

We have discussed this many times, and some people believe this is a frivolous discussion. Why are the Democrats talking about not wanting tax cuts?

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We are talking about investment, and what we are suggesting is that these tax cuts are misplaced. They have nothing to do with increasing the minimum wage, which might be something we would want to consider. It has nothing to do with strengthening the middle class. And even as we looked at poverty in Hurricane Katrina, let me tell the Members there are middle-class working families that have been totally devastated. They are in our city. They had businesses. They had incomes. They had homes. Mr. Speaker, they do not have any of that now. And these tax cuts, taking away from giving them an opportunity to rebuild, SBA loans, fixing the infrastructure, which I have heard the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) speak of eloquently, this is going to be the choice being made by our good friends in the budget reconciliation.

They are willing to take tax cuts for the top 1 percent and prioritize that over health care, education, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, housing. But most importantly, the most vulnerable now in our Nation, not only the impoverished but almost 2 million people that are evacuated that are scattered across 44 States who may want to come home to the gulf region are going to need a little help from their friends in the Federal Government. Hard-working taxpayers now with this budget will not be able to finally support that this Federal Government can provide for them. And I hope that, as we look at this problem, we will be able to find some compassion for those who are in need.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SPRATT. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I believe the gentleman has some charts that he wanted to discuss about some of the choices that we are making.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, these charts were compiled by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL), and basically what he is trying to show here is that we have a robust program of rebuilding and restoration ongoing in Iraq to the extent they can maintain anything there in the midst of that insurgency.

For example, in terms of infrastructure, we have rehabilitated the Sweetwater Canal System, including repairs to the levees on the Tigris and Euphrates. On the other hand, we have cut \$336 million from the Army Corps of Engineers, including funding for the levees on the Mississippi. We have rebuilt the Iraqi republican railway line.

But in the United States there have been \$2.5 billion in cuts in Amtrak, and the high-speed rail funding program has been eliminated. Community development, 3,120 community action projects completed in Iraq; \$320 million cut from community services block grants in the United States.

\$470 million for the construction of housing and public buildings and civic centers for Iraqi citizens; in this country \$250 million has been cut from community development block grants; and the President's budget cuts for public housing, the capital fund, have been cut by 10 percent even though it is now already deficient to meet the needs of the program.

This chart shows the same thing. In Iraq, 110 primary health care centers built or renovated. In this country \$10 billion has been cut or is being proposed to being cut from Medicaid.

I could go down the list, but the example is stark. We are not saying this should not be done in Iraq. We have got to help get that country back on its feet, and the sooner we can get out, the better. But in the meantime, we need to stabilize the country, and this is part of it, part of the economic reconstruction. But it stands in stark contrast to what we are willing to do in this country for infrastructure that we all acknowledge we need and see we need in a case like New Orleans when the levees break.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SPRATT. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to say one sentence to that because what he just highlighted are two-pronged: one, we have to take care of all America, including those not so impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, all of the folks who are vulnerable no matter what their station in life; hurricanes Katrina and Rita survivors but also the Americans who are hard-working taxpayers. This budget that they are putting before us does not do any of those.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I made the point earlier that the cost of catastrophes like Katrina and Rita should be spread over the whole country, the whole population, but spread equitably. And it is not right to saddle that heavy burden on those least able to bear.

I thank our participants for their participation.

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REICHERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, 6 weeks ago all Americans saw the human face of poverty in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. President Bush vowed that after the botched Federal response to the hurricane that the Federal Gov-

ernment would do everything it could to help those displaced in the gulf and to finally address the issue of poverty. Six weeks later, the House Republican majority is already forgetting about America's most vulnerable. This week, Republicans had planned to cut Medicaid, higher education, food stamps, and possibly the earned income tax credit in order to achieve budget reconciliation.

We heard today that the budget reconciliation has been postponed. We are not going to vote on it tomorrow, and that is certainly good news. I think it is a strong indication that this budget plan was a bad plan for America and that it was, in fact, going to be used as a method of basically hurting the poor and might have had a direct impact on those hurricane victims.

But it does not mean that the Republican leadership is not going to try to bring it up again next week when we come back. And the problem is that it just is not fair, it really is not fair. It is un-American, in my opinion, to say that we are going to try to pass this budget reconciliation by making cuts in the very programs that impact the people who suffered during the hurricane.

The Republicans are claiming that their budget reconciliation bill is fiscally responsible and will cut the deficit. But, obviously, we could tell from the last Special Order that is simply not true. The budget actually raises the deficit, gives more tax breaks to the wealthiest, and makes matters worse, obviously, for the victims of Katrina.

Essentially, this is a way of trying to build in, if you will, the Republican tax breaks that primarily go to the wealthy, to the special interests, to corporate interests that the Republicans would try to pass further down the road this year. And it is amazing to me, Mr. Speaker, that it only took Republicans 6 weeks to forget the images of Hurricane Katrina. They are once again putting the priorities of the wealthiest few ahead of the working-class Americans. It is now clear that the Republicans learned absolutely nothing from Hurricane Katrina.

I could go on myself, but I have to say that my ideas and my concerns with this budget bill were very much set forth in a Washington Post article or op ed that appeared today by Harold Meyerson called "Gunning for the Poor." And I am not going to read the whole thing, Mr. Speaker, or put it in the RECORD, but I wanted to highlight some of the things that Harold Meyerson said because it basically says in probably better language what I just indicated and how I feel.

And Harold Meyerson said in this op ed today in the Washington Post: "Congress is back in session and it's gunning for the American poor."

"A revolt of House conservatives has persuaded that body's Republican leadership to offset the increased Federal spending going to rebuild the Hurricane Katrina-devastated gulf coast by

reductions in Medicaid, food stamps, and other programs for the indigent. If things go according to plan, this week the House will begin to cut \$50 billion from those efforts.

"The emerging Republican response to Katrina, apparently, is to comfort the drenched poor and afflict the dry.

"For a moment last week, it looked as though the Republicans were going to enact across-the-board spending cuts.

"That, however, would have meant less money for defense contractors and the highway industry and other contributors to congressional Republicans' campaigns. GOP committee chairmen made that point so forcefully that the idea was scrapped.

"The beauty of taking the cuts out of Medicaid and student loan programs, by happy contrast, is that it does not reduce the flow of funds to the Republican campaign committees by a single dime.

"Even before the right-wing House leadership capitulated to the even further right-wing House rank and file, the government's response to Katrina already appeared to be driven more by laissez-faire ideology than by need or common sense. The administration has opposed efforts by Senate Finance Committee Chairman CHARLES GRASSLEY to extend Medicaid coverage to those Katrina survivors who lost their jobs and health insurance in the flood. And by suspending the requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act that construction workers on federally funded reconstruction efforts be paid the prevailing wage, President Bush has ensured that much of that work will be done by illegal immigrants, as one New York Times report on the Mexican workers rebuilding Gulfport, Mississippi made abundantly clear."

The article goes on, Mr. Speaker; but the bottom line is, and this is what Meyerson says at the end: "The same Republican zealots who demand fiscal responsibility by cutting \$50 billion for the indigent sick are now also demanding a new \$70 billion in tax cuts, including the permanent repeal of the estate tax, that would chiefly benefit the rich."

So Meyerson basically explains, and I think it is abundantly clear, the Republicans are not trying to make these cuts in programs for the indigent that would essentially help the hurricane victims because they want to balance the budget. Because, no, the deficit is still going to be huge. They are basically doing it because they want to build into the budget the opportunity to come back with permanent tax cuts for the wealthy, for the corporate interests; and this is their way of cutting programs that essentially are crucial for the hurricane victims in order to accomplish that.

And the amazing thing to me, Mr. Speaker, is that we heard President Bush just a few days or a week or so after the hurricane struck say that the hurricane showed that there were a lot

of poor people, a lot of people that were unemployed, a lot of people that did not have basic necessities; and rather than trying to help them in some way by extending Medicaid benefits to them so that if they lost their health insurance, they will still have some health insurance, or rather than giving them an opportunity to have a job so that they can help rebuild New Orleans or the various towns along the gulf that were impacted by Hurricane Katrina, this administration and this Republican Congress are just cutting the legs out of any kind of help that those hurricane victims would receive and basically saying we do not care about them; all we care about is giving tax cuts to the very wealthy.

I think it is scandalous, frankly, and it is another reason why we need an independent investigation of what happened with Hurricane Katrina.

A number of my colleagues and I have been coming down here for the last few nights as well as before the congressional break that we had last week and have been saying, and so have the media been saying, that a bipartisan Katrina investigation is needed because the Washington Republicans, the ones who have set up their own committee or investigation on a partisan basis, are the same people who are responsible for the problems that we faced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In other words, the Bush administration botched what happened in the aftermath of the hurricane. And they continue to do things that are primarily for special interests, for the people who contribute to their campaign coffers, without worrying about the people, the victims, that are suffering in New Orleans and other cities along the gulf.

So why in the world would we let these Washington Republicans who control the White House, control the Senate, control the House investigate themselves? It makes no sense.

The only way that we are going to get a true analysis of what is really happening in the aftermath of Katrina, including what was discussed today in terms of the unwillingness of the Republicans to help the victims in the aftermath of the hurricane, is by having a bipartisan commission so that Democrats and Republicans are both involved in the investigation, both can look at what is happening and not have this fake Katrina inquiry that would just essentially be a whitewash, if you will, for what happened in the aftermath of the hurricane.

I notice that I am being joined now by some of my colleagues who have been here every night making this point; but we are particularly upset with the fact that, in addition to not having this bipartisan investigation, this bipartisan commission, we now face a situation where the Republicans want to bring up a budget plan that actually is going to cut the very programs that these hurricane victims need.

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I would like to point out the other night I read a part of an editorial in the New York Times which I think says it all about this fake Katrina inquiry, and I am not going to read the whole thing, but I just wanted to read the very beginning and the very end.

This was in the New York Times on September 26. It is called, "Faking the Katrina Inquiry," and it says: As the Nation reels from Rita's devastation along the Gulf Coast, any hope for a thorough investigation of government's gross mismanagement of Katrina is quietly ebbing away behind the political levees of Washington. The White House and the Republican-controlled Congress, resisting popular support for an independent, nonpartisan commission, remain determined to run self-serving, bogus investigations. There is no way to whitewash a hurricane. The government dominated by one party should be disqualified from investigating itself. Just as President Bush repeatedly fought the creation of the 9/11 Commission till public pressure forced him to yield, so should the public now demand that the administration and Congress get real about Katrina."

I feel even more strongly about this in the light of this budget reconciliation bill that we understand now has been postponed because the Republicans do not have the votes. Thank God they do not have the votes, and hopefully, they will never have the vote for this scandal.

I would yield now to my colleague the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) who has been here practically every night making this point.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) I am just so glad to be here with you tonight, and I know that the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) was here a little earlier, our good friend from South Carolina and the ranking member on the Committee on the Budget, to point out some of the variations you have been talking about now.

I can tell you also that I was concerned. I think it takes more than a press conference that the majority did today down in the basement of the Capitol here saying we are fiscal conservatives. All of the sudden, after all of this time, after all of this borrow and spend money, no one said a mumbling word. Now we have Americans that are displaced, Americans that are looking for assistance from its government, Americans that are still in shelters, and now we want to be fiscal conservatives. We want to all of the sudden say, oh, well, you know, the American people know the Republican majority here in the House, that we are fiscal conservatives.

Let me just say something. The budget does not reflect the highest deficit in the history of the republic or one of the highest. Definitely when it comes down to the war in Iraq, there is

no real accountability as it relates to corporate greed and corruption and cronyism of companies that have stolen the taxpayers' money under the lights, and they are still getting contracts from some of those very same companies that got contracts in Hurricane Katrina to make the taxpayer victims all over again.

Now folks over there want to get religion about being fiscal conservatives, saying we are going to find some, what, \$55 million or whatever the figure is, off the backs of poor people. So I think it is important that we talk about this.

I think that I just want to do this again. Maybe the folks over here on the other side forgot about this. Maybe they forgot about this community. This is the before picture of the Category 3 levee, and this is the after picture. Maybe they forgot about those Americans that lost their homes. All under this we are going to be fiscal conservative. Maybe they forgot about this lady here with her children, finally getting out from the water after 4 days right here in New Orleans. She is carrying her kids out when 30,000 people were trapped there. Maybe we forgot about that. Maybe we forgot about these folks here that had to improvise and find their way back to safety, and these kids stroking here on the refrigerator with a board, maybe they forgot about that. Maybe they forgot about this, too.

Let me just say that I want to make sure we do not get confused on the reason why we are having this debate in the first place. This is all about helping Americans and making sure that local government and the Federal Government is able to respond in a way that it is supposed to respond, appropriately, to taxpayers when this happens.

Now we are going to make the country pay even more of the 67 percent cut that took place under regular order under the last budget that the majority held the clock on once again, open a little bit longer, the Republicans on the majority side did, and now we are going to go back on top of the 69 percent, and the goal is to do an additional 50 percent cut, okay, 50 percent more going into cutting these programs like Medicaid and Medicare and free and reduced lunch for children.

What was so disturbing and I think the Members should be aware of, I watched this on C-SPAN. It was down in the basement. There were about six Members, the temporary majority leader and all of that stuff. They were down there talking, beating chests and all.

In closing my opening statement, I am so happy that there is a God, and I am also happy that there are some folks in this Congress that are willing to put the pressure on the majority side on this issue.

As you know, today we were supposed to do some voting on this, on the budget, and tomorrow we were supposed to do some voting. That vote has been

pulled now, and it is not going to happen. I do not think that it is not going to happen because the staff could not necessarily get the paperwork together. It is not going to happen because it was the wrong thing to do on the backs of the wrong people.

You do not go to a family saying we are here to help you, but first of all we are going to take back at least \$1,000 of the services that you had coming to you due to the fact that Federal-mandated law, as it relates to health care, we are going to take it back from you. Matter of fact, take that cookie out of the kid's mouth. Did he get that in the free and reduced lunch program? Take it back from him because we are going to cut that, too.

What they did that I think is important and I think the Members in their offices that are watching now needs to know, what they did, they said, well, we are definitely not going to deal with the billionaires. We are having this press conference to send a code to let them know that you are safe.

I want to make it clear we have a Republican majority here in the House, and it has been that way for 10 years. We have a Republican majority over in the Senate and definitely a Republican White House. So anyone that would come and say anything publicly on this floor about, oh, the Democrats are stopping us from governing in a compassionate way, that is not true.

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

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate that. That is the distinction that we need to make here. The Republican Party controls all the levels of government, the committees, the House, the Senate, the White House. What they say goes. We are an opposition party at this point, and they are the governing party. They are taking the country off the cliff is basically what is happening here.

The point I want to make to my friends in the 30-Something Group and to the Members who are watching and the American people is this. When this body was originally trying to figure out a way to pay for Katrina, all those pictures that you show, when they were originally trying to figure out a way to pay for this, you know what came up? Across-the-board cuts in all programs, 2 percent, in order to pay for this, across the board. Then, when the extreme right wing Republicans in the caucus came over and those corporate interests here in Washington, D.C., came over to the Hill and they started exerting their influence here, it changed because we cannot cut programs that the big-time lobbyists want. That would be wrong in Washington, D.C.

Notice what is being cut, notice. Look at the list: Medicaid, Head Start, college loans. There is not a program that is getting cut where the people can actually donate money to Congress. We cannot cut programs where

people have to donate and they make big profits. Is that not a coincidence? Of all the programs we have, not one program is going to be cut in which a special interest would be hurt. What a shame. What a sham. It is a joke that we are going to ask Medicaid recipients, Head Start, free and reduced lunch, college loans. Those people are going to take the brunt of the hit to pay for a natural disaster.

I heard a columnist today say we are going to take from the dry poor and give to the wet poor, and is that not something?

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Oklahoma.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, the last few nights I have been watching this 30-Something crowd up speaking at night, and it really inspired me to come down to the floor.

This is my first Special Order as a freshman Member of Congress. I hail from the great State of Oklahoma, and this is very, very important. I think the American people need to know about what is going on here in Washington, D.C. It is hurting my district. It is hurting all of us.

I want to talk about some of these programs that you are talking about that affect everyone from Broken Arrow and Idabel, if you are listening tonight; to Muskogee, Oklahoma; to Miami, Oklahoma; to Durant. Let us talk about the community health centers that the funding has been slashed.

The President's budget asked for a 64 percent reduction. We talk about Medicaid and the COPS program. We have talked about economic development in the rural part of America that is being cut. Even Start, which you talked about earlier tonight, is very, very important. Head Start funding, TRIO and Gear Up are so important.

Let me tell you, in my district we have a lot of young people and their families. No one's been to college, and these programs are vital for creating jobs in a district like mine. Because of some kind of offset for, as you said, a billionaire or someone else like that, people in my district are getting cut, people in Oklahoma.

I am one of the more conservative Members of our caucus. I come from a red State. I am the only Democrat in our delegation. The President carried my district with 59 percent of the vote, but I want to tell you, this resonates with all Americans, both Democrats and Republicans.

We are running up a huge national debt. We are paying interest payments, and it gets larger and larger every day. As we pay those interest payments, it squeezes out all those programs that are so vital to us, not to a Democrat or a Republican, but all Americans, especially in rural parts of the United States.

I want to tell my colleague from Ohio, my colleague from Florida and New Jersey, and now another Member

from Florida has joined us, I thank you for allowing me to be a part of this team tonight and to speak on these issues.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, let me just say that it is great to have you here, and I think it shows that it does not matter whether I am a red State, Florida's a red State, Oklahoma unfortunately is a red State. You are the only blue Stater here, but I think what the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. BOREN) brings here is that there is this idea that we are trying to promote the Democratic agenda. This is about America. This is not a partisan issue.

I mean, help us out here. The kid who is getting Head Start or the kid that wants to go to college or the parents that are trying to pay for the school or whatever it may be, this is not a red State-blue State issue. I think the 30 Something Group is all about talking about what is best for the United States of America, and that means making sure that those people in your district have an opportunity to go to college, that they have a healthy start.

I think we have talked about that, and that is not a partisan issue. This is about what is doing what is best for the country.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

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Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio. I feel a little odd over here. But, Mr. Speaker, if more of the people on this side of the chamber thought like me, then we would be improving things really significantly here. So I think maybe if I stand here long enough, maybe the philosophical brain waves will travel over here.

It is wonderful to have our colleague from Ohio join us in the 30-Something group. We have been trying to encourage our fellow 30-Something Members to join us down here to talk about the things that resonate universally across this country. The gentleman is absolutely right, both gentlemen are. It does not matter whether you are in New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Florida, Idaho, California, the things that we talk about on this floor during our hour are resonating and run deep in terms of their impact on Americans, whether you are from the right wing of the spectrum or the left wing of the spectrum.

Let us take the cost of college. Obviously, people in our generation, whether they are raising children that are about to go to college, or whether they, in the case of people who are maybe closer to the ages of the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. BOREN) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), who are closer to having been in college than perhaps the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and I are, the rising costs of college are just really getting out of control. The gentleman from

Florida (Mr. MEEK) and I just turned 39 a couple of weeks ago, so we are in our last year of eligibility here. So listen, I am a woman, and I am acknowledging that.

But there was an article in my paper today in the South Florida Sun Sentinel that talked about the cost of college having risen by one-third over the last 5 years. One-third. Parents have been preparing every year for yet another hit in their pocketbook. The average college costs today at a private college are \$21,000, and almost \$5,500 at a public university. It does not matter whether you are in a red State or a blue State, and I am going to claim Florida as a purple State. We are 50-50 right down the line when it comes to those elections, so I am not willing to cede that we are a red State just yet.

We cannot have our college students face the double-digit tuition increases that have been rained down upon them, coupled with the deep financial aid cuts that have been proposed. That is what is coming out of this Congress right now.

One of the things that we mentioned last night was that while we are very critical of the actions that are being proposed here by this Republican leadership, we do have our own set of plans, particularly in terms of how we would approach higher education and making college less expensive.

We would make college more affordable in several ways. Our proposal would guarantee a \$500 boost to the maximum Pell grant scholarship. We would give students the choice between either a fixed or a variable interest rate when they consolidate their student loans, and we would do so without raising costs for students. We would keep Congress's promise that was made in 2002 on the Republican watch, which still has not been fulfilled, to lower the interest rate cap on student loans at 6.8 percent. The Republican bill reverses that bipartisan agreement and raises student interest rate caps to 8.25 percent.

We absolutely have to do not just right by our students, but we have to at least do what we say we are going to do. You cannot just talk about lowering the cost and expanding access to higher education; you actually have to follow up with action on it. And this Republican Congress and their leadership has been dropping themselves into a full-scale reversal and literally closing off access to higher education to Americans across this country.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, that building block that we talk about, education, being ready for the work force is very, very important. Let us talk about going into the work force. This Republican Congress has talked about creating jobs, has talked about growing the economy and, at the same time, they are cutting programs that are very vital to creating jobs. Let me talk about them right now.

The small business 7(a) loan program is very important to my constituents.

These loans are the most basic and most used types of loans of SBA's business loan programs. Under this budget, for the second year in a row, the budget eliminates appropriations for small business 7(a) loans and proposes to run the program solely through fee increases, substantially raising the costs for small business and lenders.

We talk about these rural communities again. They get out of college like at Southeastern in Durant or they are at NSU in Kulaqua, they have that degree, they are going for that seed capital. They want to start a new business. We have always been the party of small business. We have always been the party of Main Street, going out and striking out on your own. This budget slashes those programs.

Another thing, SBA business information centers, joint ventures between the U.S. Small Business Administration and private partners, they provide the latest in high-tech hardware, software, and telecommunications to help start-up and expanding businesses. They also offer a wide array of counseling services. Under this budget, that program is eliminated.

One more. Micro loan program. This program provides very small loans to start-ups and targets mainly low-income entrepreneurs. In 2003, this vital program provided \$26.5 million in loans and an additional \$15 million in technical assistance. The micro loan program enables individuals to become self-sufficient while creating jobs and contributing to economic development in local communities.

Under this budget, every single dollar is eliminated. Think about that. We are talking about growing the economy, we are talking about creating jobs. Right now, we are creating inflation, because we have such high energy costs.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That one program was for low-income folks?

Mr. BOREN. Absolutely.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is almost hysterical, in a bad sense hysterical. We were in the Committee on Education and the Workforce today marking up the TANF bill. We offered an amendment to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. Shot down. We offered an amendment that we wanted to give more money for people who were going from welfare to work, we were going to step in and provide them with child care, more money for child care. We have a study that says you need about \$8 billion for these people to have adequate child care so they will actually get off the welfare rolls and get to work. That got shot down.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, we need to clarify who we are and they are.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate that. I thank the gentleman. I thank the gentleman. The Republicans on the committee who have a majority of the folks on the committee shot all of those democratic amendments down. The Democrats offered to have a living

wage. The Democrats offered to increase money for child care so that you can go out into the work force and contribute to the economy and pay taxes. Now, our friend from Oklahoma says, well, even the program where low-income people want to strike out on their own and they want to start their own business, that program is getting cut.

What do you propose these people do? Is there an answer on that side? They are talking about this long and distinguished record of helping people. How? What do you mean? The poverty rate is going up, wages are stagnant, and it is harder to get into school, and tuition has doubled.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, the gentleman from Ohio is absolutely correct. I want to go back to what he said before, because we are talking about all of these terrible things that the Republicans are doing and are proposing to do, and I am sure a lot of the people say, well, why would they do those awful things. I think it is important for us to go back to what the gentleman from Ohio said before, which is why is this happening?

I mean, obviously, it is not happening because they want to reduce the deficit, because my understanding is that this budget that they were going to bring up tomorrow, this budget resolution actually increases the deficit by more than \$100 billion, so it is not for deficit reduction. Any spending cuts, in my opinion, are being used primarily for 2 things. One is because they want to offset the tax cuts; again, these are tax cuts primarily for the wealthy, for the special interests that are coming down the road.

The other thing that I think we need to point out, and that is why I asked the previous Democrats from the previous Special Order to leave this chart up. Also what is happening here is that the Republicans want to continue to pay for these infrastructure and other improvements in Iraq. Now, I am not saying that it is bad to do all of this reconstruction work in Iraq. I mean, I strongly believe that it needs to be looked at, because a lot of times it is going to Halliburton and other companies that are skimming the money and not necessarily delivering the services. But I think it is very interesting to see that almost every one of the programs that were mentioned here tonight by each of my colleagues, well, to the extent it is being cut in the United States, it is being done in Iraq. I just do not think that is fair.

I want to just read this again briefly, because it is just amazing to me. Again, this comes from the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL), our democratic colleagues: health care, because the gentleman from Oklahoma mentioned the community health programs. Health care in America, \$10 billion in medicaid cuts through reconciliation, \$252 million in cuts for health care professionals, \$94 million in

cuts to community health care centers that the gentleman from Oklahoma mentioned. In Iraq, 110 primary health care centers built and renovated, 2,000 health care professionals trained, 3.2 million children vaccinated. We are spending the money in Iraq rather than here.

Education, the gentleman from Florida talked about education. The Republican budget cuts in the United States, \$9 billion in cuts to student loans through reconciliation, \$806 million in cuts to No Child Left Behind. In Iraq, 2,717 schools rehabilitated, 36,000 teachers and administrators trained. I am not going to go through the whole thing because it was gone through before and I do not want to repeat it.

But I will just never forget, within a couple of months after the invasion of Iraq, a couple of my Republican colleagues came down here one night on the Floor and they had just come back from Iraq and it was the first day of school and they had all of the books and the pencils and the papers that were being provided to the students in Iraq. I had just come back from New Jersey and was hearing complaints from the schools about how they did not have pencils and paper and supplies. There is nothing wrong with helping the people in Iraq, I am not trying to take away from them. But for them to say to us that we have to cut similar type programs for people who are really in need, including the hurricane victims, it is just not right. An the reason they are doing it is because they do not want to cut the programs for their special interest friends and, at the same time, I believe they are trying to build in money that they can use for these additional tax cuts that primarily benefit the wealthy.

I just want to also say, again, I am showing my age here because I know this is the 30-Something club, but I am going to digress for one minute. I am so pleased that the gentleman from Oklahoma joined us tonight. I followed his election last year and I was so happy that he won, because we certainly need Democrats in Oklahoma. I know you are in a long tradition of people that the rest of my colleagues probably do not even remember, and that is your father, who was the Senator; Brad Carson, your predecessor; Mike Synar. Oklahoma always had conservative populace, I guess I call them, who were conservative but, at the same time, understood the needs of the people. So I am very pleased that you are with us here tonight.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I want to add one more person to that list, and that was my grandfather, who served in this body from 1937 until 1947 and actually represented the southern portion of my district. So we share a bond that we both serve in the House. Dad was in the other chamber.

But I talked a little bit about programs that are traditionally Republican programs, like what you would

think of as economic development, creating jobs, these are really programs that I believe that Democrats support more than Republicans. Another one that Republicans try to talk about that they have the upper hand on is law enforcement programs. Let me just give a few statistics about law enforcement.

The COPS program, a very, very successful program. It stands for the Community-Oriented Policing Services program. It provides grants to help communities hire, train, and retain police officers and improve law enforcement technologies. Under this budget, it is slashed by \$477 million or 96 percent.

Another program which is very vital to my district is the firefighter grants program. It affects all of our communities I know that are here in this chamber tonight. This program provides local firefighters with everything from trucks and equipment to the ability to pay salaries for trained professional firefighters, despite the fact that police departments nationwide do not have the protective gear to safely secure a site after the detonation of a weapon of mass destruction, and fire departments have only enough radios for half of the firefighters on a shift.

□ 2000

Under the Republican budget it has slashed the fire fighter grant program by \$215 million or 30 percent.

We talk a lot about Homeland Security. I am on the Armed Services Committee in this body. We talk a lot about Homeland Security, we talk about being prepared for the next threat. Obviously with Katrina, that is a new threat that most of us probably did not even think about just a few months ago. How are we going to be prepared for the next disaster if we are cutting programs like these?

A budget here in Washington, when we craft a budget it is a statement of our priorities, and unfortunately the priorities of some Members in this Chamber have been for those who have, and have left those in areas like my district in eastern Oklahoma who do not have the funding to make sure that they can talk on these radios.

I can tell you a perfect example. Greg Walters, if you are listening tonight, he is a first responder in Sequoyah County, somebody I talk to every day, talks to me about his fire trucks. The Nicut Fire Department, they are having trouble getting funding for their trucks, they are having problems getting funding for their radios. If there is a fire or something that happens, and terrorist attacks can happen anywhere, they happened in my home State of Oklahoma. It is not just in the urban areas. We have got to be prepared. Again, we have got to refocus our priorities.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. The gentleman just mentioned that if we are going to make sure that we are ready for the next natural disaster, often when you talk about events like epic proportions like natural disasters,

you think of them in terms of their rarity. Since myself and Mr. MEEK are both from Florida, and in the next 2 days we will face what is no longer considered a rarity in our State in the name of Hurricane Wilma that has now reached the point in history that it is the strongest storm on record with the lowest barometric pressure ever to be recorded in the Atlantic Basin and is expected to make landfall in our home State, possibly crossing over either mine or Mr. MEEK's district over the weekend.

One of the things that we have been emphasizing over the last several days and weeks is that the confidence of the American people in their government has been badly shaken. The gentleman from Oklahoma mentioned that we are not sure how people are expected to be able to have that confidence restored and know that the next natural disaster, or man-made disaster for that matter, that their government is going to be prepared both in terms of getting them ready to deal with that disaster or in the aftermath of that disaster.

If you look at the results of Katrina and the aftermath of Katrina, certainly their confidence was not restored. If you look at the revelations that have come from the independent 9/11 Commission's Report, and now yet another report is about to come out from the independent 9/11 Commission that through their private educational foundation they are about to release a report that blasts the FBI for not implementing much of their recommendations.

When is this administration, this Republican administration and the leadership here going to listen to the priorities of the American people and make sure that, in terms of disaster preparedness, whether it is man-made or natural, that we not add insult to injury in the aftermath of those disasters by cutting services and badly needed health care and badly needed higher education and assistance for the very people that were victims? And when are they going to make sure that they have adequate preparation to deal with those, the aftermath of those disasters? Right now we have not seen anything other than the development of a partisan committee in this institution to supposedly investigate what happened. Well, if you cannot even know that the FBI and that the administration is going to respond to the report that was issued from the independent 9/11 Commission, then certainly we would have little to no confidence that anything is going to come from a partisan investigation like the one that is going on here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell my colleague from Oklahoma that he is supposed to do exactly what he is doing. We are doing exactly what we are supposed to be doing, and that is represent our constituents. That is why we are up here. We are not up here to be friends, buddies, and pals. We are here to make

sure that folks who woke up early one morning, whether they be Democrat, Republican, Independent, no party affiliation whatsoever, an individual that was in a nursing home could not make it, did not have an absentee ballot, they deserve our representation. And the reason why this bill did not come up and hopefully will not come up in the form that it is in now, and some folks ask what do Democrats do in the minority? What do you do because you do not have the ability, not we do not have the physical ability or the mental ability to do it, but by rule we cannot bring certain things to the floor. We cannot agenda bills here on the floor. There are a lot of things that we cannot do because we are in the minority. But what we can do is propose.

Now, this very bad budget amendment that is coming up that is going to cut the opportunity for families who want to work to be able to have child care and to be able to, like the gentleman from Ohio, provide for their families. And so I think it is important that we realize that this is not a partisan conversation. The only thing partisan about it is the fact that the majority, which is the Republican leadership here, will not do what they are supposed to do.

The last point. This whole issue on this we are going to cut, this exercise as it relates to looking at the budget has gone off the focus of helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Rita to we have got to prove to America that we can govern. That is what it has turned into. It has turned into that by saying, well, we can govern because we know how to cut. We know how to cut. Well, who are we cutting? We are cutting those that cannot fight back. You might as well just answer the question the way it really is. Let us talk, let us, like they say in some places, let us put the cookie on the bottom shelf so that we can all reach it and understand what is going on.

So I think it is important, need it be if someone has a bus pass in their hand, they carpool to work, they have to go out and do certain things in their car before they turn it over because they cannot afford to buy a new car. I have been there before, I put my hand up. Those that are running around here know that they can only put \$20 in their tanks and some of them have to shut their car off at certain times because they know they just cannot spend that money because they do not have it. These are individuals that we are standing for. These are the individuals that we are leading on their behalf.

So it is important that we put these things out there. It is important that we come to this floor, and not let Democrats in the House or America know what is going on, to let Americans know what is going on. But this stuff does not just happen. It happens because we want them engaged, we want Members engaged in representing their constituents.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, I will just give my colleagues an example in my district. We have a terrible problem with methamphetamine. It is happening everywhere, it is not just happening in rural areas, it is happening in urban areas. We have places in Le Flore County in Oklahoma where literally this is infiltrating not based on socioeconomics, the rich and the poor, it is affecting everyone. And one of the only tools that we have to fight this scourge of methamphetamine is the Byrne Grant Program. Under this budget, it was slashed. Once again, when we have the tools, we have the necessary tools, it is taken away.

And I can think of the district attorneys and the drug task forces in my district that I have met with, the first responders who say, damn, we desperately need it. We need it in places like Heavener. And we are saying to them, no, we cannot do it because we are going to spend it somewhere else. I just wanted to give that example.

Mr. PALLONE. I am so glad that the gentleman used that example and the other examples that he has been using. Tomorrow in the Energy and Commerce Committee we are going to have a hearing on the health and social costs associated with drug use, particularly methamphetamine use. And I just have the statistics because I am getting ready for the hearing. In 2000, researchers estimate the annual health and social costs associated with drug use, particularly methamphetamine use, was approximately \$116 billion, \$15 billion of which was attributed to health care costs.

A lot of the things that we talk about here, particularly health care, are actually preventative. And so the Republicans think that somehow they are saving money. They are not saving anything because they are going to drive people, as the gentleman says, he is talking about methamphetamine, they are going to create a situation where the problem is going to even get worse and it is going to cost us more in the long run because the people that are impacted are going to get sick.

I was thinking of the gentleman's dad again, and I do not want to keep bringing it up. But one of the things that the Republicans are talking about doing, this \$10 billion in Medicaid cuts through reconciliation, the gentleman from Oklahoma pointed out that we are not just talking about poor people and indigent people here, we are talking about working people. Maybe you call them the working poor or middle class, I do not know what the word is, lower middle class. The Medicaid cuts that the Republicans are talking about mostly impact senior citizens who go to nursing homes, because what they are proposing to do is to make it more difficult for the spouse who is left behind to keep their home or to keep their car. They want to make the guidelines so that they take the money from those very people in order for them to be able to continue to stay in a nursing home.

And I remember, I was thinking again about the gentleman's dad, because one of the things that he did was the so-called Boren Amendment. I do not even know if my colleague remembers that, but that was the one that said that the nursing homes had the ability to seek redress if the Federal Government was not providing enough funding for nursing home care, because what happened is that the quality of that care decreased and people became sicker, and so he wanted to have some enforcement mechanism to make sure that the quality of care in the nursing homes was still good. When the Republicans came in, they wanted to repeal that, of course, and they did repeal it ultimately.

So these cuts, they directly impact people, not just indigent people. I am not saying we should not be worried about the poor, we obviously do. But a lot of the people who may not necessarily be aware of the fact that they are going to be directly impacted, middle class people, senior citizens, they are going to be impacted by these health care cuts. Even the student loan programs. These are not just student loan programs for poor people, these are middle class kids that are struggling. These cuts impact the majority of Americans. I mean, that is a fact. And I appreciate the fact that all of you are bringing that out, because I think it is very important.

I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I think that is a tremendous point. The Democrats are offering up amendment after amendment on the floor, in committees. We have an agenda that we are trying to move forward here, and our agenda is pro taxpayer, and it is pro taxpayer because we make investments, just like you do in your home with your family. The best investment you can make with your kids long term: Education. It is going to save you money in the long run. That is what the Democrats want to do. We want to invest into health care and pay up front so that we do not have to pay more in the long run.

The Democrats are for preventative care with the community health centers, with clinics, so that people go to a clinic and get the antibiotics that they need or the basic care that they need, the preventive care that they need so they do not wander into an emergency room 2 weeks later with pneumonia and the taxpayer still has to pay for it. That is smart use of the taxpayer money. Investing in the student loans, I have said this a million times on this floor. We had a study in Ohio, University of Akron. For every dollar the State of Ohio invested into higher education, the State got \$2 back in tax money. That is the investment the Democrats want to make. We are playing offense. We have an agenda here. We are not here just to criticize, although we could spend a lot of time making the proper criticisms.

Providing health care for young kids. If you do not get these kids health care

at a young age on the Medicaid program, SCHIP, the programs that we want to fund, these kids are going to develop long-term diseases, illnesses that will cost us a lot more money. And not only that, if you have kids in the classroom and only half the kids have health care, they are going to get the kids that do have health care sick.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Do you know what else we are for? We are for honesty. We are for honesty in government. We are for ridding this institution of the culture of corruption that has consumed it in recent weeks and months.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Do not forget cronyism, please.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I was getting to cronyism, because there are a lot of Cs that are flying around this Chamber, including the first letter of the word Chamber. The gentleman from Oklahoma and I are freshmen, we just got here, we have been here 10 months. We have conversations on the floor all the time about how astonishing it is that this institution has a pall cast over it, that there is a shadow cast over this place by the culture of corruption, the cronyism, the ethical challenges that some of our Members face, the cronyism in the administration, the appointments of people who are not qualified for the job that they were hired to do.

□ 2015

It is time to return this government back to the honest people, back to the people who are in it for right reasons, back to the people who went into public service to make the world a better place, not to line their supporters' pockets, with all due respect. That is literally what I have watched this place become both as an outsider and now as someone who has become a Member of this body.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let us reiterate that point right before we go. We have about 5 minutes left.

Every cut that is being made to fund the Katrina relief is being made to a group of people who do not donate to the Republican majority. They are Medicaid recipients. They are food stamp recipients, and they are college students and middle-class parents who do not have a big lobby group here.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I just want a point of clarification. The folks that are going to suffer under these cuts, they do not make political contributions. Their only contribution is their vote to send a Member of Congress up here. I do not know when I go to these health care centers and they say, well, we had to cut 10 employees, we cannot even meet the people from the community that are coming in and need our help because the budget has been cut.

It is the evolution of taxation. We make the cuts up here and then the States, they return the favor to the local folks, and they cannot do what they are supposed to do. The folks that are being cut and dealt with and man-

handled by the majority on this, they do not make contributions to anyone. They cannot afford to. These are the people that are punching in and punching out every day.

I think it is important that everyone understand the proposal that the majority is talking about now will do nothing but weaken the country. That is the bottom line. That is what it does. I want to make that point of clarification because even when I check my campaign reports, there are not a lot of Medicaid recipients there saying, we are writing a fat check to the Congressman. They cannot write \$10 to the Congressman because they are too busy trying to pay for gas and the heating oil.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, actually, something that we are not talking about also, we are seeing all of these cuts, but at the same time there is a State tax increase there because you have cuts at the Federal level and guess who has got to bear the brunt?

I served in the State legislature in Oklahoma before I came to Congress. And we had all these things called unfunded mandates that the other side talked a lot about, these unfunded mandates. Guess who is sending these unfunded mandates right now? It is the other side. They are sending them back to State legislatures like my home State of Oklahoma. And they are not only going to the States. They are going to the counties, they are going to the municipalities, and it is going to be a tax increase for the American people.

Mr. PALLONE. The gentleman mentioned before Medicaid. Medicaid is a matching program, 50 percent Federal, 50 percent State. So if the States do not get the 50 percent from the Federal Government, they have to make it up themselves or drop the people completely.

I know we are almost done so I would like to yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) because he is going to give us the 30-Something information.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Before I give the e-mail address, the cuts at the Federal level, it goes down to the States. The State has to make a decision to raise taxes; and then it goes from the State, the State is pushing it down to the counties, as was said; and many of us represent districts, the local communities which are some of the poorest in the country. So those people are choosing between raising their own taxes that they do not have, the person who does not have \$10 because of the energy costs and everything else, versus funding for their local school because No Child Left Behind is not paid for or hiring more cops because the COPS grant has been cut. And that is the end line.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest the Web site.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Our Web site is 30somethingdemocrats@mail.house.gov. We have been getting a ton of e-mails. Keep sending them. We love to get them.

I appreciate the strong cast we have here and maybe tomorrow or next week

we will be able to fill the whole Chamber up. Let us keep rolling.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank everybody for joining us tonight for a very important Special Order.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agreed to the amendments of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the text of the bill (H.R. 3971) "An Act to provide assistance to individuals and States affected by Hurricane Katrina."

ABLE DANGER FAILURE

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

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk to our colleagues and through our colleagues to the American people about an issue that troubles me greatly.

I have been in this institution 19 years, and during those 19 years I have been on the Committee on Armed Services. Currently, I am the vice chairman of that committee and chairman of the subcommittee that oversees the purchase of our weapons systems. In the past I have chaired the research subcommittee. I have chaired the readiness subcommittee, and I have spent every available hour of my time working to make sure that our military troops were properly protected and have the proper equipment and training.

I am a strong supporter of our military. Whether it was in the last 2 years of the Reagan administration, the four years of the Bush administration, the 8 years of the Clinton administration, or the current administration of President George W. Bush, I have been a strong supporter of our military. I am a strong supporter of President Bush. I campaigned for him. I am a strong supporter of Secretary Rumsfeld. I say all of that, Mr. Speaker, because tonight I rise to express my absolute outrage and disgust with what is happening in our defense intelligence agencies.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1999 when I was Chair of the defense research subcommittee, the Army was doing cutting-edge work on a new type of technology to allow us to understand and predict emerging transnational terrorist threats. That technology was being done at several locations, but was being led by our Special Forces Command. The work that they were doing was unprecedented. And because of what I saw there, I supported the development of a national capability of a collaborative center that the CIA would just not accept.

In fact, in November 4 of 1999, 2 years before 9/11, in a meeting in my office with the Deputy Secretary of Defense,

Deputy Director of the CIA, Deputy Director of the FBI, we presented a nine-page proposal to create a national collaborative center. When we finished the brief, the CIA said we did not need that capability, and so before 9/11 we did not have it.

When President Bush came in after a year of research, he announced the formation of the Terrorism Threat Integration Center, exactly what I had proposed in 1999. Today it is known as the NCTC, the National Counterterrorism Center. But, Mr. Speaker, what troubles me is not the fact that we did not take those steps.

What troubles me is that I now have learned in the last 4 months that one of the tasks that was being done in 1999 and 2000 was a top-secret program organized at the request of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, carried out by the general in charge of our Special Forces Command, a very elite unit focusing on information regarding al Qaeda. It was a military language effort to allow us to identify the key cells of al Qaeda around the world and to give the military the capability to plan actions against those cells so they could not attack us as they did in 1993 at the Trade Center, at the Khobar Towers, the U.S.S. *Cole* attack, and the African embassy bombings.

What I did not know, Mr. Speaker, up until June of this year, was that that secret program called Able Danger actually identified the Brooklyn cell of al Qaeda in January and February of 2000, over 1 year before 9/11 every happened. In addition, I learned that not only did we identify the Brooklyn cell of al Qaeda, but we identified Mohamed Atta as one of the members of that Brooklyn cell along with three other terrorists who were the leadership of the 9/11 attack.

I have also learned, Mr. Speaker, that in September of 2000, again, over 1 year before 9/11, that Able Danger team attempted on three separate occasions to provide information to the FBI about the Brooklyn cell of al Qaeda, and on three separate occasions they were denied by lawyers in the previous administration to transfer that information.

Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday on "Meet the Press," Louis Freeh, FBI Director at the time, was interviewed by Tim Russert. The first question to Louis Freeh was in regard to the FBI's ability to ferret out the terrorists. Louis Freeh's response, which can be obtained by anyone in this country as a part of the official record, was, Well, Tim, we are now finding out that a top-secret program of the military called Able Danger actually identified the Brooklyn cell of al Qaeda and Mohamed Atta over a year before 9/11.

And what Louis Freeh said, Mr. Speaker, is that that kind of actionable data could have allowed us to prevent the hijackings that occurred on September 11.

So now we know, Mr. Speaker, that military intelligence officers working

in a program authorized by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the general in charge of Special Forces Command, identified Mohammed Atta and three terrorists a year before 9/11, tried to transfer that information to the FBI were denied; and the FBI Director has now said publicly if he would have had that information, the FBI could have used it to perhaps prevent the hijackings that struck the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the plane that landed in Pennsylvania and perhaps saved 3,000 lives and changed the course of world history.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight because we have been trying to get the story out about Able Danger and what really happened. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have to rise tonight to tell you that as bad as this story is, and as bad as it is that the data was not transferred to the FBI, and as bad as it is that the 9/11 Commission totally ignored this entire story and referred to it as historically insignificant even though it was authorized by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, even though Louis Freeh has now said it could have provided information to prevent the attack against us, the 9/11 Commission ignored it. Not because the commissioners ignored it, but because someone at the staff level on the 9/11 Commission staff decided for whatever reason that they did not want to pursue the Able Danger story.

Mr. Speaker, in August and September I met with the military officials involved with Able Danger and one by one they told their story, until, Mr. Speaker, leaders in the Defense Intelligence Agency, including the deputy director, decided they do not want the story told. I think because they perhaps are fearful of being embarrassed and humiliated.

So what direction had they taken, Mr. Speaker?

They have gagged the military officers. They have prevented them from talking to any Member of Congress. They have prevented them from talking to the media. And the Defense Intelligence Agency has begun a process to destroy the career and the life of Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Shaffer.

Now, it might be easy for us to ignore this, Mr. Speaker. We all have busy careers and worry about reelections every 2 years and worry about our own families and our jobs. But I cannot do that in this case and neither can this body, and neither can the other body. You see, Lieutenant Colonel Shaffer took an oath to defend our Constitution. He took the words "duty, honor, country" seriously and devoted 23 years of his life in four deployed intelligence operations of our military to protect America.

During the time he served our country, he has received the Bronze Star, an award that does not come easily, for showing acts of courage, leadership, and bravery in the course of his activities.