

help to our seniors who need prescription drugs. Do not be fooled twice.

AMERICA'S WORKING

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, in spite of all of what the pessimists have said, and regardless of what the mainstream media reports, the economy has greatly improved.

The facts are plain and simple. Our Nation is producing more, and our government is spending less. The estimated Federal budget deficit is \$94 billion less than the earlier prediction, and we have had 14 consecutive quarters of economic growth.

House Republicans have faith in America's ability to grow our economy, and we look to the future with confidence. Our job in Congress is to hold the line on spending. And the unemployment rate has fallen to 5 percent, the lowest since September 2001, with nearly 4 million new jobs created in the last 2 years alone.

Sustained job growth, falling deficits, low interest rates and a booming housing market: America's economy is robust and getting stronger.

With fiscal responsibility and passing pro-growth bills, including the death tax repeal and legal reform, we continue to show our commitment to growing America's economy. But there is still work to do. I am hopeful that Congress will approve the highway and energy bills which will add new jobs to the economy, help improve our roadways, and decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND WOMEN

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about Social Security and the millions of American women who rely on it every day.

Women are among one of the largest groups of Social Security beneficiaries who stand to lose a great deal should Social Security be privatized. On average, women live 3 years longer than men. Any contributions to a private account would have to stretch out over more years.

Additionally, the private accounts do not have the guaranteed annual cost-of-living increase in Social Security which would jeopardize the retirement and economic security of older women through the gamble of the stock market.

Social Security is a good deal for women because it gives people with lower earnings a greater return on what they paid in, and women on average have lower incomes and less time in the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time we quit talking about privatizing Social Security

and instead come up with ways to strengthen it.

CENTRAL AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. The Central American Free Trade Agreement. We use this acronym frequently, CAFTA. It is Central America, our brothers and sisters and the future of the world when it comes to the corridor for an economic base that is unlimited into South America and Central America.

Exports to Central America from my home State of Nevada grew 56 percent from 2000 to 2004, far higher than the 16 percent average increase. In 2003 alone, Nevada experienced an 88 percent increase with significant gains in machinery, computer and electronic manufacturing.

Manufactured goods accounted for 69 percent of Nevada's exports to Central America. Not only will the passage of CAFTA immediately eliminate tariffs on 80 percent of exports on Nevada's manufacturers; it will also abolish all remaining tariffs within 10 years, including the tariff on chemicals, electronic equipment, machinery, and transportation equipment.

Mr. Speaker, Central American Free Trade Agreement, the future economic base of the world is Central and South America.

DEMOCRACY DEPENDS ON FREE SPEECH AND DISSENT

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

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I heard the remarks of the majority leader a few minutes ago. Democracy depends on free speech and dissent. Free speech is stifled when dissent is labeled treason or is derided in time of war as not supporting our troops.

We all support our troops. One can point out the mistakes or the dishonesty of the administration while not stinting in supporting our troops. Pointing out that the administration misled the country about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is not "not supporting our troops."

Pointing out that Karl Rove appears to have participated in a conspiracy to punish Ambassador Wilson for telling the truth about this by revealing the Ambassador's wife's CIA role is not "not supporting our troops."

Pointing out the administration's justification for keeping our troops in harm's way in Iraq flip-flops by the season is not "not supporting our troops."

Demanding proper investigation of evidence that the administration has

disgraced this country by evading our laws against torturing prisoners is not "not supporting our troops."

A free society requires that all these accusations see the light of day. Let the administration rebut them if they can. But do not use the mantra of supporting our troops to stifle essential free speech.

STATE DEFENSE FORCES

(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, as the global war on terrorism continues, State Defense Forces are playing an increasingly critical role in ensuring that their communities are prepared for Homeland Security crises and recovery from hurricane damage.

As a 31-year veteran of the South Carolina Army National Guard, I am well aware of the valuable contributions of the South Carolina State Guard. From training monthly to supporting National Guard operations, these capable men and women honorably offer their time and experience for their communities.

To ensure that these volunteers are used to their greatest potential, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS) and I have reintroduced the State Defense Forces Improvement Act. This legislation will recognize the importance of the State Defense Forces, authorize DOD and DHS to coordinate Homeland Security efforts with and provide training to State Defense Forces and allow State Defense Forces to receive surplus DOD equipment.

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

□ 1030

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN IRAQ

(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, today's New York Times states that a London-based group of academics and researchers has released a report on civilian casualties in Iraq for the first 2 years of the war. The report, based on analysis of civilian casualties reported in the news media, states that 24,865 civilians were killed and about 42,500 wounded.

The report goes on to list its findings specifically. We also know that there is another study which was published in October of 2004 in the Lancet, the British medical journal, according to the New York Times, that says that some of the estimates of Iraqi civilian deaths range as high as 100,000.

I have stood on this floor many times and bemoaned the loss of our American troops, but I think in the name of humanity we have to start thinking

about the impact that this war is having on the civilians in Iraq. Their lives are being destroyed. Their families are being wiped out.

House Joint Resolution 55 sets the stage for bringing our troops home and ending this tragedy in Iraq.

EFFECTIVELY FIGHTING TERRORISM

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, though the two parties may disagree on aspects of the war in Iraq, I believe that terrorism is not a partisan issue. Yet minority party Members choose to align themselves solely with political rhetoric and hollow accusations. Instead of joining efforts to enhance America's security, Democrats continue to bring sensationalistic banter to this floor.

Republicans are pushing legislation forward that will improve the effectiveness of and bring more accountability to U.S. foreign assistance around the world and bring democracy even further into the light. It is no secret that terrorist groups continue to recruit and train at a rapid pace. This legislation assists in cutting off the outlets and supplies of terrorist organizations and helps sever their operational channels. We are vigorously closing their doors.

The foreign relations authorization addresses the pressing issues of our day such as U.N. reform, human rights and nuclear proliferation. This legislation authorizes assistance to America's allies and contains measures that continue breaking down elements of repressive foreign governments. As terrorists seek to debase the vision of peace and tear down hope, America will steadfastly provide a beacon of promise and allegiance.

CAFTA

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

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I just heard a quote on the floor of the House of Representatives to send product to Central America or send troops. I have never heard anything more absurd or simplistic in my 9 years here in the House of Representatives. The people of these six countries oppose CAFTA. They say it is unfair. And it really is a corporate-inspired trade deal that hurts working people both in the United States and Central America.

Stop the hemorrhaging of American jobs. Protect American sovereignty. Put some backbone into both sides of the aisle on the independence of the legislative body. CAFTA is not only a spear into the heart of American independence but a heavy blow to the integrity of this House under Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution.

Do we have the backbone to stand for the common good, the basis for the

Judeo-Christian foundation of this Nation? Or do we just invoke these principles when convenient?

CAFTA

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

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, the United States is a leader in today's global economy. As countries around the world work and trade together at a rapidly growing pace, we must stay competitive to remain a contender. The Central American Free Trade Agreement will help us do just that.

My home State of Washington is the most trade dependent State in the country. One in three jobs in Washington depends on trade. We must embrace CAFTA and see it as an opportunity to stimulate our economy and be actively involved in a world market. The United States cannot afford to shrink from international trade and establish itself as an isolationist. The absence of our participation will only be seen as an opportunity by competing nations like China. Whether we are prepared to acknowledge it or not, we are in a global economy.

Mr. Speaker, this trade agreement builds America. In establishing an open exchange with the Central American countries, we build our foreign relations. By increasing circulation of goods, we build our economy. And in taking this step forward, we build on the future and the possibility that the entire Western hemisphere will one day be open to free trade. CAFTA looks to the future of our country. I urge my colleagues to support this agreement.

SERVICE IN IRAQ

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, over the last few days I had the privilege of visiting in the home of John Boccerri. John Boccerri is a young Ohio State representative. He is the husband of Stacy, the father of two young daughters and just 3 days ago brought to his home from the hospital his third child, born 8 pounds, 8 ounces, young Matthew Boccerri.

I was in that home as John gave that young infant into the arms of his young daughters for the very first time. John is a pilot in the Air Reserves flying out of the Youngstown Air Base. He flies the large C-130 transport planes.

On Thursday of this week, tomorrow morning, at 10 o'clock, John Boccerri leaves his wife, leaves his two daughters and his new infant son to go to Iraq for the fourth time. For the fourth time. John Boccerri represents the hundreds, yea, the thousands of young Americans who are serving this country with honor and distinction. It is sad that John Boccerri's children will pay for the cost of this war.

DR-CAFTA IMPLEMENTATION LEGISLATION

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

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement, also known as CAFTA. While CAFTA countries also enjoy duty-free access to U.S. markets for the majority of their products through U.S. trade preference programs, these countries often have high tariff and nontariff barriers for U.S. exports.

Under CAFTA, barriers to U.S. exports in these countries would be drastically reduced. More than 80 percent of U.S. consumer and industrial exports and over half of U.S. farm exports to Central America would become duty-free immediately with the agreement's enactment, and the rest would be phased out over time. CAFTA would also benefit the State of Georgia, which I represent, by providing new market access for our State's products.

CAFTA will also help the U.S. and CAFTA countries compete with China, a growing economic force in the world market. Seventy-one percent of apparel from CAFTA countries currently enters the United States using U.S. yarns and fabrics, while only one-tenth of 1 percent of apparel from China enters the United States using U.S. yarn or fabric.

Mr. Speaker, this body must pass CAFTA and give the United States the same access to the markets in South America that they have to ours.

IRAQ AND SOCIAL SECURITY

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my colleague just before me indicated the crisis that we have in America where a young man is sent off four times to Iraq and not able to see his family.

Well, maybe the young soldier that I buried the other day, Nathaniel Parker, who got liver disease in Iraq and died languishing in one of our military hospitals, or maybe the tragedy of 70 who died after a suicide explosion there are crises that we should be focusing on. Then, of course, our friends on the other side of the aisle want to insist that Americans change their basic infrastructure pension, that is, Social Security. We know that whatever plan they have is going to cut America's benefits. In fact, middle-class Americans will have their benefits cut 40 percent.

Social Security should not be privatized. It can be fixed. It can be extended. Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill did it in 1983.

Women most of all will be hurt. More than 24 million women receive Social