

The Senate held one set of hearings on the failure of intelligence. They promised that after the election they would hold yet another set and reveal a report on the use of the intelligence. They are now refusing to do that with an emboldened and enlarged Republican membership. So we do not know. The American people do not know. Something that is costing \$1 billion a day, almost 1,800 American lives, more than 10,000 wounded, and we do not know exactly why this administration took us to war and under what auspices they took us to war.

Now we have a memo, the so-called secret Downing Street Memo from British intelligence, saying that as early as July 2002 that many of these facts were known.

Now, a number of us were disturbed by that and we wrote to the President on May 5. Mr. Speaker, 122 Members have now signed that letter. The President has not even acknowledged the letter from 122 duly elected representatives of the United States House of Representatives. He should answer that letter.

But, better still, the majority should stop stonewalling an investigation. If this was all very innocent or if it was just the incompetence of the intelligence agencies, then let us find those who were responsible. If it is something else, let us find those who were responsible. You should not stonewall this important information, so that we can learn from our mistakes and move forward with more confidence in the Congress and the administration when it might come to future threats against the United States of America.

Now, yesterday, we were sent to the basement, led by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), because we were told there were no rooms available to hold a hearing on this memo and these issues. Unfortunately, it turned out that all of the rooms in that vicinity, which were much larger, were vacant, as were many other hearing rooms.

This Republican leadership should have a full and fair and nonpartisan investigation of how America was led to war.

STATE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDS AND GRANTS AGREEMENT ON QUESTIONABLE BOSNIAN AMBASSADOR APPOINTMENT

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

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, in April of this year, my office expressed a deep and sincere concern to the State Department over agreeing to the designation of Bisera Turkovic as the new Bosnian Ambassador to the United States. At that time, State was postured to recommend an agreement on this appointment.

After several discussions, the State Department asked me not to go public with my concerns because there was a pending deal with the Bosnian government to send Bosnian troops to Iraq in July. In good faith, Mr. Speaker, my office agreed not to publicly raise our very grave and sincere concerns.

But, Mr. Speaker, our office was surprised and profoundly disappointed when we learned this past Wednesday, after literally months, that the State Department had granted agreement on this outrageous appointment without contacting us or informing us in any way.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush has repeatedly and strongly stated that in this fight against terrorism, that you are "either with us or you are against us." Yet, I am beginning to wonder if our own State Department is with us.

Bisera Turkovic is one of the founders of the radical Islamist Muslim SDA Party in Bosnia, a party that has had, since its foundation, strong links with al Qaeda, numerous other terrorist organizations, and even the intelligence mechanisms of Iran.

In 1939, Bisera Turkovic's father, Alija Izetbegovic, started a group called the Young Muslims. After World War II, they were prosecuted as Nazi war criminals and spent time in prison together. Over the years, Dr. Turkovic was promoted by Izetbegovic and then founded the SDA Party in 1990.

Alija Izetbegovic was a close confidante of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. And when he became President Izetbegovic, he recirculated his 1970 Islamic Declaration and openly espoused his view that "there can be no peace or coexistence between Islamic faith and non-Islamic faith."

Mr. Speaker, soon after the beginning of the Bosnian civil war in 1992, Dr. Turkovic was accredited as Bosnian ambassador to Zagreb. It was this post, coordinating with others, that was constantly used by the SDA and their leadership to provide Bosnian passports, visas, humanitarian worker status, and logistical support to radical Islamist mujahideen coming into Bosnia to fight their own jihad there. Individuals such as Anwar Sha'ban, the spiritual leader of al Qaeda in Bosnia and the cousin of Osama bin Laden, Abu al-Madani, who was killed fighting soldiers in Sarajevo, and even Osama bin Laden himself entered Bosnia through Zagreb.

In violation of a U.S. embargo, the SDA also organized a massive flow of weapons from Iran through Croatia during Bisera Turkovic's time as ambassador.

When my office raised these concerns, Mr. Speaker, we were told that the actions during the war were Bosnian government policy at that time and that it was a long time ago. But, Mr. Speaker, can it possibly be the position of our State Department that despite the fact that we know that Iranian weapons were smuggled into Bosnia in contradiction to a U.N. embargo,

and that foreign mujahideen were given documentation to enter Bosnia to fight a jihad, often fronting as humanitarian workers, that that is not enough evidence to deny diplomatic status to someone who was centrally involved and who remains a senior level official for the party that instituted these very policies?

My office has also raised issues of concern with regard to Bisera Turkovic's ethical fitness, Mr. Speaker; and the State Department has said that "we can't deny appointees on the basis of being corrupt."

Mr. Speaker, these actions on the part of our State Department are a disservice to our President, they are a disgrace to the United States of America, and they are a betrayal to the cause of human freedom. It is past time that the State Department start acting like it represents the interests of America and the citizens of this Nation. The people of this Nation deserve better than to be served by a State Department that aids our enemies and then lies to cover its actions.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again, it is a pleasure to address the House, and I would like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group, once again, to come to the floor to not only address the Members, but also make sure that we continue our commitment of sharing information as we get it on various issues that are facing 30-somethings throughout the United States of America; also to be able to address the issues that are facing everyday Americans, whether they be young or old, school age, or those that are yet unborn.

It is very, very important for us to come to the floor, especially in this democracy that we celebrate, and talk about some of these issues that are taking place, some that we are taking action on, others that we have had very little action on, and some that we are not acting upon at all.

The focus of the 30-something Working Group is to make sure that on issues that are ongoing, such as Social Security, an ever-growing Federal debt, a deficit that is in the trillions of dollars that will keep future generations and even the present generation indebted to this Federal Government, and also issues that are facing our young people as it relates to education, making sure that they are able to not only go to college, but when they leave college, that they do not find themselves in debt.

Just for a moment, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to point out the issue of Social Security. I do, Mr.

Speaker, have some good news to report: one, that this issue of private accounts and taking benefits away from the American people is very unpopular with Americans; also, two, that it is unpopular with Members of the Congress.

Now, in the other body, there is a chairman of a committee over there that basically cannot get the Social Security bill rolling as long as they are talking about private accounts. As a matter of fact, there is an article today in *The Washington Post* that talks about the fact that even at the White House, and some of the leaders of this House have said, either we are going to deal with Social Security soon or we are not going to deal with it at all, and why put Members of the House in jeopardy to vote for private accounts that will take benefits away from the American people, not only those who are retirees, but also those who are receiving survivor benefits and those who are receiving disability benefits. It will take away benefits from them by using the private account formula.

The good thing about this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when we get off the agenda of trying to privatize Social Security, then we can do what we have been trying to do all along in a bipartisan way and coming up with great ideas and putting them into action to be able to strengthen Social Security. I hope, as a Member not only of this House, but as a member of the 30-something Working Group, that we can work in a way that, even though we are strengthening Social Security, the money that it will take to strengthen Social Security, that we will not only explain to the American people, but to make sure that every Member of this House understands that we have to have a way to pay for it. Not just saying that we are going to throw a lot of money in there and not find a way to pay for it, because it is almost like, Mr. Speaker, taking a carton of milk out of the refrigerator and smelling it and saying, wow, it is sour, and putting it back in and maybe it will be fresh tomorrow. It will continue to be an issue for the American people in future generations, and that is something that we have to work on.

I would ask the Members to take a look at *The Washington Post* article today speaking of the strategy on Social Security. It is nothing that I am going to sit here and say "we told you so" as it relates to private accounts, but it is something that is encouraging. Hopefully, Republican leaders will start to say, well, maybe we need to back off this strategy of \$944 billion going to Wall Street, and maybe we need to work on strengthening Social Security, making sure that those that elected us to come here know that Social Security is here for future generations, and also for this generation and the baby boomers.

I also believe that a great deal of credit should be given not only to the Members here in Congress, and I would

like to commend the very few Members on the Republican side of the aisle that said, no way, Jose on privatizing Social Security. And I am so glad that they are standing against the Republican leadership, and I am so glad on this issue of Social Security, and I am so glad here on the Democratic side, from the beginning, the Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Democratic whip, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), also the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman MENENDEZ), and also the vice chairman, the gentleman from South Carolina (JIM CLYBURN), of our leadership on this side of the aisle, all along, without any problems, have said that they are standing shoulder to shoulder with the Democratic Caucus to make sure that we strengthen Social Security, just like we did in the 1980s when Ronald Reagan was in the White House and Tip O'Neill was the Speaker of this House with a bipartisan bill to make sure that we shored it up.

Also, even when we start talking about the history of it, I am glad that President Clinton took the position he did when he took the position of balancing the budget and putting us into surpluses to make sure that we could shore up the Social Security Trust Fund and to know how we were paying for it. We were paying for it with an ever-growing surplus. But right now we do not have that surplus. The majority side and the leadership on the majority side have led us into an almost \$7.8 trillion deficit, and I think that we have to work on that.

Mr. Speaker, I see the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is here, and I am so glad that the gentleman is here, and that the 30-something Working Group is here on the floor once again.

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But if I can read into some of the groups that have been out there sharing with the American people about the fact that why do we want to privatize Social Security when it is going to take away benefits; from right from the beginning we were saying you are going to lose somewhere up to 70 percent of the benefits. In some cases individuals will lose benefits, and even if they were not in the private account side of the privatization of Social Security, they would lose 30 percent of their benefits. So that is even saying, well, listen, I want to stay in a system that I have now. You still will lose.

I want to thank those groups for going out there because I say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) if it was not for them, and, Mr. Speaker, I believe that if it was left up to the mechanics of the Beltway here in Washington, DC, I think once again the American people would be a recipient of the Potomac two-step.

I would like to thank the Americans United to Protect Social Security; also thank Rock the Vote, College Democrats, Young Democrats, Progressive Democrats of America; also AFSCME,

AFSCME Retiree Program, the National Council of Individuals With Disabilities, the Americans for Democratic Action, the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Association of Community Organizations for Reform, the Alliance for Retired Americans, which is AARP, the largest senior organization here in the United States, America Votes, California Health Advocates, Campaign for America's Future, Center for American Progress, Center for Medicare Advocacy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center on Economic Policy and Research, Child Welfare League of America, Coalition of Human Needs, Code Blue Now, Consumers Union, Economic Policy Institute, Families USA, American Baptist Convention, Fair Taxes for All, Independent Living Services, Leadership Council on Civil Rights, Medicare Rights Center; also the National Academy of Social Insurance, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Coalition on Nursing Home Reform, the National Conference of State Legislators, which is bipartisan, I must add, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the National Education Association, the National Health Law Program, the National Organization of Social Security, the National Senior Citizens Law Center, the New Democratic Network.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I have just got a couple more.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida is saying there is a lot of support against the President's Social Security plan.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure. Against privatization of Social Security. The Subcommittee on Social Security, also you have the Century Foundation, the U.S. Action, Visiting Nurses Association of America, American Corn Growers Association. That is good to have them on board. The Center For Rural Affairs, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the League of Rural Voters, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Family Farm Coalition, Progressive Student Initiative and the 21st Century Democrats.

I am going to put this list in for the record. But I just want to say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), it is always good, and all of the people were not mentioned because we would take a good part of this Special Order talking about those individuals that are out there. But I want to make a case in point.

Young people in America have risen up beyond the expectations of many individuals in the past as it relates to advocacy on this issue of Social Security.

So I am so glad that they are a part of it because that is the reason why the American people are being educated.

Americans United to Protect Social Security; Rock the Vote; College Democrats; Young Democrats; Progressive Democrats of America; AFSCME; AFSCME Retiree Program; The US PIRGS; National Council on Individuals With Disabilities; Americans for Democratic Action; American Nurses Association; American Public Health Association; Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; Association of Community Organization for Reform Now (ACORN); Alliance for Retired Americans (AARP); America Votes; California Health Advocates; CALPERS; Campaign for America's Future; Center for American Progress; Center for Medicare Advocacy; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP); Center on Economic Policy and Research; CHC; Child Welfare League of America; Coalition on Human Needs; Code Blue Now; Consumers Union; Economic Policy Institute (EPI); Families USA; Fair Taxes for All; Half The Planet; and HBC Dems.

Independent Living Services; Leadership Conference for Civil Rights; Medicare Rights Center; MoveOn; National Academy of Social Insurance; National Association of Area Agencies on Aging; National Association of Police Organizations; National Association of Social Workers; National Coalition for Nursing Home Reform; National Conference of State Legislators; National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare; National Education Association; National Health Law Program; National Organization of Social Security Claimants Representatives (NOSSCR); National Senior Citizens Law Center; New Democratic Network; Public Citizen; Subcommittee on Social Security, Committee on Ways and Means; The Century Foundation; United Cerebral Palsy; USAction; Visiting Nurse Association of America; American Corn Growers Association; Center for Rural Affairs; Federation of Southern Cooperatives; League of Rural Voters; National Catholic Rural Life Conference; National Family Farm Coalition; Progressive Student Initiative; and 21st Century Democrats.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, what has been great, really, is to watch that debate kind of evolve since early January since the President came to this Chamber and talked to the American people and basically said he had an idea for how to fix Social Security; stated that the Social Security program is in crisis, which we have refuted many times here in this Chamber through the 30-something Working Group. And it has been interesting to watch the evolution of the debate and the support for the President's proposal in January not only among many Americans, but among young people, and as the young citizens of the country became more and more educated on exactly what the President's plan would do through some of the groups that you mentioned, through Rock the Vote and a variety of other groups, became educated on, you know, basically what the President's proposal would be.

And the issue that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and I and the

gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. DAVIS), other members of the 30-something Working Group here have focused on that we think is the most poignant argument to make is this issue right here, the national debt. The President's proposal would add \$5 trillion to the national debt over the next 20 years.

Now, as you can see here, and this is actually not updated, and we will have the new numbers next week. It is actually now \$7.8 trillion this country is in debt that we owe; 7.8 trillion. The President's proposal over the next 20 years would add an additional \$5 trillion to this number here and almost doubling the national debt. And if we keep going at the rate we are spending money here, we will double it in the next 20 years if we do not get our house in order.

But this is the main issue, and I think young people, when they saw the President's proposal, when they saw that his proposal would add \$5 trillion, increase their taxes, push the responsibility of paying the bills off on the next generation, I think that is when you began to see the rug come out from underneath the President's proposal. And so we have got to keep focused on the national debt and the annual deficits that are costing each taxpayer that is in the country, or each citizen in the country, almost \$27,000.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I would say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), for a child that was just born 10 minutes ago already owes \$26,349.67, and even that number has gone up. When we have our new chart next week, we will be able to have that new number. Unfortunately it continues to go up, and there is no sight of that number going down. We cannot see the end of the tunnel as it relates to the Federal debt continuing. I see that you have a new chart.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is exactly what you were talking about just before I arrived here. This is the chart of the deficits over the past probably 40 some years, since the Johnson administration. We ran a pretty tight budget for a good many years. And into the Reagan administration you see a deep, deep dip, and into the Bush administration, and we were running \$300 billion deficits every year.

And then when President Clinton came in with a Democratic House, with a Democratic Senate, in 1993 passed a budget without one Republican vote. Al Gore came to the Senate to break the tie to vote for it. And it led to record surpluses in the United States of America. This is where we were in the late 1990s; and back with the current President, back into an era of deficits, of borrowing money from the Chinese, borrowing money from Asian countries, putting in jeopardy the fu-

ture of many of the young people who live in this country today.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I would say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), the bottom line is that it is important that we not only come to the floor to make sure the Members understand what has happened, because we want to make sure that no one suffers from what one may say amnesia of not knowing what has taken place in this Chamber when the leadership rose to the level of saying that we had to do something about the Federal deficit and we did. I think it is also important for us to understand if we are ever going to have an about-face as it relates to spending, without having a plan to pay for what we are spending, it is going to continue to carry on.

I do not look forward to not only our days left in the 109th Congress, but when the 110th Congress comes in to be able to talk about what took place in the 109th Congress, because we could not stop ourselves from spending irresponsibly. And, you know, serving on the Armed Services Committee, a lot of money, almost \$150 billion are going into the war annually. With that, and the forecast of that continuing to take place, and I must say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), it is good to hear the Democratic leader and others push the card on the Republican leadership also as it relates to the White House of coming up with a plan, a plan on how we are going to proceed from this point, because the reason why we want to know what is the plan as it relates to training Iraqi troops is so that our troops can start focusing on other issues and be able to carry out action there in Iraq, versus every day patrol that Iraqi troops could be doing, the training of those troops are important. It is important that the majority side gives us that information so that we are able to make sure that we are on course in having the proper oversight over this war.

Now, we both support our men and women in uniform. We are both on the Armed Services Committee. We both appreciate their commitment and sacrifice, and we give our love and appreciation out to those families that are also making a sacrifice and, unfortunately, those that have made the ultimate sacrifice of losing a loved one.

But what I also think is important, Mr. Speaker, is that we make sure that we have a plan, a forecast plan, because there are domestic needs also that need to be addressed.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is right. A budget comes to this floor. We need something for our men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am a yes vote. When education comes to this floor, leave No Child Left Behind, the fully funding of that program, I am a yes vote.

But guess what? It is just not happening. And our leadership, and on the Democratic Caucus side we want to prioritize our children's future just as much as we are prioritizing the future

of the Iraqi people. And so it is important that towns and cities and locations that we both represent, the gentleman being from Ohio, I am being from Florida, that they receive their just due of their Federal tax dollar and making sure they are a part of the solution and their own family needs, versus saying that, well, we are going to continue to make a sacrifice, you know, on behalf of the Iraqi people, versus the individuals that are living in our own communities that we go to church with every day. And it is counterproductive if we do not plan to be able to focus those same kind of dollars and those efforts towards helping local communities.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The gentleman is exactly right. And I think when you look at the number that we are going to spend in Iraq, probably by the end of this year it is going to be over \$300 billion that we are going to spend in Iraq with absolutely no end in sight. No one has any idea of how much longer we are going to be there and what the cost in human life and U.S. treasure is going to be.

Now, imagine, 435 Members in this Chamber, \$300 billion. You are talking about \$6- to \$700 million per Member of Congress. Now, the American people need to ask themselves, would you have rather given that money to your congressional Representative in the House of Representatives to spend in your community on building schools, on building clinics, on making sure everyone has health care, or on this mess that we have in the Middle East?

And I know people in Youngstown, Ohio, and Niles, Ohio, and Warren, Ohio, and Akron, Ohio, and Ravenna, Ohio, and Kent, Ohio, they would rather have the money spent in their districts. Because you are getting the same kind of calls that I am getting. No money for police and fire. No money for mental health levies. No money for their schools. And we have a boondoggle going on in the Middle East right now that no one even knows where the money is being spent. And money is being lost. U.S. taxpayer money is being lost.

Now, you mention how we have bills that come to the floor to fund education, fund veterans and fund some programs that we believe in and we support and how underfunded they are, and how many thousands of kids. We had a study in Ohio that said No Child Left Behind was underfunded in the State of Ohio by over \$1 billion.

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Mr. MEEK of Florida. Do you know that four States have sued the Federal Government for lack of Leave No Child Left Behind funding? Texas is one of those States.

I am going to tell you something, the bottom line is it is about priorities. Do we want to bring about the standardized testing of our children, making sure they are under the umbrella for them to learn, but better yet, we do

not want to provide the dollars to make that happen? We do not want to give a teacher an environment where she can teach and children an environment they can learn?

We are saying that, well, you know, do not worry, you have to work it out, and matter of fact, we are going to penalize you if you do not reach the bar. This is why it is important if we worry about these domestic needs, we do something about it.

I want you to share that chart with the Members because I want to talk about what we have in plan and in store if we had Democratic leadership that was in the majority in this House, to be able to carry out some of these plans.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, what happened, what we had done here is we have a chart that we broke down and basically puts in the perspective, what has been happening down here. As you can see, on the left, it is the red chart. It is the cost in trillions of dollars over the next 10 years to make President Bush's tax cuts permanent, of which a majority went to people who make over \$500,000 a year, \$1.8 trillion is what we are going to spend over the next 10 years. This is our priority. Tax cuts for rich people.

The next is of that tax cuts for the top 1 percent, \$800 million. Now, the top 1 percent in this country make a lot of money. So we are going to take \$800 million from education and health and all these other programs, and we are going to give that \$800 million back to the top 1 percent of the people in the country.

Now look at this. This is the bar for how much we are going to spend over the next 10 years for veterans budget authority, \$300 million. \$300 million. Why would we choose permanent tax cuts for people who make over four, five, six, seven, \$800,000 a year? Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, they are going to get the big tax cuts. Our friends at Enron, Tyco, all the big dogs are going to get a tremendous amount of money, and yet, we are shutting out veterans.

We have thousands of veterans who are now in our hospitals in Bethesda and Walter Reed who are coming back single, double, triple amputees. This is a real problem, and I think this sends a message to the country that we just do not have the priorities that I think a lot of people in America have, and if you look at the polling, if you look at what the American people are saying, the approval rating, 33 percent for Congress, the President's approval rating is not much better.

The ultimate question is, does Congress or does the President or the administration represent your values? Do you think they are fighting on behalf of what you want and what you need? The answer is becoming more and more apparent that this Congress is out of touch with the American people, that this President's agenda is out of touch with the American people.

I think when you brought up priorities earlier, in a recent bill that was

passed, big oil got a \$2 billion subsidy. Can you imagine with the price of gas now and oil by the barrel going over \$50, that we are going to take money from middle class Americans, take their tax dollars and give \$2 billion of it for big oil companies to go explore and find more areas to get more oil? Is that not what they say, when the price increases, they need that money because it is expensive to go dig for oil, it is expensive to go drill? We are going to take taxpayer money to go do this, and I think that is a perfect example of how this Congress does not represent the values that many people in this country have.

Would you not rather have \$2 billion spent on your schools? We have got to compete with 1.3 billion Chinese workers, over 1 billion Indian workers over the next couple of decades. We need to be investing into our kids. We need to be investing into our schools, making sure our kids are healthy with programs in their communities, in their schools, that they can learn Chinese and they can learn a different foreign language of the countries they are going to be competing with.

Why do the rich schools have two swimming pools and art programs? God bless them, we want schools to have them, but why do all schools not have a liberal education and liberal in the sense of speech and debate, art, visual arts, music, dance, all these things that provide for a well-rounded education?

Those are the first programs that end up getting cut, and it is because, back here, we are cutting taxes for the top 1 percent and cutting benefits for veterans and the No Child Left Behind program and the health and welfare of our average citizens.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What is important, and I think, Mr. Speaker, it is good for the Members to be able to note the fact that if the situation was different in this House, and when I say the situation, I am saying, if we were in the majority on this side and it was a Democratic House, the discussion about veterans at .3 percent would be a discussion, as a matter of fact, the action would be taken to make sure our veterans are treated the way they should be treated for the service and the freedom that we celebrate every day.

I think it is important because this is not the Kendrick Meek/Tim Ryan Report from Ohio and from Florida. This is what we are getting from the Congressional Budget Office. This is information that is publicly printed in a number of nonpartisan groups that are out there.

I think it is also important for us to talk about our new partnership for America's future, what we are talking about on the Democratic side, and it is good to make sure that everyone understands that by the Democrats being in the minority here in this House, we cannot agenda bills to come before a committee by House rules. We cannot

call a committee hearing. We cannot bring a bill to the floor because of the House rules, because we are in the minority. We cannot say, well, there will be no privatization of Social Security whatsoever and the bill will not come to the floor because we are in the minority.

To be in the majority, it is going to take the American people and also some individuals to continue to focus on the issues that are not happening on behalf of not only our patriots, and patriots come in two forms. Many of them are everyday Americans that are out there, trying to make sure they provide for their families. They go to church, the synagogues, what have you, to the mosques, if they go, and they work hard every day. They expect their piece of the American apple pie.

You have individuals that are going even a step further, those individuals that are wearing the uniform in a forward area, in Iraq and Afghanistan or wherever they may be, individuals that have served this country before. This is our veterans. Those individuals that not only have stories of war and conflict but have stories of real life experience.

When they signed up, we promised them that we would help them in their health care. We promised them that they would not have to wait 6 months to see the ophthalmologist. We promised them that they will receive the respect that they deserve out of this Congress as it relates to making sure they have the necessary funds to be able to carry out the rest of their lives, either with a disability or what have you.

I must report that that is not happening right now. It is important that hopefully we can get some sort of forward movement to get us moving down in the right direction.

We have the new partnership for America's future which is a Democratic plan that has six components, which brings about prosperity, national security, fairness, opportunity, community and accountability.

Accountability, Mr. Speaker, is pivotal in this debate as it relates to balancing the national debt or making sure that we do not have a deficit at about \$8 trillion number. Accountability is making sure that we pass a Leave No Child Left Behind Act, that we fund it and that we stand by our States and we stand by our children or our future generations, to be able to do what the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) was talking about, of making sure that they are prepared to carry out the jobs that we need them to carry out. We are being outcompeted in other areas because our kids are not carrying the mathematics and some other areas, the sciences, that they need.

So the Leave No Child Left Behind Act was put into place to hopefully bring about that kind of accountability, and guess what, it was a bipartisan effort. Guess what again, it is not a bipartisan effort to fund it. It is

being underfunded, and if we were in the majority here in the House, it would have better funding. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), Democratic leader, has said that she will fully fund Leave No Child Left Behind. That is a major statement, and better yet, an action that would take place because she said it would happen.

Just like we are bold in saying we will make sure that the millionaires and billionaires get their tax cuts, we are going to make sure that our children are educated. Guess what, again, here is another thing. They are Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, Green Party, Reform Party households. No one's picking and choosing. We are saying all of America's children should receive that kind of leadership and that kind of accountability.

A perfect example, when we talk about opportunity within our six principles and we talk about community and we talk about prosperity, we are the 30 Something Working Group. We have individuals that are going to school and leaving college with what, 20, \$30,000 in debt. Am I correct?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. They are leaving in debt. Better yet, the administration gives them a bad hand of cards in saying that we want you to go to college, we want you to educate yourself. Individuals are running around here, going to commencement ceremonies throughout the United States of America saying that we are with you, but better yet, as it relates to the Pell grant obligation, it is because they changed their formula it is going to be \$300 million coming out of that formula, which is going to take the cost up of Pell grants in the year 2005, 2006.

I do not think that is a message of what we should do, but I can tell you what we are doing on this end. There is legislation that has already been filed, and which I have signed on to and you are signed on to, to replace that \$300 million back in so that the Pell grant opportunity for kids that want to better themselves and move on and educate themselves, that they do not have to end up paying what you may call this, I call it a \$300 million tax. When you change the formula and you go up and you give them a greater responsibility, you are taxing them, but better yet, you want to make tax cuts permanent for those individuals that are slamming Cadillac doors here in the United States, eating lunch at some of the finest restaurants in this country, walking around here, not even worrying about how we are going to pay the rent. They are collecting the rent, but better yet, we want to send our young people into a fixed situation.

We already know that on average kids are leaving school with 20, \$30,000 in debt, which means they are going to be living at home with mom or dad or grandmother or someone because they cannot get a loan to be able to buy a house because you do not come out of

college making a lot of money to be able to make that happen.

So I am glad on this side of the aisle, if anyone wants to know the difference between what is going on in the majority side, and I do not want to generalize because there are some individuals on the majority side who see it the way we see it. They see it the way we see it. They know that this is an important effort and that we have to make sure that we stand up for our children.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I was talking to a young person in my district a couple of days ago, and he is so talented on the organ. He is a great singer, and he is a great song writer, and I go to his church in Youngstown, Ohio, frequently. He is the head musician and head of the choir.

□ 1630

And I talked to him, and he is going through a difficult situation. So I asked him, well, why not go to school? Why not sign up at Youngstown State and get a degree in music and teach music? You know what the initial thing he said was? I cannot afford it. I cannot afford it. There is no way I am going to be able to do it.

Part of this that we talk about here is nuts and bolts. We need money for this program, and we are going to reduce or increase the Pell Grant scholarship by \$1,000 per student. And I know if the Democrats were in charge, we would do that. But it is not just about reducing the debt, it is about communicating to that person. And there are millions of people just like this young man who are talented and skilled and want to do better, but do not think anybody is on their side.

What we are trying to say is that if you put us in charge, if you give us a chance, we are going to be on your side. We are going to be your partner in this. We cannot do it for you. We cannot make this kid go to school. We cannot make him study. But there are millions of people out there who want to live a better life, and what the Democratic Party wants to do is help them do that; help them achieve their goals; help them move forward.

Whether it is with education or health care or clinics or whatever it is, we are offering solutions here to create incentives for people to be able to go and experience their dreams and to move on. We are in the hopes and dreams business here. That is what the Democrats are all about. And we want to be in charge because we believe that we have a better program, better solutions than just saying everybody gets a tax cut, especially the top 1 percent, because that clearly has not worked.

President Bush's dad called it voodoo economics. It has not worked yet. We are still waiting for what is going to happen here. Job creation is low and slow. People are taking up jobs that pay \$10,000 less than the job they lost, without health care benefits. That is not progress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It is important we move beyond personalities and look at what is actually taking place and what is not taking place. I think it is important looking at the numbers that we understand that it is just not happening.

When we dealt with the whole Medicare issue and we dealt with prescription drugs, the majority side, the leadership on the majority side came over and told us it would cost \$350 billion. They also said that it would cost \$400 billion. Now it is well over \$400 billion; matter of fact, it is even closer to \$500 billion.

There was the same information that came to this House regarding the weapons of mass destruction. We had prima facie evidence that there were weapons of mass destruction. But no weapons of mass destruction.

There was also an initiative that came to the floor by the majority, now majority side, that said we are going to do something about health care, and the President said, well, we are going to have these health care savings accounts, and everyone will be able to save, and everyone will be able to have good health care. Still, today, we have millions upon millions of working families without health care, families that go to work every day that do not have a health care plan.

Public hospitals and private hospitals are going under throughout this country, and not because they are bad managers. It is because they do not have the necessary attention or the funds that they need from this Federal Government to be able to provide health care to the everyday American.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield once again, I might just comment that we should just look at the way it is set up. Everyone screams, let us have universal health care, and America needs universal health care. America has universal health care. Unfortunately, it is through the emergency room. It is the most expensive, inefficient way to run a health care system, because hospitals who run emergency rooms, especially in cities that have high concentrations of crime and people accessing health care through the emergency room, they get charitable funds. The taxpayer is still paying.

So the question is are we going to pay for it up front and take care of someone when they have a cold, or are we going to wait until they go to the emergency room with pneumonia and it costs you 10 times more?

What we are saying is restructure, reform the health care system and have the courage to take on the big donors with all the nice cufflinks and the Cadillacs; take them on and say, we are going to act on behalf of the American people, not on behalf of specific interest groups that are making a ton of money.

Now, we cannot take on the pharmaceutical industry because they donate so much money to this body. So you ei-

ther pick them, or you pick the people you represent back in your district. In the path of \$400 billion, then \$700 billion, then a \$1 trillion prescription drug bill you do not do one thing about reimportation to help drive the cost down, or not do something as simple as giving the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to negotiate down the cost of the drugs?

Why not say to Pfizer and Merck, you want the contract for Medicare? Well, we are going to sit down and we are going to talk price. But no one had the courage to do that, because they get too much money from that industry.

But there is a choice. And what we are saying is we are going to make a choice to represent the people of the country who need help, your grandparents, your parents who cannot afford prescription drugs, instead of the pharmaceutical companies. People elect us to come down here and do this. They want us to say, we do not want to bankrupt the pharmaceutical companies, we want you to keep doing your research and doing what you do, but you have to play fair.

The bottom line is that a lot of the patents that the pharmaceutical companies get are researched out at the National Institutes of Health. They are publicly funded institutions. The taxpayers are paying for a good portion of this. Merck comes in and picks up a patent and only has to pay NIH .5 percent of their profits, and they go out and make billions of dollars at the expense of our grandparents, the 30-somethings' grandparents, or our parents.

There is a certain unfairness there. And what we are saying and communicating with these charts, and what we are talking about is we want a chance to lead this Chamber. We have ideas, and we will implement them, and we will help partner with the American people to make their lives better and improve their lives and give them opportunities that they do not have or have not had in many, many years.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is important that everyone understands that what my colleague and I are talking about here right now is doing something about the issues that are facing everyday Americans. Everyday Americans, Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green Party, Reform Party, you name it, we are out there trying to help them. We want to make sure that they get the butter from the duck.

We want to make sure, as we start talking about devolution of taxation, that when we cut funding to State and local governments, the difference between us and them is the fact that we can reach back in our pocket, and I will not even use my big credit card today, matter of fact I do not even have my credit card in my wallet, but I have my debit card. If we were to take a card out and say, fine, we will put another \$3 billion on the credit card. That is fine, we will put it away.

Matter of fact, no, we will not put it away, we will just throw it away. We will throw it away because we do not have to pay for it. It is someone else who has to pay for it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let our kids pay for it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let our kids pay for it. Let someone else worry about paying for it. But as relates to the State governments, they have to balance their budgets, and the reason why they have to balance their budget is that they have a balanced budget amendment. Many States do. They cannot deficit spend. So they cut education, tuition goes up, and in many of the States Medicaid reform, oh, my goodness, it is just a travesty what is happening in many of these programs that have helped so many people. And transportation dollars on the State level is drying up.

So when we get down to the county commissioners or the cities or the town, or what have you, municipal governments, which way are they going to turn?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Nowhere to go.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Then guess what? The local folks start seeing the millage rate go up from the school board. They start putting these local bond referendums on the ballots, because they do not have the money. Meanwhile, we are sitting up here in Washington talking about what is the problem, we have not raised your taxes? Yes, we have, we have raised your taxes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right. They raise them at the local level, and in many instances those people at that level vote "no" on the school board levy. Some States, like Ohio, it is elected. It just cannot be assessed. So in Ohio, the average person who lost their job and are making \$10,000 less, and their kids' college tuition is up, and here comes the school board levy and they vote "no." who is hurt then?

We are all hurt then, because how are we going to compete with other countries who are focusing on educating their kids? How are we going to compete with an engineer in China who makes \$5 an hour?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I want to correct myself, because in my last statement I said we here, as a Congress, raise taxes. No, we did not; the majority side who came up with a strategy on how we can cut funding in certain areas did, and that is the reason why those States are suing the Federal Government right now. We have given them an unfunded mandate.

When my constituents woke up at 7 a.m. on a given Tuesday morning last November, they did not go to the voting booth and take their voter registration card out and say, well, Congressman, I am going to vote for you to make sure you have better health care than I have, you and your family; or to make sure as relates to undue taxes or what have you that you can raise my taxes, and I will vote on me raising my

own taxes. That is why I am sending you to Congress.

No, better yet, I am sending you to Congress to make sure you do nothing about health care. Matter of fact, take my credit card, use it, because I am going to have to pay it off. I am going to let you use it. That is like sending someone to the mall that you know has a problem with shopping and saying, do not worry about it, take it to the maximum.

Can I have my credit card? I said I was not going to pull it out, but I am. My congressional spending card right here, the numbers are going up so fast, I keep having to change the numbers. The thing about our credit card, unlike any other credit card in the wallets of everyday Americans, is that it just keeps going and going and going and going to the tune of \$7.8 trillion.

Now, I know my colleague wants to say something, but let me just say this. For those individuals on the majority side that want to say, boy, those Democrats, they just tax and spend, look at the deficit. I want to know where they are now? I cannot even hear them. I do not even see them. Where are they? Where are these fiscal conservatives? Where are they? They are nowhere to be found. You go out in the hall and say, conservative, it just keeps echoing, conservative, conservative, conservative. Where are they?

So we have not been in the majority here, I would say, for 10 years now? Maybe 10 years. Maybe 8?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Going on 11.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Going on 11. Once again, I want to make sure everyone understands that we have to be in the majority to be able to run this House. So everything that takes place in this House and comes to this floor and goes before a committee, the agendas in committees, and bills moving, and appropriations and all of that is done by the majority side because they are in the majority.

In some instances, to be very truthful, we are able to work out some bipartisan efforts sometimes. We have a lot of votes that go up on the board where we are all together on the post offices and the Federal buildings, the naming of those post offices and the Federal buildings. But when it comes to issues like the budget, the Federal deficit, health care, education, in many cases we are not together, and that is unfortunate.

This is nothing we would like to see continued. We would like to work in a bipartisan way. You know, I have Republican constituents, and I have Independent constituents, and I have all the other parties even though I am a Democrat. And they go and vote for what? Leadership. They are going to vote for leadership.

So I want to make sure that Members understand, and before my colleague got here I was sharing with the Speaker and the Members the fact that I am glad that there are some leaders in this Congress that have said we need

an exit strategy on the privatization issue.

□ 1645

That is in The Washington Post today. It is just not flying back home to say we are going to private accounts, and if you are in the private account or not, you are still going to lose benefits, but this is what we are doing to shore up Social Security. We can shore up Social Security and strengthen Social Security without private accounts. I am glad we have leaders here that can carry that message on.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we are not against deficits for the sake of being against deficits. Many would like to borrow and spend as much as they can, and that is what this Congress has been doing. But when you borrow, you have to pay the interest payments.

Here is a very interesting statistic. Here is 2004, here is 2014, 10 years from now. The red is the interest on the debt that we pay every year, \$7.8 trillion. That is the red. The light blue is education, the purple environment, and this last one here, a bluish-green is veterans. This red gets bigger because the interest payments that we have to pay every single year are getting huge. We do not like deficits because it diverts money from education, from the environment, from veterans, from health, Medicare, Medicaid, investments in which we will see a good return by having healthy, educated citizens who will create wealth and keep the system running.

With deficits, that money is going down the toilet. A bigger and bigger portion of the budget goes to pay deficits. It is a waste of money. For this Chamber to be run by a group of fellows who said in 1994 that they wanted to pass a balanced budget amendment and make it a Constitutional amendment to have to balance the budget, to give us this, I think, begs the question why do we not turn the Chamber over to the other party. That is what we are asking for.

The money we are borrowing is coming from outside of the United States. The turquoise here is domestically held debt, 2000 to 2004. The purple is debt held by foreigners. As we start to borrow more and more money, out in California it was not so much held by foreign interests, and as we move, we are borrowing more from the Chinese, Japanese, we are turning high deficits, high debt over to our children, and who do we owe? Asian countries we are competing directly against. Bad news, bad leadership, and we need a change. That is what this is all about here.

Mr. Speaker, as we are starting to wind things down here, I just wanted to mention we had a tragedy in my district. On June 13, we lost a soldier in Iraq from Austintown, Ohio, Sergeant Larry Kuhns, Jr., who was 24 years old. He was 3 weeks from coming home.

I wanted to take this opportunity to pass on condolences from this Congress to his family, to his wife, Courtney,

their 23-month-old daughter, McKenzie, his mom, Kelly, and his mom's fiance, Jerry. We sometimes think we are important, but moments like this I think wake us all up and kind of allow us to recognize the gravity of some of the decisions we make. Whether it is sending kids off to war or putting the burden on them in the future, I wanted to mention Sergeant Kuhns and thank him and his family for his sacrifice to the country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I send my condolences to the family. We appreciate the commitment of our men and women in uniform who pay the ultimate sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman give our Web site out.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, to send us an e-mail, tell us what the challenges in your life are, 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Drop us an e-mail, and we will possibly read it here on the floor.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that we close out by not only thanking the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) and the rest of the leadership here on the Democratic side of the aisle for allowing us to take advantage of this hour, also the new Partnership for America's Future. We talked about the six principles if we had the opportunity to be able to lead within this House, which are values of prosperity, national security, fairness, opportunity, community, and also accountability.

Accountability is making sure that we deal with issues such as health care, making sure our troops have what they need as it relates to national security, making sure our children have opportunities, making sure that every American is paying tax dollars which are spent in the way that they are supposed to be spent and bring about the kind of fairness that they deserve from their Federal tax dollars. And also opportunity, making sure our children have opportunities, that we do what we are supposed to do as the Federal Government in holding up our end of the deal.

HONORING AUNG SAN SUU KYI

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in this week where we as a House voted to reform the United Nations, hold them accountable for their actions, I rise to talk about a place in the world where the United Nations is not, but where it ought to be, and a brave woman who is doing the work of the entire United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute a woman born on June 19, 1945. I would like to read a poem that she wrote:

"Emerald cool we may be, as water in cupped hands. But of that we might