Security reform. If the House goes first, we will produce a reform that is consistent with the Presi-

dent's vision for a 21st century public retirement system.

SENATE FILIBUSTER

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, the Republican Congress and Republican President are overcome with power, so much so that they want to fundamentally change our Nation's government into one where a single political party in power holds total control.

And how do the Republicans want to lay claim to absolute power? In order to break down the separation of powers and ram through their appointees to the judicial branch, the President and the Republican leadership want to eliminate a 200-year-old American rule that permits the Senate the right to extend debate in the confirmation of Presidential nominees.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the Senate in the confirmation of Presidential nominees is a central element of our democracy. The confirmation process underscores our Founding Fathers' commitment to the separation of powers and their abhorrence of simple majority rule. It provides for essential checks and balances to ensure we remain a Nation ruled by laws and not just by men.

We do not need a monarchy. We need to preserve our Republic.

CENTER FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

(Mr. McHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McHENRY. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of talk by groups in Washington, D.C. about ethics, making sure that Members of Congress hold to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

It is good stuff. But one of these groups concerned about ethics, the Center for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, is not the nonpartisan entity we may have thought. The Center for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, CREW, Mr. Speaker, is a partisan group with a partisan political agenda.

According to The Wall Street Journal, board members of the group, including a former Clinton White House pollster, have contributed over \$340,000 to left-wing causes in the past 4 years.

The group's director has said, "Since I started, the main thing I want to do was to go after Tom DeLay. DeLay is my top target."

This group is concerned about ethics, Mr. Speaker? No, I do not think so. It is about partisan politics. And they only have one agenda, and that is to file complaints against Republicans.

Mr. Speaker, as someone new to Washington, I am not used to this Washington, D.C. parlor game of dirty tricks. This is about politics, Mr. Speaker, not about ethics.