

what we are paying for our own homeland security. And that is a very unfortunate situation, but it drives home the point of the very dangerous position that we are in. Should any of these countries feel that they could get us, they can get us because of our lack of financial responsibility and fiscal security.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for joining us this evening, and I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for joining us.

As members of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, we are 37 strong. There are 37 of us in this town that are committed to trying to get our fiscal house in order, to once again have a nation that knows how to live within its means.

If you have questions or comments that you want us to answer next Tuesday night, you can e-mail them to us at bluedog@mail.house.gov.

At the beginning of our hour, I pointed out that the debt as of today is \$8,251,355,000,000. That is \$8,251,355,000,000. Every man, woman, and child in America, their share of the national debt is \$27,674. And it continues to grow. It continues to grow. In fact, just in this last hour our Nation's debt has increased by \$41.666 million. So, obviously, you see when we started an hour ago it was \$8,251,355,000,000, and, unfortunately, it has increased to \$8.293 trillion. Just another example of how our Nation must get its fiscal house in order.

I think it is very appropriate that we spend a little bit of time changing these numbers and letting people see that in the hour that we have stood here talking about our Nation's debt and deficit and getting our fiscal house in order, we have seen the Nation's debt go up by \$41.666 million. The debt now in our Nation \$8,251,293,000,000.

AMERICAN HERITAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for half the time remaining until midnight, approximately 42 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come and chat with the House and to maybe set the record straight a little bit.

As a freshman Member of the House, we have 24, 25 freshmen on our side of the aisle, and over the past 13 months we have grown a little weary with what we see as the amount of misinformation and disinformation that we so oftentimes see brought by the other side, so we have developed what we call the Official Truth Squad. And so I am here to bring you some messages with some of my colleagues from the Official Truth Squad, which is an effort to try to embrace the American Dream, to embrace the American vision, and to present to the American people and our colleagues the story that Congress is

working in a positive manner, that we are optimistic about the Nation's future in spite of some things that you hear from some of our friends on the other side of the aisle.

When I go home and I talk to constituents, I oftentimes hear them say, What is going on up there? Why all the negativity? Why all the pessimism? Why all the misinformation that we appear to hear all the time? And I commiserate with them. So this Official Truth Squad is an attempt to try to bring some light to truth, to some of the information that we believe the American people ought to have in contrast to some of the things that you have heard, even here tonight.

I am pleased to hear the Blue Dogs present a proposal or two. They talk about being fiscally conservative. They talk about being fiscal hawks. But my recollection is a little bit to the contrary of that. There is a wonderful quote that I like from Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a former United States Senator from New York, Democrat. And he was such a cogent individual. He was one of those individuals who worked for the truth regardless of where it led. And he had this wonderful quote. He said, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts." Everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts. And I really think that that kind of crystallizes what we have heard in this Chamber over the past few minutes.

You have heard the other side talk about deficit spending and how we ought not be spending into the deficit, and they are right. They are right. But when they had an opportunity to decrease spending by nearly \$40 billion just a few short weeks ago, not a single one of them, not one of them, voted for it. A \$39.8 billion decrease in spending and not a single one voted in favor of it.

You heard them talk about the alternative minimum tax and how it is an unjust tax and it needs to go away, and they are right. They are right. A colleague of mine, Congressman ENGLISH, has a bill, H.R. 1186, that would repeal the alternative minimum tax. Not a single Democrat on that bill, not a single cosponsor from that side of the aisle.

You hear them talk about the need to balance the budget and not spend so much money, and they are right. They are absolutely right. But when the proposals are put on the table to do away with programs that are wasteful or do away with programs that have significant abuse, where are they? Nowhere to be found.

So you are entitled to your own opinions, but you are not entitled to your own facts. And to crystallize that a little more because the disinformation that we heard over and over about budgetary cuts really does a disservice to the debate, does a disservice to the discussion, does a disservice to the American people, because when you look at the numbers, when you look at the truth, that is not what is going on.

And this evening you have heard the other side talk about budgetary cuts in the area of defense spending and spending on veterans. So, at home, if I were sitting there listening, I would say, well, my goodness, they must have addressed the amount of money that was going to the military or decreased the amount of money going to veterans.

Mr. Speaker, is that not what you would think? That is what I would think if I heard that. But here we have the Defense Department appropriation, budgetary authority from Congress from the year 2000 projected through 2007. In 2000 it was \$287 billion. In 2001 it was \$303 billion. That does not sound like a cut to me. In 2002, \$328 billion. That is real money. That does not sound like a cut to me. In 2003, \$365 billion.

Remember, down here in 2000 we were at \$287 billion.

So these are the actual numbers. Fiscal year 2006, \$411 billion of budgetary authority for the Department of Defense. Mr. Speaker, that is not a cut. That is responsible spending on the part of the United States Congress. And I am proud of the support that we have given to our military. And I am proud of the support that we continue to give to veterans.

You have heard this evening that veterans' budgets were cut. Here are the numbers, the actual numbers, from 1984 through 2005, and I want to draw your attention to what has happened in the last 10 years. In 1994 discretionary spending for veterans: \$17.2 billion; 1995, \$17.6 billion; 2005, \$30.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what arithmetic they are using. I do not know where they went to school, but I do know that that is not a cut in anybody's book.

So when we get this kind of misinformation, this kind of disinformation, it does not contribute to the public debate. It is not honest. It is not truthful. So the Official Truth Squad is here to try to bring some truth to the situation.

This is veterans' medical care, and you heard it talked about this evening, how we have these incredible cuts in medical care for veterans. Mr. Speaker, here are the numbers: 1994, \$15.6 billion; 2005, \$29.9 billion. Mr. Speaker, that is not a cut. It is an appropriate, responsible move by Congress to take care of those who are protecting our freedoms.

So remember what Mr. Moynihan said, You are welcome to your own opinions but you are not welcome to your own facts.

So I would like to highlight this evening what is called the politics of division that seems to be practiced by so many here in Washington, and it is disheartening and it does a disservice to all of us. We are going to talk tonight in a positive way about America. We are going to talk in a positive way about our future. We are going to talk in a positive way about our Founding Fathers and about our history and about our heritage.

And just to identify the destruction of the politics of division that is so often practiced here, I have got a quote from Abraham Lincoln that I would like to share with you and it is kind of his philosophy on the social fabric. He said: "You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot encourage the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could do for themselves."

Mr. Speaker, the politics of division has no place in the public arena. It does a disservice to our Nation. It does a disservice to the debate. Frankly, it is an embarrassment for the individuals that practice it.

So I encourage all Members of Congress, Republican, Democrat, all of my colleagues, to go about our debates and the discussions that we have and the challenges that we face in this Nation in a positive and honest and truthful manner. Then we can get to the right solutions.

As I mentioned, the Official Truth Squad comes almost every evening since we began the first of the year and talks about some positive aspects of America, talks about the importance of honesty and truthfulness in the debate. And tonight we are going to concentrate on our heritage, our American heritage, our wonderful American heritage.

□ 2245

I have been joined by a number of colleagues tonight, and they are going to share a story or two about maybe the Founding Fathers, some heritage that we have. I hope that what that will do is inspire some of our colleagues to remember the principles that brought our Nation about and remember, remember, the ideals that we are bound to uphold.

With that, I am honored to yield to my good friend LOUIE GOHMERT from the great State of Texas. He is a judge by profession and is a member of the freshman class as well, and has just a wealth of knowledge about American history and our heritage. Congressman GOHMERT, please share a few words with us.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my good friend from Georgia, the eminent physician, healing not only bodies in the past, but coming in and healing with the good elixir of truth. We appreciate that tonight, Mr. Speaker, and we appreciate the opportunity to be here.

You are talking about truth, and you have the poster that says the Official Truth Squad. Something that has been neglected for far too long is the truth

about our history. You look back, there was a school I read not too long ago that was going to change their name away from George Washington, and I thought how tragic. They do not know history.

You go back, and above the Speaker's head up here, we see "In God We Trust." George Washington, there was a time when he was in desperate need, and he prayed to that God in whom we trust.

Going back to 1755, a young man in his early twenties, Washington was headed up toward Fort Duquesne with about 100 American soldiers and about 1,300 British soldiers. As they proceeded up through Pennsylvania, they had to go through a wooded area, a large wooded area, and there was a ravine that they marched through. There were 85 soldiers on horseback, those were the officers, and that included George Washington.

As they made their way through, the Indians and French were lying in wait, this was the French and Indian War, and here this young man with boldness, gallantry, was on horseback, he led his soldiers. When the ambush started, it was horrible. Bodies were flying everywhere, bullets taking them out.

After about 2 hours, there were over 700 who had died. There were 84 of the 85 officers that had been shot off their horses. Only one remained. That was George Washington. Finally, after a couple of hours, the remaining British and Americans retreated from the woods, and when they got a good distance away, they reformed and retreated, I believe it was back to Maryland.

There was a letter that Washington wrote back to his mother and brother accounting what happened. There are other accounts that seem to all tell the same story. But Washington wrote that when he took off his hat and shook his head, bullet fragments fell out of his hair, but there wasn't a scratch on him. He said when he took off his vest, there were bullet holes in his investigate, but not a scratch on him. As he wrote to his mother and brother, he said, "Truly God was with me," that God in whom we trust.

Fast forward 15 years later. Washington and a friend of his named Dr. Craig were going up through Pennsylvania. Washington was going to go by and show him this place where this horrible thing happened, where so many people died.

As they approached the woods, they were met by a group of Indians, and it turned out an old Indian chief was with them. They had a council fire, and during that time the chief disclosed that 15 years earlier, he too had been in that wood, and that he had heard Washington was coming to that area so he journeyed to meet him.

He said, "I gave the order to my braves to shoot at you, because we could see you coming from a distance and I knew if we shot you, that your men would flee in fear. We could just

tell the way you rode." He said, "I personally shot at you around 17 times. I traveled this distance to meet the man that God would not let die."

This was a man who was prepared for that. Through it all, through that horror of that event, you look back and see how that was worked together for good. He saw how the British reacted when they were under fire. He saw effective tactics. But, even more so, all those people saw him. They saw his gallantry, his bravery, his courage, his leadership. They knew this was a guy that they could trust, even in his early twenties.

So as we move toward the 1776 time, in the days when he would lead this country, a lot of people don't realize, but he was just the man for just such a time.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking to a group of youth from Grace Community School there in Tyler. Those kids know so much about our history. They know. But not every school teaches the history. I am proud to have a school like that in my city in Tyler where they know those kinds of things.

But after 1776, after the Declaration of Independence was signed, things looked so grim that the signers of the Declaration of Independence knew that if their troops failed, they were all dead people. Their families were dead, everything they owned would be taken, their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor, everything would be gone. Yet they put their trust in George Washington, along with the God that we trust.

On December 27, 1776, when things looked so bleak and they knew that shortly, just a matter of a week or so, the enlistment of these men would be up, they knew if they headed home as they were intending to do, all was lost. So they passed a resolution as a Continental Congress that basically gave Washington all the power that they had, power to pay money, to make orders, to tell people to do whatever. Then, interestingly, the letter that accompanied that resolution that they sent to Washington included this line. It said, "Happy it is for this country that the general of their forces could be safely entrusted with the most unlimited power, and neither personal security, liberty nor property be in the least degree endangered thereby."

Mr. Speaker, I know my good friend from Georgia feels the same way. I trust so many people, but I don't know of a single person in this country right now I would trust with that kind of power. But that is what George Washington had.

One of my favorite paintings, as I was telling the group from Tyler earlier today, from Grace Community Church, is the painting of Washington coming back in to the Continental Congress saying here is all the power back. Nobody had ever done that before.

This was a guy that had won the war. He had won the day. He was entitled to be called czar, emperor, dictator, pharaoh, whatever he wanted to be called.

Yet he came back in and, just as the resolution and the cover letter said, they knew he could be trusted. He came back in and said here is all the power back. It is yours. I am going back to Mount Vernon, and he did.

Some people don't realize just how brave he was. At the battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777, a young soldier wrote, and it is a recorded part of our history, "The sight of Washington set an example of courage such as I have never seen. I shall never forget what I felt when I saw him brave all the dangers of the field and his important life hanging as if it were by a single hair with a thousand deaths flying around him. Believe me, I thought not of myself." That is not a picture we see much these days.

Nathaniel Green wrote, "He will be the deliverer of his own country."

The Pennsylvania Journal wrote of Washington in 1777 as the revolution went on, "If Washington had been born in the days of idolatry, he would be worshipped as a god. If there are spots on his character, they are like the spots on the sun, only discernible by the magnifying powers of a telescope."

As David McCollough wrote, "Without Washington's leadership and unrelenting persistence, the Revolution almost certainly would have failed."

That is the kind of heritage we have. That is the kind of truthful, honest, courageous man that helped start this country and to whom we owe so much.

In conclusion, as our good friend and fellow Republican, we didn't know him personally, but God rest his soul, what a legacy, Abraham Lincoln, said in his second inaugural, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

God has blessed America. Mr. Speaker, it is my prayer that will continue.

I thank my good friend from Georgia for yielding to allow me to address those comments.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much, Congressman GOHMERT, for bringing us those words and the inspiring stories of American history. You have highlighted one of my absolute favorites with Washington withstanding the onslaught of the attack and then meeting the Indian chief years later and the Indian chief telling him that he understood and knew and it was clear that Washington had been touched by the hand of God. That just is so inspiring when we hear those words.

Washington himself talked a lot about our Nation. He talked a lot about what it took to preserve the Nation. He was concerned that the Nation might have difficulty in the future, and he felt that the only way to keep our

Nation strong was on what he called teaching the science of government. He said a primary object should be the education of our youth in the science of government. By that he meant learning about government, learning about our republic.

He went on to say, "In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important and what duty more pressing than communicating or teaching it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of our country?"

That is why it is important that I think we come here this evening and talk about our heritage, talk about our history, talk about the wonder of America.

It has been said if you want to see the future of a nation and what it will be, look at what the children are being taught. So we hope by some small measure to assist in the education of all of us and to remind us about the wonder and the beauty and the awe of our Nation and its heritage.

I am joined now by Congresswoman JEAN SCHMIDT. Congresswoman SCHMIDT is a fellow freshman and an active participant in the Official Truth Squad. We are so pleased to have her join us this evening and bring some comments about our heritage and about the principles of our wonderful Republic.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Thank you so much.

Tonight, I really want to talk about what I believe freedom is all about. As we sit in this beautiful Chamber, we must be mindful that we are the luckiest people in the world to live in the greatest Nation in the universe.

So I stand here tonight on the floor of this great Chamber like thousands of Representatives before me as living proof that democracy works. I share the same love for my country as my 37 predecessors from the Ohio Second Congressional District. I am the 38th Member of Congress from my district and the first woman. And I may be the first to wear high heels, but I am not alone in my support of this great country and for all that it stands.

Our country was founded on the principles of freedom: freedom to pursue life, liberty and happiness; freedom to bear arms; freedom to voice your opinion in the market square, or in this very Chamber; freedom to print what you decide to be printed is fit to be printed.

Freedom is a wonderful thing. It is an infectious thing. Millions of the oppressed around the world yearn for this very thing called freedom: free from oppression, free from terror, free from tyranny. Freedom is a powerful drink. It spills 1 million people into the streets of downtown Beirut demanding to be free from the rule of Syria and its dictator. It causes men to take up arms against their oppressors on the streets of Baghdad and Kabul. Just the dream of freedom caused men and women to risk their lives by organizing opposition in places like Beijing and Havana.

□ 2300

Far too often we Americans take our freedom for granted. We forget about the heroes before us that gave us this right, this privilege, this ability.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." He knew, even as freedom was being brought to our new country, that our very freedom would be constantly at risk.

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it," said Thomas Paine. As we stand here tonight, the Official Truth Squad, surrounded by the glorious testament of our democracy and freedom, we must be mindful, mindful that democracy is on the march, mindful that 50 million people are newly free thanks to our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let me repeat that. Fifty million people have the same opportunity that we have to taste and drink freedom, but most importantly, mindful that much more needs to be done. Tonight, the oppressed are dying at the hands of evil in far too many places around the world, in the camps of Darfur, in the jails of Havana, in political prisons in Asia.

Dwight David Eisenhower once said, "History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid. We did not choose to lead this fight, history has chosen us. Only we have the power needed to spread freedom. We indeed have been given the responsibility."

Our forefathers knew that when they were participating in this grand experiment so many years ago. We have been handed that torch. History will judge not what we say, but what we do.

I am honored to be here tonight to speak about this very important principle, because if we do not continue to lead this march, someone will come and take that torch from us.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak my mind in the greatest Nation, in the greatest chamber.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you, Congresswoman SCHMIDT. It is just a pleasure to hear your words and the very inspiring words.

You talk about freedom being infectious. It truly is. But you also talked about freedom not being free, and that the price of freedom, the price of liberty, is eternal vigilance.

I am proud to stand with you this evening and continue, continue to try to assist others to appreciate the fact that that eternal vigilance is necessary now, as never before frankly.

So we appreciate so much your words this evening and your participation.

Mr. Speaker, I am also joined this evening by another fellow freshman, Congresswoman FOXX from North Carolina, just a great, great member of the freshman class, an individual whom I respect highly, who spent a number of years in the education community, understands what it means to impart the importance of our heritage, of American principles and fundamentals.

I welcome you this evening and look forward to your words.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Congressman PRICE. It is a real pleasure to be here tonight. I am grateful for the words of our colleagues earlier, Congressman GOHMERT and Congresswoman SCHMIDT. I appreciate what they have said, and you. I am really proud to be a part of the Official Truth Squad.

And while I did not hear all of the comments that were made just prior to our beginning our session here, I did want to respond to one thing that you said. That is that we all are entitled to our opinions, but the facts are the facts. And it is important that we get the facts straight here. And I think many of the things that we are responding to are things that have been purported to be facts which are not facts at all. And I think it is important that we set the record straight.

I also noted tonight in the presentation by the Blue Dog Coalition that they are very concerned about the deficit, but they want to do away with the tax cuts and spend more money.

The problem with the deficit is that we are spending too much, and we need to cut back on the spending. And that is a fundamental issue. I think it is pretty much a fundamental law of economics, which I do not think can be done away with simply by talking about it. I think that we are going to have to come to grips with it.

As our colleague from Ohio was saying, it is such a great honor to be able to serve in this House. And I want to say that I grew up in a house in western North Carolina with no electricity, no running water, about as poor as anybody you will ever meet. And it is a true miracle that someone with my background could come here and represent the 5th District of North Carolina. And I am in awe every day of the fact that I have this great opportunity and am grateful for it.

And I think about the way this country was formed, and I think it is important that we talk a little bit about that.

I am troubled that so few people even know the basis of our government. People do not know the Constitution. They do not know the basis of our laws. They do not know the history of this country. And I want to talk some more about that, but I know we are not going to have as much time tonight as we had thought we would originally, so I am going to make a recommendation of a couple of books which I think are wonderful books to read.

Anything by David McCullough is great. I know that he was being quoted earlier. I had a chance to read 1776 recently, which is the story of the first year of the revolution, and it is wonderful.

And tonight I was reviewing the *Founding Brothers* by Joseph Ellis. And he talks a lot about the things that came together to make the United States possible, to make the Revolution possible. And I do want to quote

one piece from Ellis, or maybe a couple of pieces from the book *Founding Brothers*. I do highly recommend it as something so easy to read.

But he said, No one had ever established a republican government on the scale of the United States. And the overwhelming judgment of the most respected authorities was that it could not be done.

Well, here we are over 200 years later proving that it can be done. But it is our job as representatives of the people to make sure that this wonderful experiment in liberty is sustained. And as, again, our colleague from Ohio said, it is a great honor to serve here.

And some people may not know this, and I think it is important to know, that the only way anybody can serve in the United States House of Representatives is to be elected. People can be appointed to every other office in the United States, but they cannot be appointed to serve in the United States House of Representatives. One must be elected, and we are elected every 2 years.

And I hope in this course of time, as we talk about the principles of this country, that we will do something that I do not think people do often enough, that is read the Constitution. I think it is helpful for us to reflect on the Constitution. And as we talk about the Truth Squad, I want to read two pieces from the Constitution tonight, and then turn it back to you, Mr. PRICE, to conclude our time here.

But I think so often even the Constitution itself is not quoted accurately. And I think that part of our job should be to remind the people what the Constitution says, and how it is the basis for everything else that we do.

Now I am going to read just the Preamble to the Constitution. And by the way, I borrowed this from the Parliamentarian. And I find it interesting that we tie back to Mr. Jefferson and the Founding Fathers. This is, in one manual, the Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and the Rules of the House of Representatives.

As I understand it, in almost every elected body in the United States, they go back to Jefferson's Manual when there is any dispute on whether the rules apply or not. And so I think the fact that we do that is a great tribute to again our Founding Fathers and particularly Mr. Jefferson and the care he took with these things.

Let me read the Preamble:

"We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

I think that the key words for me here are "provide for the common defense." That is the role of the Federal government. That is the number one role of the Federal government. We do

want to promote the general welfare, but that is not the primary goal of the Federal government. It is to provide for the common defense.

Promoting the general welfare can be done in lots of different ways. And I have heard some people on the other side say we should change those words around and say, provide for the general welfare and promote the common defense. I think that that is one of the problems that we are having in our country these days.

And the other piece of the Constitution that I want to read tonight that I think is a part of tying back into our being the Official Truth Squad is amendment 1 to the Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

I find that in most days, when people want to quote the first amendment, they often quote that first phrase and leave out the second phrase. And I think that that is so important; I think it is a part of tying back again to the Truth Squad.

Many times you hear people quote, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion," that says we should take the words "In God We Trust" off of our money, the words "Under God" out of our pledge. But what is so important is the second half of that sentence, "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Unfortunately, those who would take away our freedoms are the ones who so often leave off the second half of that phrase. And it is extremely important that we not distort the words of the Constitution. And it is important I think that our Truth Squad remind people of those words so often, and I think we need to do that.

I hope we will in our sharing things with the people talk more about the Constitution and how the truth of the Constitution itself has been distorted by some of our colleagues.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much, Congresswoman FOXX. I tell you, it does my heart good to listen to your comments about the Constitution, about our Founding Fathers, and the kinds of things that they held dear.

I want to just highlight again that Preamble, the first line of the Preamble, "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union."

The Founding Fathers used these words to remind us that preserving the Constitution that they created is as difficult, maybe even more so, as writing and ratifying it in the late 1780s.

The words remind us that it is we the people that educate ourselves on the issues, become involved in choosing our leaders, and committed, those leaders, make sure the leaders are committed to governing by constitutional principles. And again the issues that we

face today are equally as dangerous as those that the Founders faced.

I wanted to highlight very briefly another document that is one of our founding documents, that is the Declaration of Independence. One of the early paragraphs in the Declaration I think crystallizes something that is incredibly important, we all know those words, but I think it is important to repeat them:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness," and "that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Incredible, powerful words.

But the message here that I always harken back to is that the power that government has is derived from the people, because the people derive their power from the Almighty, and the power that people have they then cede to government. It is not the other way around.

□ 2315

We do not believe that government has power and gives it to people. We believe that people, because of the inherent power from the Almighty and because of the inherent quality of life, have that power and cede it to the Federal Government and to the State government to bring about the kind of things that Congresswoman FOXX talked about.

The founding of our Nation truly is tied to a reliance on a higher authority and everyone at the time knew that. We have gotten a bit away from that, and I think one of the things that is incumbent upon us as leaders is to make certain that we remember that and that we remind people of that and that we talk about it freely and openly make certain that everyone understands and appreciates the importance of the Almighty.

One of the items that I will close with that moves me so every time I read it is Lincoln's Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting and Prayer. There are a couple of portions of that that I find incredibly eloquent. I quote from the proclamation:

"It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence on the overruling power of God, and to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the holy scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is Lord.

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have

forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. And we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

"Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended power and to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Mr. Speaker, we live in a wonderful and a wondrous Nation, a Nation that has blessed more individuals on the face of the Earth than any nation in the history of mankind. It is our privilege to serve in the United States House of Representatives and to bring this message of hope and optimism and positive speaking to the American people.

HONORING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) is recognized for the time remaining before midnight, approximately 42 minutes.

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, it is a great pleasure for me to lead this annual Special Order of the Congressional Black Caucus in honor of Black History Month. The theme for this year's African American history month is "Celebrating community, a tribute to black fraternal, social and civic institutions." And it is dedicated to exploring the impact that these civic organizations have had on the evolution of African American life and history.

A word or two about the history of Black History Month. The celebration of Black History Month started in 1926 as the vision of Dr. Carter G. Woodson who, out of frustration from not finding references to black history in any of our history books, launched an initiative to highlight the many outstanding contributions of African American people throughout the history of the United States. This year we are celebrating the 80th anniversary of Black History Month.

Initially, black history started off as a 1-week event during the second week of February because it marked the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced black people in this country, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. However, as time passed, it was clear that one week was not sufficient to highlight the achievements of black people and eventually the celebration became known as Black History Month.

Mr. Speaker, this year during Black History Month, we are celebrating the

institutions, fraternal, social, civic and religious, that have been so vital in our progress, the many national organizations and the community and grassroots organizations around the country that have been and continue to be the backbone of the African American community. Often times these organizations have stepped in when the Federal, State, and local governments have failed to provide the necessary services, and for that they are to be commended, most recently in the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have often said that Black History Month is about the future, a time to assess and acknowledge that there is no place for complacency and no time to rest. For that reason, the Congressional Black Caucus continues to focus its agenda and our efforts on closing and eliminating disparities that continue to exist in every aspect of our lives.

It is now my pleasure to recognize some of my colleagues to help us celebrate this Black History Month celebration. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just commend Mr. WATT as chairman of our Congressional Black Caucus for providing leadership in this important celebration and observance of the great and extraordinary contributions that African Americans have made and continue to make in America and throughout the world.

No race of people has come through the ordeal and the circumstances of slavery, of Jim Crowism, of racism, of de facto segregation, and in spite of all these obstacles made extraordinary contributions in every field of endeavor: business, medicine, the arts, sports, politics, business.

Today we are here to highlight especially the role of fraternities in our community. Nowhere is that more particular than within the African American community, for the African American fraternities were brought about not as a result or a need for social edification or for frivolity; but those fraternities that came about in the African American community came about because of great need at a time of extraordinary struggle and circumstance within the African American community.

Such was the case with all of our fraternities and certainly with the fraternity that I am a member of, which is the first fraternity and the oldest fraternity, the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. I would like to spend just a few moments talking about this fraternity because this was the first fraternity, and its development exemplifies all fraternities and the importance of their contribution.

In 1905 in Ithaca, New York, a group of African American students at Cornell were so devastated with the racism and prejudice at that institution that they found themselves in, that half of the six refused to come back in 1906;