

The importance of quality and trusted nurses is best illustrated by my telling you about two of them who are particularly special in my life. When I was a practicing OB-GYN physician in Marietta, Georgia, Lynn Olmstead was a wonderfully gifted nurse who worked with me for 20 loyal and dedicated years.

Lynn is a graduate of Michigan State University, a Spartan, as is her husband, Ken. She had worked in labor and delivery at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital in Marietta, Georgia, in my district for 10 years; and I had an opportunity to see her and her compassion and working with patients in the wee hours of the morning and was very, very fortunate that she agreed to come and work in my office and where she spent the next 20 years, as I said, working so compassionately with patients and helping me, in fact, make right decisions a lot of the times. And I remain dedicated and grateful to Lynn for that service that she gave to me and our patients at Marietta OB-GYN Affiliates.

The other nurse, Mr. Speaker, is my daughter-in-law, Emily House Gingrey. Emily is a graduate of the University of Georgia. She recently, after making a decision a couple or 3 years ago to go back to school and get her registered nursing degree from Georgia Baptist School of Nursing, now works at the Northside Hospital in Atlanta in the neonatal intensive care unit, taking care of the most fragile, not just premature babies, but what we know as immature babies, those less than 2,500 grams.

And I see Emily as she is beginning her career in that most important area of neonatal intensive care, providing life, really, to these very fragile babies that might possibly not make it in this world without the dedication of young nurses like Emily House Gingrey, the wife of my son, Billy.

So it is with a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to take just these few minutes this evening to pay tribute to all nurses, and I rise today to applaud the profession of nursing and encourage young Americans to consider this noble work as a future career.

IRAQ AND THE FY07 DEFENSE BILL

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, this Congress had a great opportunity today to pass a defense authorization bill that is good for the American people, a bill that reflects the very best of American values. Foremost among those values is our desire for peace, our capacity for global leadership, and our compassion for the people of the world. We could have reflected those values by utilizing the defense bill as a means of voicing our opposition to prolong the war in Iraq. The Rules Committee, however, prevented me from offering

just such an amendment to the defense authorization bill.

My amendment expressed the sense of the Congress regarding the war in Iraq in two parts. First, it instructs the President, the Commander in Chief of the United States Armed Forces, to develop a plan to bring the members of the U.S. Armed Forces home from Iraq and to bring the plan to the congressional defense committees.

It is clear that we need to begin the process of bringing our troops home because, among many other reasons, the presence of nearly 150,000 American troops in Iraq is an obvious rallying point for dissatisfied people in the Arab world, making the situation in Iraq worse and not making the U.S. any more secure.

The second part of my amendment describes how the United States should support Iraq once our troops have come home. The amendment directs the United States to engage the international community, including the U.N. and NATO, to establish a multinational interim security force for Iraq. The U.N.'s Department of Peacekeeping Operations actually is particularly well suited to this task.

Next we would have shifted our role from that of Iraq's military occupier to its reconstruction partner. By working with the Iraqi people to rebuild their economic and physical infrastructure, we can give Iraq back to the Iraqis and help to create Iraqi jobs and Iraqi security.

Finally, my amendment urged the President to involve the United Nations in establishing an international peace commission comprised of members of the global community who have experience in international conflict resolution so that they would oversee Iraq's post-war reconciliation process, beginning Iraq's long road to recovery after years of sanctions and war.

The House should have been able to debate the importance of ending the war while we helped to stabilize this war-torn nation. Unfortunately, this Congress had other priorities, priorities like authorizing another \$50 billion to continue a devastating war in Iraq that has already taken the lives of more than 2,400 American soldiers, countless tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, and forever shattered the lives of another 16,000 injured and wounded American troops.

Priorities like authorizing another \$10 billion, that is billion with a "B," on a still unproven missile defense system that can't stop the greatest threat we face, nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, and has never even been able to stop the missiles it is designed to destroy.

It is beyond dispute that this administration, in tandem with the Republican Congress, has been, to put it mildly, less than fiscally responsible.

Earlier this month I introduced new legislation called the Commonsense Budget Act of 2006 that finally put some sanity back into the Nation's fis-

cal policy. This bill already has the support of almost 40 cosponsors.

The Commonsense Budget Act would trim \$60 billion in waste from the Pentagon budget and put it to work on behalf of the people and programs that truly strengthen America.

These programs include \$10 billion for the modernization of every public school, \$12 billion for health insurance for every child in America, \$10 billion to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, \$13 billion to feed the hungry, \$5 billion to improve homeland security, and \$5 billion to start the reduction of our deficit.

We need to change the way we think about national security, Mr. Speaker. The return on the investments I have proposed as part of the Commonsense Budget Act will benefit the entire society, and they won't cost us a dime more than we currently spend on our bloated national defense.

Any change in budget priorities, though, has to go hand in hand with change in policy on the ground. The very first of those needs to be an end to the war in Iraq. For the sake of our soldiers, their families and our national security, it is time to bring our troops home.

□ 1730

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

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

BUSH ADMINISTRATION TAX CUTS

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, with little notice or fanfare, a modest tax benefit for families who are struggling to help their kids get a higher education expired this year. It was what is called an above-the-line deduction, up to \$4,000 towards tuition could become an above-the-line deduction.

Now for a family with \$40,000, \$50,000 income, that would be worth about 1,000 bucks off their taxes, not insignificant when they are straining on that income to try and help their child get an education, get ahead, realize the American dream.

But the Republican majority, being the fiscal conservatives they are, said it was too expensive. We could not afford to renew this modest tax benefit for middle income families to give them a little help with tuition for their kids. Now, well and good.

When you see their budget that they have pulled from the floor for the third time in 3 weeks, they are going to pass a budget, probably next week, that will have America borrowing \$1.4 billion a day, a lot of it from foreign sources.

It will have a lot of us borrowing from this year's Social Security surplus, \$193 billion, and spending it on

other things other than Social Security, in part to give tax cuts to wealthy Americans. Also buried in their budget is the fifth increase in the debt limit in 5 years. Fiscal conservatives that they are, they are hiding it in the middle of their budget because they don't want people to see it, another \$600 billion increase in the debt limit to nearly \$10 trillion.

That is quite an achievement. Nearly doubling the national debt in 5 years is something that they could write home about, but they don't want the people at home to know. So I can understand their concerns.

But, wait a minute, oh, no. We just passed a bill to give \$70 billion in tax breaks to wealthy investors. Now, where is that money going to come from? Oh, well, they say tax breaks pay for themselves, especially when you give the money to rich people.

This particular piece of work extends a tax break that wasn't going to expire until 2008. The college tuition deduction has already expired. Middle income families can't get it next year, but wealthy investors were worried that starting in 2009 or 2010 they might have to pay the same percentage of their investment earnings, their unearned income, as people who work for a living.

The Republicans said that would just destroy the economy of America. Those investors are the heart blood of our country, not the people who work and build the country; no, they have got to pay higher rates of taxes, but the people who can invest for a living.

What does their \$70 billion tax break do? Well, someone who earns \$5.3 million, \$82,000 tax relief. They really need it too at \$5.3 million, hard making ends meet. You know, their Hummer, 3 bucks a gallon of gas for their Hummer too. Well, maybe it is a limousine driven by a chauffeur, but who knows.

How about the retired CEO of ExxonMobil, \$400 million, that is what he got, just retired. Well, this bill gives him an extra \$2 million off his tax bill. It was going to be hard for him to maintain his lifestyle in retirement with only \$400 million in retirement. So the Republicans feel that working people should borrow \$2 million to give to him an additional little tax benefit.

But for a family earning a good income, 75,000 bucks, it is worth \$110 a year. So the family that earns \$75,000 is going to get up to \$110 tax benefit under this. But the retired CEO of ExxonMobil is going to get \$2 million, and the family who earns wages and salary at \$75,000 is going to pay to retire the debt, because we are borrowing the money to give to the wealthy investors.

How stupid do they think the American people are? How profligate and shameless the Republicans are to do this sort of thing. Help the families who are trying to have their kids get it. That is the next generation of earners. You cannot even extend them a modest tax benefit, but you can shower

money on the wealthiest among us, those who need it least.

It is time for new priorities in this Congress. It is time for fiscal responsibility. It is time to give a little bit of a helping hand to middle income and working America and let the rich help carry their fair share of the load.

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

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

FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I had the honor and privilege of attending the 15th annual FIRST Robotics Competition in Atlanta, Georgia at the end of April. I watched teams from both the United States and foreign countries take part in contests using robots that they built with the help of professionals.

While the winning teams were given awards, the primary goal of this competition was to help high school age students discover how interesting and rewarding the areas of math and science can be. As far as I am concerned, all of the students that participated are winners.

Seeing these brilliant students in person inspired me to join my friend and colleague, Congressman CHARLIE BASS on the floor tonight to share the important lessons and insights that we gained from our experience. I am excited to hear what my colleague has to say this evening as well.

Well, For Inflation and Recognition of Science and Technology, or, FIRST as it is known, was founded by my friend Dean Kamen, who is a brilliant inventor with a social conscience. Among his many distinguished achievements, he has invented the first wearable drug infusion pump, the first portable insulin pump, the Segway scooter and the IBOT wheelchair. His real passion, however, is inspiring younger generations and getting them excited about science and technology.

In pursuit of this goal, FIRST uses partnership between businesses, educational institutions and governments. Through FIRST's many programs, students learn the value of teamwork and sportsmanship and have the opportunity to pair up with mentors in their desired field. FIRST also gives students a chance to apply for scholarship awards so they may pursue these schools skills at the college level.

Now the success of this program can be seen by the fact that since 1992, the

FIRST Robotics Competition has grown from 28 teams to over 1,000 today. The goal of this organization is one that I have supported since I first cochaired a special legislative commission as a state representative to get young people interested in math and science in Rhode Island.

Now, as many of our colleagues have acknowledged, these are areas that our younger generations are not getting involved in sufficient numbers. This is detrimental to our country in the long run, not only for our reputation as innovators, but also for our national security.

Now, the argument that inadequate research in education systems pose a threat to our national security was made in a 2001 report, the Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change.

Now, this was issued by the U.S. Commission on National Security, better known as the Hart-Rudman Commission. The report stated American national leadership must understand these deficiencies as threats to national security. Now, if we do not invest heavily and wisely in rebuilding these two core threats, America will be incapable of maintaining its global position long into the 21st century.

This is why I encouraged my fellow members to learn more about the FIRST program. It gets students in their district involved.

It is our job, not only to protect our country, but to inspire the next generation and maintain our status as the world leaders in research and innovation. With programs like FIRST, I am optimistic about the future, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to congratulate all the teams that participated in the FIRST Robotics Competition and especially the three teams from Rhode Island, La Salle Academy, Middletown High School and Tolman High School, for a job well done. May they all have continued success in their future endeavors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my friend, Dean Kamen, the mentors and everyone who organized the FIRST robotics competition. I congratulate all of them and wish them well.

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

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

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim Mr. NORWOOD's time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) is recognized for 5 minutes.