

championship title is the impact Mike has had on the wrestlers off the mat, as he has produced not only outstanding athletes but also gentlemen.

On the occasion of hosting the 20th Richardson Memorial Tournament in his tenure, Mike's athletes returned from years past to give him tribute. I wish to review a few of those and also add to those tributes myself.

One of these young wrestlers noted that when he was a junior he broke his sternum not once, but twice. It was very difficult for him to just sit on the sidelines and cheer on his teammates, realizing he could not contribute to the success of the team. Most kids would have just dropped out at that point. Coach Ripplinger, realizing the pain of lack of participation, gave an extra effort to include this kid as part of the team. Through his encouragement, this young student learned how to persevere and, as he later noted, he made many successes in preparation for life that year even though he had no activity on the mat.

Another former student said that the coach expected us to live with dignity, honor and respect for others.

Another admitted that, when they were disciplined, the toughest thing was feeling like we had disappointed the coach because we had all the respect for him as a person and as a leader. All teachers seek respect. Very few of us actually earn it the way Mike Ripplinger has.

Those lessons were as important to the student athletes as the trophies that they earned.

When Mike was hired, his principal said, I wanted a coach who could build a strong wrestling program but an individual who could also build young men. He said this is one of the best hires he ever made. "On a personal note," he also wrote, "my son Joseph, who has found success in his personal life as an orthopedic surgeon, found out what life was all about from you and your program." Even though a three-sport athlete, he had little wrestling skill. Through your program, he found out what it was like to rise above losing. He found the encouragement and desire to keep picking himself up and going on, and from people like you he found out how to succeed.

Sometimes in our environment today we actually do not want people to display any outward religious conviction, but through Mike's demonstration he showed his goodwill, his strong moral character and his relationship with his God.

At one point, when one of his students seriously injured an arm by sticking it through a glass window, one of his other students noted that he admired a coach who was not afraid to have a team prayer for the cut student.

Mike Ripplinger is to be commended for not being afraid to help his students become better people, as well as better wrestlers.

Students of Mike recognize that he has a rare ability to make each indi-

vidual student feel like he or she is important, has value, has someone who cares. Every year, Mike helps students mature and learn. Every month, Mike gives himself to others. Every week, Mike creates a learning environment in which kids want to participate. Every day, Mike makes the world a better place. Mike Ripplinger is one of our everyday heroes.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

IRAQ AND LIBBY'S SUCCESSFUL COVER-UP

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, Scooter Libby was arraigned this morning, and the Bush administration defenders continue to insist that the administration of the CIA leak was "much ado about nothing."

They say that the crime of perjury and obstruction of justice are mere technicalities, nothing to worry our heads over. Ha.

Let us leave aside the obvious hypocrisy. We all know that there was quite a hue and cry over perjury in this town 7 years ago when the President's party was on the outside of the White House looking in. Dare I say, the underlying issue at that time was just a little more frivolous than the matters of life, death and war that are at the heart of the current episode.

More importantly, of course, Scooter Libby's lies matter. Libby's lies are exactly what is keeping us from knowing the truth about the original crime, the outing of a covert CIA operative as part of a campaign to scare the Nation into a war based on the lie that Saddam Hussein was poised to use nuclear weapons on the United States.

Columnist E.J. Dionne makes the important and distressing point: the Scooter Libby cover-up was successful.

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You see, 1 year and 1 day ago, the President was reelected by a narrow margin. Why does that matter? Because Libby is stonewalling. His tall tale about having learned about Valerie Plame's status from gossiping reporters was all about gumming up the investigation just long enough so that the clock would run out on the last campaign season. It was all about ensuring that Americans went to the polls last year with very limited knowledge of this scandal.

As we analyze the legal maneuvers and intrigue, as we try to read between the lines of Scooter Libby's bizarre let-

ters to Judy Miller, let us not lose sight of the big picture. Right now, there are some 140,000 loyal, patriotic, courageous Americans who have been separated from their families and are prepared to die, all because the neocron's cabal had it in for Saddam Hussein. Over 2,000 of their fellow soldiers have already made the ultimate sacrifice, and I have no doubt that those men and women would be alive today if not for the trumped-up intelligence and the campaign of deceit.

I had the privilege of talking with our soldiers when I was in Iraq a month ago, and you could not ask for a finer, more committed group of young people. I came away from those conversations full of pride but also profound sadness, because the men and women on the front lines have dutifully entrusted their lives to cynics and ideologues like Scooter Libby. They deserve so much better. They deserve civilian superiors who are at least as honorable as they are.

Even as we never forget the lies that got us into this war, I am even more concerned about how we are going to get out. There are ways to do this while still keeping Iraq secure, while helping build its democratic institutions and its economic infrastructure. I held a hearing earlier this fall where we discussed such ideas in detail.

We can appeal to the U.N. and to NATO to establish an interim security force in Iraq. We can launch a diplomatic offensive, helping establish an international peace commission that can coordinate peace talks between Iraq's various factions and oversee the post-war reconciliation process.

But the President does not want to be part of this conversation. All he has to offer is the same old rhetoric about staying the course and completing the mission. But how do you win a war against an enemy that grows more resilient with each passing day because your occupation appears to be occupiers of their land? One military commander put it best: He said that "for every insurgent I kill, I create three more."

Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker. The current Iraq policy is a bloody, destructive, dead end. We have paid way too high a price already. It is time to honor our troops. It is time to bring them home.

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

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PENTAGON PROGRAM COSTING TAXPAYERS MILLIONS IN INFLATED PRICES

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on October 23, the Knight-Rider newspaper had a headline that said, "Pentagon Program Costing Taxpayers Millions in Inflated Prices." I want to give a few examples, because, as we talk about budget resolution, budget cuts, or tax increases or whatever, if we just look at what is happening, and I am going to relay this to the House in just one moment, we ought to start looking at the inflated prices and what is going on at the Department of Defense. I am going to give examples.

The Pentagon is paying \$20 apiece for ice cube trays that cost 85 cents. In other words, you can go to a retail store and you get a plastic ice tray and pay 85 to 90 cents, yet the Department of Defense is paying \$20.

In addition, the Pentagon is now paying \$81 apiece for coffee makers that were bought for years at just \$29 from the manufacturer. So \$81 now, and they were paying \$29 for coffee makers.

A commercial 7-foot refrigerator that the general public can buy for a little more than \$17,000, the Pentagon is paying nearly \$33,000 for the same refrigerator, for a markup of 89 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I think about the tough decisions we are going to have to make here over the next few weeks, yet we are not even doing the oversight that should be done with the Department of Defense. Why, instead of using competitive bid contracting or buying directly from the manufacturers, is the Pentagon using middlemen who set their own prices and take the American taxpayers for millions of dollars?

Again, this is an investigative new report. The high prices are a result of a Defense Department purchasing program called "prime vendor," started by the Defense Logistics Agency, known as DLA. This program, which eliminates competition, is used to speed up deliveries.

Defenders of the prime vendor program highlight the program's speed. Deliveries are fast, they say. However, critics indicate the advantages offered by prime vendors are overstated. Since competition is reduced, these prime vendors charge enormous prices for their services. More so, there are other government agents who have been eliminated that claim their services were just as fast and cheaper.

There needs to be an investigation into the prime vendor program to ensure that taxpayers are not being taken advantage of. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, for this reason. I have written the Speaker of the House, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and I also wrote the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) of the oversight committee. We need to look into this.

We need to do what is right for the taxpayers. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, when we have so much in the way of a debt and deficit in this Nation, the easiest thing we can do is look at the

Department of Defense, and if they are paying \$20 for an 89 cent ice tray, if they are paying \$81 for a coffee maker you can buy for \$29, we have a real serious problem.

I think in a bipartisan way we, as a House of Representatives, need to get together and ask those committee chairmen and the Speaker of the House to please look into this on behalf of the taxpayers of America.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, always on the floor of this House I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless their families and hold in his loving arms the families who have given a child to die for freedom, and I ask God to please continue to bless America.

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

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ENERGY

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, middle-class families across this Nation are struggling to make ends meet. While housing and education prices are skyrocketing, wages have been held stagnant for the last 3 years. Now families can add energy to the list of out-of-control costs to their family budget.

Gas is around 3 bucks a gallon. Utilities are now predicting families could pay as much as 70 percent more to heat their homes this winter. Natural gas prices are so high the Energy Department is predicting the average family will pay \$350 more this winter than last winter. Home heating oil, used by many in the Northeast and Midwest, is skyrocketing.

But while American families struggle with sky-high energy bills, oil and gas companies face a totally different problem: too much cash. For example, Exxon Mobil recently reported their profits increased by 75 percent. Their revenues: \$100 billion. Shell Oil, earnings 68 percent up. Phillips, 89 percent up. B.P. Amoco, 34 percent rise in quarterly earnings.

American families are struggling with massive energy bills that cut into their living expenses, their college costs, and their health care costs, while energy companies are reaping huge, huge profits.

Henry Hubble, a senior vice president at Exxon Mobil said, "You have got to let the marketplace work." I agree with the executive from Exxon Mobil. Let the marketplace work.

But here is where we disagree. When they had an energy bill down on this floor, the oil companies got a \$14 billion taxpayer-funded corporate welfare

giveaway to do oil and gas drilling around this country. They got \$14 billion for companies making record profits.

That is what we call corporate welfare. If they want the marketplace to work, give the taxpayers back their \$14 billion. We should be not be subsidizing their business plans. Taxpayers are not in the business of helping companies making revenue runs at \$100 billion a quarter where profits are up 89 percent.

The Congress, not Democrats but the Republicans in Congress, are cutting college loans by \$14 billion, they are cutting nutritional programs for 40,000 kids, and they are cutting kids health care. Yet what have they held sacrosanct? \$14 billion to Exxon Mobil. My view is what corporate America needs in the energy business is a little free market medicine.

We have seen nothing but corporate welfare around here in subsidizing the energy industry, and it is high time they get off the dole and started running their own business plan and stop asking the taxpayers to fund them. The only reason they do that around here is because, since 1980, the big oil companies have contributed \$220 million to the Republican candidates for Congress, Senate, the Presidency, and their party. They have gotten a \$14 billion return. You cannot get an investment return like that on Wall Street. It is 200 percent on their investment that they have gotten.

This Congress has given big oil \$14 billion in tax subsidies. If that is not bad enough, there is a refinery bill where we ended up giving them another \$2 billion that they did not even ask for. So with oil running at basically \$3 a gallon at the gas pump, not only do consumers have to pay inflated prices to big oil at the gas pump, but on April 15 they get a bill because they have given them \$14 billion in taxpayer-funded corporate welfare so they can do one thing: execute their business plans.

Well, I am suggesting they start doing a little more free enterprise in executing their business plans and stop relying on the taxpayers of America, who are struggling with sky-high energy prices, sky-high health care costs, and sky-high college tuition costs, just trying to struggle to make ends meet.

What Congress would actually cut home heating assistance to our most needy citizens yet give Exxon Mobil and the other big energy companies \$16 million? A Republican Congress, but, of course, this should make sense to all of us who have seen what goes on around here.

When the Speaker's gavel comes down, that gavel is intended to open the people's House, not the auction house. What has happened around here lately when it comes to big oil companies is we auction off the American people and their future. When it comes to the pharmaceutical companies, who gave \$132 million, they ended up with \$135 billion in additional profit when