Iraq and Afghanistan as new veterans, you would think House Republicans would be willing to stand behind their promise to provide necessary health care to these new veterans.

Mr. Speaker, it is sad that Washington Republicans are unwilling to give America's veterans the support they deserve. America's veterans should be outraged by the treatment they are now receiving from the Bush administration and the House Republican leadership.

CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, last year, TOM DELAY, the most powerful Republican in the Congress, promised this House that we would vote on the Central American Free Trade Agreement, so-called CAFTA, before the end of last calendar year, before December 31 of 2004. Then earlier this year he promised we would vote on CAFTA sometime before Memorial Day. Then he promised that we would vote on CAFTA sometime before July 4. The simple question is why has Congress not voted on the Central American Free Trade Agreement? The simple answer is that dozens of Republicans and Democrats, small businesses and manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, workers, environmentalists and food safety advocates all across the board oppose this agreement. There simply are not enough votes in this Congress to pass the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

During this whole period, supporters of CAFTA continued to make the same old, tired promises about trade. They promised that passage of CAFTA would reduce our trade deficit, but it continues the failed trade policy of the last dozen years. In 1992, the year I ran for Congress, we had in this country a $38 billion trade deficit. Last year, a dozen years later, our trade deficit had mushroomed to $618 billion. From $38 billion to $618 billion and the CAFTA supporters say that CAFTA will reduce our trade deficit.

CAFTA supporters say it will increase manufacturing jobs. Again, another broken promise from these trade agreements. The facts are that in the last 5 years, the U.S. has lost more than 2 million manufacturing jobs, more than 200,000 of them in my State of Ohio, another 200,000 in Michigan and Pennsylvania and New York, hundreds of thousands in Texas and California, in the southeast North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, those regions of the country.

Because no one believed these promises that it would cut the trade deficit, that it would increase our exports, the promise that it would raise the standard of living in Central America, they now are bringing out a whole nother round of promises. One promise they have made, CAFTA will stop illegal immigration from Central America. The facts are that based on a report by the Pew Hispanic Center, a quarter million undocumented Mexican-born workers entered the U.S. from 1990 to 1994, prior to NAFTA. Then NAFTA passed, the number of illegals entering the U.S. sharply increased to almost a half million from 2000 to 2004. Free trade agreements are not a solution for illegal immigration.

Another promise they made, another wild, unsubstantiated promise, is that CAFTA will stop illegal drugs from entering the U.S. However, all you have got to do is look at what happened with NAFTA. Despite the passage of NAFTA, the State Department says Mexico is the principal transit country for South American cocaine entering the U.S. The report says that Mexican drug traffickers have steadily increased operations in all illicit drug sectors in the U.S. during the period after NAFTA.

Another wild, unsubstantiated claim is that CAFTA will stop al Qaeda from utilizing our southern border to enter the U.S. Geography 101, Mr. Speaker, shows that our southern border is with Mexico, not Central America, and despite claims made about NAFTA, border security remains low. CAFTA supporters fail to argue how passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement will fix the Mexico border problem.

Another wild, unsubstantiated claim is that Central American presidents support labor unions. The facts are very different from that. In every one of these CAFTA countries, Dominican Republic and the five countries in Central America, these nations are not compliant with internationally recognized labor standards today as defined by the International Labor Organization. Most CAFTA nations have inadequate protection for workers who try to join unions in violation of ILO Convention 98's right to organize and bargain collectively. They maintain onerous strike requirements in violation of the right to associate under ILO Convention 87. In Honduras, not a single one of the 8,000 workers in the Porvenir Export Processing Zone has the right of freedom of association. One worker in that zone said, ''Look, there's a whole mountain of workers who have been fired over the last few years for trying to organize in the industrial park. They simply don't allow it.'' In other words, these nations, one after another, continue to violate International Labor Organization standards.

CAFTA would lock in those lower wage standards, lower worker safety standards, right to organize, bargain collectively, prohibition on child labor, all of those things that we hold dear as our moral values in this country, human rights issues, protecting workers, protecting children, protecting against forced labor.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is, defeat this CAFTA. It has been promised that it would come to the floor week after week, month after month. Defeat this CAFTA and renegotiate a Central American Free Trade Agreement that workers and small businesses and farmers and manufacturers and environmentalists and food safety advocates and businesses can support.

ON SUPREME COURT RULING REGARDING PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, in ancient days of kingdoms and fiefdoms, those in authority would sometimes arbitrarily and sometimes capriciously order the transfer of property from one owner to another person who was in greater favor with the ruler at that particular moment. The owner from whom the property was taken had no recourse once the king or ruler had made the decision to transfer the property. To back up the transfer, the tyrannical despot would make clear that the full weight of his military or local law enforcement could be brought to bear against anyone who attempted to stand in the way of the transfer.

In the recent Supreme Court case of Kelo et al. v. City of New London et al., the elaborate 20-page majority opinion of the United States Supreme Court is one of the most eloquent, articulate, intellectual efforts to ever rationalize or try to cerebrally legitimize the forced transfer from the legal, legitimate owner of nonblighted property to someone who is in greater favor with the ruler of that area. It is something that our high court can point to with pride that they almost make it sound fair that private property can be taken from one legitimate owner and forcibly transferred to one who offers greater financial rewards to the ruler of that area.

What a great day for the intellectual superiority of the highest court of the land as it gets a 10 rating in the field of mental gymnastics, even from the Russian judge. But what a very, very sad day for truth, justice and what used to be the American way.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI PROJECT TO BE CONSIDERED IN WRDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the House Water Resources Development Act is on its way to the floor this week, perhaps as early as Thursday. In that bill, there is authorized a $1.8 billion expansion of lock work on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, despite three National Academy of Science reports concluding that realistic projections of the traffic that it is meant to

deal with do not justify it. This project epitomizes the need for reform and modernization of the Corps and for Congress to exercise its oversight role.

In the year 2000, Corps economist Donald Sweeney filed for whistleblower protection after Corps leaders fired him when he claimed that Corps officials had ordered him to underestimate how much grain would be shipped to alternatives on the river. Two generals and a colonel ultimately lost their jobs after the Army Inspector General concluded that the Corps had indeed ''cooked the books''. Yet we have the project before us here today, an example still of the continuing problems of the Corps planning system where nonstructural alternatives such as congestion fees, scheduling and switch boats are ignored. This project demonstrates the need for independent review of huge Corps projects. If outside independent review had been applied in the beginning, we would have saved millions of dollars and decades on studies and we would not be arguing about it today.

Make no mistake, every Member of Congress has a stake in this argument, because if we pass this project, it will take up 10 to 15 percent of the entire Corps construction project for years to come. It will delay or eliminate funding for many worthwhile projects around the country when we currently have a $58 billion backlog of unfinished Corps projects and less than $2 billion a year to construct them.

Each Member of Congress should ask, Is there a demand for this project? Is it worth the money? Are there cheaper alternatives?

That demand issue is particularly important because this is a project to reduce river congestion on the upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. But according to the Corps' own data, barge traffic has declined 23 percent from 1992 to 2003. Last year it dropped 19 percent. Lock delays have significantly declined as well in recent years.

The cost justification according to three National Academy of Sciences studies over the last 4 years and the Office of Management and Budget have questioned the methodology used in this project. In 2001, an NAS panel concluded the Corps had relied on overly optimistic barge forecasts for traffic. In December 2003, a second NAS panel reviewed the revised study and renewed their objections. Yet another NAS report came out in 2004 and concluded that, and I quote, the Corps has made substantial progress on the study in the past 3 years but the study contains serious flaws, serious enough to limit its credibility and value within the policymaking process.

There are, in fact, cheaper alternatives. The National Academy of Science concluded in its 2004 report that nonstructural approaches for managing waterway traffic appear not to have been considered at all. Why should we go forward with a project on this scale until we have examined all the inexpensive, small scale congestion management measures that could be just as effective and make a much greater difference much quicker?

Last but not least, it should be pointed out that we have been pouring money into the area for years. Over the last 15 years, the Corps has rehabilitated many of the locks they now plan to replace. They have spent over $900 million extending the productive lives of the existing locks and dams.

People ought to take a very close look at this before it comes to the floor. As I mentioned, every Member has a stake in it. When you compare this to our overall water construction projects, it is actually five or six times larger than the ''Big Dig'' road project in Boston compared to our highway system.

I plan to offer amendments with the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) to make sure that if we go forward, that we do so with the proper assessment. We should not have political decisions take the place of economic analysis. We have to make sure we are funding legitimate projects, not politicizing the Corps.

NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. HARRIS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of National Homeownership Month. I am a strong advocate of homeownership, not only because it is a key component of the American dream but also because it is vital to America's economic security. Statistics show that higher levels of homeownership translate into safer and stronger communities, communities in which people feel more rooted and engaged, in which they feel stronger stakes in their local schools, civic organizations, businesses as well as their churches and synagogues. Additionally, children who are raised in families that own their own homes have shown greater academic success as well as greater levels of self-esteem.

Two years ago, we passed the American Dream Downpayment Act which I introduced to help more American families enter the market for quality, affordable housing. This was an important step on the way toward making homeownership available to everyone, but it was only a first step. We still have much more work to do.

I am proud to have been a cosponsor of the resolution we passed yesterday in honor of National Homeownership Month and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to bring the American dream of homeownership to more families across this country.

COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQ'S SOVEREIGNTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 1 minute.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Iraqi people on the anniversary of the establishment of Iraqi sovereignty. A year ago today, Iraq took the first crucial step toward establishing a democracy and rejoining the international community as a free nation. In January, as all of us know, the Iraqi people took another step forward. In defiance of an insurgency threatening to ''make the streets run with blood,'' 8.5 million Iraqis cast their ballots.

Now, the political and administrative duties of government are run almost entirely by Iraqis. With the help of U.S. and coalition troops, Iraq's security forces now number approximately 170,000. The people of Iraq deal a crushing blow to the insurgency each and every day through the spirit and courage that they demonstrate. The American people stand firmly beside the people of Iraq in their efforts to establish full democratic rule for themselves.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 23 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Ruffin Snow, Senior Pastor, Tri-City Baptist Church, Conover, North Carolina, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, we bow humbly before You, for You have told us in Your word that You ''resist the proud and give grace to the humble.'' Without You we can do nothing of good consequence. We embrace our place in history and our responsibility. With the psalmist we recognize that promotion comes from God: ''He puts down one and sets up another.''

We thank You, Lord, for this Nation. We beg forgiveness for our sins. May we become the Nation You intend.

We pray for all those in authority including the Members of this Congress, their staffs, and families in their pressurized lives. Please give our troops and their families strength, protection, and encouragement. Bring confusion to the forces of evil and terrorism.