

This budget must be changed. It must be a budget that is invested to help the American people. I thank the Speaker, and I look forward to the debate. I also thank the distinguished gentleman from New York and my colleagues who have been on the floor for their participation in this very worthy debate.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I submit herewith the list of programs slated for elimination, which I referred to earlier:

III. PROGRAMS PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION

The 2006 request continues the practice of the Bush Administration—also consistent with previous administrations over the past 25 years—of proposing to eliminate or consolidate funding for programs that have achieved their original purpose, that duplicate other programs, that may be carried out with flexible State formula grant funds, or that involve activities that are better or more appropriately supported through State, local, or private resources. In addition, the government-wide Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART, helps focus funding of Department of Education programs that generate positive results for students and that meet strong accountability standards. For 2006, PART findings were used to redirect funds from ineffective programs to more effective activities, as well as to identify reforms to help address programs weaknesses.

The following table shows the programs proposed for elimination in the President's 2006 budget request. Termination of these 48 programs frees up almost \$4.3 billion—based on 2005 levels—for reallocation to more effective, higher-priority activities. Following the table is a brief summary of each program and the rationale for its elimination.

<i>Program Terminations</i>	
[2005 BA in millions]	
Alcohol Abuse Reduction	\$32.7
Arts in Education	35.6
B.J. Stupa Olympic Scholarships	1.0
Byrd Honors Scholarship	40.7
Civic Education	29.4
Close Up Fellowships	1.5
Community Technology Centers	5.0
Comprehensive School Reform	205.3
Demonstration Projects for Students with Disabilities	6.9
Educational Technology State Grants	496.0
Elementary and Secondary School Counseling	34.7
Even Start	225.1
Excellence in Economic Education	1.5
Exchanges with Historic Whaling and Trading Partners	8.6
Federal Perkins Loan Cancellations	66.1
Foreign Language Assistance	17.9
Foundations for Learning	1.0
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs	306.5
Interest Subsidy Grants	1.5
Javits Gifted and Talented Education	11.0
Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships	65.6
Literacy Programs for Prisoners	5.0
Menal Health Integration in School	5.0
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers	2.3
National Writing Project	20.3
Occupational and Employment Information	9.3
Parental Informational and Resources Centers	41.9
Projects with Industry	21.6

Program Terminations—Continued

Ready to Teach	14.3
Recreational Programs	2.5
Regional Educational Laboratories	66.1
Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities State Grant	437.4
Schooll Dropout Prevention	4.9
School Leadership	14.9
Smaller Learning Communities ..	94.5
Star Schools	20.8
State Grants for Incarcerated Youth Offenders	21.8
Support Employment State Grants	37.4
Teacher Quality Enhancement	68.3
Tech-Prep Demonstration	4.9
Tech-Prep Education State Grants	105.8
Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity Program	3.0
TRIO Talent Search	144.9
TRIO Upward Bound	312.6
Underground Railroad Program ..	2.2
Vocational Education National Programs	11.8
Vocational Education State Grants	1,194.3
Women's Educational Equity	3.0
Total	4,264.4

Program Descriptions

[Figures reflect 2005 BA in millions]

Alcohol Abuse Reduction	\$32.7
Supports programs to reduce alcohol abuse in secondary schools. These programs may be funded through other Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities National Programs and State Grants for Innovative Programs.	
Arts in Education	\$35.6
Makes non-competitive awards to VSA arts and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as well as competitive awards for national demonstrations and Federal leadership activities to encourage the integration of the arts into the school curriculum. Eliminating funding for the program is consistent with Administration policy of terminating small categorical programs with limited impact in order to fund higher priorities. Arts education programs may be funded under other authorities.	
B.J. Stupak Olympic Scholarships	\$1.0
Provides financial assistance to athletes who are training at the United States Olympic Education Center or one of the United States Olympic Training Centers and who are pursuing a postsecondary education. Athletes can receive grant, work-study, and loan assistance through the Department's postsecondary student aid programs. Rated Results Not Demonstrated by the PART due to lack of performance data and program design deficiencies, including its duplication of other Federal student aid programs.	
Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to vehemently state my disappointment, frustration, and objection to the FY 2006 budget submitted by President Bush.	

When President Bush submitted his 2006 budget to Congress on Monday he said, "The taxpayers of America don't want us spending our money into something that's not achieving results." I couldn't agree more. The unnecessary tax cuts for the rich and an optional war with Iraq are not producing results.

The President's 2006 budget request slashes social programs while increasing military spending. Yet not a single dime of his FY 2006 budget is earmarked for Iraq. Instead, those costs are hidden from the American people in the form of an \$80 billion emergency supplemental request to Congress. This budget will severely impact Texas citizens negatively, as well as other American citizens. They deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, never before has America faced such an array of issues that demand creative, competent leadership. But the Administration has pursued solutions that serve only to escalate the problems we are facing. Programs and policies that not only provide assistance for the poor but for a large portion of the American people who need help to keep their heads above water are under attack. On the cutting block by this Administration are grants for college tuition; housing assistance under Section 8; food stamps; health care for the uninsured.

Eight million Americans are unemployed. But Republicans passed a new set of tax breaks that reward corporations who send jobs overseas. About 45 million Americans have no health insurance. But Republicans have proposed Health Savings Accounts that benefit a wealthy few, encourage employers to drop insurance coverage and will increase the number of uninsured by 350,000. Over 8 million children nationwide are struggling to meet new national education standards. But Republicans refused to provide promised help to our schools, leaving millions of children without the help they need in reading and math.

America needs a national security policy that is as strong and brave and as decent as the heroes who serve in uniform. We must make sure that they have the training and equipment they need to get the job done right.

Democrats are working to build a future that is worthy of the trust of the American people, the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, and the aspirations of all of America's children.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OWENS. 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 the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a privilege to stand here tonight and to talk with my colleagues

and discuss what we have going on with the President's budget that has been submitted, and also with the desire of the President and of our leadership to begin to get their hands around the spending issue and to address the spending issue.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I hear regularly from my constituents in Tennessee is it is time to stop spending so much of the taxpayers' money. And one of the things that people in my district constantly remind me of, and a message they want me to bring to Washington is: it is not the government's money. The government is not creating a product; the government is not selling a product. It is the taxpayers' money, and they want accountability with that money.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this morning I think that the taxpayers across this country woke to the kickoff of a national scare campaign, and it is aimed squarely at the President's budget and at this Congress' efforts to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in government. Listen to some of these headlines that we found in the newspapers out there.

This one from Illinois: "Bush Budget Includes Steep Cuts." In Tennessee a paper said: "Bush Budget Axes Scores of Programs." In Oregon, news sources said: "Domestic Programs Sacrificed in the Budget." And in California, newspapers declared: "The President's Budget Proposal Cuts Vital Funds For Safety Net."

Now, all of this is coming about, Mr. Speaker, because finally, finally this Congress and this President are answering a need and a desire the American people have, and that is to reform government, to reduce the amount of money that we are spending, and for us to come up with a 21st-century delivery of government services that is more effective and more efficient, that is going to meet the needs of government, that is going to avail itself of new technologies, and that is going to be fair to the taxpayer.

That is what they want. They want to be certain that we, the Members of the U.S. House, are going to be good stewards of the tax dollars that they send here. Because they want to see a system that is more fair to the taxpayers, to the working men and women that every single day get up and leave their homes and go to work; and who, with every single paycheck, look at that paycheck and look at the amount of money that is withheld from that paycheck to do, what? To fund government services.

□ 2100

Mr. Speaker, since when did eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse in government become a bad thing? And to listen to some of my colleagues here on the floor this evening, one would begin to think that trying to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal Government is a bad thing. But my constituents and millions of Americans

think this is the right thing to do and now is the right time to do it.

Listening to my colleagues speak tonight, one would begin to think that demanding results, demanding positive outcomes of government programs is a negative. But I hear from constituents and Tennesseans every single day that say let us demand results. Let us be certain that programs are producing the right outcomes that we expect from them. That is a positive, not a negative; and the American people are ready to see that kind of accountability. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because it is their money. It is their money that they have earned that is coming into the government coffers and is being spent on programs that are to benefit the American people.

I would like for every American to know that President Bush and this Republican Congress are not content to sit idly by while even a penny of taxpayer dollars is wasted, and let me tell Members there is significantly more than a penny of waste that we can target in this budget.

I am proud of the leadership of this House, the Senate, and the President and his team for saying we are going to roll the spending back. I agree with them. We can save America one dollar at a time, and that is what we are going to do. We are going to take these first steps and put it on the road, saving America one dollar at a time.

What those headlines should be saying is this: President Bush and the Republican Congress believe taxpayer dollars ought to be spent wisely or not spent at all. Sounds like something ours grandmothers probably told us. If you are going to do it, do it right. If you are going to do it, do it right the first time. If you are going to make some money, save it. If you are going to spend it, spend it wisely or do not spend it. In Tennessee we call that good old common sense. It makes sense, but I guess that is why a lot of the liberals do not like it, because it is good old common sense.

That is what this is all about. It is about our firm belief that the American people work far too hard and far too long to have half their earnings taken in taxes and then squandered by the government. Taxes, that is the single largest part of a family budget. They spend more on taxes than they do for food, for education, or for transportation. Taxes, and it is an imperative that we be good stewards of that money, that we be accountable for that money, and that we look for every single possible opportunity to save and manage wisely those taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Congressional Research Service, there are approximately 1,200 Federal Government programs, and I hope Members heard me say approximately because that is exactly what I meant to say. There are so many programs out there, we do not even know how many programs we have. We know we have approximately 1,200 programs.

So what our President is saying is, all right, folks, let us look at 150 of these, the really egregious examples of waste, and let us find some savings. Let us start to whittle away and find what works and what does not work. Let us look at the programs that have outlived their purpose, their usefulness, let us find the things that are duplicative, let us find the things that have turned out to be failures and are not producing the outcomes that we want and have not yielded an acceptable return for the investment of taxpayer dollars that have gone into those programs.

There is not a single thing radical here. As I said earlier, it is common sense, it is fiscal responsibility and the Republicans are committed to it. Why should an agency have its budget automatically increased year after year? Most people do not get automatic increases every year. Ask a lot of the folks working in my district. It is not a given that they are going to get a raise every single year, so why should an underperforming Federal Department get a budget boost every 12 months?

For too long in Washington, a Federal spending increase has been a certain thing. It has been as certain as the sun rises and that it is going to set in the evening. It is time to reform that process.

Here are some great examples of things that we need to get behind: the Forest Service. They could not figure out for what purpose it spent \$215 million out of its \$3.4 billion operating budget in fiscal year 1995. They could not figure it out. They did not know what they spent \$215 million on.

Has anyone mentioned that since 1992 the Rural Utility Services Electricity Loan Program has canceled \$4.9 billion in debt? That essentially means it loaned \$4.9 billion of taxpayer money and then said do not worry about paying us back. CEOs go to prison for things like that.

Did Members know that the State Children's Health Insurance Program, the SCHIP program, is currently insuring childless adults in two States at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$330 million? The program, a good program, was created to provide health insurance to uninsured children, not uninsured adults.

This is not an isolated problem. We have other examples, and it is not a rare thing that programs waste taxpayer money. In fact, the Committee on Government Reform where I served last Congress found that the Office of Personnel and Management's Inspector General recovers \$12 in fraudulent spending for every \$1 spent by its office. That is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Veterans Administration, we know there are \$3 billion in outstanding loans and that processing errors and program fraud account for \$125 million annually in VA pension overpayments. These overpayments comprise about 4 percent of the \$2.9 billion

in total pension benefits that the VA paid out in fiscal year 2001.

Mr. Speaker, given this information, how can we not work to reduce spending and insert accountability? How can we not say to these agencies no more funding increases until you prove you can handle what you have already got?

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an expert on some of these issues join us this evening here on the floor. The gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) is out of Mississippi's first district and he is a part of the Republican leadership here in Congress. He does a wonderful job for the people of Mississippi and does a wonderful job for our leadership. He is a deputy majority whip, a member of the Committee on Appropriations; and he knows a lot about our budget and what we can do to work on being more accountable in our government budget system.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) for that kind word of introduction.

I have to observe what a refreshing contrast we have seen tonight between the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) and those who occupied the previous hour of Special Orders on this floor tonight because of the great difference in the philosophy of government evidenced by all of the speakers tonight.

The gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) has outlined a conservative philosophy of efficiency with the taxpayer dollars, not taking the first answer at face value but looking for savings wherever we can find them because that is what the taxpayers expect us to do.

What we witnessed in the previous hour was an example of what we hear from our liberal Democrat friends year after year. I had to think as I was listening to them that these are the same arguments that we hear over and over again from the other side of the aisle. They say we are not spending enough. Regardless of the fact that Federal spending almost always increases, it is never high enough for our friends on the Democrat side of the aisle. They always, always want to spend even more.

Whatever tax level the President and the Republicans propose, the Democrats always want to tax more. They want to raise taxes on the American people. However high taxes might be, we can always count on our friends to make the argument year in and year out that they want tax rates to be higher. They may shed crocodile tears about deficits, but their solution to deficits is always higher taxes, always higher taxation, and their solution to deficits is never ever to find a way to make savings for the American people.

Their arguments are always the same, and I must admit more often than not their predictions are off the mark too, Mr. Speaker, their predictions about how the President's budget will affect the poor, the disadvantaged, the unemployed, the econ-

omy as a whole. We heard those predictions, those same dire predictions last year, and what has happened? As a matter of fact, what has happened is exactly what we on the Republican side of the aisle predicted: healthy growth in our economy, the gross domestic product of a sustained rate of now 4 percent continuing on now for several months, and the unemployment rate falling. Job creation is at a record high in the United States of America, and I am proud of that. It has come in spite of the dire warnings we had from our friends on the left who predicted last year when we tried to hold the line on budgeting that we would have all sorts of dire consequences for the American people.

One argument that was made previously that cannot go unchallenged is this argument about the term "withering on the vine." I think some people in this town believe if you say something often enough, it will take on truth. As a matter of fact, no Representative on this side of the aisle has ever advocated Social Security withering on the vine. It is just factually inaccurate to say such a thing. We were actually accused of saying that not with regard to Social Security but with regard to Medicare, and it was not true about Medicare.

What a Speaker of the House at one time said should wither on the vine is this HCFA program which we have now renamed CMA that could command and control a health care system where government tries to manage each and every aspect of it. That is what he said should wither on the vine so Americans could have more choices about the way they get their health care.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to challenge every time I can this allegation that Republicans wanted either Social Security or Medicare to wither on the vine; it did not.

I want to applaud the President and my colleagues for saying tonight that we believe government can do better. We know there is waste and fraud and abuse in government spending.

□ 2115

And every single penny that is wasted, every single penny that is subject to fraud is money that could go to programs that actually do benefit Americans. And it is money that could go to tax reduction. It is money that could go to deficit reduction.

So central to the President's budget that he submitted to us this week is the fact that the President and Republicans in Congress are dedicated to providing stronger financial management and oversight for Federal programs. This should not be controversial. It ought to be a common-sense, bipartisan approach to Federal spending, and we invite all Americans to help us.

I hope that Americans will be contacting Members of this Special Order after tonight's Special Order, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the phones will be ringing off the walls in congres-

sional offices with Americans giving us examples of the way they know we can save money. My constituents instinctively know that this Federal Government is so big, so large, so unmanageable that there have got to be ways that we can effect savings.

So I look forward to this Special Order tonight. We have got, I guess, around 40 or 45 more minutes. I intend to stick around, Mr. Speaker, and if the gentlewoman from Tennessee will recognize me again, we might be able to cite some very specific examples that I think she might find interesting about ways in which we believe that we can begin to look for additional savings for the American people.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I appreciate the gentleman's comments so very much, and I appreciate his insights and his wisdom that he brings to the discussion.

And he is exactly right. Government can do better, and it is our responsibility to challenge government to do better, to challenge our systems of accounting, to challenge our systems that we are using to track the agencies and the outcomes that are there. Everything is funded by the taxpayer's dollar, and we do want to invite the American people and our constituents to join us and be a part of this team as we look for ways to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in our system. We want to be certain that for future generations, for my children, for my grandchildren, that this is a healthy, vibrant nation where hope and opportunity continue to live and continue to be realized by every American man, woman, and child who seeks to find that American Dream.

And I agree with the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) that all too often some of the liberal elites, those that are government elitists, their answer to everything is, just give us a little more money and we can make it right. And we know that does not work. Higher taxes do not yield greater outcomes. What yields greater outcomes is finding ways to do things better, constantly challenging ourselves to do things better, constantly working to find ways to root out that waste, fraud, and abuse that have become so rampant in our governmental entities.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined tonight by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), who joined me in our freshman class in the 108th Congress, and he has been a leader in the effort to target waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal system. He has done a tremendous amount of work on this issue. He has made it his cause and his challenge. He is a member of the Committee on the Budget and lends to that committee much of his expertise on how we can go about creating a better budget process and strengthening our government and strengthening our freedom for future generations.

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

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me. And I certainly want to recognize her for her great leadership in the United States Congress in helping root out waste and fraud and abuse. Her work on the Committee on Government Reform is known throughout the United States Congress. She has been a champion to make sure that there is accountability for taxpayer dollars so that we do something in this institution to protect the family budget from the Federal budget, and I appreciate her leadership.

And I also appreciate the leadership of the gentleman from Mississippi, who spoke earlier. I had the pleasure to serve on the Committee on the Budget with him, and he has been a champion of less government and more freedom on that particular committee.

Mr. Speaker, I especially tonight want to thank our President. There is no doubt in my mind why our President was reelected. He is a man of vision and a man of bold leadership. It is under his leadership that we are going to be able to not only strengthen Social Security for my parents, who are in their 70s, but save it for my children who are both in diapers and know a whole lot more about Big Bird and Barney than they do about Social Security.

And I appreciate the President's leadership on this budget because the only way that we are going to be able to save Social Security for future generations is to do something to rein in the growth of the Federal Government, to root out that waste and that fraud and that abuse and duplication that we know permeates every single nook and cranny of the Federal Government.

For years and years, decades and decades, Washington has squandered money out of the Social Security trust fund. It is time for Washington to put it back. And the way that Washington puts it back is to rein in the growth of government.

I have listened to part of the debate earlier this evening, and I think it is very important, Mr. Speaker, that we first agree on what the facts are. We heard a lot this evening about cuts here and cuts there and cuts here and cuts there. What I find interesting is in the budget that the President is proposing, government is still going to grow. It is going to grow 3.6 percent more in the next budget than it did over this budget. What the President is doing, though, and something that it is absolutely novel in this town, is, it is not going to grow quite as fast as it has in the past.

Most people would be very interested to know, if they just look in their rear-view mirror for a decade, government has grown on average 4.5 percent a year. That is over twice the rate of inflation. In other words, if we are happy with the government we had 10 years

ago, its level of spending, if we just wanted to keep that same government, we would have grown at the rate of inflation. Instead, we have done almost twice that.

And perhaps more importantly, Mr. Speaker, the government budget has grown almost three times faster than the family budget over this same time period as measured by median worker income.

I have a hard time believing and my constituents in the Fifth District of Texas have a hard time believing, why, with the exception of a national emergency, does the Federal Government budget have to grow so much faster than the family budget? And guess what? They are related.

That money is coming from somewhere. It is coming out of the family budget, and it is going into the Federal budget.

What we call mandatory spending now amounts to 11 percent of our economy for the first time in the history of America. What we call discretionary spending in this body is now approximately 7 percent of our economy for the first time in a decade. We are spending over \$20,000 for American households for only the fourth time in the entire history of the United States of America and for the first time since World War II.

It would be wonderful, Mr. Speaker, if all of this money that we were spending somehow magically turned into love and happiness and kindness. Unfortunately, all too often it does not. We have thousands and thousands and thousands of Federal programs spread across hundreds and hundreds of agencies. I defy anybody in this town to be able to tell me, what do they all do? And the examples we have of the waste and the fraud and the abuse and duplication are just profound. We read about it in our local newspaper every day.

It was not that long ago that we picked up our newspaper to find out that our Federal Government with our money spent \$800,000 for an outhouse in one public park and the toilet did not even flush. The only thing it flushed was hard-earned taxpayer money down the drain, \$800,000. And then we read about the millions and millions that were recently spent for an indoor rain forest in Iowa. And this does not even talk about a number of the questionable studies that we end up funding with taxpayer dollars.

I am not sure who thought up the use of taxpayer funding to figure out how and why college students decorate their dorm rooms. I am not sure exactly what vital Federal interest was being served by that. I think a number of my constituents would be surprised to learn that we spent over \$2 million of their money to study the sexual habits of older men. Mr. Speaker, I do not particularly care to know what is in that study, and I feel fairly confident that my taxpayers in the Fifth Congressional District do not really care to pay for it.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me talk a little bit about duplication. We have over 342 different Federal economic development programs, 342 at last count. That is probably 342 different executive directors and deputy directors. How many different Federal economic development programs do we need? And, by the way, a very good question that needs to be asked is, what does the Federal Government know about economic development anyway?

The Federal Government, at last count, administers 50 different programs to aid the homeless, 50 different programs spread across eight different Federal agencies. Four agencies administer 23 programs offering housing. Six agencies administer 26 programs offering food and nutrition. Three agencies and ten programs attempt to protect homelessness. Three different agencies, 17 different programs provide mental health treatment. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important cause. We need to make sure that something is done about the homeless in our society. But how many different programs do we need trying to do the same, exact thing? It just speaks out for some kind of consolidation.

Drug control, we have more than 50 Federal agencies responsible for waging the war on drugs. Early childhood development, we have more than 90 different programs spread across 11 different agencies. Job training, seven agencies and 40 different programs. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on, and that is just talking about duplication.

Some of the fraud that goes on that I believe our constituents would be shocked to find out, in the last year of the Clinton administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development just lost 10 percent of their budget, roughly \$3 billion lost in improper payments. I mean, can one imagine for \$3 billion how many Americans could have paid the down payment on their first home? Instead, government just squandered the money.

Why does this happen? It happens because government does not do anything as well as we the people. As one of my colleagues said, it is intoxicating to spend other people's money, and unfortunately, there are a number of Members of this body that are quite intoxicated with that power to go out and spend other people's money. And it is always easy to do it.

And speaking of other news articles that I have seen recently, I saw where a government official paid a taxidermy service with taxpayer funds to prepare a shoulder mount of a mule deer head, and according to the General Accounting Office, the deer was road kill and found by the official on the side of the road. And there are Members in this body who want to raise people's taxes to pay for more of that. It is example after example.

Recently, the Republicans in this House finally cracked down on one abuse, and that is, for years and years

and years, the Medicare program paid almost four times as much for a wheelchair as the Veterans' Administration did. Mr. Speaker, how could that happen? We scratch the surface and what we discover is that one agency would competitively bid and the other would not. I wonder how many small businesses across Texas and Kansas and Oregon and Vermont would be able to stay in business if they did not competitively bid their supplies? Fortunately, we managed to discover that one and do something about it.

I could go on and on all evening, Mr. Speaker, but the point is that these are just a handful of examples. If we cannot find 1 or 2 or 3 percent of waste in a government budget, Mr. Speaker, we are simply not looking.

□ 2130

We are just not looking. And if we are going to save Social Security for future generations, we have to moderate the growth of the Federal budget.

Now, again, liberals in this body are going to say the President is cutting here and he is cutting there. But you need to listen to the language of Washington, because it is not the language of the American people. When people in Washington say "cut," what they mean is it is not growing as much as they would like to see it growing.

It is kind of like if your son comes up to you and says, Gee, Dad, you are giving me a \$5 a week allowance, and I really need \$10. You sit there and you think about it a while and you say, Well, Son, you make a good case. I have listened to what your expenses are. I am not going to give you \$10 a week, but I will raise you to \$7 a week. He says, Gee, Dad, that is a \$3 cut. Don't you know I wanted \$10? That is the language of Washington.

So I hope as the American people listen to the debate over this budget, that they listen very, very carefully, because what liberals call cuts really tend to be a moderation in the growth of government.

Again, if we are going to save Social Security for our children, we are going to have to moderate the growth of government. As my esteemed colleague from Tennessee was saying earlier, where is it chiseled in stone that we have to spend more money next year on a program than we spent last year? I have not read it in the Constitution, I did not read it in the Declaration of Independence, I have not read it in the Budget Act. But there are people here that say that if you care about farmers, or if you care about veterans, or if you care about school children, the only way you can show it is to spend more money next year than you did last year, regardless of what the results are, regardless of whether any kind of standards of accountability are being met.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, as people are telling us that all these budgets have been cut, they may be interested to know, for example, that over the last

10 years, education spending has increased 128 percent. It does not sound like a cut to me. Agricultural spending has increased 42 percent over the last 10 years. It does not sound like a cut to me. Health and Human Services has grown by 80 percent. It does not sound like a cut to me. The Energy Department has grown by 56 percent. It does not sound like a cut to me. Agency after agency after agency has seen large increases in their budget for the last decade.

What we really have to be asking ourselves are two different things: What is the essential role of government in the free society, and how can government most efficiently meet those goals?

It is time, again, Mr. Speaker, that we do what the President wants us to do, and that is to moderate the growth of the Federal Government, so we can start to root out all the examples of waste, fraud, and abuse and be accountable to the people who work hard back in our districts and send this money to Washington.

Again, there is so much of this throughout the entirety of the budget; and if we only start to moderate the growth of Washington, then we can start to root some of this out. And we must do this. Our deficit is too high; our debt is too high. We need to save Social Security.

Yet Democrats who will talk about the deficit and decry the deficit, all they want to do is increase more spending, more taxes. They tell us that tax relief is the reason that we have a deficit. Well, I would invite them to go talk to the people at the IRS, talk to the people at Treasury. What you will discover is that tax revenues are up. We cut tax rates and tax revenues came up because we promoted economic growth. Tax revenues are up almost 10 percent over last year, because more people are saving and they are working and they are investing. Tax relief is part of the deficit solution, not part of the deficit problem.

Besides that, it is the deficit which is a symptom. Spending is the disease. By any measure whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, spending is absolutely out of control in Washington D.C.

In some respects, this is not a debate about spending. What it really is is a debate about who is going to do the spending. All my colleagues would like to see more money spent on education, housing, and health care; but we are not indifferent as to who does the spending. Bureaucrats and liberals want Washington to do the spending. We want American families to do the spending. We know who has our children's best interest for the future in mind, and it is not Washington. It is our constituents back home.

We must remember what Ronald Reagan once said, and that is the closest thing to eternal life on Earth is a Federal program. We need to change that, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of our children, for the sake of Social Secu-

rity, and for the sake of the Republic. I appreciate again the opportunity to speak out about the budget and to speak about ways we can protect the family budget from the Federal budget. I appreciate the gentlewoman from Tennessee for yielding, and I appreciate her great leadership on this issue.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) for being here to talk with us this evening and reminding us of some points that are so very important. I hear from my constituents, as he does, about that language of Washington and understanding when something is actually a reduction and when something is just slowed growth when some of the spending has been moderated. The gentleman is so exactly right.

What we would like to do, what the American people would like for us to do, is root out that waste, that fraud, that abuse of the system; get rid of the duplication of programs; eliminate the bureaucracy here that soaks up the money and allow that money to go to the local programs where the rubber meets the road and be certain that the dollars are spent wisely. As I said earlier, spend them wisely, or not at all; make sure we are making good decisions and being good stewards.

The gentleman mentioned a little bit about economic development and tax relief. As the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) said earlier, it is the reduction in taxes that has helped to spur economic growth, which is such a vitally important part of working on waste, fraud and abuse; the fact that we have a growing economy.

The other part, that we reduce spending; that we take a good solid commonsense approach to this; that we create the right environment for business to be successful; and that we continue to reduce programs that are not helpful to that, that add to the cost of free enterprise, that slow down the process of delivering government services. These are good, commonsense approaches.

I do applaud our President and our leadership for taking a stand and moving us in this direction.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined also tonight by a new Member of this body, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), and we are so pleased to have him here with us. He is out of Texas' Eleventh District. I particularly like the fact that he has brought a lot of common sense to Congress with him. He is a good old Texas Aggie from Texas A&M, spent some time in the U.S. military, has appreciation for freedom, for protecting freedom, and understands the importance of protecting individual freedom and free enterprise.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee and also want to compliment the two previous speakers on the excellent job they did in setting out some of the things that we all want to talk about.

In the interest of fair disclosure, though, I do need to correct one thing. I went to Texas A&M at Commerce, Texas, which is actually the second largest institution in the A&M system. We were the Lions, not the Aggies. In fair disclosure, I need to set the record straight on that.

Mr. Speaker, I stand tonight in support of our efforts to aggressively eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in our Federal spending. I am a CPA by profession. I have over 30 years of practice in helping clients and others deal with this issue in the world outside of government, and it is incredibly important in that arena, as it is in Federal Government.

I once spent 5 years working with President George W. Bush as his business partner in Midland, Texas, the chief financial officer of the oil and gas exploration company that we co-owned, and it was an exercise in meeting payrolls and providing jobs for people of west Texas, but doing so in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

We were getting other people's money to spend in the oil business to drill with, and it was incumbent upon us to spend those dollars as if we were spending our own money, wisely and with an understanding of how scarce they were, because folks trusted us with that money.

We in Congress have much the same role in that regard. We take money away from people at the point of a gun, for the most part; but that should not relieve us of our obligations to spend that money as wisely as we possibly can.

I believe that is important that we in Congress aggressively approach the issue of balancing the Federal budget from a business perspective. President Bush and this Republican Congress, of which I am very proud to be a part, are committed to spending the American taxpayers' hard-earned money as wisely as we can.

We seem to hear a lot about opposition in Congress these days, not only opposition in Congress to cutting waste out of our budgets and out of our organizations, but we also see debates on Social Security reform, abusive lawsuit reform, funding our troops and much, much more. The opposition we face in these critical issues has become almost par for the course, and I find it quite personally disappointing that we are unable to reach any kind of common ground as we search for solutions to the issues and problems that face our Nation.

Now to the issue of eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse. Surely this is one area that both sides of the aisle can find common ground on, an area we can agree that every single tax dollar that we, as I mention, take away from the citizens of this country, the working citizens of this country, should be spent in a manner and on programs that we in Congress authorize and provide for. We should all agree on the importance of cutting waste, fraud, and abuse from Federal spending.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that every Member of Congress take this issue seriously. We are a little better than 2½ years past the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley bill, which looked at fraud in the public arena, publicly traded companies. There are men and women today who are on trial for committing fraud within that arena, and they are going to go to jail. They are going to do felony time for that. Those were serious issues, where they defrauded the investing public. We ought to be just as serious about that happening in Federal spending programs as we are in the public arena.

Here are some examples of waste, fraud, and abuse that hopefully everyone who listens would find offensive. Fraudulent tax returns. As I mentioned, I am a CPA and I have spent 30 years practicing, preparing tax returns for folks, helping them comply with the income Tax Code.

According to some recent data, more than a quarter of the tax returns claiming the earned income tax credit were prepared erroneously, accounting for up to 32 percent of the total claims for over a decade. The estimated errors and erroneous payments, should they have been eliminated, would have freed up \$8.1 billion of tax dollars that we took away from the taxpayers of this country.

Another area is in the General Services Administration. Improper payments and duplicate payments for GSA credit cards occur primarily because cards are typically used without preauthorization for purchases, and controls to reconcile these purchases are inadequate. We have got a recent example of a GSA employee who spent over \$32,000 during a 15-month period on her government credit card for personal expenses. We just simply cannot abide by that kind of conduct.

We have also got waste in the tax collection system. There is an overall problem with the way we collect taxes to fund the Federal Government. The problem lies in the complex Tax Code that we have built over some approaching 90 years, a little better than 90 years, I guess.

With a simpler and fairer Tax Code, we could take the tax industry that is kept in business by the need to comply with the Tax Code; we could take that industry on that is kept in business because of the needs of complying with this complex Tax Code.

The costs of complying with the Federal tax laws and regulations is roughly \$250 billion a year. I would argue while much of this money goes to my CPA brethren and me to help our clients, it does not help businesses do a better job, whatever business they are in. It does not help them provide better surfaces. Drilling contractors in my districts do not drill for energy better because of this. This is simply a burden that they have to pay, year after year, to allow us to collect taxes.

We ought to be able to come up with a tax collection scheme that is simple

and straightforward and fair and eliminates much of these compliance costs, which not only is a compliance cost, but generates a great deal of tax fraud in its compliance.

Waste, fraud, and abuse not only costs taxpayers unnecessarily; but there are two hidden costs I would like to speak of. The first cost is to legitimate participants in programs who may not get the services that they need because resources that would have otherwise gone to provide those services have been stolen or diverted by cheaters within the system.

As an example, in my hometown we have recently convicted a physician of fraudulently collecting fees from Medicare and Medicaid. This money, money that this person stole from the taxpayers of this country, should have gone to the providers in our area for treating patients, not for cheating.

□ 2145

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the gentleman would yield on that point, because I appreciate him making that very good point.

There are programs which are designed to help those people that cannot help themselves or that are at a disadvantage for whatever reason. The gentleman makes an excellent point that when someone cheats on a program like that, they are not only cheating the government and the taxpayers, but they are cheating the neediest Americans, the most disadvantaged Americans.

I wonder if I could go back to another point the gentleman from Texas made. Did the gentleman say that there is a 25 percent error rate in the earned income tax credit?

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, no, I think I said there was a 32 percent.

Mr. WICKER. Oh, my goodness. Okay, it is even worse than I heard. So 32 percent of the earned income tax credit is claimed erroneously or fraudulently, one or the other; is that what you are saying?

Mr. CONAWAY. Either by intention or by accident.

Mr. WICKER. The gentleman is an expert, and I am sure he can explain better than I can the purpose of the earned income tax credit, which is a worthy purpose.

Mr. CONAWAY. Well, that is right. The earned income tax credit was an attempt by this Congress to credit folks at the lower end of the earning scale for taxes that they would have otherwise owed to the Federal Government. It is a credit that is targeted directly to those who make the least amount of money in our system, or in our economy, and phases out as folks' income goes up.

Mr. WICKER. And it is designed for parents of children and for working poor parents to help give them an extra opportunity. So when almost a third of the earned income tax credit money goes to people who are not entitled to it, certainly it hurts the people who

would be entitled to it. Perhaps we could give a more generous benefit to the EITC families. Perhaps we could give a tax cut to other working families, or pay down the debt.

So I just appreciate the gentleman mentioning that very good point. And when he said it, I had to go back to the earned income tax credit, a program we are not proposing to cut in any way, but would it not be wonderful if we could find that one-third that is going to people who are not entitled under the law?

Mr. CONAWAY. Well, the good news is, we found a third of them, and there should be processes in place within the Internal Revenue Service to get that money back so that it does, in fact, go either to pay off the debt or to fund other government services.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I probably interrupted the gentleman's train of thought, but I just had to jump in on that very excellent point he was making.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, while we are there, let me mention one other area of cost that waste, fraud, and abuse causes. Every single time we have an incident of waste or fraud, the regulatory agencies in charge put on layer upon layer of additional regulatory burdens to try to prevent it. I am not criticizing them for that, but that is just the way the system works. They try to figure out, how did this person cheat us, how can we put some additional regulations in place so that we do not let that happen again.

Every time that happens, legitimate providers of services for Medicare, as an example, or health care have to continue to comply with this increasing burden of regulations that we have put in place. This costs them money.

In a business, when you have to comply with a regulation of some sort, you either have to hire somebody to help you with that, a direct cost, or you have to allocate some resource within your organization who was previously working to help you make money and help you provide services to clients to comply with that. So either one of those costs those providers within the system money, and it is a direct result of cheaters in our system.

Now, I am not advocating that we do not go find the cheaters; let us go find them and point them out. But let us also help all of us understand that as people cheat, that increases government regulation; and all of us, particularly on this side of the aisle, campaign often on reducing government regulations, so there is a second cost that the cheaters put into the system.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could interject one other thing at this point. We are about to run out of time, and I do not know if we have complimented the leader of this Special Order quite enough. She has been very generous in her remarks about us.

Actually, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) has been quite a champion in the area, particu-

larly, of credit card fraud within the Federal Government. I understand this amounts to almost \$100 million a year in lost taxpayers' money. The gentlewoman, I think, has introduced, along with the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), legislation to address this problem; is that not correct?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Yes, that is correct. I thank the gentleman from Mississippi for bringing that point up, because we were concerned about the use of credit cards, primarily looking at what was taking place in DOD, and knowing that there was an opportunity there to rein that spending in.

Last year, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) and I worked with Senator GRASSLEY, and we did introduce a piece of legislation that would bring that into line, because we feel like there is an opportunity to save about \$100 million annually by putting some proper controls and working to be certain that there is not waste and that there is not fraud in the use of government credit cards by employees. That is just one of the many ways, just one of the small ways.

As I said earlier, we can go about this one dollar at a time, because those dollars mount up to hundreds, to thousands, to millions, to billions of dollars. And over a period of 5 years or 10 years, which is really not that long a period of time, it is substantial savings for the American taxpayer as they are working to fund government.

It is so important, I say to the gentleman, as he has pointed out, that government can do better and that we realize that and that we challenge our constituents to work with us on this.

It is also important that we participate by being certain that we stop funding things that do not work. If it is not working, if it is a program that is not working or has outlived its usefulness or is duplicated in other ways, then we need to look for ways to be certain that we are not funding things that are not working.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, I know also, I would say to the gentlewoman, that she finds as refreshing as I do the remarks of our new Member who came to us from a business background and who is determined to work with us on this type legislation, someone who knows of what he speaks when he says he has taken other people's money and had to invest it wisely and make sure that it was used efficiently.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for just a quick point, it is so refreshing to see members of the freshman class come in and join us on this issue. My freshman class made waste, fraud, and abuse its class project.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), who was just here, was one of the founders of a group that we call the Washington Waste Watchers to draw attention to this subject. So we are so pleased, after having put a tremendous amount of work over the past couple of years on this.

Also, the gentleman from Virginia (Chairman DAVIS), who chairs the Committee on Government Reform, has put an incredible amount of time over the past 2 years with that committee, holding hearings and having reports, getting things on paper so that we are beginning to find out what is and is not working; who is and is not accountable for their money, what agencies are producing results, what agencies are not producing results. We can go back and look at the Treasury books from the year 2001 to see that the Federal Government cannot account for \$17.3 billion. Now, to my constituents and for all of us, that is not acceptable.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman would yield on that point, the Federal Government could not account for \$17.3 billion, with a "b". That means that \$17.3 billion is just gone and the Federal Government cannot say what happened to it. Can we imagine? But this comes not from some story in some newspaper of doubtful authenticity, this comes from a report of the Department of the Treasury, the 2001 financial report of the United States Government.

Mr. Speaker, \$17.3 billion with a "b", and we do not know where it went.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, that is right. The Office of Management and Budget in their budget of the United States Government, fiscal year 2003, people can go to page 48 in that report and they will see how the OMB shows us that 21 of 26 departments and major agencies received the lowest possible rating for their financial management, meaning that the auditors cannot even express an opinion on their financial statements. Our colleague from Texas, who is a CPA, understands exactly what that means. We had 21 of 26 departments and major agencies that got the lowest possible rating.

Now, what we are saying, as the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) said, government can do better, we can do better. The American people, as taxpayers, expect us to do better. It is our responsibility, being a good steward of those dollars, that we do a better job, that we require government to do a better job. That is the purpose that we are setting forth.

I agree and I join each of the gentlemen who has spoken tonight in commending our President and our leadership in saying, the time has come to address this. We have to rein the spending in because we need to know what we are spending, where it is going, and what the American taxpayers' dollars are being used for.

Mr. WICKER. Well, let me just say, and these will be my final remarks and then I will yield back to the two of my colleagues for whatever they might want to say; I just look forward to working with my three fellow Representatives who have spoken on this Special Order tonight, and with the President, to say that we can be more diligent in the way that we spend the taxpayers' money, we can be more efficient, and we can continue in our effort

to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in our government.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Mississippi for joining us tonight.

I yield to my colleague from Texas for any final remarks that he may have.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Congress should approach Federal budgeting in a more businesslike manner. I, too, do not understand how underperforming Federal agencies or programs can continue to receive funding year after year without being held to account. In the real world, a business owner who manages his or her own business this way would soon find themselves out of business. Instead, Washington seems to reward that behavior.

Mr. Speaker, our President has proposed a budget that will serve as a good starting point for Members of this Congress as we begin to craft a budget that respects and honors the wishes of the hard-working American taxpayer. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in crafting solutions, and not just blind opposition, to wasteful programs that hamper our Federal Government.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for joining us this evening.

Mr. Speaker, before I came to Congress, I had the opportunity to represent Tennessee's 23rd State senate district. While I was in that body, I had worked on government reform issues and came up with a plan that would have called for across-the-board spending cuts. I certainly believed that State agencies could get in there and find waste, fraud, and abuse within their operations, and they could cut it and better serve the taxpayers of my State.

Of course, at the time that I came up with my plan, the 5 Percent Solution, it was criticized by so many as being too harsh. The word was, well, people will not accept that kind of accountability. A few years later, many of those reductions were actually put in place. And do my colleagues know what? Things started working a little bit better in Tennessee.

Today, we see some of that same press in Tennessee calling the taxpayers and the President's plan, Congress' plan far too harsh. I read some of those headlines earlier. But I do not think that some of the media, the liberal media has been paying attention to what has been taking place in some of our States.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, in fiscal year 2002, 26 States implemented across-the-board spending cuts, 15 States downsized State government employment, and 13 States streamlined government programs. We hear all the time that our State governments are great laboratories for new programs and new projects and creative government solutions, and this should be a

lesson to us here at the Federal level, because it is not impossible to root out waste, fraud, and abuse. It is our responsibility to do so.

□ 2200

Here are some of the headlines that we have found of what is going on in some of the States. In Alaska where Governor McCaskey proposed cutting 21 State programs and 200 jobs; in Colorado where the legislature passed an \$809 million budget-balancing package which eliminated some 200 State employees.

We are looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to working with the leadership in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 418, REAL ID ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-3) on the resolution (H. Res. 71) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 418) to establish and rapidly implement regulations for State driver's license and identification document security standards, to prevent terrorists from abusing the asylum laws of the United States, to unify terrorism-related grounds for inadmissibility and removal, and to ensure expeditious construction of the San Diego border fence, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, for some time now, several of my colleagues and myself have come to the floor of the House to address issues surrounding our national policy in Iraq, and tonight we intend to have a few comments in that regard, particularly in regard to the budget and how the budget refers to our ongoing efforts in Iraq. And I was thinking about that in combination with the President's suggested budget the other day.

That same day I was looking at the President's budget, I was reading a story about 3 GIs who were walking through a town in central Iraq, and they were trying to alert people about essentially the polling activity and the election activity that was going to go on, but they knew they were in a very hostile environment when they were doing so. And a group of them, about nine soldiers were walking through an area, and they were just sort of handing out leaflets to folks about the election activity to let them know where they could vote and what kind of security was going to be provided, and a shot rang out. The leader of the platoon was shot and went down, and they immediately started to receive fire from all points of the compass.

The thing that struck me is that it said what immediately happened is two of the soldiers who were near the fellow who was shot immediately, instead of taking cover, jumped up and sort of literally sort of shielded the injured GI with themselves as they returned fire. That is just one of the many acts of heroism that our troops have been involved with in Iraq.

What it made me think about was, to ask the question frankly, whether back home we are matching the responsibility and the values and the heroism that are going on in Iraq. Because whatever you think about the Iraq policy, and I voted against the Iraq war. I thought the President's assertion that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction was overstated, that his assertion that Saddam was responsible for September 11 was inaccurate, and I voted against the war. But, nonetheless, all of us respect what our GIs, Marines, and other service personnel are doing in Iraq.

And the question I was just thinking about is whether or not their courage and responsibility and the values, American values they are displaying in Iraq are sort of met on the domestic side here in Washington, D.C., particularly in regard to the budget that this administration has just proposed to the people in the U.S. Congress.

I was thinking about how you would test the budget that the President has proposed against the values that we are seeing by our troops in Iraq. And in thinking about it, it became pretty clear to me that there are some real questions about that, about whether this budget really is up to snuff and up to the level of character that we have seen of our people in Iraq.

Let me give the first example that comes to mind. We now have literally thousands of our sons and daughters, husband and wives coming home injured from Iraq, some very, very seriously. In fact, one of the most disturbing things about this war is, because of our excellent medical care, we are actually having people come back from Iraq with more devastating injuries than other wars because we have been successful in saving lives. But people are coming back with very, very debilitating injuries. And they are coming back to a system that we would like to see is eminently successful in treating them, the veterans health care system.

The first question I think we ought to ask about the President's budget is does the President's budget in the veterans health care system meet the heroism and the commitment and the sacrifice that our troops have put on the line in Iraq?

So when I looked at the President's budget I was absolutely flabbergasted to see what the budget proposal from this administration has in mind for our injured people coming home from Iraq. Now, one would think that an administration that took our country into war in Iraq, sent our sons and daughters