

office . . . unless I want to work at McDonald's in a job."

Raiche, a former firefighter before heading to Iraq, said he couldn't even get that job back, nor a job in law enforcement, until his name is cleared.

"I have guys in the military right now who were personal friends of mine," Ginter said. "I have no resentment toward the military. I want this off my record."

URGING LOBBYING REFORM

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today in the Washington Post, we found out that a key adviser to President Bush on the Intelligence Advisory Committee has been instrumental in helping China and the Chinese oil company put together their bid to purchase Unocal.

The other day, the Center For Public Integrity disclosed that big drug companies spent \$800 million in the last 7 years to influence the Congress, the Senate, and the legislation and the policies we have here; and then just last year we passed a pharmaceutical prescription drug bill that ended up producing or will produce \$132 billion in additional profit for the pharmaceutical industry.

The tobacco industry donated over the last few years \$40 million to the Republican Party, and then they get a sweetheart deal by the Department of Justice for just pennies on the dollar when it came to settling a lawsuit. They settled for 8 percent of what they had originally gone in for, \$10 million versus \$130 million. USA Today points out that corporate donors have given more than \$120 million to Republicans during the last election, and now they are receiving their reward. For some businesses, invest a little now and get a larger return later. That has been the motto.

Just take energy prices. Big oil and big energy companies has been a major contributor to the majority party, the Republican Party. Oil is at \$60 a barrel, approximately, and yet we talk about giving a \$8 billion taxpayer give-away so big oil can do what? Drill for oil. I thought that was their business plan. So what we are asking the American taxpayer to do is pay once at the pump and again on April 15. Why? Because big oil is a more influential player here in Washington.

Special interests have attached themselves to Congress, and this parasitic relationship is having a corrosive effect on our Nation of and for the people. When the Speaker's gavel comes down, it is intended to open the People's House, not the auction house. And lately when we look at the tobacco industry, the energy industry, the pharmaceutical industry, those who lobby on behalf of major interests like Chinese oil companies, we can see something that is happening as it relates to the People's House.

The relationship between lobbyists and lawmakers has become far too cozy and close. Professional lobbyists and the lobbyist profession have become a back office for Congress, serving as travel agents, employment agencies, and authors of legislation. In fact, in the past 6 years, lobbying expenditures have more than doubled to \$3 billion annually. Yet while the number of professional lobbyists and their fees have increased, only one in five lobbyists actually register as required. Of the 250 top lobbying firms, 210 failed to file one or more of the necessary documents.

The special interests have benefited from the weak reporting, nonexistent oversight and toothless penalties while the credibility of the United States Congress suffers. We have had a debate about campaign finance reform here in this Congress, a debate that ultimately put some distance between donors and candidates. Now we need a similar debate as it relates to lobbyists and Members of Congress.

□ 1945

We tell, in this institution, corporate America how to clean up their act. We tell professional sports teams how to clean up their act. Yet when it comes to our business, how we clean up our house, we are not very good at that. We think business as usual is just fine.

It is time we updated our laws to reflect the explosive growth and increasing influence of the professional lobbyist community. It has been 10 years since we have done anything. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) and I have introduced the Lobbying and Ethics Reform Act. Our bill creates a code of official conduct for Congress. In the coming days, we will have a Senate bill, itself, introduced by a colleague of ours. This code of conduct would close the revolving door by requiring former Members and staff to wait a minimum of 2 years after they leave Congress before becoming lobbyists to work back here influencing legislation and trading on their knowledge. The bill would end the practice of lobbyists serving as congressional travel agents by arranging lavish junkets for Members of Congress. We also require lobbyists to disclose their past connections, previous Hill employment and financial activities on a public database.

The Meehan-Emanuel bill increases the penalties for failing to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act. It also creates a bipartisan House task force to recommend ways to reinvigorate ethics oversight and enforcement. And it would require the Government Accountability Office to report twice a year on the state of oversight and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the gavel should mark the opening of the People's House, not the auction house, and that is what the American people now see this Congress doing. Unless we reform the relationship between the lobbying community and Members of Congress, we cannot

restore the public's faith in the People's House. We are suffering from a systematic problem requiring an institutional solution. We need more sunlight, more transparency, better oversight and stiffer penalties. The Meehan-Emanuel bill provides that transparency. And let me add that this is not a partisan issue. I hope that Members of both parties will join us in working together to pass these important reforms.

Mr. Speaker, we have a duty to ensure that the voices of the American people are not drowned out by the professional lobbyists working the halls of Congress. Only through lobbying reform can we return the People's House to the American people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MEEHAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. INSLEE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN MEMORY OF CONGRESSMAN JAKE PICKLE

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

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I did not just like Jake Pickle; I loved Jake Pickle. Congressman Pickle was one of the finest public servants to have ever served in this House, and he was a true Texas treasure. He was a kind, decent, caring human being who spent his entire life making life better for others. Whether it was helping a veteran receive health care, bringing research dollars, and he brought many of them, to his beloved University of Texas or saving the Social Security system in 1983, Jake was always dedicated to helping others.

Jake Pickle's faith was shown time and time again as he lived the commandment to love thy neighbor. Jake Pickle lived every day with another biblical verse, "This is the day the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Jake lived every day joyfully. He lit up a room when he walked into it because of his joyful, positive approach to life. His positive approach has enlightened the lives of all of us blessed to have known him.

Jake Pickle exemplified courage when he voted as a freshman Congressman from Texas to pass the Civil Rights Act which brought to reality the promise of equal opportunity to millions of African-Americans. He did it because it was the right thing to do, even though it could have ended his political career.

I want to tell one story about my friend Jake Pickle. In June of 1994, he and I were part of a U.S. congressional delegation at the 50th anniversary of D-Day. After the ceremony on June 4 of 1994, our bus was about to leave to go back to a hotel an hour to 2 hours away. I noticed Jake getting off the bus by himself. I stopped, walked up to him and said, Jake, what are you doing? And he said, Why don't you come with me, Chet?

So I followed Jake Pickle off that bus. We walked several hundred yards. We went to Point du Hoc, that monument to American GI courage on D-Day when Colonel Earl Rudder led Rudder's Army Rangers up that stiff cliff against murderous fire by the Germans above them. It turned out that Jake Pickle and Earl Rudder, then the land commissioner of Texas, roomed together after the death of Jake's first wife when then General Rudder was serving as land commissioner in Austin, Texas.

So that June day in 1994, Jake Pickle got off the bus, not knowing how he would get back to his hotel in France, to go pay his respects to his personal friend and fellow Texan and American, Earl Rudder, the hero along with America's Rangers at Point du Hoc. That was the character of Jake Pickle. Our Nation will miss Jake Pickle, but the world is a better place today because of his life of dedicated public service.

Mr. Speaker, Winston Churchill once said that we make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give. By that high standard, Jake Pickle led a rich life, a life that enriched every one of us blessed to have known him.

Goodbye, my friend, until we meet another day. Thank you for the memories. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for making America and the world a better place.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the sub-

ject of my special order today of J.J. "Jake" Pickle's death.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

SMALL BUSINESS AND HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, what an honor it is to come before my colleagues tonight to talk about some of the most important aspects of all of our lives, and that is our jobs and our health and how they are tied together.

I think it is helpful to begin this by answering the question, how did we get to this point? Why do most Americans receive their health insurance from their employer? Did you ever think about that? Whether it is good or bad. You think about other kinds of insurance. Car insurance does not come from your employer necessarily. Certainly, health insurance does, and that is so incredibly important. Your home insurance does not come from your employer. Why health? Like most things, it has a long and a curious and sometimes a colorful history.

By way of introduction, and I will be brief, but I think it is important to review kind of how we got to where we are right now. Actually it begins during World War II when employers were short on employees, and they were attempting to attract employees, and so they offered a health benefit to try to encourage some folks to come and work at their place of business. The government at that time had to decide whether it was going to treat that health benefit as a taxable benefit or whether it was going to be a nontaxable benefit. Were they going to tax the employee for getting that benefit or not? What the government at that time elected to do is to treat it as a nontaxable benefit. And so began this incentive that we now have and have lived with for the past 60 years or so for employer-based health care.

During the 1950s, there was a period of significant collective bargaining in our Nation, and many individuals got their health insurance with what is called first dollar coverage, meaning that every single dollar of their health care was paid for by somebody else. In the 1960s, the government got involved with Medicare and Medicaid and instituted Medicare as a program that was a cost-plus program, meaning that those individuals that were providing the care were paid for the cost for providing it plus some. And so what you had over a period of the next 10 or 12 years or so was a significant increase in the cost of health care. Businesses said, Hey, wait a minute, what's going on here? We've got to have some help.

And so instead of looking at that situation then and moving toward a system that allowed individuals greater choice and greater opportunity for their selection in health care, what happened was an increasing regulation of both the insurance industry and the beginning of HMOs and the managed care as we know it. All of this began basically with the tax favorability for employers to purchase health insurance. And so that system flourished.

Now, tying health care to jobs has had many unintended consequences and many that have adversely affected those who can get insurance. As a legislature, as a Congress, as leaders and decisionmakers, we need to make it easier for businesses to provide health insurance. One person who knows firsthand about that and about how to make that happen is the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The gentlewoman from Tennessee is a small business owner herself and represents a district that is heavily dependent on small businesses and the jobs that they generate. She understands this issue as few do and has been a great leader in our Congress in an effort to pass both the health savings accounts and associated health plans. I am proud to yield to my colleague as she discusses the issue of small business and health care for a few moments.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his leadership on this issue. He certainly brings a wonderful perspective to our body as he leads in the discussion of small businesses and health. I think most people know that small town physicians, that is a small business, and working with small business employers, he understands so readily how employers truly desire to provide great benefits for their employees. Mr. Speaker, I think most small business employers feel like their employees are family. They want to be certain that they have got the best of everything, the best of opportunity, the best of health care, the best work environment, because they treasure having those individuals work with them. Most small business owners understand, too, that it is important that employees be happy and content in their work environment, that they stay with you, because one of the greatest expenses is having to train a new employee, having to help them learn the ropes, learn the skills, come up to speed to fill that role. They also know that good health care is important because of time lost from work. That is very expensive. That means an employer, if he has an employee who is sick, who has not had access to good preventative health care, then what happens? He has to go hire a temporary employee to fill that job. So small business employers understand the importance of creating a good comprehensive work environment and the importance of appropriate health care and health coverage for employees.