

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of Army Specialist Dustin Fisher. Dustin, a Van Buren, Arkansas, native, gave his life serving his country in Iraq. He was one of three soldiers killed by terrorists when a car bomb was detonated near Dustin's convoy in Baghdad on May 24.

This is especially hard because not only has our State and Nation lost a wonderful young man, but his father, Waldo, is one of the finest people I know. Hundreds of people attended Dustin's funeral on Monday, a tribute to the many lives he touched in the community of Van Buren. He was remembered as a "fun-loving person" who always held a soft-spot for the women in his life: his mother, Brenda; sister, April; and his wife, Alicia, to whom he was wed only weeks before being deployed.

Dustin always admired his father, Waldo, and his brother, Shane, who are both veterans. Dustin shared his father's love of country by following in his footsteps and enlisting in the Army in 2003. Waldo said that Dustin made him more proud than words could describe.

Madam Speaker, Specialist Dustin Fisher, at the age of 22, made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. He is a true American hero. I ask my colleagues to keep Dustin's family and friends in their prayers and thoughts during these very difficult times.

RISING COST OF HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, in the last few weeks I have had the honor of addressing Chambers of Commerce from districts which have included the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) and the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG). In both cases, we ended up having a deep discussion about the rising cost of health care, about how health care is becoming increasingly costly for many American businesses, a threat to their profitability.

Today's news is that General Motors is talking about cutting 25,000 jobs and closing plants. Here is what GM's CEO says in today's news, "A big challenge for General Motors is to cut its soaring health care expenses, \$5.6 billion this year for its 1.1 million current and former workers and their families. Health care bills add about \$1,500 to the cost of each GM vehicle, a significant disadvantage versus our foreign-based competition."

Madam Speaker, it is time for a universal, single-payer, not-for-profit health care system which will enable businesses to survive and the health care needs of the American people to be provided for.

EXPORTING RICE TO CUBA

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning to highlight the importance of free trade and the merits of agricultural trade, particularly rice trade, with Cuba. An injunction against tourism is one thing, but our sanctions against Castro's regime, which have been in place since 1963, should not prevent our Nation from selling farm products, specifically rice, to the people there.

The Cuban people will eat rice. If we will not sell it to them, they will get it elsewhere. Why are we economically punishing ourselves and our farmers in the name of punishing Communists in Cuba?

The Cuban market remained closed until this body passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. With the reopening mandated by this Act, rice sales to Cuba have grown to \$64 million a year. But now we hear that some want to slash back this momentous trade for political reasons.

The Federal Government announced it was redefining the definition of "payment of cash in advance," a ruling which could jeopardize future trade. This bureaucracy is getting in the way of the law. As Cubans begin looking to Vietnam, Thailand and for other sources for rice, I urge colleagues to cosign H.R. 1339 to further explain in simple terms to government bureaucrats that U.S. farmers should be allowed to trade with Cuba on a cash-for-crop basis.

FUNDAMENTAL TAX REFORM NEEDED

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, today in the Committee on Ways and Means we are holding a hearing on tax reform. We have a tax system that is needlessly complicated, inequitable, and burdensome to the middle class. We need fundamental tax reform that reflects the values and the interests of our middle-class families, not the special interests.

President Bush when he announced the commission said his core principle is that tax reform should not adversely affect government revenues. The democratic core principle of tax reform is it should not adversely affect the middle class, not the government. It is the middle class that is our taxpayer.

In the last 4 years, the Tax Code has been filled with special breaks for special interests. At the same time, the tax burden has shifted from wealth to work, from passive dividends to daily wages.

Madam Speaker, four objectives of tax reform:

Take the five different educational tax breaks for college education and make it one \$3,000 credit per child going to college.

Second, simplify family credit. Take the earned income tax credit, the per child and the dependent care and go from 20 pages of code down to 12 questions.

Third, on retirement, bring the 16 different versions of the Tax Code on savings down to a universal pension.

Madam Speaker, these things would help the middle class eliminate burdensome paperwork and eliminate pages and pages of Tax Code and help the middle class achieve a middle-class dream.

DECISIVE ACTION NEEDED ON DARFUR

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the continued reports of rape, mutilation, killings, and racism from Darfur, Sudan. The African Union, the U.N., the international community all know what is happening there. Women are raped and men are killed.

Our government has called it genocide. The U.N. stopped short of using that term but has expressed concern. The fact is the extremist regime in Khartoum is engaging in an ethnic cleansing campaign, so-called Arab Muslims brutalizing and attacking so-called black Muslims. One 21-year-old Sudanese woman was attacked by a group of uniformed men who said, "You are black people. We want to wipe you out."

Madam Speaker, where is our outrage? Where is the outrage of the international community and the U.N.? We have no excuse because we know what is happening. The U.N. does not appear to have the ability to rally the public's popular support among its membership to act decisively because of a few powerful states undermining the process behind the scenes.

The real question is, does the international community care enough to go after the Sudanese government and its puppet militias? I wish I could say we do. People are suffering because of our inaction and inaction of the U.N. and the international community.

MINORITY WOMEN UNITED AGAINST JANICE ROGERS BROWN

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

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, today I rise in opposition to the confirmation of Janice Rogers Brown who today will be debated on the floor of the other body. Her extreme views are out of touch with the mainstream and are not in touch with Americans values. She

was the only member of the California Supreme Court to find that a jury should not be allowed to hear expert testimony in a domestic violence case regarding battered women's syndrome. She even said that employers may use racial slurs against their employees.

Her record is clear. She does not protect the rights of women, workers or minorities.

Yesterday I and 14 other women members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Asian Pacific American Caucus sent a letter to Senate leaders stating our strong opposition to the confirmation of Janice Rogers Brown.

Given the serious concerns against Janice Roger Browns' views, I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to vote against her confirmation. Her confirmation would have a detrimental effect on women, minorities and all Americans.

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REPUBLICANS PAVE THE WAY FOR AMERICAN HOMEOWNERS

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, June is American Homeownership Month, recognizing the benefits of achieving the American Dream. As a former real estate attorney for 25 years, I know firsthand the joy of homeownership. By purchasing a home, Americans are investing in their own futures, ensuring stability and promoting long-term financial security for their families. House Republicans are providing important incentives for homeowners and creating jobs and are paving the way for more American families to own their own homes. Today, homeownership is near record levels, with 69.1 percent of American families now owning their homes. According to the National Association of Realtors, sales of existing U.S. homes climbed 4.5 percent in April.

Increased home sales are just another sign of continued economic growth in America. Last week, the Department of Labor also reported that the Nation's unemployment fell to 5.1 percent in May and that over 3.5 million jobs have been created since May 2003 when President Bush signed into law his tax reductions.

Republicans remain dedicated to a successful, positive agenda that will grow the economy and provide more opportunities to American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

TOBACCO ESCAPES HUGE PENALTY

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. President Bush, your Justice Department legal team is failing you, and failing you miserably. Tobacco companies have bilked the consumer for hundreds of billions of dollars. I am proud to say that State attorneys general recovered \$215 billion for their States. We find out today in The Washington Post the Justice Department has given away the ranch. The headline says it all: "Tobacco Escapes Huge Penalty." Even the tobacco attorneys are mystified.

They said, "They've gone down from \$130 billion to \$10 billion with absolutely no explanation. It's clear the government has not thought through what it's doing."

President Bush, there is still time. Call your Attorney General and tell him to put on a real case. Otherwise, you are throwing in the towel to Big Tobacco.

HOMEOWNERSHIP AND JOB NUMBERS

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, June is Homeownership Month and the housing market continues to be a catalyst for a growing economy. Just last quarter, growth figures were revised higher, growing at a 3.5 percent annual rate. For the past 2 years, the U.S. economy has grown faster than the economy of any major industrialized nation. Since May of 2003, over 3.5 million jobs have been created with 24 straight months of job growth. That is 2 years of putting people back to work, 2 years of more people collecting paychecks. What is even more impressive is the fact that the unemployment rate dropped to 5.1 percent, the lowest level since 9/11.

Many things are behind these positive job numbers, but one thing in particular is the strength of our housing market. Homeownership is at near record levels with nearly 70 percent of American families now owning their own homes. Sales of existing U.S. homes climbed 4.5 percent in April. In 2004, home prices posted the biggest gain in 25 years.

Madam Speaker, these steady gains are great news. They show that more people are working, more people are collecting paychecks, more people are owning their own homes, and more people are realizing the American Dream. This direction should be celebrated.

SOCIAL SECURITY: DEMOCRATS RAISE TAXES

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to continue to shine the light on the need for reform of our Social Security. On Monday, an editorial ran in The Washington Post

which criticized the Democratic leadership for not having or supporting a plan for Social Security reform. The editorial also hammered the plan offered by Democrat Robert Wexler as a lopsided quick fix, calling the proposal both unbalanced and inadequate. They say the plan would merely raise payroll taxes and would fail to provide long-term relief. Further, the proposal shows little or no benefit for workers under the age of 55.

One solution which could help improve Social Security and provide long-term relief is through personal retirement accounts. Giving Americans the option of putting a portion of their payroll taxes into small personal accounts is a more balanced and better solution to the Social Security problem. Quick fixes, such as the one proposed by Robert Wexler, will only pass the problem of Social Security to younger generations.

Madam Speaker, our children and grandchildren deserve the best, including a Social Security program which provides generational fairness. And clearly Americans are hearing this clarion call. In fact, a recent Fox News poll showed that 84 percent of workers age 18 to 55 would support having the option of personal accounts.

IN SUPPORT OF THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY

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

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, recent reports paint an unfair picture of the United States Air Force Academy. It has been characterized as a place where religious intolerance is the norm. As someone who has spent considerable time with Air Force personnel and cadets, I know that the academy has always been a place that has indeed taught religious tolerance.

After discovering perceptions of religious bias during a survey in 2004, the academy made considerable efforts to address issues of religious intolerance and has implemented a proactive plan to address this very issue. The academy leadership instituted a new training program for all cadets, staff, and faculty to address the diversity of the Air Force and the need for each person to respect others, regardless of their beliefs or faith.

Like any other university, cases of perceived religious intolerance do occur. But any attempt to brand the academy as a place where intolerance is accepted is just plain false. I applaud the United States Air Force for taking the proper steps to investigate and correct any problems regarding allegations of religious intolerance.

ANNOUNCING INTRODUCTION OF THE SHIELD ACT

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