

We can find the reforms, but we must start this process of reconciliation, which, again, when we look at \$62 billion of savings we are trying to find in a 5-year \$13.9 trillion budget, that is a half a cent. That is one half of one penny, Mr. Speaker, that we are trying to find so that our children do not face massive tax increases as far as the eye can see, guaranteeing to lower their standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, this really comes down to two visions for America: one helping empower people, helping them realize their American Dream, about them going out, starting new jobs. It is really about a vision of less government and more freedom. Yet our friends on the other side on the aisle who will not work with us on reconciliation, who will not work with us to root out this waste and this fraud and abuse, who only want to continue with more spending and more spending and more spending, they believe nothing good happens in America unless it comes from the Federal Government.

Well, a lot of good things come from the American family. A lot of good things come from the free enterprise system. That is what we need to strengthen. In the days to come, Mr. Speaker, that is what this debate is all about, those who want to restrain the growth of the Federal budget so the family budget can expand and those who only want to grow government and impose massive tax increases on our children and grandchildren as far as the eye can see.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that when the American people will look at this, ultimately they will chose less government and more freedom.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for half the remaining time until midnight.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House again. Unfortunately, we are missing a couple of our standard-bearers who are usually here, our two Members from Florida, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), who are down dealing with the hurricane and the storm down in Florida. So we want to send out to them our thoughts and our prayers. We are thinking about them and their constituents and all the citizens of Florida at this time. And we are glad they are down there where they should be, with their constituents.

I would also like to say hello briefly, Mr. Speaker, not only to those citizens of Florida but some friends of mine who are paying attention to what is happening here tonight and good friends of mine who are back in Ohio now, Bill and Molly Gales, who are watching us, paying attention, trying

to understand some of the issues of the day, and I would like to give a shout out, Mr. Speaker.

But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, we spent the last hour listening to, quite frankly, a lot of rhetoric, a lot of empty rhetoric. And normally the 30-something Group comes out and we talk about and criticize and critique the performance of the Republican majority. And I want the American people to understand this: the Democrats do not have any power in this Chamber.

The Republican Party just spent the last hour blaming the Democrats. Like we had any lever of government to pull. The Republican Party controls the House by a large margin. They control the Senate. And the Republican Party controls the White House. They control every legislative and executive branch of government in the United States of America right now, Federal Government. So to look over here like we are the ones running these huge budget deficits is an absolute joke.

I would like to say, my friends on the other side who were talking about saving money and controlling the deficits that are projected as far as the eye can see, \$500 billion, I would like to say to our friends, Mr. Speaker, go to www.Thomas.gov and you can get the votes for two particular votes that I think the American people and Members of this Chamber would be interested in. Go check out H.R. 1, this is www.Thomas.gov, H.R. 1 in the 108th Congress. That is the prescription drug bill. That is a bill that spent 700-plus billion dollars on the Medicare prescription drug program and did absolutely nothing to control the costs of drugs by allowing for reimportation from Canada that would drive the costs down, or allow for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with the drug companies on behalf of the Medicare recipients. Both of those provisions were Democratic provisions that went to drive down the costs of the prescription drug bill because we would be able to control the costs.

Now, my friends on the other side who have spent the last hour being so critical, I find their names on the "aye" column. There were only 25 Republicans who voted against the prescription drug bill. So the Republicans passed a prescription drug bill full of pork that did not control costs.

Before I yield to the gentleman, let me first give him a formal 30-something welcome. Do not let the gray hair fool you. This guy is 39½. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Ohio. Before I begin to comment, let me say that over the past several months I have had a chance to observe the gentleman and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ). They have done an extraordinary job in reviewing what is happening in America.

It is an honor to join the 30-Something Group. I think in terms of honesty, I would have to disclose that I am a bit over 30. In fact, if you allow me, I am two members of the 30-Something Group because in one body you get 30 times two and maybe a little more.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are going to have to implement the same rule that we had to implement when the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) came. The gentleman is going to have to pay dues twice to the 30-Something Group.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I see. I know the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE). We share the same alma mater, Middlebury College in Vermont. I know that I graduated a decade or so before the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE).

Mr. PALLONE. Is the gentleman sure about that?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think so.

Mr. PALLONE. The gentleman looks good.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Because we are here to be honest, because in the previous hour I think what we heard tonight from our friends on the other side an attempt at humor. I do not think that they were being dishonest. I think that they were just demonstrating a great sense of humor because I heard the term "fiscal responsibility" as I was watching their conversation, and I really laughed out loud.

I do not know if the gentleman from New Jersey saw it like I did, but if the Republicans in this House and in the other branch and the White House represent fiscal responsibility, we are in serious trouble. Because I remember when the gentleman and I were here during the Clinton administration when President Clinton left. My memory is, and the gentleman can help me because I am a little older, there was a surplus in excess of \$5 trillion. And maybe the gentleman can tell us, is there still a surplus after the Republicans have run this government?

What we have today is a single-party state, and what has happened? It certainly is not, in my judgment, and I think we probably share this conclusion, it does not reflect fiscal responsibility. What it does reflect is an appetite to borrow money and then to spend it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely right. The amazing thing to me when I was listening to the Republicans in the last hour is when they were trying to make the analogy to their households and talking about their kids. And one of the Republican Members talked about how he went down to the candy store and you could only spend what was in your pocket, and that is what we want to do here. And I was saying, these guys on the Republican side of the aisle have been building up deficits ever since President Bush came into office.

How do they have the nerve to even talk about making the analogy with their households and going to the

candy store when from the day that they arrived they have been increasing the deficit?

Mr. DELAHUNT. With all due respect to my friend from New Jersey, I do not think that he realizes what they meant. They really meant that they would send their kid down to the candy store with a credit card because that is how they have run this country, on a credit card. It is borrow and borrow and borrow and borrow and you know what? Sooner or later that credit card gets maxed out. And the next thing if you are a family or if you are an individual, you are down at the bankruptcy court. That is why I say when I heard the term or the sentence that "we are the party of fiscal responsibility," then I knew they were joking. I really did. And I started to laugh. That was a great punchline.

Mr. PALLONE. I know the gentleman says he is older than me and I question that. I know I have been here longer than he. I remember when I first came down in 1988, there were a group of Republicans who would come down and do Special Orders every night, and they had the pages come out with this digital clock that really was the length of this dais here, and every night they would talk about the deficit and how they wanted to cut the deficit and the deficit was climbing too high.

That is just all completely out of the window. All they have done now is increase the deficit.

I have statistics here that this budget resolution which they were going to vote on last week and now they so far cannot get the votes for it, and hopefully they will never get the votes for it that they were talking about, will increase the deficit by more than \$100 billion over 5 years. By contrast, the House Democratic budget achieved balance in 2012.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is just another example of a great sense of humor on the part of our colleagues on the other side on the aisle. They gave us and the American people who were watching this evening a real good belly laugh. Fiscal responsibility? Please.

Mr. PALLONE. I wanted to respond to one thing the gentleman said because he took us back to the Clinton administration and the last 2 or 3 years when we had a surplus. Not only did we have a surplus because we had a balanced budget but the economy was booming. Jobs were being created left and right. I do not care if you were rich or you were poor, things were getting better. But President Bush comes in and he is elected and he says, the answer to the economy is we are going to cut taxes. And the taxes were cut mostly for wealthy people and corporate interests and special interests that were helping the Republicans with their campaign finance. And that was supposed to be the answer to the economy.

Well, I will say, I have this briefing paper from the Economic Policy Institute, which is a bipartisan group. This

is not a Democratic organization. And they are talking about the boom that was not. The economy has little to show for the \$860 billion in tax cuts under President Bush. As the gentleman said, we went from a surplus of something like 2 or \$300 billion. Now just the opposite, a deficit that is two or three times that.

And they come to the conclusion in this report, I just want to read this one section, it says: "Almost every broad measure of economic activity, gross domestic product, jobs, personal income, and business investment among others, has fared worse over the last 4 years than in the past cycles. Proponents of this series of major tax cuts since 2001 have projected that gauges such as these would reflect improvements after enactment."

In fact, the opposite has occurred. Not only have we created a huge deficit under the Bush Republican administration, but all the indicators of economic activity have gone down. So where this Republican philosophy has just created a dynamic that has really ruined the economy, it is not completely ruined, we are getting along, but by every economic indicator things were better in the last few years of the Clinton administration.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I agree with the gentleman 100 percent. The study that the gentleman just referenced, the Economic Policy Institute, the 30-Something Group is all about third-party validators. This is not the Meek or Ryan or Delahunt or Pallone Institute. This is the Economic Policy Group, a nonpartisan economic study group saying that the tax cuts were bogus.

A couple of our friends on the other side said, well, the projected budget is going to be \$100 billion or \$80 billion less than what they thought it was going to be because the tax cuts are actually working.

□ 2230

What they fail to tell you is that a loophole has been closed. It sunsetted out last year. So there was a tax put on a small business, people, that raised money to the tune of \$80 billion. Do not come in and mislead the American people. It is not the tax cuts that are working. The tax cuts are not working.

Go ask the workers at Delphi if the tax cuts are working. Go ask the workers whose wages have been stagnant the last 30 years if the tax cuts are working. They want to talk about we want to raise taxes. They are spending money on the country's credit card, as my good friend has said.

Real quick, I just want to clean this up. The two bills I want our friends, other Members, to go see, go to Thomas.gov. H.R. 1 in the 108th Congress was the prescription drug bill which we were lied to about the original price, was supposed to be \$400 billion. Then they came back months later and said it was \$700 billion, no controls on the price. Go to the 108th Congress, H.R. 1. Then go in the 109th Congress, Thomas.gov, H.R. 3893, our energy bill.

Our friends that are so concerned with reining in spending, the Republican House passed a bill that has given billions of dollars to the oil companies, and BP's profits today came out 34 percent higher this quarter.

I mean, give us a break. The rhetoric is done. You try to dust off the rhetoric from the 1980s and put it in today's society, and it just does not work because it just does not make any sense. If you can hear and see and think, you know what they are saying on the other side is not making sense.

What the Democratic proposal is to balance the budget; is to implement PAYGO, which means if you spend money, you have got to pay for it, one way or the other. Our friends, the Republican majority, that started out with this big Republican revolution that I think has ended up in a Republican devolution, would not pass the PAYGO rules. We have a plan, you go to the House Committee on the Budget, to balance the budget. We retain middle-class tax cuts for working people.

I am not afraid to stand up and say I am going to ask Bill Gates to pay a little more in taxes. I am not afraid to say it. I do not think that is a bold political move, but the wealthiest people are the only ones in this country who have not been asked to sacrifice in some way to pay for the two or three wars that we have going on and the greatest natural and national disaster this country has ever seen.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I think when we hear our friends on the other side talk about the economy is growing, well, the economy is growing. The question is who is benefiting from that growth, and the answer is very simple. It is a very small segment of the American community. It is the top 1 percent, the top 5 percent. Their income is going up; but remember this, the median income for a family of four in this country that is directly in the middle, it is not an average, it is directly in the middle, has in fact gone down since the Bush administration came to power. There are today in absolute numbers and percentages more Americans below the poverty line.

So what we have is an economy today that is eroding the middle class and is creating a Nation and a society where a very few, a small segment, is doing quite well and everybody else is slipping behind.

What we have or what our friends would do is, they support ironically a welfare program, a welfare program for pharmaceutical companies; a welfare program for large energy companies; a welfare program, by the way, for Iraq, not for the United States, but for Iraq, because here is what we are doing in Iraq. We are building schools. We are building primary health care centers. We are educating teachers. I see the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) has a chart there that illustrates this.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield briefly, I

just want to share a third-party validator that we have as we continue talking about welfare in the United States and what it is being spent on. This is by Cal Thomas, who writes a column.

Cal Thomas, as most of you may know, is one of the conservative columnists in the country. In his column this week, he says, "Seventy-two percent of farm subsidy money goes to 10 percent of recipients, the richest farmers, partnerships, corporations, estates and other entities." Cal Thomas, third-party validator says too much money going to the big farmers, and this is a big welfare State. What is Cal Thomas' advice to the 30-somethings and the House of Representatives? Cal Thomas says, "Here's a suggestion: don't start with the poor. Start with the rich."

Cal Thomas, one of the top conservatives in the country, is telling the Republican Congress, the Republican Senate and the Republican President, start cutting the welfare programs for the richest people in this country.

We have been pinned into a corner in this country where the people down in New Orleans and those people who do not have and the middle class are somehow to be blamed for our huge deficits when 72 percent of ag money, ag subsidies are going to the top 10 percent of the farmers.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say one thing, and then I want to lead into the issue of this budget reconciliation that we want to talk about tonight.

I wanted to go back to what my colleague from Massachusetts said about how, since the Bush administration came into office, the fiscal policy benefits wealthy people and is at the expense of the middle class. There is no question that is true.

I would venture to say that the Republican fiscal policy is really stupid for everyone because the bottom line is that in the last few years of the Clinton administration, when we had a surplus and we were balancing the budget, everybody was getting richer. The richer were getting richer, the middle class was doing better, and the poor were doing better.

I do not even think if you are wealthy you are doing better under Bush. You are doing better than the rest of the guys because the rest of the guys are suffering, but the irony of it is, in the last few years of the Clinton administration, the economy was booming so much that everybody was doing better. I do not even care if I were the wealthiest person in the world, I do not see how I benefit under this administration ultimately, because if the economy does not grow the way it did in the boom years of the Clinton administration, nobody benefits. It is true, of course, that it is primarily for the benefit of the wealthy. There is no question about that.

What I wanted to stress tonight, and all that we do is that the Republicans now have gone even further. Now they

are saying because they have to pay for Katrina, they want to do this budget reconciliation, which is another sort of round of budget cuts; and those budget cuts are primarily at the expense of poor people and working-class people rather than the wealthy.

What we are seeing is all the programs that might benefit middle-class people, working-class people or poor people, whether it is student loans or it is health care or it is housing, are all being cut; and those cuts directly impact the hurricane victims. Rather than going after wealthy individuals or cutting benefits of programs that might benefit wealthy individuals or corporate interests, they are simply cutting programs for poor people and working people. That is simply not right.

As my colleague from Massachusetts was saying, the irony of it is they are increasing the deficit in order to give more tax breaks for the rich and for the corporate interests. At the same time, they are increasing the deficit by paying for Iraq because none of that is paid for. None of the war reconstruction in Iraq is paid for; and if you look at these charts, as you were saying, you can see that the very cuts that are being proposed in programs here in the United States, in many cases money is being spent in Iraq, deficit spending, to do the same things in Iraq that are being cut here.

I do not want to go through the whole thing, but if you look at health care, \$10 billion in Medicaid cuts are proposed by this Republican budget; \$252 million in cuts for health care professionals; \$94 million in cuts to community health clinics in the U.S. In Iraq, we get 110 primary health care centers built or renovated, 2,000 health educators trained, 32 million children vaccinated. You can go through this whole list.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I just want to make a point.

The money that is getting cut, and we understand that reform needs to take place and our friends on the other side have not been willing to do it, but to cut \$94 million in community health care and community health centers, that is preventative medicine. That investment is ultimately going to save our country money and save our health care system money because those people who will not have access to the community health care centers will end up in an emergency room a week or two later.

Instead of going to the community health center with a cold, they are going to go to the emergency room in downtown Youngstown or East Hartford, Connecticut, or wherever they are living, and they are going to walk in with pneumonia; and it is going to cost the taxpayer more money. That is poor management. That is not smart. That is silly. No businessperson would make that investment.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I think another aspect of this conversa-

tion ought to be informing the American people and our colleagues that while we are doing such things as building 6,000 miles of roads in Iraq, constructing 2,500 new schools or rehabilitating existing schools in Iraq, we are not going to see a single dime of those American tax dollars come back because we all were here when the money for those initiatives was appropriated. Democrats stood on this floor and said let us make it a loan; let us allow the American taxpayer to be paid back for these billions of dollars that they are investing in Iraq.

The Republican White House, the Republican majority said no. This is the same party who about an hour earlier was talking about welfare. Tell me, Mr. Speaker, can you imagine this kind of a welfare program being sponsored and promoted by a party that claims to be fiscally responsible?

We talk about welfare reform. This is a giveaway of extraordinary proportion; but you know what, we will not do this in America. We will do it in Iraq.

Guess what happened? There are layoffs occurring, as everyone knows, in Louisiana, in Mississippi, because the tax base for municipalities has been destroyed.

□ 2245

They are laying off firefighters, emergency responders, and teachers. Some school districts that formerly employed 2- or 3,000 educators no longer have schools that are operating. They have layoffs.

So what are these communities doing? They are calling on the Federal Government for help. You know what the Federal Government is saying to them? We cannot give it to you, but we will loan it to you. We will loan it to you. In other words, if you are in Iraq, we are going to give it to you. What a giveaway. But here in America, no, you have to have matching funds if you are a community. The State treasurer down in Louisiana said, we asked for a grant, and they said, no grant, but a loan. But if you are in Iraq, because of the action of the Republican majority and the White House, they said, no, we will just give it away.

The United States taxpayer is rebuilding Iraq, and they will never see a dime come back. If they are serious about Operation Offset, I am sure that we could work out a unanimous consent agreement where we would go back and renegotiate with the Iraqi Government and say, we will give you favorable terms, and we will not charge you an arm and a leg in terms of your interest; but at some point in time, that money has to come back to the coffers of the United States Treasury because we cannot carry you.

Do you remember Paul Wolfowitz saying this will not cost anything? They have those massive oil reserves that will fund the reconstruction of their country. They were wrong on that like they were wrong on the weapons of mass destruction, and like they

were wrong on al Qaeda, and like they have been wrong on so many different issues. But if you want to see welfare, go to Iraq. You will see an American welfare state operating today in Iraq.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I could not help but remember within a few days of the hurricane when President Bush gave a speech, I think from New Orleans, and he talked about how they were going to reconstruct the city and provide all of these programs and benefits, and none of it has happened. It sounded like he was doing a reconstruction program like in Iraq, or the Marshall Plan after World War II. Now they are proposing cuts in all of the programs that would actually benefit people.

It is not just poor people. If you look at the things that we are mentioning here for the U.S. versus Iraq, I talked about health care. The Republican budget would cut \$9 billion in student loans, \$806 million from No Child Left Behind. That is for all Americans. On the other hand in Iraq, they rehabilitated 2,717 schools, and 36,000 teachers and administrators were trained.

Even the environment, everybody breathes the air and drinks the water. In the U.S., the Republican budget has a \$200 million cut in clean water State revolving funds, and opens ANWR to oil drilling. In Iraq, we spend \$1 billion for safe drinking water, \$4 million for marshland restoration. Everybody is drinking the water and benefiting from environmental infrastructure.

It is just really Americans versus Iraqis, and I am not saying that we should not help the Iraqis in some way. I did not support the war, and I still oppose the war, but I do not mind spending some money to help rebuild Iraq, but it is not fair to spend all of this money on Iraq and cut money for Americans.

Look at the infrastructure. In the U.S. under the Republican budget, \$336 million is cut from the Army Corps of Engineers, including funding for the levee construction in Louisiana. It is no wonder the levee gave. We did not keep it up. There is a \$2.3 million cut from Amtrak; high-speed rail funding is eliminated. In Iraq we are rehabilitating the canal system, including repairs to levees, and rebuilding the Iraq railway line.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, why should the American taxpayer be reimbursed? Why should we be carrying that burden? If they are serious about Operation Offset, let us renegotiate. We are the only country, the only major donor country, other than, I think, maybe Japan, that did not insist on providing reconstruction dollars on a loan basis. We are not going to be paid back.

And here we have Donald Rumsfeld in March 2003 saying, When it comes to reconstruction, before we turn to the American taxpayer, we will turn first to the resources of the Iraqi Government and the international community. Hogwash. Hogwash.

Mr. PALLONE. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) talked about prevention before in the context of health care. It is not just Iraq versus America, it is the fact that these cuts are plain stupid. We talk about prevention in terms of health care, by eliminating community health centers, people go to emergency centers, and it costs more. An argument could be made if we did not cut funding for the levees in Louisiana, we may not even have had the crisis there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Basically what we are trying to say is that the Republican majority in the House and the Senate are not only spending American, hard-working taxpayer dollars to subsidize the most profitable industries in the country, the oil industry, the pharmaceutical industry and the top agricultural, the megafarms. Not only are they doing that, welfare for corporations, and Democrats are for ending corporate welfare. Not only have they provided a welfare state for Iraq where we are not going to loan them the money and get the money back, welfare to corporations, welfare to Iraq, and then we are cutting the programs that just may lead to economic growth in the United States. We have to jump-start this economy, and we are not going to do it by cutting one of the great investments of high-speed rail. What a great program for United States of America.

When I was in China, I went to Shanghai. They had a magnetic levitation train. It is the only one in the world. It goes almost 280 miles an hour. You are standing up and you are drinking your coffee. Why is that in Shanghai and not in the United States of America?

Look at some of the cuts from the Republican Study Committee. Loans to graduate students, \$840 million in cuts; eliminate the National Science Foundation math and science program grants.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), you go to Iraq if you are a student and go to school. If you are an Iraqi and you qualify, you get a grant. If you are an American, you have to pay your own way.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And tuition is going to double in 5 years.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Is this Alice in Wonderland, up is down and down is up?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, how about this for short-sightedness. We are going to cut the Centers for Disease Control. Everybody is talking about the avian flu. We do not know what to do. People are making requests of the administration. I am sorry, but government is the problem, unless somebody needs something. And I am sorry, but the Republican majority has had this House since 1994. They have had the Senate since 2000 or 2001, definitely since 2002, and on and off through the 1990s, and the White House since 2001. They cannot govern.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) makes a very good point about investment. There was just completed in Iraq, in Mosul, a magnificent dam. From every source that I am aware of, it is purported to be extremely well engineered, and it is a dam that will hopefully serve the Iraqi people well. Good for them. They benefit from the welfare state funded by American taxpayers. But you know what? It was reported in the New Orleans Times Picayune, which is the paper down there, that last year the funding for levees in New Orleans was reduced. In other words, a levee that may have prevented the magnitude of the disaster that befell New Orleans and Louisiana could possibly have been averted, and we would not be looking at a \$60 billion bill. But oh, no, the government is the problem.

Well, if the government and the Army Corps of Engineers had the funding, possibly, possibly, those levees and the issues of flood control could have been addressed in a timely fashion. But no, what we hear is government is the problem.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the budget bill that they want us to vote on, the one we were supposed to vote on last week, cuts funding for levees again, not necessarily the one in New Orleans, but other levees in Louisiana. This is part of the funding cuts. They want to cut levee construction now. This is not the same one that fell in New Orleans.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, there was a dam up in Taunton, Massachusetts, in a district that is represented by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) that was on the verge of collapsing and inundating a city of some 50,000 that would have been a disaster. But do not worry if you are in Iraq, particularly if you are in Mosul, you are well protected. You are well protected because you have a brand new dam funded by the American taxpayers. Thank you to the welfare program of the Republican Party for our friends in Iraq.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I used this analogy last week, and I cannot help but repeating it again. Soon after the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. invasion, a couple of our Republican colleagues went over there. Maybe it was within 6 months of the U.S. invasion. It was in September of the year after. They had just come back, the Republican colleagues had just come back from Iraq, and they had been there on the first day of school. I will never forget because I was on the floor waiting to do a Special Order, and three or four of my Republican colleagues, they brought back with them the book bags and the pencils. They had these book bags that were in blue, and they had emblazoned on them the seal of the United States with the eagle. They were so proud of the fact that every Iraqi school child on the opening day of school had received a book bag with

the seal of the U.S., pencils, pads, all kinds of things, free of charge.

I had just come back from approximately the first day of school here in the U.S., and I had just been to a teacher event at one of my local schools, and the teachers were complaining that the pencils and paper were not provided there, and they had to actually go out, the teachers, and buy pencils and paper and pads and crayons for the children because they were not provided at our public school in my district.

The pride that was on the faces of my Republican colleagues for all the wonderful things we were doing in Iraq, and I kept saying that was very nice, but we do not have those things here in my district. It is not right. It is not fair. I am not saying again that we should not be helping the Iraqis, but it is just not fair that they get this help and we do not.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, how about helping our kids? How about helping our elderly? How about helping our disabled? How about protecting our cities? We talk about a strong America. A strong America begins at home. That is really what it is about. Right now, given what is happening to our economy, given all of the problems that are besetting our Nation, it is time that we focused on the United States of America, all of us together. Together we can make America a better place for every citizen.

□ 2300

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the decisions that we need to make have to be focused on what is best for the country, not what is best for one's political party; and I think that has really been the problem. It seems to me that every decision that is made down here by the Republican majority is what is best for the Republican Party, not what is best for the country. And it is time we start choosing the country over the party if we want to have some success.

And just go through everything that has happened. Everything that has happened with the majority leader has been an attempt to secure power for the party and not do its best for the country. Let us look at the CIA leak and the corruption that is going on. To out a CIA agent because their husband disagreed with them on the war is choosing their party and protecting their party over what is best for the country.

And to make cuts in programs that would invest in the American people and lead to economic growth instead of listening to Cal Thomas, who says cut for the richest people who are getting corporate welfare, they do that because they could then raise money for their party. And if the Republican majority keeps choosing their party over the country, then the country becomes weak; and a strong America starts right here at home.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, can I

pick up on the corruption theme. I am the ranking member on a subcommittee of the House Committee on International Relations. Its title is the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. We have not held one hearing after repeated requests to exercise our oversight responsibility into an unprecedented level of corruption in Iraq.

In Iraq, billions of dollars are missing. In fact, the defense minister of Iraq made this statement, that this is the greatest robbery of all time. There is in excess of \$1 billion missing from that single ministry. I guess there was one contract where they bought some tanks from Poland that were 28 years old, 28 years old, to the tune of \$230 million; and they cannot find the contracts. And the current Iraqi defense minister is saying all we have are scraps of paper and scraps of metal.

I found it particularly interesting listening to Fox News where there were two colonels who were very hawkish in their attitudes that described the situation in Iraq in terms of corruption as totally out of control. That is the biggest scandal of all, because here tragically today was memorable in the reality that there have been 2,000 American servicemen killed; and we all, Republicans and Democrats, join our fellow citizens in our sympathy to the families of those 2,000 as well as to the tens of thousands of American service men and women and others including Iraqi civilians and Iraqi members of their defense force that have been wounded and maimed for life.

But to think that this rampant corruption going on under the auspices of the Coalition Provisional Authority is not being reviewed and examined by the subcommittee with jurisdiction is absolutely an abrogation of our responsibility. They are afraid of it. They will not look into it. They will talk about it, but it is absolutely crying out for review.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, one of the things that the 30-Something Group has been talking about, and it relates directly to what he said, is this idea that there should be a bipartisan commission in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. And it is the same principle that the gentleman from Massachusetts brought up, that they just do not want any kind of investigation of themselves.

The Republicans control the White House, the Senate, the House of Representative. They know there are problems that came out of Hurricane Katrina. They know they are responsible. They do not want any investigation by a bipartisan commission because they do not want an investigation of themselves. They are afraid of what it is going to reveal. And that is the problem around here. They do not want oversight. They do not want accountability. They do not want any kind of effort on a bipartisan basis, which would happen with the gentleman's subcommittee, because it might

reveal that they have basically created a lot of problems and screwed up on a lot of things. That is what they are against.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, that is another example of the extreme Republican majority in this House choosing their party over the country. They do not want to find out what the truth is, although that would be best for us to fix the problems that we had with Katrina and then be able to respond to the next problem that we may have, whether it is a terrorism attack or another natural disaster. We would then educate ourselves.

But to not give the Democrats subpoena power to try to fix the problem because they hired all of their cronies in the top 8 or 10 positions in FEMA is, again, what is best for their party, not what necessarily is best for the country. And the Democrats are providing, time and time again in committee, on the floor, with amendments, with ideas, whether it is lend the money, whether it is reduce the cost for prescription drugs, whether it is strip the billions of dollars in subsidies that went to the oil companies, the Democrats have always provided an alternative, a change, to take the country in another direction. And that is what the Democrats are for.

Let me real quickly give the e-mail address here:

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

I would like to thank our dual Member from Massachusetts and our Member and a half from New Jersey. With that, Mr. Speaker, I say this is not your father's 30-Something Group.

ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for the remaining time until midnight.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about what I believe is the number one issue facing America. It is the energy issue. And the one part of our energy debate that, in my view, has been neglected is natural gas.

Natural gas is the fuel that we use to heat our homes, we cook our meals, we heat our schools, hospitals, YMCAs, YWCAs. Most small businesses use natural gas. We melt steel. We melt aluminum. We make nitrogen fertilizer, all fertilizers; and 71 percent of the cost of making fertilizers for our farmers is natural gas. It is used as an ingredient in all our petrochemicals. All the chemicals that we buy at the hardware store and the grocery store, the cleaners, skin softeners, all have a natural gas base to them. Polymers and plastics are made from both petroleum and natural gas. From face creams to fertilizers, everything we manufacture in this country, they use natural gas to make it; and they use natural gas as an ingredient.