

(b) Use of the Committee Broadcast System shall be fair and nonpartisan, and in accordance with House Rule XI, clause 4(b), and all other applicable rules of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Government Reform. Members of the committee shall have prompt access to a copy of coverage by the Committee Broadcast System, to the extent that such coverage is maintained.

(c) Personnel providing coverage of an open meeting or hearing of the committee or a subcommittee by Internet broadcast, other than through the Committee Broadcast System, shall be currently accredited to the Radio and Television Correspondents' Galleries.

RULE 18. ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND AUTHORITIES OF CHAIRMAN

The chairman of the full committee shall:

(a) Make available to other committees the findings and recommendations resulting from the investigations of the committee or its subcommittees as required by House Rule X, clause 4(c)(2);

(b) Direct such review and studies on the impact or probable impact of tax policies affecting subjects within the committee's jurisdiction as required by House Rule X, clause 2(c);

(c) Submit to the Committee on the Budget views and estimates required by House Rule X, clause 4(f), and to file reports with the House as required by the Congressional Budget Act;

(d) Authorize and issue subpoenas as provided in House Rule XI, clause 2(m), in the conduct of any investigation or activity or series of investigations or activities within the jurisdiction of the committee;

(e) Prepare, after consultation with subcommittee chairmen and the minority, a budget for the committee, which shall include an adequate budget for the subcommittees to discharge their responsibilities;

(f) Make any necessary technical and conforming changes to legislation reported by the committee upon unanimous consent; and

(g) Designate a vice chairman from the majority party.

(h) The Chairman is directed to offer a motion under clause 1 of Rule XXII of the Rules of the House whenever the Chairman considers it appropriate.

RULE 19. SUBJECTS OF STAMPS

The committee has adopted the policy that the determination of the subject matter of commemorative stamps and new semi-postal issues is properly for consideration by the Postmaster General and that the committee will not give consideration to legislative proposals specifying the subject matter of commemorative stamps and new semi-postal issues. It is suggested that recommendations for the subject matter of stamps be submitted to the Postmaster General.

RULE 20. PANELS AND TASK FORCES

(a) The chairman of the committee is authorized to appoint panels or task forces to carry out the duties and functions of the committee.

(b) The chairman and ranking minority member of the committee may serve as ex-officio members of each panel or task force.

(c) The chairman of any panel or task force shall be appointed by the chairman of the committee. The ranking minority member shall select a ranking minority member for each panel or task force.

(d) The House and committee rules applicable to subcommittee meetings, hearings, recommendations and reports shall apply to the meetings, hearings, recommendations and reports of panels and task forces.

(e) No panel or task force so appointed shall continue in existence for more than six

months. A panel or task force so appointed may, upon the expiration of six months, be reappointed by the chairman.

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

(Mr. THOMPSON of California 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 gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas 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 Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS 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 gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE HONORABLE SHIRLEY CHISOLM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of the Third Congressional District of Florida, I am honored to share my thoughts with you about this amazing lady.

Upon her passing, let's pause to reflect upon her life and times, and how she has influenced our world today. During her hard fought rise to the halls of Congress and her permanent place in the history of our Nation; she was on time to fight for truth, justice, humanity, and the rights of the have-nots; she was where she needed to be to raise the consciousness of a nation, and shed light on the plight of others.

She led a battle that was personal, one that was rooted deep in the soul of the oppressed, the forgotten and the disenfranchised. Hers was a fight to make this Nation live up to its promise—liberty and equality for all. This great battle was more than just politics—it was a fight to garner the hopes of the few and infuse them with the dreams of the many. This was the struggle for the humanity of human kind; the reminder that the prize was always in view, yet denied by those who sought to keep their dreams squandered.

As a founding Member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Shirley Chisholm was a driving force behind the Caucus' mission to serve as the 'Conscience of the Congress,' and the

fight to include women, children, and people of color in the public policy debate that so deeply affects their own lives. It is from her example and spirit that we continue to fight for the ideals that she held so close.

Shirley Chisholm joins the ranks of countless other civil rights leaders to whom we owe our strength. Today, we bless and honor her by keeping her struggle, and our struggle, alive. I will miss her dearly, and both she and her family will always remain in my thoughts and prayers.

SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY

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 an honor to be before the House of Representatives to speak directly to our colleagues. I think it is important for us to remember that in this democracy of ours it is important that we share good information and accurate information on the issues that are being debated here in this Chamber and in the capital city, and I think it is also important for us to remember that many Americans counts on us to represent them in a way that is an honorable way, a way that will give them good information so when they stand in time of judgment on who their leadership will be here in Washington, D.C., that they can make a sound decision.

There have been a lot of things that have been going on in the last couple of weeks. We have heard reference by other Members on both sides of the aisle to the President's budget and also to the President's State of the Union, but we also have a great deal of responsibility to the American people to make sure that we represent this branch of the government, which is the legislative branch.

This is our 30-something Hour that has been designated by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), Democratic leader. This is now going on our third year of putting voice to many of the issues that are not only facing young people in America but also facing their parents and their grandparents. We try to make the direct connection between those that are trying to help themselves, that go to work every day, go to school every day, to those parents that know what it means to punch in and punch out every day to supply the necessary resources for their family to have a better opportunity than what they have had; all the way to the grandparents that, of course, their hope and prayer is to make sure that their grandchildren and their children are able to provide for future generations.

And so this brings us to Social Security, and in the 30-something Hour I am so glad to be here once again with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), whom I admire quite a bit, who serves with me on the Committee on Armed Services.

I just want to briefly say, as it relates to Social Security, when people think of Social Security they think of silver and blue hair. That is not necessarily what Social Security is all about. There are millions of Americans, I must add, that count on that Social Security promise that they were made in their years of working and providing for this great country of ours. And I must say that there are 48 million people that are receiving benefits, and they are not all over the age of 60, and they are not over the age of 55. They go all the way down into the younger years, and 17 percent of our young people are benefactors of survivor benefits of Social Security.

Also, when we look at it, there are 33 million retirees that are receiving Social Security, and we also have seniors that are looking at an average of \$955 from their Social Security benefits every month.

So when we talk about Social Security, we are talking about the real backbone, the real backbone of what we do and what we are all about here in the U.S. Congress in providing the leadership to make sure that it is solvent. We do know that it will be solvent for another 47 years, and we even know that after that period, 80 percent of the benefits that are being paid out now will still be able to be paid out. So the fact that there is a three-alarm fire on Social Security, that is not necessarily the case.

But to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), it is just such a pleasure. I was really looking forward to this. Last week when we left, I just could not wait until Tuesday night when we could get back in this Chamber again and share very good information with our colleagues and hopefully continue to stay in the fight to make sure that Social Security is here not only now but also for future generations.

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

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding to me, and I would like to say how much I enjoy this as well.

And those of us who ran for these positions and had to ask 700,000 American citizens to give us their blessing to come here and represent them, there is nothing better than having a vigorous, honest debate about an issue that faces the whole country and do it in a way that is not personal. I am sure the President in many ways thinks that his plan is the best plan, and we in many ways think it is not and in the long term it will end up hurting many of these 48 million people, the 48 million people that this program lifts out of poverty.

I would like to take this opportunity tonight here in Congress to talk a little bit about the situation that the country is in right now. I do not think we can have this Social Security debate in a vacuum, just saying here is

the little program and it has no effect on anything else that is going on around it. So we have some charts here that many of our colleagues have been using, and I think they are going to be very important to impress upon the American people exactly where we are fiscally in the United States of America. So I have this chart here that talks about the deficit that we are in, and then we will get into the plan later, and we will discuss the different approaches.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, what plan?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The blueprint.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I mean, we need to make sure the American people understand there is no plan. There is no plan. We said last week that I have not received a bound copy from the President's office or from the majority about a plan on Social Security. There is no plan. So we need to make sure that people understand. I mean, people can talk concepts and philosophy all day; but it is important that once we start talking about a plan, then we can have a true debate, especially if it is a plan from both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans.

And the last time we dealt with this, Mr. Speaker, before our time here in the Congress, Democrats were in control and worked with Ronald Reagan, God bless his soul, in coming up and saving Social Security. And it was a true crisis then. They had to act right then. They did not have an opportunity to play around and dance around a tree and do the old Potomac two-step with the American people. They made it happen and they made it solvent, and that is the reason why beneficiaries, young and old, are able to celebrate that here today. But right now I just want to make sure that people understand, because I had an opportunity to check the different reports that are around. We get the Congressional Daily a.m. and the p.m. and the Congressional Quarterly, and there are a lot of publications that are around.

□ 2015

I can tell you that with administration, this is not about the President; this is about a philosophy that is on the majority side to privatize Social Security. That is what it is all about.

It started back in 1978 with the President. In 2000 he said he was very adamant about wanting to privatize Social Security. Then in 2001 the President appointed a commission to develop a privatization plan for him. Then in December of 2001 the commission gave the President three options to privatize Social Security. In December 2001. Silence. Nothing.

The President, you would have thought he would run to the Hill with the bill. Still nothing. Still no plan produced. In 2004, running for reelection, the President again said he was adamant about private accounts and a solution for Social Security. Then days

after the 2004 election he said he has the "political capital" to come to the Hill and make it happen. Still no plan. I just think it is important for us to share this with folks.

Then the budget that was just submitted that we are all talking about, Democrats and Republicans, because there are a lot of good things in there, it is all about our principles and our values here in this Chamber; what we believe is important to the American people. Still no mention, still no plan, still no numbers on his privatization plan for Social Security.

There are now a number of press accounts saying there may very well be no plan for this year. So when we start with the President flying around burning all kinds of Federal jet fuel, taxpayers' money, talking about his philosophy, Social Security is such a deep issue from young to old that we cannot walk around and start talking about, "well, we think" and "we believe," because the Congress, I hope, will not go for it.

So I just want to make sure. I know the gentleman is leading up to that. In some instances they say, "Let's put the cookie on the bottom shelf so everyone can reach it and understand that there is no plan." So when folks start talking about Democrats, saying "Where is your plan," there is not a plan out there now.

Our plan is to make sure we pay for every dollar we spend or someone may borrow to make the deficit greater, to be able to pay it back. It is not a Federal emergency right now to protect Social Security.

So I think it is important. I think this chart is good. I apologize, but this is something I wanted to say.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, I appreciate the gentleman's passion on the issue, and I think he is absolutely right. There is not a plan.

Basically what we are talking about and what the President last hinted for sure is he wants private accounts. He has made that perfectly clear. He has made it clear that privatization, throughout his career, since the time he ran for Congress in the seventies, he has been advocating these kinds of plans, where the private accounts go. Somehow, through a lot of fuzzy machinations, he figures out a way to say that will somehow shore up the system.

What I want to do is basically paint the picture of where we are now, because you cannot say we are going to implement this "option two" of the commission's plan or the blueprint that the President has insinuated or indicated portions of. But we know he is for the private accounts, and many on the other side are for the private accounts as well. But we cannot just do it.

My point is this: Here is a graph of the annual deficit that we have in the United States of America as of 2004. Now, the debt is the overall deficits all

added up over time. We just raised the debt ceiling last year, I think it is over \$8 trillion. Or the majority did. They raised the debt ceiling to \$8 trillion. But here is what is basically happening.

Here in 1989, we had a deficit in 1989 of about \$153 billion for that year. It continued to slide. You remember President Bush-1 said "Read my lips, no new taxes," and then he ended up putting some taxes on and cut some spending and put some caps on some programs.

Then, in 1993, we still had in 1992 a \$290 billion annual deficit. All these numbers are adding up to create our national debt.

Then the Democratic House, Democratic Senate and President Clinton in 1993 passed the budget, and it was after that budget that we started to begin to reduce the deficit. Then we had all the economic growth, 22 million new jobs because of the balanced budget, low interest rates, and we all remember what it was like in the nineties, until we got to a \$236 billion surplus.

To make a long story short, since 2000–2001 with the decline, now here we are with over a \$400 billion deficit for 2004; red ink as far as the eye can see. So right now we have to borrow over \$400 billion from the Social Security Trust Fund, the Chinese and Japanese primarily, the same China that is cleaning our clock in manufacturing. So we are borrowing this money from the Chinese.

Now, the President's plan, and let me just show real quick, that is the deficit, this is the debt, which is all the deficits added up. In 2004, the Republican House, Senate, and President Bush raised the debt ceiling to \$8 trillion, and the projection by the Congressional Budget Office is by 2014 the debt will be \$13.6 trillion. That is a heck of a debt to have as a Nation, very unhealthy for our economy. So right now we are borrowing over \$400 billion.

The President's proposal, what little of it we have about the private accounts, the gentleman and I, should we choose to access one of these private accounts, would take a part of the money, a percentage of the money we put into Social Security, the 6.2 percent we put in, and we will divert that over into a side account, which leaves a gaping hole for our parents and grandparents in the Social Security system.

So we have to borrow, if we do the private accounts, which the President has said he wants, \$1.4 trillion, with a "t," \$1.4 trillion over the next 10 years. Because everyone has thrown their money in these side accounts, we have to plug that hole.

So we do not have, as evidenced from this chart here, we do not have the money, because we are already borrowing \$400 billion. If we were in surplus we would be having a different debate right now, but we are not. We are borrowing \$400 billion now. Then we

are saying over the next 10 years you have to borrow another \$1.4 trillion, and over the next 20 years we have to borrow \$5 trillion to pay for private accounts.

We cannot afford to do that. We cannot afford to borrow \$5 trillion. And if one thinks we are going to be able to run this scheme and our taxes are not going to go up, then you are missing the point. You are not being responsible to what the facts are.

What happens is as the government is going out and borrowing money in the international market from China, there is less money for the private sector to go and get, which will raise interest rates for average citizens who want to buy a house or a car.

That is kind of the background of where we are right now.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, this is just so very important to the American people, and also Members of Congress. I put a great deal of responsibility on Members of Congress.

I do not take great pleasure, even though I am honored to serve in this institution of the U.S. Congress, elected by my constituents, representing not only my district but the State of Florida, but we are U.S. Members of this great House.

I must say that we have to make sure that we frame this correctly, that we are in the minority. The Democrats are in the minority in the House and have been during the time of that great dive that we see on that chart that the gentleman just illustrated to the Members of the House.

We have a great deal of responsibility. We are serving in the House, in the legislative branch, that is overseeing, or watching, I should say, the largest deficit in the history of the Republic. Not once before was it like this. This is the largest deficit in the history of the Republic.

Can the gentleman put the chart back up on "backsliding into the deficit ditch?" I think this is important, because I think that nose-dive, you can see in the blue you have President Bush-1. You have the green, Bill Clinton and the Democratic House and other body that did what it took when the going was tough to say that we wanted to bring about surpluses.

I will tell you in this House, I believe there were only five or six Republicans that joined the Democratic majority in passing that budget that took us into a surplus. One of the main themes was making sure that we could provide and keep the Social Security Trust Fund in good shape. We made the tough decisions. Back when President Reagan and this House, Democratic House, I must add, at that time, did what it took to make sure that Social Security was there for those that are receiving checks now and benefits now from Social Security, even survivors, they did what they had to do.

Guess what? Two-thirds of the Democrats in this House voted in the affirm-

ative to make the right decision to make sure that the guarantee we told the American people we would provide, that we did. I am proud of those Members and individuals that made that vote.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, those of us in this business and those at home obviously interested in this kind of debate and what is going on in your community and country, looking back and having all the anger and personal issues that we have today here in Washington, D.C. and in our State capitals, politics has gotten so bitter and so personal, can you imagine President Reagan and Tip O'Neil strolling out saying, "We did it. We sucked it up for the American people and did what was best; and part of it was your idea and part was our idea; and part was conservative and part liberal. But we made it work for the American people, for the people who this program lifts out of poverty and the 48 million people that get it."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I am saying all of that to say we have to work together. You cannot come to the Hill with a plan and say "It is our plan; and, guess what, if you do not like it, so what?"

This is Social Security. The campaign is over. For folks who did not get the news flash, our colleagues, the campaign is over. The signs are down, the commercials are no longer on television, and it is important that we actually work towards what the American people would like for us to work towards: bipartisanship.

I will tell the gentleman what is also important in this debate: If there was a Democratic majority here in this House and a Democratic majority in the other body across the hall and there was a Democrat in the White House, guess what? Democrats could not pass a plan by themselves without Republican input. Because do you know something? When Mrs. Johnson goes to that mailbox counting on that Social Security check to be there, and when that 21-year-old young man or young woman that has a benefit from their father, who worked his entire life and was cheated on his job because the pension plan was raided and Social Security was the only thing there, his only financial legacy is that benefit to his child in Social Security. You cannot play around with that.

You cannot be a Democrat or Republican or an independent when it comes down to that. You have to be an American, and you have to come clean with the American people.

There is one other thing the gentleman mentioned that I think is very, very important and that we definitely need to highlight and illuminate as much as we can. What we tell the American people is important, and I will say to the Members that are watching us now, I am not going to go back to ancient-time double-digit years. I did not have to run over to the

Library of Congress to look this up. This was just within the last 12 months.

During the Medicare debate that took place right here on this floor, where the clock was held until 4 a.m. in the morning, arms were being twisted, Members were trying to make the right decision but were not allowed to, I must say here on this side of the aisle, Democrats stood firm, because the Medicare prescription drug plan was important to those that put it on the line for this country and allowed you and me to have an America that we can be part of and represent.

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During the Medicare debate, the other side, the majority side, the Republican side, said that the true costs of the Medicare prescription drug plan, what the administration said and the majority embraced, that the bill would only cost \$350 billion. I remember that just as clear as my daughter going to school for the first day. I can remember that number because it was a number that was highly suspect because there was just no way in the world that you can satisfy pharmaceutical companies and provide a benefit to the American people.

Now, that is what makes me very concerned about this Social Security plan or, I'm sorry, not plan, but concept, that folks are talking about around here on the majority side, saying that there is a 3-alarm fire.

We were originally told \$350 billion. Then it slowly moved up after someone got fired in one of the budget offices and said, well, I do not know. This fell behind the copier. We did not necessarily get this page. There is a page 3 to the 3-page document or 2-page documents that you received. It slowly moved up to \$400 billion. That is a lot of money, \$400 billion.

Then sure enough after the debate, we returned back here after the campaign and the signs went down, and then someone lo and behold said, you know, the true cost, the really true cost of the prescription drug plan that was put forth by the administration, it started off at \$350 billion. This is real money. This is not chump change. It started off at \$350 billion. The true cost is \$530 billion. It stops there. What are we going to hear in another couple months? \$700 billion?

Like my mother used to say, money does not grow on trees. The gentleman just mentioned China. I am not upset with China for making an investment in our country; but, you know something, I have a problem if they ask to cash in, because we will be in trouble. They are backed by U.S. bonds and what-have-you; but we are going to go through some real financial issues, and we are now.

So when we talk about Social Security, I know the reason why, I am sorry. I stopped at \$530 billion. I am sorry. The true cost, since this continues to go up, this is the fourth num-

ber that has now come in, is \$724 billion. It is continuing to inch up.

So what we are hearing now may well be the message that we are being told by the majority in this House and by the administration over on Pennsylvania Avenue right down the street from this Capitol building, what we want to hear, telling people over 55 they do not have anything to worry about. Do not worry. You can go to sleep. It is those folks 50 and below that may have some concerns as it relates to privatization accounts and cutting benefits.

But, you know something, this is America and we should not and we will not as far as we are Members here, and I stand firmly with our Democratic leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and not budging and saying we are not playing generational warfare. One thing about grandparents I can tell you, I have learned a lot about them and I have children and all, they will turn on you when it comes down to those kids. But they will not turn on the financial future of their grandchildren and children's retirement. They will not. And this administration and the majority is going to be up for a rude awakening when it comes to judgment time in 2006 if they continue to play around with the Social Security and the security of American families and their retirement.

So I do not think that we are wasting our time, not a bit, by coming to the floor on a 30-something Working Group to say not only are we speaking and giving some voice that people care about, and I know the gentleman has some e-mails that he will read later on. This is serious business.

One other thing. I flew back to my district. When you go back to your district and you see your constituents and they say, please do not allow the Congress or the administration to cut my benefits I worked for for my entire life. We have watched veterans go through it. We have watched the copayments go up for veterans. Guess what? At the VA they do not ask you your party affiliation. They just tell you that your copayment has gone up and that your wait time has gone up to see the ophthalmologist or whomever you may want to see at the VA.

But when you come down to 48 million Americans that what they were told and promised what would be at the end of the rainbow as it relates to their hard work over the years and that people who have died, have passed on, gone on to heaven, knowing that their children will receive their death benefits, we cannot break that deal. And we cannot sit idly by and watch them broken.

I want to commend here in this House and in the other body and those that are willing to leader up enough to tell their constituents, I am not on this philosophy that the administration, the majority side, is on in this House of saying that there is a 3-alarm fire. Now we have to privatize Social Security

that will bring \$940 billion-plus to Wall Street. I am with the American families.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with the gentleman more, and I think he spoke on behalf of a lot of us. I have two stacks of letters about this high over in my office from seniors. We have got 2,400 as of last week, and I have not got the update yet this week, but 2,400 letters from seniors in my district saying that they are against this proposal. They do not want their benefits cut, and one phone call that says, support the President and the President's private accounts.

But what has been amazing is on several of the letters of those 2,400 that have come in, the senior citizens will write a little note on there, and just typical of our grandparents' generation, they say, I am not worried about my benefits, but please fight to make sure that my grandkids will have Social Security when they get older.

Now, is that not typical of that generation, of the Greatest Generation who made sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice until this day to not worry about Social Security for them but worried about it for their grandchildren?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I will tell the gentleman, those are the kinds of values that we talk about as it relates to our communities and our neighborhoods and our families. That is what it is all about. Those are true American family values.

Like I said, I have kids and I watch grandma. They push me aside and say, I am on their side, and say, we are against you; and they spoil them and then they say, now you take them home. But as it relates to the financial viability of the bloodline of the family, grandparents and even parents, they do not say, I have mine, get yours, son. I am 56; you are 30. Good luck. They do not say, well, I have all my benefits, but I do not know about yours.

And guess what, I want to make sure that people understand because sometimes, yes, the campaign is over; but in our democracy, there will be other elections. And people need to take into account that sometimes, not from what you receive in the mail, not the phone call which you receive, not someone coming to tell you where you should stand on a particular candidate because he is our guy or our gal. It is what that individual has done or what that individual will do as an elected Member of this Congress as it relates to what is happening in my family economically.

I have to make sure that my daughter, if someone is receiving benefits now and they are called to glory, they have to make sure that their daughter is going to be able to receive their benefits; and Social Security is pretty much all they have. It is the guarantee. It is not the Enron plan. It is not some of these companies that are going belly up and then you see folks crying on television saying, I paid in

for years and years on that pension plan. So it is important that people understand.

I just want to say it kind of hits home here in the Congress today; two of our colleagues said that they went to school on the survivor benefits. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), who is the ranking member on the Select Committee on Homeland Security. They talked about growing up where they lived and if it was not for Social Security, they would not have been educated. And there are stories like that throughout America. We talked about a few of those last week, and we will continue to talk about those stories.

We are here to say if we want to make sure that Social Security is solvent beyond the 47 years, it is going to be able to provide 100 percent benefits that it is providing now, then let us have bipartisanship.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the ranking member, said this past week on one of the Sunday shows that Social Security screams of bipartisanship and that it demands bipartisan input, and that is what we have to have. It cannot be Democrats against Republicans or Republicans against Democrats because, guess what, the majority in this House right now as it stands and as it has been for double-digit years, 10 years or so, set the agenda, set what comes to the floor, talks about what legislation will move and what legislation will not move. It sets the agenda on what amendments will come to the floor. It sets who the committee chairpersons will be. It sets pretty much when we come to Washington and when we do not come to Washington. And if the majority said, there is no session this week of the House, then there will be no session of the House.

So I must make sure that we remind our colleagues of the power that they have, the power we have to make the right decision or the American people will make it for them. So those are true American values that the gentleman has outlined.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. Just to follow up, the number of people, Social Security beneficiaries, 15 million of the 48 million recipients, 30 percent receive disability or survivor benefits. We all grew up with kids in our schools that one of their parents got killed or one of their parents had cancer and passed away at a very early age. Those kids, our friends, received benefits from the Social Security system. This is a social insurance program. This is not the mega-millions lottery system, multistate lottery system. This is a social safety net, and you do not play games with this kind of system.

You do what you did and what we did in 1983: in a bipartisan fashion sit down like adults and fix the problem and not try to destroy the system. I mean, I am not the sharpest knife in the drawer,

but when I went through all these and we had a briefing today from people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The gentleman is sharper than he thinks.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I spoke with some people today who study this and understand this system, and after hearing all the facts and after studying this for the past few months of what the President's proposal is or what little of it that we know about, we need to make sure that we save this system and protect this system. That is really what we need to do.

What an honor it is for us to be joined here by a great friend, great athlete, great baseball player on the congressional Democratic baseball team, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER).

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. I consider myself an honorary member of the 30-something Group now that I have passed 40. I am here strictly as a visitor. But I was taken by some of the discussion that was going on here on the floor, and I want to make one philosophical point and one economic point to essentially affirm some of the things that the gentlemen were saying.

First of all, there is a great deal of discussion inherent in the President's debates that seeks to drive a wedge between two generations. The beauty of the Social Security program is it was a classic generational compact. One generation supports the other. And the President when he embarked on his campaign across the country kept saying, well, seniors, you do not need to worry about this. We are not touching your benefits. This is entirely about the next generations.

□ 2045

This is the first time in my memory, and we, the three of us, have not been around as long as some other Members of this august body, that you did not hear the President seeking to unify the country around an agenda. You heard him trying to divide the country to perpetuate an agenda, and I think that most Americans realize, whether they be younger or older, that at the end of the day the Social Security program has worked exactly as it was intended since the moment it was passed.

Sometimes you build up large surpluses and you spend them down as the next generation retires. Sometimes you have gifts, sometimes you have ebbs and flows, and there has been inherent in this debate a certain sense of it is about me now, rather than the idea that we are going to be there for the next generation the same way they were there for us.

If I could just make an economic point based on the charts that you have been showing, some people say and even some economists say, well, deficits really do not matter. There are a lot of people in this matter who are in the deficits-do-not-matter school. Well, that may have been true in the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s because, frank-

ly, there was no place else on Earth for someone to invest their money except in U.S. dollars. If you ran up a big deficit, it did not matter. It is not going to stop someone from coming in here and saying, well, if you are the Chinese, as my colleague so aptly put, if we are the Saudis or Egyptians, if we want to put our money someplace safe, we have to buy Treasury bills and invest in the economy, we have no other choice. What choice do we have? There is no other economy in the world that can sustain it.

Well, for the first time the Euro has now become a reserve currency of the world that is competing with us. So what does this mean to the average New Yorker, the average person who lives in Ohio or Florida?

What it means is that we, the Federal Government, are going to have to compete with Europe in terms of who is going to have the higher interest rate. What does that mean? That means that not only are T-bills going to be higher, your interest rates on our credit cards is going to be higher. Your interest on your bank loans is going to be higher. Your interest rate on your mortgage is going to be higher. If you think this only matters to you, you are 30 years from retiring or getting a Social Security check today, you are completely wrong.

If we keep going on this path, what we are going to be doing is essentially competing with ourselves for interest, and it is going to wind up costing average Americans hundreds and hundred of dollars each month on their dollars. If we have one good thing going for us in the last couple of years, it is low interest rates. If it were not for low interest rates driving demand for homes and cars, this economy would be in a worse rut than it has been in the last several years, and we are putting that at risk, and that is why deficits matter.

Deficits matter for another reason. Those of us in this House, and I think the three of us are in this crowd, who are true conservatives when it comes to money, we look at the idea of being a conservative person is to say, look, I derive certain debts, I rack up certain debts, whether I borrow money or I spend freely, it is my obligation to be responsible for those things. Anyone who sits in this Chamber, who campaigns as a fiscal conservative, who supports the continuation of that chart that is to your right is simply not a conservative. You cannot legitimately make that claim.

I believe that in the years that you refer to when Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan got together and did things, frankly sometimes did a half-a-loaf thing that neither side was completely happy about, the one thing they did have was this intellectual consistency about saying if we are going to spend it, we are going to pay for it; if we are going to augment the Department of Defense, we are going to do the best we can to pay for it.

We even reached a moment in this House when our deficits were at the paltry amount of \$250- or \$260 billion, where we said we are going to pass laws to restrict ourselves. The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act said you cannot spend a single dime unless you pay as you go. A lot of people said it was really bad because it hurt some programs more than others, but at least it was an acknowledgment in this House, an acknowledgment that the government has, at the end of the day, to be responsible for the deficit.

Today, the philosophy is entirely different. Today, it is not our problem, which brings us back to the original problem, that we have now started to say it is all about us, it is all about this moment in time, not thinking at all about the next generation, not thinking at all about the past generation. That is why deficits matter. That is why the President's plan matters to wherever you are on the demographic scale, this is an issue that matters to all Americans.

I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) because he has been out here many times talking about this. People have been sending e-mails and saying we get it. That is where fundamentally the President has to understand. This is not a matter of going out and doing a campaign swing like you mentioned. This is a matter that fundamentally people understand it is our obligation, both in the Social Security system and fundamentally to our children, that we do not continue exacerbating that problem.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman has an issue of concern, I just want to say that it is important that the American people understand that Social Security is not a program for the poor. Social Security is a program for everyone in America. It does not matter if you started off with a small business, a hammer and two nails, and you became the largest business in your community. If you are paying in your contributions to Social Security, you are going to receive a benefit from it.

What is important is that people understand that this is not, and when we say Social Security program, I want to make sure people understand, this is for everyone. This is also dealing with survivors, and so many of them are helping themselves through the contribution of their parents, and many of them are no longer with us. So this is the only real legacy that they have, financial legacy, to be able to move on their aspirations.

One thing that I must say that we are saying on this side of the aisle, and I think the majority needs to take some responsibility for this, too, you mentioned how can you say you are conservative, meanwhile you are seeing a nose-dive there at 450 with a "t" trillion, to 425 trillion, I mean down, nose-dive. How in the world can you say that you are a conservative? Now when we look at it, we know that.

Our colleagues, some that put it on the line literally for us to go up to the 236, it was a price to pay.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I am sorry to interrupt. I just want to make this point.

As we run these deficits, as the gentleman from New York just stated, it is not free. We are borrowing, money and we have got to pay interest on it. The interest payments and the money that we have got to pay on our debt becomes a greater portion of the budget that we have every year here, and that is less money that we have for Pell grants, that we have for investing in the health and education and general welfare of our society in order to lift more people up, to create taxpayers.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, it is national defense and it is antiterrorism programs. It is all of the things that all of us fight tooth and nail for here every year.

I would argue that interest on the national debt that we are racking up every year is an expenditure that we get no value for. It is essentially foreign aid is what it really is because so much of these payments are going overseas because so much of our debt is held by overseas entities, but we do not get anything for that.

You cannot go back to your district and say now we have 20 percent of the budget is going to just make these payments.

Let us not forget something. The Social Security program is not supposed to be a profit retirement plan. The President is absolutely right. If we invested since 1935 every dollar in the stock market, we would have a lot more money in the trust fund for sure. The problem is the line would not go like this. It would go like this.

The program was intended to be fundamentally an antipoverty program, a safety net program. It is a program that is there for everyone, and also, the idea you are getting out a lot more than when you put in. The President says that it is a sign that the program is broken. No. That is the way it was created because we assume that from generation to generation, just as your generation did for us, we would be creating a stronger economy with more coming into the Social Security program.

He said there are so many fewer children supporting the parents. Yeah, but we are making a lot more. Thank goodness that economic growth continues growing which is even more preposterous, that when the budget actuaries concluded we are going to start going broke in the year 2042, they based it on a presumption that for the first time we are going to have a 20-year-period where we start going in the other direction. Some optimistic projection.

I keep hearing about the President being the ultimate optimist. Well, not if you believe the Social Security actuaries.

So the idea that somehow we get some value by doing this, I defy my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that if you want to pay for homeland security, which I do, if you want to pay for national defense, which I do, and if you want to pay for farm subsidies, as many of you do, we do not actually have farms in Brooklyn, but then you cannot do any of those things if you are paying that much in interest.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the other point is, as my colleague so aptly put this, the up, down and the ebb and flow of the stock market. Some of the plans that are being offered from the other side say no matter what your savings account or your private account, where it is, if it is down at the bottom, you rode the wave and then you started losing money, like if you wanted to draw out your private account in 2001, in 2002 when your 401(k) was cut in half, some of our friends on the other side of the aisle are saying it is okay, there is a guaranteed minimum benefit for you, which sounds good.

So here is a guy who, instead of paying into the Social Security system, is paying into the private accounts, and then when the private account goes belly up, the government will come back in again for the second time and bail them out with a guaranteed benefit. There are so many risky propositions here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Once again, there is no plan. It is almost like saying I want to build a house but we do not have a blueprint, but we are going to build it and we are going to build it on philosophy and we are going to build it on what we may put out as guiding principles.

I do not know if you heard us a little earlier, but at the top of this hour we talked about the majority side are saying, well, you are saying that we need to do something about Social Security, but where is your plan? The same thing, where is their plan? I mean, the President came into this Chamber there at that podium and said there was a state of emergency, urgency, about dealing with Social Security.

This is not the Weiner-Ryan-Meek report saying that Social Security will be solvent for years. They made the tough decisions back when Reagan and Tip O'Neill was running this House, this House and even the leadership in the other body. So it is important that we come clean with the American people.

If we can, I know that we have some e-mails that some folks sent to us, but we have to make sure that we are asking that the American people and also that Members of Congress are even asking some of the tough questions of the administration.

I want to commend especially some of our colleagues on the other side that have said I am not comfortable with this guiding principle thing; I am not comfortable with the fact that people may lose benefits or will lose benefits under these private accounts.

□ 2100

And I do not believe that I can support it.

Now, I hope that their back is strong, because I can tell those on the majority side that that is the same debate we had with the Medicare vote. The gentleman from New York was here on the floor. He saw that debate. We all have constituents, and now we are up to 740-something billion dollars, starting from 350.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I tell my colleagues that the ultimate decider of this issue is not going to be the three of us. The ultimate decider will be the numbers of people sending e-mails to 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov and who contact their elected officials who say, before you go anywhere on this, you should all understand there are some issues that still unify a country that is 50–50, and Social Security is one of them.

The endearing beauty of the Social Security system is that across demographic lines, across political lines in all parts of this country, just about every American has a story within their family about how the Social Security has worked for them. Now, some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are famous for standing up in March against something and then meekly, no pun intended, in June, voting for it. We saw that with the Medicaid bill.

But at the end of the day, if we get a sufficient number of calls or e-mails to 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, we are going to have the ability to say, you know what, this is pure politics now. And if we let that voice go out there that this is not going to be touched, we will eventually win enough of them. And we will do this the old-fashioned way.

There will be a core on the other side of the aisle that says we are unprepared. Now, admittedly, their ancestors in the Republican Party did not cast a single vote for this in 1935 either, so I am not so sure that they have the ownership that we do of it. And we are proud this is a Democratic legacy program, but it is also one that has helped millions and millions and millions of Republican families in suburban areas and rural areas and everywhere else.

So the die has not been cast. This is ultimately going to be up to the people of the United States of America. And they are going to see, just like they got sold a pig in a poke with the Medicare bill, we are not going to let that happen with this as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. The more cynical side of me, and being a 30-something I should not be cynical just yet, but that side of me says that this whole thing may be a big side show. While we are having this debate here and we are all focused on Social Security, we have a budget coming up here

that is ugly. We have a budget that is coming up here that is going to slash food stamps and Medicaid and increase the Pell grant by \$100 a year for 5 years when tuition costs have doubled.

To those listening at home, I think we need to keep our eye on a couple of these issues here. Social Security is definitely one of them, but I think it is very important we understand there is this other game going on here with the budget and how dangerous that may be for the long-term consequences of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want my colleague from Ohio to get to those e-mails. I want to make sure we talk about if someone starts in a company with a hammer and two nails, and then works for that company, not own that company, but that paid into Social Security, and maybe became the foreman or forewoman or whatever it may be, the supervisor, that that individual is counting on one thing. They may not be able to count on the company pension plan, but they can count on Social Security being there for them. Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green Party, what have you, it is there. And that is what it is intended for.

If my colleague from Ohio could, so we can let some of the folks know that our e-mails, of course we cannot bring in the reams of paper and e-mails, and I am not being funny, I am just saying that I want to commend those that have e-mailed in and voiced their opinions.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, just to remind everyone of the e-mail real quick:

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us your thoughts on this.

We have a couple here: one from a Harvey Johnson from Baltimore, who says the “issue of privatization of Social Security hits home with my mom, the age of 81, recently widowed, now lives on a total income of \$1,000 a month from just Social Security. When you factor in the cost of much-needed medicine, bare essentials such as rent, utilities, and food, I still supplement her income nearly 50 percent just to make minimal ends meet. The thought of a drastic reduction in her benefit would force us to make even further tough decisions, including possibly the loss of some of her independence if she were to need to move again. Frankly, the more I hear of the President’s proposals, the more upset I get.”

That is from Harvey.

Earl watched on C-SPAN last week. He wanted us to make sure to mention that the “current system also provides disability and survivor benefits.”

Earl, we did talk about that. We took note of your e-mail here, and we did make sure we mentioned that here tonight. “If a younger worker becomes disabled for any reason, he or she would be guaranteed a disability benefit, including benefits to their dependents.”

That is the thing. We are borrowing the money from China, and we have to compete with this great rising power in the world. And if we do not have every person on the field playing for us, we are at a disadvantage. This is also an economic argument, not even about compassion. Although some of us may feel that way, this is an economic argument. If one of your parents dies prematurely and society does not come in and step in and try to help, that is one less person on our team.

One last one here, Mr. Speaker, from Karan who says she watched the ‘30-Something Dems’ last week and related to a lot of the topics: taxes, deficits, veterans, and said “after watching last week’s talk, I feel more at home with the Democrats and would love to know more about how to become involved.”

So we are getting people engaged in the process.

Mr. WEINER. And let me just reiterate, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps I have a less cynical perspective than my colleague does.

I think something good is coming out of this in that our generation is remembering again that there was a time in this country, in the early to mid-1930s, where we had a poverty rate among seniors that was approaching 40 percent; that we had just come through the tremors of the Great Depression that had left, frankly, our economy in a shambles, and there were certain things we did that made fundamental sense that have endured throughout time.

People sometimes do not understand what the Social Security is and what it is supposed to be. But if we can start to animate a discussion in this country among people of all generations about why this is important and why we should not be so sanguine about the idea that we are paying for a lot of this by borrowing out of Social Security today. If the President was so concerned about how solid the Social Security would be, one thing he could do is stop borrowing from that trust fund today.

So I think, frankly, having this discussion is going to turn out to be very salutary if we prevail. If we do not prevail, and if the President is successful in pulling hundreds of millions of dollars out of the Social Security system, we are quite literally, our generation, will be the one to live to regret it first. Every other generation since the 1930s, our parents and grandparents, have benefited from this program, and we are the ones that will wind up having to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, so much of what we do around here, unfortunately, is going to be left to others; my colleague’s young child is going to be left to clean up the mess being created by the 107th, 108th Congress; and it is very important that we keep doing this.

It is also important that people continue to send their e-mails to 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, because for every letter that we get,

there is evidence that there are 100 or 200 that we are not actually receiving.

One final point on this: for those of a generation who are not yet ready to get Social Security, this is an economic issue for you today, but it is also an economic issue for you tomorrow. Just the same way you would be smart in investing in your 401(k), we should be smart about legislating.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their time and for being allowed to address the American people.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we are moving swiftly into the Iraq Watch time, and many other Members will be down here shortly to talk about a couple of different issues, one would be the issue of Iraq that has been going on for some time in a working group here.

Congress has been talking about this issue over and over and trying to bring some awareness and some clarity to many of the people of this country who are very concerned with what is going on in Iraq. I would also like to, since we claimed the time here, I would also like to talk a little bit about the veterans and a little bit about what is going on here with the budget.

As we just talked about, and as the gentleman from New York articulated and the gentleman from Florida articulated as well, there is some real pressure being put on the budget here in the United States Congress, and I did mention it towards the end. One of the programs that is going to take a real beating here in the 2005 budget is going to be the issue of veterans.

Now, the President has made a formal request of this body for another \$80 billion to help fund the Iraq war, and this will take the grand total over \$300 billion that we will spend on the Iraq war. And that is just today. That is up to this point. This \$80 billion may get us through the year, but some analysts say it may not. We are going to be over \$300 billion in what we have spent in Iraq.

Now, there is nobody in this Chamber who will not support the troops, who need our support. Many of us have argued, and I was on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the last Congress, many of us argued vehemently that we need to fully fund veterans health care in the United States of America. If we are going to continue to say there are other priorities in the budget, or that a certain amount of people who make a certain amount of money, a lot of money, the Bill Gateses of the world, should somehow get a tax cut and that we should do it on the backs of the veterans of the United States of America, and tell them their copay is going to go from \$2 to \$7, \$7 to \$15; that their an-

nual fees are going to be increased up to \$250 if they are a category seven or eight veteran, then this is an issue that I think as much as Social Security attacks some of the fundamental concepts and promises of this country.

Is there anything more despicable than to go out and tell a veteran who has left a limb somewhere across the world that somehow he is not going to be able to get the kind of benefits he was promised? That is what is happening with the irresponsibility of the budgeteering that is going on in the United States Congress today.

We showed the deficits: \$450 billion. We are out borrowing money, paying interest on it, and eating up a bigger share of the budget in years to come. And we are not challenging the top 1 percent, or people making \$1 million a year or more to somehow pay their fair share, to say they do not have to on the backs of the veterans.

And no one can squirm out of this one. This is one you just cannot get away from. You can maybe talk private accounts will yield more interest and at least get people thinking, but how can you not ask people who benefit the most from the capitalistic system to pay and meet their obligation to the rest of society? Because if it were not for those people, if it were not for the veterans of the United States military, there would be no capitalistic system for anyone else to make money off of. That is the fundamental premise. So we need to make sure that we find the resources in the Congress to do it.

I would like to just take this opportunity to acknowledge the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who was the Republican chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, who was a great advocate for veterans in this country and who was removed from the chairmanship of the committee because he was too strong of an advocate because he wanted more resources put in.

I live in Ohio, and a lot of those folks have moved into the State of Florida, south Florida, Miami, and they have some sun and fun; but there are a lot of veterans who have stayed in my community and who are having a lot of difficulties accessing the system. So I think it is appropriate that we are here following this debate, the generation that gave us Social Security, the generation that freed Europe, the generation that saved southeast Asia in many ways, and who created a lot of the opportunities that we have here today and set us on this path of democracy and fiscal responsibility for years to come, social justice. I think we have an opportunity to honor those folks, especially as we have more people from our generation coming back.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK).

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio for his comments, and I am very excited about the fact that some Mem-

bers of the Congress are watching out for our veterans, making sure our veterans are receiving what they deserve.

We talk about silver and blue hair once again, but there are a number of veterans that were in the first Gulf War, in Korea, even some in Grenada, definitely in Vietnam and World War II, and other conflicts that we have been involved in over the years; and it is important they receive the care they need not only at our veterans hospitals but also because these veterans were told when they signed up and they went into harm's way on behalf of this country, on the philosophy of our leadership and this Congress, that we would provide those kind of benefits.

That is the reason why in the President's budget, as we heard in the last hour where we said how can we talk about Social Security and not talk about the budget, that it is important that we realize that this budget is deplorable as it relates to keeping our promise to our veterans and to our young veterans. We have a lot of young veterans out there that are trying to raise families and dealing with real issues. Some are on 50 percent benefits, some are on 100 percent benefits because they laid it down for this country, Democrats and Republicans.

□ 2115

I will tell you once again, when you see the land of milk and honey, when it comes down to the top 1 percent and what they get and the promise that is kept to them by this administration and by the majority side, it is really night and day. If you are in the top 1 percent, you are in good shape right now. You are receiving every tax cut that you could possibly get at this particular time, and I am pretty sure there are some Members of this body that would have some other great ideas for you. But what happens to that individual that works every day? What happens to that individual that puts it on the line every day?

We are talking about Iraq Watch, and this is the hour that usually our colleagues come to the floor to talk about Iraq. I just recently returned with a bipartisan group going to Iraq and Afghanistan to visit our troops and also to visit some of the civilians that are over there. I will tell you that news reports are not even covering half of what is happening there. Tomorrow we will have the opportunity on the Committee on Armed Services to hear from Secretary Rumsfeld. We will have an opportunity to hear the administration's vision as it relates to Iraq, and also to talk about this budget in the Department of Defense. But it is important that we have past statements and hopefully not to say that we want to have the Secretary responding to misstatements or anything of that nature, but we want to make sure that we are giving voice to those future veterans and we are giving voice to the troops that are over there in harm's way right now. There are individuals,