

CIA agent stationed in many hot spots around the world. When someone in the White House decided to leak her name to reporters, they were not only jeopardizing Plame's life, but also the lives of other covert agents she has been in contact with.

Mr. Speaker, House Republicans should be concerned about whether or not this White House has been spreading this information. The only way we can get answers is by conducting a congressional investigation. It is time that this Congress do its job.

SPACE SHUTTLE LAUNCH

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago, the Nation mourned the space shuttle *Columbia* tragedy. President Bush declared, "This cause of exploration and discovery is not an option we choose, it is a desire written in the human heart."

Today, seven more astronauts will take hold of that desire and follow their heart into space. This return to flight marks a new era of space travel with unparalleled safety measures. As the crew tests new safety techniques and delivers much-needed supplies to the International Space Station, we will all watch. We will watch with excitement and pride, and we will remember. We will remember and honor the lost crew of the space shuttle *Columbia*.

The *Columbia* crewmembers valiantly gave their lives pursuing knowledge in our name for space exploration and today, we continue our quest to get our shuttle program back.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to those who worked so hard to get that shuttle program back. To today's crewmembers, Eileen Collins, James Kelly, Charles Camarda, Wendy Lawrence, Soichi Noguchi, Steve Robinson, and Andy Thomas, may they be safe and may their mission be successful. We thank them for their dedication, their determination, and their courage. Godspeed.

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SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, early this year the President said, "There's no Social Security trust." Lately, some White House supporters in this Congress say they want to establish private accounts with money from the same trust fund which the President says does not exist. That way, when favored Wall Street interests take the money from the administration's private accounts and lose it in stock speculation, they can turn around and tell the American people, "Hey, the money was never there to begin with."

There is a line in the Bible which says, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." Think about that line when you think about Social Security privatization.

AMERICA'S FLOURISHING ECONOMY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Fridays are turning out to be a great day for American workers for more than one reason. Last Friday, the Department of Labor announced that over 146,000 new jobs were created for American workers in June. Over the last 25 consecutive months, 3.7 million Americans have gone to work due to President Bush's tax cuts. Additionally, the national unemployment rate has dropped over the past year to 5 percent, which represents the fastest decline in nearly a decade. More Americans are working now than ever before in our Nation's history and our tax receipts continue to rise as the Federal deficit continues to steadily decline. The Congressional Budget Office now predicts that our deficit may fall to under \$325 billion. Friday's job reports continue to bring positive news for American families and prove that President Bush's tax cuts are moving the economy forward.

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

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, it has now been 13 days since the House could have passed a \$1.5 billion emergency VA health care spending bill to address the VA health care crisis in America. Unfortunately for millions of America's veterans, the House leadership refused to pass the bipartisan bill that the Senate had already passed by a vote of 96-0. We could have already had help on the way, but the House leadership said no.

Yesterday, the VA confirmed what House Democrats said on this floor 13 days ago, the House leadership-backed VA bill does not fully address the VA health care crisis. Every day that goes by is a day when veterans are either having their important health care delayed or canceled. The House Republican leadership caused this VA health care crisis by underfunding VA health care for 2 years. Now they have a responsibility to deal with it.

Now I hear the House leadership says we might be on vacation this Friday. What is more important, Members of the House taking a vacation this Friday or addressing the needs of America's veterans?

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I would say that my good friend from Texas's 1-minute is very unfortunate because, CHET, you and I are working together. We are working with your colleague, Chairman WALSH, to find the right number. And so to try to say that, gee, there is a bogeyman, there is a bad person here, that is false. What we are looking for, CHET, is to get the right number.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The Chair would advise Members that they should address their remarks to the Chair and not to other Members either in the second person or by given name.

Mr. BUYER. I can address the Chair, but I think we know who we are talking to.

I am hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman who just spoke will be very careful, because we are trying to work together to get the right number. I think it is an embarrassing moment. When we ask the administration for the number, they testify to a number, and then we find that it is not right potentially? We are trying to get the number right and to make sure that veterans are served properly on a bipartisan basis. Please, let us not erode that.

VA FUNDING SHORTFALL

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

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago the administration told Congress that the VA health care system did not need any more money. Then, feeling the heat, they said they needed an additional \$975 million. Just yesterday, the Bush administration conceded that it had made another mistake. Now they say they need another \$300 million. It is clear that either the administration cannot get it right or does not want to get it right. The nearly \$1.3 billion that the administration now admits is necessary this year is the amount Democrats have been working hard for this last year. The Republican leadership has consistently fought adequate increases in the VA health care budget. Now, more than 50,000 veterans are coming to health care appointments and being denied care. It is time to stop nickel-and-diming veterans health care and give the veterans of this country what they need and deserve.

POSITIVE ECONOMIC NEWS

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there is great economic news for American workers. The reason this economy is growing is because of small business. That is why we are celebrating Small Business Week. We found out from the Bureau of Labor Statistics last week, 25 months of consecutive economic growth, 146,000 jobs in June. We have unemployment at near historic lows. We are going to see the deficit \$100 billion less than projected. The reason that is happening, the reason we have steady economic growth, is because the tax reductions are working. The tax reductions are working, and we are seeing higher Federal revenues.

We are going to continue with this. It shows that the agenda laid forth by the majority leadership has worked for all Americans, and we are going to continue to work to reduce Federal regulations like the bills we did in dealing with OSHA to make the environment more friendly for small business to do what they do best, create those jobs. We look forward to continuing to create the environment for a great competitive American workplace.

WHITE HOUSE STONEWALLING ON ROVE

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, it has now been 2 days since we discovered Karl Rove told a Time magazine reporter that Ambassador Joe Wilson's wife was a CIA agent, and what is the response from the White House? Silence.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan has refused to take questions from reporters for the last 2 days on Karl Rove, citing an ongoing Federal investigation. However, McClellan had no trouble spreading erroneous information about Rove's supposed innocence.

On October 1, 2003, McClellan was asked about Rove's involvement; and after first stating that there was an ongoing investigation taking place, McClellan continued by stating, "It's simply not true that he was involved in leaking classified information."

Nine days later in reference to another question about Rove, McClellan began by reminding reporters of an ongoing investigation, but then continued by stating that Rove had assured him he was not involved.

It now turns out that everything the White House was saying was false. Mr. Speaker, the ongoing investigation is not what is keeping the Bush White House from commenting. They are stonewalling because they cannot explain these falsehoods away. It is time for the stonewalling to end.

THE ECONOMY

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

Mr. CHOCOLA. As we have heard, Mr. Speaker, last week our country did receive more good economic news. The jobless rate fell to 5 percent in June, the lowest rate since September of 2001. Economic growth has continued to average a strong and steady 4 percent. The deficit is down by over \$100 billion to its lowest point in 3 years. And tax receipts have skyrocketed this year.

That news should send a clear signal to Members of this body, it is time to give the tax cuts of 2003 the credit that they deserve. Time and again we have learned that the best way to achieve growth and create jobs is for hard-working people to keep more of their own money in their own pockets.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to help sustain this growth and help eliminate the deficit by controlling spending and making the 2003 tax cuts permanent.

VA BUDGET SHORTFALL

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

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, once again the administration is forced to admit that it failed to acknowledge the full extent of the VA's budget shortfall. In June, the administration submitted a request for \$975 million to keep the VA ship afloat. This number was a joke. Democrats, myself included, protested that at least \$1.3 billion would be required to meet the VA's obligation to our Nation's veterans.

Former VA Secretary Anthony Principi, then Chairman Chris Smith and Ranking Member EVANS, the Independent Budget, the American Legion, and countless veterans wrote Members of Congress and warned us that the VA could not operate with the budget request submitted by the administration. As usual, the administration stubbornly clung to its ridiculously low figure. Once again, the administration was wrong.

Now that the administration acknowledges its billion-dollar shortfall, let us make sure our veterans are provided for and that no veteran in this country goes without the best health care we can provide to these great Americans.

NEED TO MONITOR FEMA

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my condolences to Floridians in the wake of Hurricane Dennis. Hurricane Dennis blasted into Florida as a category 3 storm and is estimated to have caused about \$1 billion worth of damage and the loss of seven lives. I share my fellow Floridians' anguish over their losses. This hurricane unfortunately is just the first of many that will assail Florida's coasts.

Last year, FEMA bungled cleanup efforts in the aftermath of four terrifying hurricanes by refusing to pay for debris removal on private roads, slow reimbursement, and exorbitant overpayments in the Miami-Dade area.

I urge FEMA to respond quickly to this latest hurricane so that the 2004 debacle is not repeated.

ROVE NEEDS TO BE STRAIGHT-FORWARD ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN VALERIE PLAME SCANDAL

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, Karl Rove needs to stop hiding behind his attorney and be straightforward with the American people about his involvement in the Valerie Plame scandal. Whether or not Karl Rove is the only administration official who leaked information to reporters remains to be seen. What is clear today is that Karl Rove has not been up-front with the American people. He has consistently denied any involvement in the case despite the revelation on Monday through his attorney that he did indeed tell a Time magazine reporter that Joseph Wilson's wife was a CIA agent. This is a serious breach of trust on Karl Rove's part. Truth and trust are devalued when this happens.

Larry Johnson, a former CIA operative who worked with Plame, explained how serious Rove's actions were, and I am quoting: "The fact that she's been undercover for 3 decades and has been divulged is outrageous because she was put undercover for certain reasons. One, she works in an area where people she meets with overseas could be compromised."

He needs to step down.

LONDON BOMBING

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my deepest condolences to our friends in London who suffered a heinous attack of terrorism last week when several bombs tore through their public transit system. Events like the London bombing remind us how absolutely important it is to stand firm against terrorism wherever it rears its hideous head. We must never let down our guard.

Next week, the House is slated to take up legislation to reauthorize 16 provisions in the PATRIOT Act. Those in Congress acted quickly in the wake of September 11 to get this strong legislation passed to help safeguard our Nation from the agony of another terrorist attack.

So far, we have been successful. The PATRIOT Act has helped our intelligence and law enforcement officials