

service. I was promised a pension and quit at age 58 after carefully considering the money I would live on, and my pension was a big part of that. Now, with the threat of the reduction of my pension, obviously, my standard of living will be greatly reduced. I ask you, if there is anything good, right, and honest in this country, why is this happening? I worked and believed a promise that should be upheld by my company and the government. I would not have retired early had I known that United Airlines would be allowed to renege on its promise. This is wrong and shameful. Please help."

The point is, again, these people upheld their end of the promise. The promise was between the employees and the company, the handshake was between the employees and the company, and that is why these people are so devastated when the company made the decision to go into bankruptcy and to discharge these pension obligations and their health care.

I know the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) and I knew the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) and I know the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) have read these letters.

So very often, these very same families that are losing their retirement income have serious health problems within their families, either their children, their spouse, their parents, who they are taking care of. Their own retirement benefits and their health care benefits for their family were very important to them, and now they are saddled with increasing health care costs, with a diminished health care plan, if any at all, and, obviously, a greatly diminished pension. So these people are really suffering a double hit by the actions of United.

We have written to our committee, the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for several years now, asking them to have hearings, asking them to look at this problem, asking them to look into the PBGC. Only today, as the Senate held its hearings, did people start talking about the loopholes.

We have known about those loopholes on the committee for years, to bring to everyone's attention how the pension plan was gamed, how the real figures are not disclosed to the employees, not disclosed to the investors, not disclosed to the public, the conditions of these pension plans. Only when it is too late are those disclosures made as the company enters into bankruptcy and there is very little the employees can do about that.

It is absolutely a scandal what has taken place here and the inaction of this Congress. Only now do we start to see them take action. But no inquiry before, no discussion of the problem, and even as we start to take this action we will not have the full information before us about the extent of this problem, and not just United Airlines but in major corporations all across the country.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I do not have to remind the gentleman from California about his efforts to have the committee go to the administration and get that information about where does the rest of the employment situation lie, where are the rest of these pensions in terms of their viability. The fact of the matter is we have been unable to get that information until very recently. We got some of it.

But what is the problem with disclosing that to the American public? What is the problem with the Congress knowing the full extent and the public knowing the full extent, how many companies are in this precarious situation? That, if anything, would force Congress hopefully to get up and act.

Something that we have known, something that the gentleman has led the way in writing to the committee, speaking to the committee and the administration on this issue and now trying to get the information that will compel them to act on it. Because it is devastating to learn just how many companies are in a situation that are near default or problematic.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I just recently wrote to the chairman of the committee and, after reviewing that information that was given to us by the PBGC, I asked him, I think it is very important that the committee go ahead and have a vote and make this information public. Because, obviously, what we have seen is there is a huge disparity between what the public has been told of the pension problems of these companies and what the PBGC has been told in secret, out of the public eye, not for disclosure, what the real situation of these pension plans are.

So that we have millions of Americans who believe the conditions of their company's pension plan is one thing, and the company knows it is another. In many cases, as we wrote to the chairman and said, the difference is hundreds of millions of dollars and, in some cases, billions of dollars in terms of those liabilities. I think that those employees, when they see how this can happen with the United case, those employees are entitled to that information.

Interestingly enough, the President of the United States asked 4 years ago that this information be made public, but the companies are lobbying hard so it will not be made public, and, so far, the committee has not responded to our letter. But certainly before we begin writing a new pension bill we ought to have this information laid out on the public record so people can comment on it to see whether or not the bill that we are considering, the ideas that the President has will make this worse or make it better. I thank the gentleman for raising that point.

I would like at this time to recognize another member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, a mem-

ber of long standing of the Committee on Education and the Workforce who, in every session of this Congress, has taken on the responsibilities of this committee to look at these issues that confront working families in the workplace, in their health care, in their daily lives in the workplaces of America, and that is the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS).

Mr. Speaker, I am going to yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) for the purposes of this discussion and to read the communications from individuals from New York.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for joining us tonight.

HUMAN SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF CORPORATE THEFT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MACK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for the remainder of the designee of the Minority Leader's time.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Approximately 30 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking and congratulating my colleagues on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY), I want to thank them for their invention of the congressional e-hearing. This is not a small thing. We now have a device, one more productive milestone for communication, that can allow us to reach out into the entire Nation, beyond the Beltway, beyond the partisan arguments of the Congress.

This is a very important new instrument for freedom of speech and for freedom of the minority party. We are, as Democrats, a minority party, and we are an oppressed minority party in that we are not given the right to call hearings or we are not allowed to recommend hearings and have the majority party follow through on those hearings. That was not the case when the Democrats were in the majority, but that is the way it has developed with the present Republican majority.

So we have a device now whereby any citizen can participate. They do not have to pay the fare to come to Washington, but you can participate in a hearing, and I think this is a device that we should look forward to using more often.

We should understand that in street language what my colleagues have been talking about is a legal swindling, legal theft. How can there be legal theft? Well, whatever the Congress approves is legal. They sometimes approve things that are immoral and illegal, really. They sometimes approve things that are devastating for people.

But legality means we made it legal, because it is a law.

By law, we are allowing corporations to run rampant over the rights of individuals in a most profound and basic way, and that is they are taking their money. They are taking the money of people who have put their money aside in a pension plan and who entrusted the corporation to be the guardian for the money that they have saved over the years.

I am going to begin with one letter, because I think it is very important to keep this on a plane where we understand that the people of America are speaking. I think the e-hearing solicited at least 1,000 responses, and I think that some of those responses need to be amplified, and we need to hear them and the rest of America.

I want to begin with one which does not come from New York State. I am going to read a few from New York State, but this one happens to come from a lady who lives in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Carolyn A. Rosenberg. I give her name, I give her location, because I think she wanted to participate in a hearing, and she wants to be heard. She wants it to be public, what she is about to say. I must say that what is in this letter is very intimate, very painful, it shows a great deal of human suffering, and I congratulate her, I thank her, for being willing to share it with the rest of America.

"Representative George," she says, "my vivid recall of 9/11 is lying on the kitchen floor in a fetal position crying uncontrollably, feeling like I am going to vomit, praying to God to keep my husband safe, and wondering where my husband is, what he is experiencing, and what the hell is going on. My next thought, rational or not, was to jump in the car and go pick up my son from his Jewish preschool, figuring these lunatics would want to kill him because of how we choose to worship God, yet my body wouldn't let me get up off the cold floor. I desperately hoped for someone to call me, anyone, and tell me my husband was safe.

"Presently, as I write this, my body is shaking. It is difficult to keep my emotions in check and to focus on what I want to say. My husband recently retired from United Airlines after a 24-year pilot career with them and a 40-year career as a professional aviator. What is happening at United to all its employees, present and past, is appalling. The people with the power of this company belong to the group that boasts Ken Lay, Bernie Ebbers and Dennis Kozlowski as some of its members. The Executive Council for the Pilots Union is also right there with them.

"The effects of the United Airlines bankruptcy has been staggering to my family. The stress on my husband and myself individually is enormous, not to mention the strain on our marriage. We have lost a significant portion of our savings due to United's collapse. At mid-life I am forced to go back to

school to switch careers, and wondering how I will pay for it. I have to find a job that will pay me what I was making, plus the 61 percent retirement loss my husband is going to suffer. Yes, that percentage is accurate. My husband used the Pension Benefits Guarantee Corporation formula. My kids want to know why we won't buy them Game Boys, why we never eat out anymore, why the house was freezing in the winter, why we are canceling the cable, why we might sell the house, and why we won't buy a replacement vehicle to our 13-year-old minivan with the loud noises.

"I'm not a rocket scientist, but I know that United's employee pension funds don't have to be turned over to the PBGC to allow UAL to emerge from bankruptcy. I expect, no, I demand, that these smart people at the top actually formulate a plan to preserve what all the employees have worked so hard to earn.

"I feel pretty darned (not the word I want to use) mad, betrayed, and depressed. I feel that my husband and I have no control over our financial future and also feel, unfortunately, that this won't be resolved for years. Congress, it's your turn to step up to the plate and do something since United Airlines' management isn't, nor this administration (and I'm a Republican). Carolyn A. Rosenberg, Doylestown, Pennsylvania."

I want to thank Mrs. Rosenberg for sharing that with us. I want to thank her for participating in the e-hearing. I hope that we will be able in the future to have many more e-mail hearings since we are not allowed to have hearings of people in person.

Mr. Speaker, I will enter the entire letter of Ms. Rosenberg into the RECORD.

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE. My vivid recall of 9/11 is lying on the kitchen floor in a fetal position; crying uncontrollably; feeling like I'm going to vomit; praying to G_d to keep my husband safe; and wondering where my husband is, what he's experiencing, and what the hell is going on! My next thought, rational or not, was to jump in the car and go pick up my son from his Jewish preschool, figuring these lunatics will want to kill him because of how we choose to worship G_d, yet my body wouldn't let me get up off the cold floor. I desperately kept hoping for someone to call me—anyone—and tell me my husband was safe.

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The effects of the United Airlines bankruptcy has been staggering to my family. The stress on my husband and myself individually is enormous, not to mention the strain on our marriage. We've lost a SIGNIFICANT portion of our savings due to

United's collapse. At mid-life I'm forced to go back to school to switch careers (and wondering how I'll pay for it). I have to find a job that will pay me what I was making plus the 61% retirement loss my husband is going to suffer—yes, that percentage is accurate; my husband used the PBGC formula. My kids want to know why we won't buy them Game Boys, why we never eat out anymore, why the house was freezing in the winter, why we're canceling the cable, why we might sell the house, and why we won't buy a replacement vehicle to our 13-year old minivan with the "loud noises."

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CAROLYN A. ROSENBERG,
Doylestown, PA.

I want to just take one moment to reminisce about the early days, my early days in Congress. Within a few years after I came to Congress, more than 23 years ago, we had what is called the savings and loan bailout scandal.

□ 2115

Savings and loans bailout scandal. I call it scandal. It was another one of those swindles, legal swindles, legal stealing, sanctified by the Congress. We have spent more than half a trillion dollars of the taxpayers' money paying for the swindling and the crookedness that went on in the savings and loans banks.

I said more than half a trillion, because whenever I try to get the final figure, and really how much taxpayers were charged for that swindle, nobody ever can come up with a hard figure. So I recommend that there are some sophomores out there listening, high school sophomores, and bright students, you might want to go and check out and see if you can research and search out the amount of money that the United States Government, the taxpayers, had to put up to pay for the transgressions of the savings and loans failures.

Legal swindling. That is what it was. Stealing. Legal stealing. Systematic swindling. Sanctioned and guaranteed by the government. And I use those harsh words because we are about to enter another one of those fantastic bailouts. It has already begun. The airlines now are going to have what the savings and loan banks had, a bailout by the taxpayers.

Now, there are two things at work here. I want the fullest possible sympathy for the people who are suffering, like Mrs. Rosenberg, and some of the other people's whose letters I will read in a few minutes. But we must sympathize fully. We must understand that

those are human beings, families that need somehow to be justly compensated.

They need the full amount that they have invested returned to them. And that is our first priority. It must be our first priority. If in the end the only way they can get that is through the Federal Government, taxpayers, then I guess we will have to do that. But what a shame.

These are individuals who never expected, never wanted to be the beneficiaries of taxpayer welfare. That is what it is going to be, a subsidy given to them from the government to make up for something that they should have gotten as a result of their own individual responsibility.

We stress a great deal, and certainly this administration and this White House and the present domineering majority party in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, they stress personal responsibility. But the personal responsibility does not seem to extend to the corporate executives who take the money of the people, the investors, and the money of the employees and illegally use it and end up empty handed, expecting a bailout again from the taxpayers. That is what we are dealing with here.

We must sympathize. We must try to get ways to get more than 60 percent. Now, once as you heard from the letter, in this case the pilot says, I will only get 60 percent. Now, I face a 60 percent loss. That means I will only get 40 percent of what I should have gotten. The loss is 61 percent. You know, we would like to see them get a hundred percent of what they should get.

And I do not want anything I say now to let us lose sight of that important consideration. But we must understand the job of Congress now is to stop further thievery. Stop further swindling. Let it be known right now that this whole acquiescence, surrender to rule by corporations, which has gotten completely out of control under the present administration, this has got to stop. You cannot let corporations continue to plunder the economy and plunder its citizens.

Yes, we have had other plunders. We know the military industrial complex, which President Eisenhower, as he was going out of office, said, beware. Beware of the military industrial complex. They will rob America blind. They had taxpayer's money in this amount, and they are doing that. They are still doing that. It is an open bottomless pit that we are dropping money into, military expenditures.

Above and beyond Iraq. Iraq had to have a special appropriation. But we are spending more than a half trillion dollars on the military already. Today the New York Times had on its front page a story of how the program for the procurement and the development of weapons has gotten completely out of control; and it cited as an example, in the early part of the story, a naval weapon that has been under consider-

ation for some time. And when it was tested, the missile blew up, melted and was no good.

But, yet, it was reported to have been a success, and additional money was given to keep the development going. Thus far, that development process has cost \$400 million; \$400 million to develop a weapon which blew up and obviously is not workable. But, also, they pointed out that we do not need to be in a weapons race. Who are we racing against? Who is it that has better weapons already than the United States of America? Why do we need to madly pour money down the drain after building more weapons?

The military industrial complex continues to rip off the taxpayers of America. The banking and credit card complex is what the savings and loan people were all about. The savings and loan scandal started with the failure of a few big banks, a few big banks after being mismanaged. Can you imagine banks with billions of dollars being mismanaged, on the verge of bankruptcy, and the United States Federal Reserve Board, the guy who was there at the time, who was in the particular banking regulation agency, recommended that we not allow them to fail?

The phrase was, they are too big to fail. If they fail, they will drag down many other industries with them. Well, first it was one bank, then in a few months it was four banks. And then it came out that the savings and loans, all of the hundreds of savings and loans banks across the country many of them were in serious difficulty because of the fact that the savings and loans program, the Federal Government guaranteed \$100,000. If any individual put their money in the bank, up to \$100,000 was guaranteed by the Federal Government; therefore they were abusing that, and in some places they were offering tremendous interest to get people to deposit up to \$100,000, and it ran away from them.

They did not have the money to cover when people came to collect their money. And this happened in large amounts across the whole country. Everybody got in on the swindle who was in the savings and loan industry, not everybody became crooked, but a large percentage. So in the end it cost us more than a half a trillion dollars.

And I wager that we probably have gotten close to a trillion dollars, but you cannot go find that figure. It was all so cleverly done, with the approval of so many very important and powerful people, and so you cannot get the full story.

We are on our way now to a bailout of the airline industry. Phase 1: shortly after 9/11, we all agreed that the airlines had been unfavorably, unjustly penalized economically, that because they were grounded as a result of trying to ensure the safety of the American people from the air they had lost a tremendous amount of revenue. So

we did an unprecedented thing. We gave a single industry money to make up for their losses.

The airlines got billions of dollars, appropriated by Congress, taxpayers' money, to help cover their losses. Step 1: but, evidently, you know, their business practices are such that they did not look at the situation and say, well, you know, like a farmer has to worry about the drought, and manufacturing has to worry about a declining interest of consumers, you have to make your adjustments, you have to do things differently. No, the airlines did not adjust, so they continued to lose money, because they did not make adjustments in terms of their commitment of volume and employees, et cetera; and they are still losing tremendous amounts of money.

And now they wade into the pension funds of the employees. And we are expected, we taxpayers are expected to cover that cost. Where will it go? How many billions will it be? Do you know? There is no way to know, because we are so compliant in our obedience to corporations, we bow down in America. The America of the last 20 or 25 years has been more and more bowing down to the power of the corporations. We do not demand that corporations act responsibly.

We do not demand that corporations, which are part of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund Corporation, that they disclose the situation with respect to their pension funds. It seems to me that that is a reasonable demand; it ought to be an automatic demand. Any common sense will tell you if you are going to take the responsibility of bailing out someone in the future if they get into trouble, the least that you should be able to do is to be able to demand that they show us how they are proceeding in their business, what is the likelihood that they may get into trouble, and what is the trend, what may be the place in which the crisis occurs.

We have every right to demand that corporations disclose the basic information about their pension funds. And yet we are not getting that information. The transparency is not there. The regular reporting is not there. Why does Congress allow the taxpayers to take on responsibility of insuring these people, while at the same time making no demands? That is what the new legislation is all about. It is old legislation. We Democrats on the committee, as the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), the ranking member of the committee, pointed out before, we have been saying for years, we need to strengthen our pension laws. We need to deal with this in a different way. We need to be more responsible as a government. We have been saying it, but in the last 8 years we did not have control; the Republican majority did. And they seem to believe that there is nothing corporations can do that is wrong.

You know, we had the great theory that persists even until today, laissez

faire is better, laissez faire, fancy French means "leave it alone."

Businesses say laissez faire, leave us alone. Government is best by following a laissez faire policy, leave business alone. And that has been the story of American capitalism. We have left business alone. But it has not worked the other way. Business has not been willing to leave government alone. And here is our dilemma.

Business has taken over government. Business has taken over government, and business demands that laws be made in ways which guarantee that their profits will be maximized, that whatever damage occurs in their case that they will be bailed out. You know, we just finished an agricultural appropriation bill today. The agricultural industry is one of those industrial complexes, the agricultural industrial complex feeds off the taxpayers enormously.

The agricultural industry is still giving subsidies to farmers. In most cases they are not going to individual farmers; they go to farm corporations, because when Roosevelt started the program for the dirt farmers of the country, small amounts of money went to them to help them grow crops, participate in the program, use experimental information from the various county agents, et cetera.

Small amounts went to individuals farmers. But the individual farmers had the right to sell their so-called quota allotment to someone else. So corporations have, over the years, bought up all of those allotments, and you have corporations now that get tremendous amounts of subsidies as a result of that original program to bail out poor farmers. The poor are not benefiting from the agricultural industrial complex at this point. The agracorporations, the big agricultural industry, benefits now.

We struggled more than a year ago to bring down the amount of money that each agricultural corporation can get. Taxpayers should not give them any more than \$275,000 per year. We should not give away any more than \$275,000 a year. I think the House passed that. I was surprised to learn a few months ago that it was overridden by the Senate, and then at a conference, we all agreed, and the number is not now \$275,000.

Agricultural corporations can get from the taxpayers of America up to \$340,000 a year; \$340,000 in welfare. That is what it is, a subsidy from the government, money from the government. If you are going to call one subsidy welfare, any subsidy from the government is a welfare payment.

I do not think welfare is a dirty word. But let us call it what it is. The only difference is that a family of four in America right now can only get about \$7,000 a year, family of four on welfare, you know, children and one adult, really, because it is for mothers. Aid to Families With Dependent Children, and that means it has to be a sin-

gle-family home, in most cases there is no father, because one adult and three kids, 6 or \$7,000 per family per year, versus \$340,000 for a farm, an agricultural corporation farm program.

□ 2130

That is what we are doing in America. The farm bill that we passed today has billions of dollars in there to give away to farm subsidies, sometimes for not growing grain, et cetera, but it is a giveaway of American taxpayers' money.

The farmers now constitute less than 2 percent of the population. Less than 2 percent of the population is walking off with a tremendous percentage that is available for needy groups. \$340,000 for each corporation, that is the maximum amount they can get. Is it not wonderful we set a maximum, that they cannot go to a million?

This is a nature of a corpaucocracy, the corpaucocracy that we have allowed ourselves to get entangled in. The old terminology for economic systems and political systems is obsolete, to talk about communism or fascism or any other "ism." I think in terms of it being a system that is set and being run a certain way, and you can talk about it in term of certain theoretical principles that will follow, there is always a pattern. Not the case.

We have a situation now where in America we have social for the rich. Socialism bailed out the savings and loan banks. Socialism meant the government, the people distributed their wealth into the banks to make up for what they had lost. Socialism means the government, the people will bail out the airlines. The government, the people will distribute money to the farmers to keep the market healthy and to see to it they do not overflow with certain commodities and see to it our exports.

For whatever reason, it is a government action, and I do not condemn all government action. I think the complexities of our civilization are such that we need a mixture, but let us recognize and admit that it is a mixture. Sometimes socialist principles need to be applied.

Socialist principles involve central planning. Central planning is necessary in order for the agriculture bills to work. Central planning is necessary in order to bail out the savings and loans. Central planning is necessary to have a Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation. There is some central planning that societies in this day and age need. But let us not fool ourselves. That is government coming to the aid of business, the private sector being helped greatly by the public sector, by the ordinary taxpayers.

It is very interesting now, we have a great deal to worry about China. China is an economic giant coming on so fast until it is beginning to worry even the capitalists who are making the most money as a result of their relationship with China. We get cheap goods from

China. We sell it at high prices here, big profits. Our relationship with China was too good to pass up. You can get things too cheap. You can get them so cheap manufactured and you can come back here and sell them in a market which has a different standard of living and you make tremendous profits. That is how we have caved in to China.

China is a Communist government politically. China is as totalitarian as a government can get in the final analysis. They do not hesitate and they do not pretend to be democratic. They will not hesitate to step in and change the rules if they want to change the rules in terms of any one of the industries in China. They put a great deal of conditions on our businesses when they go there. It is a planned economy. It is a totalitarian economy which still restricts people a great deal.

They are finding trouble restricting people because of the Internet and they cannot keep information from flowing. There are a number of things that a modern world is going to undue the Chinese totalitarian approach. But they at this point are a Communist totalitarian state with a mixed economy, and where capitalism suits them and they can make profits off of capitalism they are doing that.

We are a mixed economy here, but we do not admit it. We now need socialism to bail out the airline industries. You need socialistic actions, just as we had socialism to bail out the savings and loan industry.

Mr. Speaker, in the last few minutes I want to read a couple more of these letters, because I think it is very important to get it down to what this e-mail hearing was trying to get to, ordinary Americans suffering in this situation, not the Beltway theoretician or politicians but ordinary Americans who deserve better.

"Dear Congressman, I am a 49-year-old flight attendant based in the JFK New York area and a 28-year veteran with United Airlines. If United Airlines is allowed to terminate our defined pension plan and the Public Benefits Guarantee Corporation takes over, I will be losing over 50 percent, half, of my promised benefits. The elimination of our retirement plan will result in my inability to maintain my family's basic necessities in retirement.

"The employees at United Airlines have already lost their savings from the ESOP program, 401(k) UAL stock Stock Investments, UAL Employee Stock Purchase Program, and wages and benefit cuts that average between 30 percent and 50 percent. Currently, we are barely making ends meet and have lost much of our savings. Ironically, our CEO, chief executive officer, of the corporation, Mr. Glenn Tilton, of 2 years will retire with a \$4.5 million package. Please, please help stop this assault on our lives, our families, and our airline. Help save our pensions and what is left of our dignity. Frank Annunziata, East Meadow, New York."

Here is another statement from Arthur Mount, a retiree living in Stony Brook, New York.

"In 2003, I retired from this once great company after almost 38 years of continuous service. I started with United in June of 1965 as a ramp serviceman at JFK airport, and in April in 1967 became a pilot, finishing my career in April, 2003, as a captain. There are many things that I am concerned about regarding a loss of my pension, but my biggest apprehension is in regards to my wife. With the termination of my pension as proposed by the management of United Airlines, what sort of life can she expect? Who will take care of her? Where will the money be for the things she will need? Is she to end up as a financial burden to our children? It has been said that a true leader leads by example. Apparently the senior management of United Airlines does not hold to such a high standard. Their pensions are secure. Somehow or another I cannot help but believe that if the pensions of this company's senior management were to be treated exactly as they proposed mine to be, that another solution, other than termination, would have been proposed. Arthur Mounts, retiree, Stony Brook, New York."

Mr. Speaker, I will also include in the RECORD a letter from Leola Robinson from the Bronx, New York and a letter from James P. Lattimer from Bronxville, New York.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by saying it is the business of the Congress to protect the American people from these kinds of legal swindles and legal thefts. This is suffering that should not take place in the United States of America in the year 2005. We can do better.

We have bills that are being proposed which will make certain that no future employees of other large corporations will have to suffer what the United Airline people have suffered. We urge you to participate if you have the opportunity to participate in any future e-hearings and that we have your participation fully.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MILLER: As a result of the termination of my pension with UAL I will be the only one, and the first in my family, to not have a pension. I have been in the airline industry for 32 years working for Saturn Airline in the 70's, then Trans America, enduring with Seaboard and finally with Capital (dollar sign on the tail). With each airline I've had to support my daughter and myself on a "Flight Attendant salary" which was never enough living in New York City. I have survived under great duress.

I finally came to UAL hoping to get some decent benefits and a retirement plan which is the very least an employee should expect after devoting time and giving loyalty to this company.

Needless to say I am extremely disappointed at recent events in which UAL sought to dissolve the defined pension benefits. Now my future looks bleak. At my encouragement, my daughter became a UAL Flight Attendant as well as her husband and they now cannot support their family of five

and they have no hope of future benefits and retirement. How cruel.

Sincerely,

LEOLA ROBINSON,
Bronx, New York.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN MILLER: I know you have been inundated by communications from UAL employees and retirees concerning the termination of our pension funds. I would like to add my voice to protest this termination of my pension. I flew for UAL for thirty two plus years (retiring at 60 in August of 2002). My loyalty, labor and perseverance could not be questioned. Now, in return for my labors, I find that the company is attempting to greatly diminish the pension that was promised by contracts and that I worked hard to obtain. Since there are alternatives (e.g. freezing the pension) to termination that would be a better solution, these avenues should be given time to explore.

Personally, should the plan be terminated, I could see a reduction of 60-75 percent in my retirement income, with no potential to replace this income. This would necessitate sale of our house and a drastic change in our lifestyle. I am also aware that thousands of my fellow employees and retirees would suffer similar situations, many of them very drastic changes. But I also see further beyond that and foresee a domino effect where other airlines (e.g. Delta, Northwest, American) could seek the same relief; along with some of the larger national companies (Ford, GM). This would put an undue burden on the PBGC, necessitating a government bailout, and a possible depression and recession. I don't feel this is a house of cards, but a real and viable outcome. I strongly feel that our burdens should not be passed along to our children and grandchildren.

I fully support you in your efforts and the efforts of Rep. Janice Schakowsky to sponsor HR 2327 and my appreciation of your actions cannot be measured.

Thank You.

JAMES P. LATTIMER,
Bronxville, New York.

IRAN STUDY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MACK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, there are key moments in the life of our country in the course of this Congress when the United States faces a path towards democracy or towards war. That choice may be approaching in the policies we face regarding Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

I, for one, choose diplomacy over conflict; and I believe that the United States and our allies can achieve our ends to the Iranian nuclear program without a shot being fired in anger. This should be our goal; and towards that end I join with my Democratic colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS), to form the bipartisan House Iran Study Group.

The mission of our group is to review the situation in Iran, to measure the potential threat, to examine our military options, but most importantly to find and promote diplomatic policies that advance our security interests without a resort to arms.

I could not have chosen a better partner for this effort than my colleague from New Jersey. He is, first and foremost, not a Republican or a Democrat. He is an American. We both agree with Senator Arthur Vandenberg's dictum, who said that partisanship should end at the water's edge. We are also dedicated to the ideal that, when acting abroad, Republicans and Democrats are joined together as Americans.

We formed the Iran Study Group last year to carefully review the facts about Iran, to make sure the U.S. government is reviewing all of its policy options and to push diplomacy towards a successful conclusion. And I want to recognize my colleague from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity tonight. I want to thank my friend from Illinois for his compliment. It is truly appreciated, and I know it is shared on my side that I very much appreciate, Mr. Speaker, my work with my colleague from Illinois. I also want to point out that he is one of the Members here who simply does not talk about his patriotism but he practices it.

He is active reservist. He serves his country in uniform on a regular basis, as do his brother and sister reservists. I think he honors this institution and this country by his service, and I thank him for it.

I appreciate the work we have done in our Iran Study Group. The emphasis is on the word "study." We think the country faces a truly perilous situation with the prospect of the mullahs who run the Iranian government obtaining a nuclear weapon. We have devoted ourselves to analyzing how this problem came about and to carefully analyzing how we might solve it.

Our intention tonight is to have a discussion of those solutions that would be based on diplomacy, and I look forward to having my friend from Illinois lead that discussion, and I will join it so I can complement his points as to how we can solve this problem.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

When we review the situation in Iran, we see a nation with a proud Persian language and a culture that now is under a religious regime that has a very weak hold on the voters of its nation.

Time and again old revolutionary leaders of Iran have lost elections to reformers, but they keep power through the religious Guardian Council, Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian Intelligence Service. These ruling extremists have kept Iran as a pariah nation, unable to build lasting ties to the West.

While nearly everyone under 40 in Iran favors good relations with the West and even the United States, Iran's current Guardian Council maintains her isolation.

Now, all U.S. Presidents, Republican and Democrat, since 1979 have certified