

left to local control, to a Federal judiciary that in many instances completely ignores the intent of Federalism, all resulting in a Federal Government that has become wildly inefficient and just a huge bureaucracy.

So the old concept is really nothing new. It is just that we have lost it over time. Our founders were very clear when they established our system of government. They intended to set up a republic, a republic really, you could almost say, of sovereign states capable of self-governing, but with a small central government with clearly defined and limited powers.

As someone else previously stated, I think the gentleman from Utah, our Constitution can be thought of as a social contract, a contract between the people and their government. We must think of this most important document as a trade between the rights given up between these competing interests. One of the most important interests that we receive then from the Federal Government, as set forth in the Constitution, is the defense of this Republic.

All other inherently government services, the founders were very clear about, were to be contracts between themselves and the local government and contracts between themselves and the State governments. We refer to this as Federalism. The only powers specifically listed in the Constitution are to be administered by the Federal Government. All others are reserved to the people respectively.

Now, earlier last month, I guess it was, we had the discussion on part of this forum to look at one of the legislations that is coming down the pike that will help facilitate this, and that is the sunset commission. We have discussed this in the past, and I will just talk on it briefly right now.

The sunset commission will try to rein in the Federal Government by looking at the agencies and the powers that are already out there. We have suggested that it could be given, maybe even stronger, be given some teeth to it, and one of the ways you do that is to set it up in a BRAC-like format so that when it comes to Congress, it will actually eliminate those ineffective government programs with an up-or-down vote.

Second, and maybe an important change we can make in this to make it even truer, is to do this, and that is to provide provisions in that legislation to say that you will not simply look at the effectiveness of programs or whether programs are duplicative. You will also look at whether or not the programs of the Federal Government are constitutional.

Even if a program is not duplicative of other Federal programs or State programs, even if a Federal program is effective that is being performed right now, the underlying and most seminal question that we must ask ourselves is, do we, as Members of Congress, have the constitutional authority to do what the legislation is asking us to do.

If you put that into something like a sunset commission, that we can review this as each bill and each legislation comes up, each program that is out there, we will be moving in the right direction.

Let me just close by looking at some of the good news that just came out recently, today as a matter of fact, and that is the economic numbers showing that we are actually reining in Federal spending. We are seeing our deficit go down on the Federal level, and I am happy about that.

I am happy that I have been able to join with other members of this delegation and Members of this House to try to rein in the government and try to bring it in the right direction.

We must be awfully careful, though, that when we get the fiscal house of the Federal Government in order that we do not then decide that we will start spending money elsewhere. That would be the wrong direction to take. We have been able to get to where we are simply by putting our house in order as far as spending; we have been able to lower tax rates, allow folks to be on the family budget and not on the Federal budget, to have a more free-market approach.

So I will just say this: that if we close by putting those limitations on the Federal Government to restrict our approach to it and make sure that our philosophy is the same as the Founding Fathers, then we will see that there is both a practical and a fundamental and foundational approach to doing so, and that is a constitutional government.

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

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

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.)

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Ms. MCKINNEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 37-member strong, fiscally conservative, Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, I rise this afternoon to discuss our Nation's debt.

As you can see here, Mr. Speaker, today the United States national debt is \$8,413,298,480,959 and some change. If you divide that enormous number by every man, woman and child, including those babies being born today, every United States citizen's share of the national debt comes to the tune of \$28,120.

In the Blue Dog Coalition we have coined the phrase "the debt tax," not to be confused with the death tax or estate tax. The debt tax, D-E-B-T, is one tax that cannot go away until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

That is what the Democratic, fiscally conservative, 37-member-strong Blue Dog Coalition is all about trying to restore some commonsense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. As you walk the halls of Congress and as you walk the halls of the Cannon and the Longworth and the Rayburn House Office Buildings, you will come across these posters which signify that you have walked by the door of an office of one of our fellow Blue Dog members.

We are concerned about this because, Mr. Speaker, from 1998 through 2001, this Nation had a balanced budget, and yet under this administration and this Republican-led Congress, we have seen record budget deficits, the largest deficits ever, ever in our Nation's history.

In 2004, the deficit was \$412 billion. In 2005, it was \$318 billion. In 2006, it was \$372 billion, and in fiscal year 2007, it is projected to be \$350 billion, one of the largest deficits ever in our Nation's history.

One of the first bills I filed as a Member of Congress when I got here back in 2001 was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund. The Republican leadership in this Congress refused to give me a hearing or a vote on that bill, and now we know why, because the real deficit projected for fiscal year 2007 is not \$280 billion or \$350 billion, depending on whose numbers you want to believe. It is really \$545 billion. So where does the difference come about? It is because this Republican Congress and this administration is counting the Social Security trust fund, and that is wrong.

When you and I go to the bank to get a loan, our banker wants to know how we are going to pay it back, when are we going to pay it back, and yet this Republican Congress continues to give us the largest budget deficits ever in our Nation's history while borrowing money from the Social Security trust fund with no provision being made on how or when that money will be paid back.

Where is it going come from? They cannot tell us. When is it going to be paid back? They cannot tell us. Social Security has kept over half the seniors in America out of poverty. It is time for this Republican Congress to keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund.

Now, why is this debt so important? Total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion.

□ 1630

Let me repeat that. From 1789 until 2000, the total national debt was \$5.67 trillion. But by 2010, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. This is a doubling. This is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years.

Another reason that deficits should matter, Mr. Speaker, is because interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget, and the debt tax, D-e-b-t tax, is one that cannot be repealed until we get back to the days of a balanced budget.

Not only is our Nation borrowing \$1 billion a day; this number is going up by about \$1 billion a day. Our Nation is borrowing \$1 billion a day. More important than that, our Nation is spending a half a billion dollars, \$500 million, every single day simply paying interest on the national debt that we already got before it goes up another billion dollars a day.

I represent a very poor district in Arkansas. We have a lot of hope in creating economic opportunities by building new highways. We need \$1.6 billion to complete Interstate 69. It sounds like a staggering number until you

think about it. If we did not have this debt, we could build Interstate 69 with 3 days' interest on the national debt.

Mr. Speaker, our government will spend more money in the next 4 days paying interest, not principal, just interest on the national debt, than what it would cost to completely build Interstate 69 through Arkansas.

Interstate 49 will also be critical to creating economic opportunities and jobs for my district. We need \$1.5 billion to finish it. Again, a staggering number until you think about we are spending \$500 million every 24 hours simply paying interest on the debt we already got before it goes up another billion dollars today.

We could complete Interstate 49 with just 3 days' interest on the national debt. Hot Springs, Arkansas: We need about \$200 million to complete the expressway around Hot Springs. \$80 million to get it up the hill, and up the mountain and another 100 to 200 million to get it back down and totally completed. \$80 million would be nice. \$200 million would be better. We could complete the Hot Springs Expressway with just a few hours' interest on the national debt.

El Dorado, Arkansas, the largest town in my district not located on a four-lane highway, desperately needs four-lane access. We could four-lane U.S. Highway 167 for about \$400 million. Put it another way, we could four-lane U.S. Highway 167 from Little Rock to El Dorado and connect on down to Louisiana to I-20 with less than 1 day's interest on the national debt.

Interstate I-530, \$200 million to complete that project that is also under construction. A lot of money. But just a few hours' interest on the national debt. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we could build 200 brand-new elementary schools every single day in America just with the interest we are spending on the national debt. We cannot meet America's priorities as it relates to reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we will spend, we will spend more money in Iraq in the next 8 hours than we will spend on research and development of bio-refineries in the next 365 days.

Health care, education, making the kind of advancements to our Nation's infrastructure that we so desperately need, the kind of investments that we saw under Roosevelt with the WPA program to help get us out of the Great Depression, or with Eisenhower with the interstate program, these kinds of priorities for America will continue to go unmet until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

That is why as a member of the Blue Dog Coalition I am here to talk about this debt, and this deficit, because America has many priorities. Many priorities that continue to go unmet as our Nation continues to borrow \$1 billion a day, as our Nation continues to spend half a billion a day, \$500 million a day, simply paying interest on the national debt. Meanwhile, America's priorities continue to go neglected.

Now why should deficits matter other than all of these reasons I have already given you? Deficits reduce economic growth. We all know that. Look how much better the economy was in the 1990s when we had a balanced budget. Deficits burden our children and our grandchildren.

It is wrong for us to borrow money from other countries to give tax cuts to people here earning over \$400,000 a year and leave our children to pay the bill. How would you like to go to the bank and tell your banker you want to borrow money to build this new house, but you are not going to pay for it, you are just going to leave the bills for your children? You know, Mr. Banker, I have got two wonderful children. I am going to make sure they get a wonderful education, grow up, get a good job. They are going to pay for this house. The banker would try to have you locked up as being mentally insane.

Yet that is how we are running our country today. In fact, deficits do matter because they increase our reliance on foreign lenders, foreign lenders who now own over 40 percent of our debt. Where is this money coming from that we are borrowing? 40 percent. As we know, some of it is coming from the Social Security trust fund with no provision on how or when it is going to be paid back.

Well, where is the rest of this debt coming from? We are borrowing \$1 billion a day. Where is it coming from? Is it coming from your hometown bank? I do not think so. It is coming from foreign central banks and foreign investors.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the United States of America is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders to fund our lifestyle, which is give me tax cuts if I make over \$400,000 a year, borrow the money from China and let my kids worry about paying it back. That is the way this Republican Congress is running America.

Foreign lenders. Foreign lenders currently hold a total of more than \$2 trillion of our public debt. Compare this to only \$23 billion in foreign holdings back in 1993. The top 10 list. The top 10 current lenders. America continues to pass tax cuts for folks earning over \$400,000 a year with money that we are borrowing, because we are borrowing \$1 billion a day, with money they are borrowing from whom? Here is the top 10: Japan, The United States of America owes Japan \$640.1 billion; China, \$321.4 billion. As my friend and a founder of the Blue Dogs, Mr. TANNER, has so eloquently stated and pointed out before, if China decides to invade Taiwan, the United States of America will have to go to China to borrow more money to defend Taiwan.

The United Kingdom, \$179.5 billion; OPEC, imagine that. We wonder why gas is approaching \$3 a gallon. Our Nation has borrowed \$98 billion from OPEC to fund tax cuts for folks in this country earning over \$400,000 a year.

Korea, the United States of America has borrowed \$72.4 billion from Korea;

Taiwan, we have borrowed \$68.9 billion; the Caribbean banking centers, \$61.7 billion; Hong Kong, \$46.6 billion; Germany, \$46.5 billion. And are you ready for this? Rounding out the top 10 countries that our Nation borrows money from to fund our out-of-control deficit spending to the tune of \$1 billion a day, we have now borrowed \$40.1 billion from Mexico.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when an American family sits down around the dinner table to pay their bills and budget for their household, they include all of their family obligations, their mortgage, their car payment, their credit card bills, their education expenses, you name it. Those hardworking folks take into account the cost of a 4-year education for their children, not just for one year of it.

They take into account their car payment, and how many years it is going to take to pay for that car, not just to drive it for a year. When they mortgage their homes, they take into account how long and by what means they will be able to afford their housing, not just live in it for a year.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, they expect the same from their government. And yet as we can see, July 11, today, Los Angeles Times editorial entitled "Another Mission Accomplished," I am not going to read all of the editorial, but the first two paragraphs are worth reading:

"The release of the White House mid-session budget review is an annual event normally marked by a few wonkish observations and the routine updating of various spreadsheets, not by a full-dress Presidential dog-and-pony show.

"President Bush plans to preside today, with Members of Congress and invited guests in attendance. By all indications, including his own, in his weekly radio address last Saturday, he plans to turn this into a celebration just in time for the fall campaign.

"This is proof, if anyone still needs it, that this administration is desperate for something to boast about. On Mr. Bush's watch, triple-digit budget surpluses have turned into annual triple-digit budget deficits. There is no information in the mid-session report to alter that utterly disparaging fact.

"Yes, the report is expected to project that this year's deficit will be somewhat less gargantuan than last year's, probably somewhere between 280 and \$300 billion versus a \$318 billion shortfall in 2005. That is not much to crow about."

That is an editorial that appeared today in the Los Angeles Times entitled "Another Mission Accomplished." It goes on. But the point is that this administration is so desperate for some good news that they are having a celebration to celebrate that our Nation is not going to borrow \$318 billion as it did in 2005; it is only going to borrow between 280 and \$300 billion in fiscal year 2006. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that our Nation borrowing nearly \$1 billion a day is nothing to celebrate.

Now, contrary to this administration's rhetoric in light of these new numbers touted today, we have yet to get government spending under control. Instead of talking about 1 year, we should have a real plan to deal with the realities of our long-term debt and deficit, just like American families do for their financial obligations.

A perfect example of this is how we are handling our obligation in Iraq. I believe we all support our troops. I hope we do. I have got a brother-in-law who spent Christmas refueling Air Force planes over in Afghanistan. My first cousin's wife gave birth to their first child during his service in Iraq. We honor all of those who have and who continue to serve our country in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Where I disagree with this President is on the point of accountability. This President, this Republican Congress, is sending \$279 million of your tax money to Iraq every day. And yet if you ask him to be accountable for it, if you ask him for a plan on how that money is being spent and how it will win the peace and ultimately bring our men and women in uniform home, he will tell you you are being unpatriotic. That is where I disagree with this President.

We just entered our fourth year in this war, and I believe if we are going to send \$279 million of your tax money to Iraq every day, this administration and this Republican Congress should be held accountable for how that money is being spent.

But we are still finding it piecemeal; we are still excluding the cost of the war from our annual spending process. We are passing a number of supplemental appropriation bills to pay for it that mask the war's true cost. It is time, it is past time that this administration be up front with the American people and include these important costs in their annual budget estimates.

Only then, Mr. Speaker, only then will we be able to celebrate a real decline in deficits. Again, Mr. Speaker, the U.S. national debt as of today is \$3,413,298,480,959 and some change.

For every man, woman and child in America their share is \$28,120. What is staggering is that by the time we conclude this hour on the floor today, the U.S. national debt will have risen to the tune of more than \$41,666,000.

□ 1645

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Florida, Mr. ALLEN BOYD, one of the founding members and one of the real leaders of the fiscally conservative 37-member strong Democratic Blue Dog Coalition as we continue to talk more about the debt and the deficit and accountability. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from Florida, Mr. BOYD.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding, and I also want to thank him for his leadership. He has led these

special orders for the Blue Dog Coalition now for quite a while on a weekly basis to try to deliver the message to the American people in an honest and straightforward way about the fiscal situation of our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear him talk a little bit about Iraq. Iraq is a situation that we are having a great debate in this country about, and I think that he made the point that we all very strongly support the men and women. Once we established the mission and sent them over there to perform and carry out that mission, it is clear that we support them. It doesn't mean that we can't have an honest and open dialogue and debate about the policy.

Mr. Speaker, is appalling to me as a person who wore the uniform during the Vietnam era to see those Members of the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, or anybody that might oppose the policy that the United States Government has, to have them called unpatriotic. So I appreciate the gentleman from Arkansas bringing up that point.

I also, Mr. Speaker, came here today to talk a little bit about fiscal responsibility and to assist my friend from Arkansas in talking about the national debt. Mr. Speaker, I find it appalling to hear the partisan political rhetoric that goes on in these Chambers, rhetoric which celebrates a Federal budget annual deficit of \$300 billion.

Now, most of us that have run a business, Mr. Speaker, know that at the end of the day your revenues have to match your expenditures, or else you either have to borrow money with a long-term plan to pay it back, or a short-term plan and show your banker how you can pay it back that year.

Mr. Speaker, this administration and this Republican-led Congress over the last 5 years have run our government into a situation where we have a structural deficit built in. There is not an economist anywhere around that will tell you under the current revenue taxing system and the current spending habits of this Congress and this administration that we will have a balanced budget anywhere in the future. We all know that we have to make some structural changes to the way we are doing business. So when I see somebody celebrating a \$300 billion annual deficit, it saddens me in a lot of ways.

What Mr. Ross and the other members of the Blue Dog Coalition want for the American people is an effort by this Congress and this administration to address our fiscal situation honestly. Honestly, Mr. Speaker. What is wrong with telling the American people what the true fiscal situation is as it relates to our Federal Government?

We would like to see the Treasury's financial report that Mr. Ross made mention of earlier in his comments that is published by the Government Accounting Office and accounts for all spending, current and future. Had we seen this report last year, it would

have told us that the Federal budget actually was \$760 billion, not \$350 billion as reported. And do you know what, ladies and gentlemen? It won't change much this year.

The Blue Dogs would like to see an earnest effort to institute commonsense principles in our budgeting process, just principles which every businessman and businesswoman in this country understands that you have to live by if you are going to have a successful business. In our Federal budgeting process, those would translate into discretionary spending caps, something that in 1997, when I first came to this Congress working together with Republicans and Democrats.

Working together, we had a Democratic President, we had a Republican-controlled House and Senate; they all sat at the table together, and they talked honestly with each other, and they laid the numbers out on the table, "Here is where we are; here is what it will take to get us back into balance." Discretionary spending caps. Put some caps on spending. Use the PAYGO rule.

What does PAYGO mean? A PAYGO rule means that if you are going to spend something over here, that you have to find a place either to cut spending on this side or raise the revenue from some source. If you are going to decrease revenue over here through a tax cut, you are going to have to find a place to raise that revenue someplace else. Those are commonsense PAYGO rules. That way we won't be taking spending more than we are taking in.

Something, Mr. Speaker, that we voted on the first 4 years I was in this Congress, I think we voted on it no less than seven or eight times, and that is a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, a constitutional balanced budget amendment which requires us, as a Congress and administration, to balance our budget.

It seems that we don't have the political will under the current leadership to make these tough decisions from a legislative or an executive branch, so maybe it is time to consider a constitutional requirement that would force the Congress and the administration to balance this budget. If we don't, we will continue to see that number of \$8,413,298,480,959 continue to go up.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ross may not know this, but when I came to the Congress in 1997, that number was less than \$5.5 trillion. It has gone up over \$3 trillion since I came here. It was \$5.6 trillion when President Bush was elected and took office in January of 2001. So it has gone up about \$2.8 trillion since this President came into office.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I find it appalling that the political rhetoric would cause us to celebrate a \$300 billion annual deficit. That is over 10 percent of our Federal budget, over \$300 billion, over 10 percent of our Federal budget. We have to go out into the capital markets, and Mr. Ross has done a good job of explaining where those capital mar-

kets are, in China and Japan and Mexico and other countries.

In years past, those deficits were financed locally, mostly by war bonds and other bonds that were sold domestically, but not anymore. And I think that would lead us into a situation which could be very dangerous for us from an economic standpoint and a national security standpoint.

In addition to the things that I have talked about that I would like to see, the Blue Dogs would like to see implemented into a budgeting process, and that is discretionary spending caps, PAYGO rules, balanced budget amendment, we would like to see the government act responsibly like most every responsible family in America and save for emergencies.

We are always going to have emergencies, we are always going to have a hurricane or a tornado or an earthquake or a flood, or we are always going to be engaged somewhere around the world in a military action. Why not set up a rainy day fund for future emergencies and put money into it so that we won't have to, on an annual basis and sometimes even more than once a year, come back to the appropriations process and pass an off-book emergency spending bill?

Why do we do that? Well, again, I think it has to do with partisan politics, and that is, if you pass a budget originally which pretends that you can live within your means, but you know you have left off a lot of things, you might fool some people, but you are not going to fool many people for very long.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about what happened in 1997 shortly after I came to Congress in which we all sat together, Republicans, Democrats, House leaders, Senate leaders, sat together and developed a long-term plan to get us out of our Federal debt or out of annual deficits and put us into a balanced budget. We did that, and guess what. Once we put that plan in place, everybody bought into it, the economy continued to grow.

The economy in America has always grown. I mean, if things are even halfway normal, you are going to have more tax revenues the next year than you had the previous year.

So that is part of the partisan rhetoric that is appalling to me, that the numbers that the White House has thrown out in the last few days in terms of the growth in tax revenues is way below what they projected in 2001 when they presented their economic package, which included the large book of tax cuts.

So I think that it is really important to work together and deal honestly with the American people about what our situation is, and we can't really begin to solve this problem until we recognize in an honest way what the problem is.

Now, Mr. Ross earlier talked about the article in the Los Angeles Times today, which really I would commend

to our viewers, to those who are listening to us, to read. And it talks a little bit about this budget deficit and the current economic news. But let me quote from that, if I might, Mr. Speaker.

In that article, the writer says, "This will be the third year in a row that the administration put forth relatively gloomy deficit forecasts early, only to announce much later that things had turned out better than expected." That is what you have here. You see, back in the early spring when we first put the budget on the table, there were some very gloomy reports about what that number would be and now this is the third year that that has happened.

"To some skeptics," and I continue to quote, "it is beginning to look like an economic version of the old expectations game. Even economists who hesitate to accuse the White House of playing games," and I am still quoting from this L.A. Times article, "Even economists who hesitate to accuse the White House of playing games say the claims of good news on the budget are unfortunate because they make people unjustifiably sanguine about the government's current fiscal health."

"Our problem," and this is a quote from Comptroller David Walker who is a man that we all know and respect, those of us who serve here representing our constituents back home. He says, and I quote, "Our problem is our long-term—our large long-term deficit, and the sooner we deal with that, the better."

Walker also goes on to say that, and he warns of, quote, "a false sense of security. We are in much worse shape fiscally today than we were a few years ago."

This is from a man who is the head accountant representing the United States Government Accounting Office.

Mr. Speaker, I know we have been joined by some other Blue Dog members, and we want to hear from them, but I want to commend the gentleman from Arkansas for leading this discussion tonight. It is important, Mr. Speaker, that we have an honest debate and dialogue on these issues.

A constituent told me one time, he said, "Mr. Boyd, we used to hear debate and dialogue, but now we hear spin and rhetoric. Can we get back to honesty? Can we get back to everybody at least laying out both sides of the issue so that we can understand better how to fix these problems?"

We can't really fix them until we admit that we have a problem. And for some in this government, they don't seem willing to admit that we have a problem. So I want to commend the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Florida, one of the leaders of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, for joining us this evening and addressing part of the Blue Dog's 12-point reform plan for curing our Nation's addiction to deficit spending. And these are just 12 commonsense ideas that we offer up,

and yet the Republican leadership refuses to give us a hearing or a vote on these ideas.

□ 1700

One of them is simply a balanced budget. Forty-nine States require a balanced budget. I can assure you my wife requires a balanced budget at the Ross home in Prescott, Arkansas. Most bankers require businesses to have a balanced budget. And this is just another commonsense idea we have.

Another of the 12-point plans for budget reform simply says, "Ensure that Congress reads the bills it is voting on." Now, we can't pass a law to make Congress read the bills it is voting on, but I can promise you this: When this Congress votes on 500-plus-page bills and gives the minority, our side of the aisle, less than an hour to read the bill before we vote on it, I can promise you that Members of Congress cannot read every word of every page of every bill before they are being forced to vote on it.

We saw that happen, for example, with the Medicare prescription drug bill, now estimated to cost \$720 billion over the next 10 years. It went to a vote barely a day after the final version of the 500-plus-page bill was made available for Members of Congress to see and read.

What we propose, as members of the Blue Dog coalition, is that Members of Congress should be given a minimum of 3 days to have the final text of legislation made available to them before there is a vote. Another commonsense idea.

I want to thank again the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) for joining us and raising some of these things, because we are not here just to say Republicans are bad. We are here to say we are tired of all the partisan bickering that goes on in our Nation's Capitol. It shouldn't be about whether it is a Republican idea or a Democrat idea; we want to see some commonsense ideas.

And we are not here just to criticize. We are here to hold the Republican Congress accountable, but we are also here to offer up a solution to this problem, and that is why we have written this 12-point plan for budget reform.

At this time, I am pleased to introduce one of the newest members of the Blue Dog coalition, who has contributed greatly to our calls of trying to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. Before I do that, though, Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments or concerns of us, I hope you will e-mail us at [bluedog@mail.house.gov](mailto:bluedog@mail.house.gov). Again, Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns of us, I would encourage you to e-mail us at [bluedog@mail.house.gov](mailto:bluedog@mail.house.gov).

And at this time, I am now pleased to turn this over to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BEAN).

Ms. BEAN. I thank my colleague, Mr. ROSS, from Arkansas, for allowing me

to join him in what I hope will be a colloquy with some of our other Blue Dog members. Congressmen BOYD and DAVIS and TANNER, I think, are going to join us, as well, and we can talk about some of the issues that are so important to all of us that are part of the Blue Dog Coalition.

One of the things I would like to lead on is the PAYGO budget rules that we all feel are so important to restore honesty in government and with our taxpayers, so they understand how we are spending their tax dollars better.

One of the other things I want to do before we even go there is, I would like to ask Mr. TANNER to talk a little about his bill that he has introduced to create better auditing of those Federal agencies where we know there is a lack of controls.

Mr. TANNER. Well, thank you very much. I am delighted to join Mr. DAVIS, and you, Ms. BEAN, and Mr. ROSS and Mr. BOYD.

I became aware of the fact that there is no oversight in this town of what we are already removing from people's pockets involuntarily in terms of taxation, and appropriating it to any administration without any oversight about where it is going.

To give you some instances, this is hard to believe, and we have had to get these from newspaper reports and IG reports and so forth because there have been no oversight hearings to amount to anything around here in so long, but just listen to some of these examples of government waste:

An internal Pentagon audit found that Halliburton had overcharged the American taxpayer by over \$1 billion. This included \$45 for cases of Coke, \$100 a bag for laundry service, and several months preparing at least 10,000 daily meals at a military base in Iraq that the troops did not eat. They also paid a Kuwaiti company \$1.30 a gallon of gasoline, while other contractors were doing work for 18 cents a gallon.

This goes on. The Multinational Security Transition Command purchased seven armored Mercedes-Benz automobiles at \$945,000 a car, over \$6.6 million, that ended up being old models and did not even have the required level of armored protection. Furthermore, they couldn't locate one of them after delivery was made.

FEMA paid \$236 million for three cruise ships to house evacuees and relief workers in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This comes out to over \$1,200 a week per passenger at full capacity, almost double the price of a weeklong cruise. The ships did not have any fuel costs or entertainment costs because they were at the dock. Also, the ships have never been at capacity, but FEMA's contract pays them for capacity anyway.

They are also paying contractors in the gulf coast an average of \$2,480 for less than 2 hours of work to cover each damaged roof with a blue tarp, which is 10 times what the temporary fix would normally cost.

We had to get these reports from newspaper accounts and others because there is no oversight here.

So what we have done is, we have put together a bill, H. Res. 841, which the Blue Dogs have endorsed, that says basically three things: When the Inspector General report identifies waste, fraud, and abuse, or when they identify a "high-risk agency," which is government talk for one that doesn't work, the program is not working like Congress intended it to, or when the CPAs, or the auditor, says on the front page of the audit that we don't know if what you are about to read is true or not because the books are in such bad shape we can't audit them, in those cases, this bill that the Blue Dog Coalition has endorsed says basically that Congress must hold a hearing.

It is our, the Blue Dogs' position that at least the American taxpayer ought to expect from this Congress or any other Congress to keep up with the money we take away from people involuntary in the form of taxes. This Congress is not doing that, and it is a failure; it is a total abdication really of the constitutional responsibility that this branch of government has to the executive branch.

So I hope people will get interested in H. Res. 841, because it speaks directly, Ms. BEAN, to what you were talking about.

Ms. BEAN. Well, I am honored to have cosponsored that legislation. And to your point, I think it is basic fiscal common sense. The taxpayers deserve better than what they are getting from this Congress. I can't imagine anyone who would call themselves a fiscal conservative and not support this commonsense legislation or any leadership that wouldn't bring such legislation forward.

Mr. ROSS. I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee, one of the founders of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, Mr. TANNER, for offering up this bill. Again, another example of how the Blue Dogs are not just pointing fingers. We are holding the Republican Congress accountable, but we are not just criticizing them. We are offering up solutions, and this is another commonsense solution to restore accountability to our government.

A lot of people may not know this, but the Government Accountability Office reported that 19 of 24 Federal agencies were not in compliance with all Federal accounting audit standards and could not fully explain how they had spent taxpayer money appropriated by Congress. This bill that the Blue Dogs and Mr. TANNER have introduced will hold these Federal agencies accountable for how they spend your tax money, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. BOYD. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ROSS. Yes, I will yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD).

Mr. BOYD. I just wanted to comment on the presentation, the remarks by

Mr. TANNER, who has been a champion on this accountability effort.

And you remarked or just talked about the audits, that 19 of the 24 agencies couldn't produce clean audits. Actually, the leaders, the worst offender is probably the Department of Defense. FEMA is a bad offender. We have hurricanes in Florida all the time, so we are always dealing with FEMA. I can tell you that I can take you to some folks, many, many folks who are millionaires that were getting generators, that were getting their roofs fixed, and things like that from FEMA.

And this goes back to the accountability issue. What are we doing with the taxpayers, the folks we are taking money from involuntarily, as Mr. TANNER says? We have some responsibility to make sure, and that responsibility belongs to the United States Congress, to make sure the executive agencies are spending it wisely, and we are not doing that. And that is the point we are making here. And I thank you for yielding.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman raises an excellent point. As you can see here, these are manufactured homes. You would think that they would be in Louisiana or Mississippi or someplace where people lost their homes and everything they owned as a result of Hurricane Katrina. And you would have thought, well, the hurricane was last August, and this is July, so we are coming up on the first anniversary, and you would think they would have by now gotten to the people who have been left homeless from these storms.

Yet they have remained parked, you can see, in this cow pasture here, or hay meadow here, or whatever you want to call it. There is the barbed wire fence, and the grass, and the pasture land, and 10,777 of these manufactured homes. These are 16-foot wide, 60-foot long, and almost a \$500,000,000 worth of mobile homes sitting at the Hope Airport in Hope, Arkansas.

These trailers, 10,777 of them, arrived late last year. Today, we still have 9,959 of them. That is a close-up view. You have to see this. Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, you can get a good look at this. That is an aerial view. They are being parked at the airport in Hope, Arkansas.

That is not all of them. Lord knows, there is not a lens wide enough to get them all. But we still have 9,959 brand-new, fully-furnished, totally unused mobile homes that were designed to go to storm victims following Hurricane Katrina that are parked 450 miles from the eye of the storm at an airport in Hope, Arkansas.

Now, if that is not enough, FEMA is spending \$250,000 a month, \$25,000 of that is going to the city to park them there, but the rest of that \$250,000 a month is going for security and all the maintenance and all the stuff that is required to store them there. And on top of that, FEMA's response is not to get them to the people who need them, FEMA's response is, oh, my goodness,

the inspector general is right. When a big rain comes, they are likely to sink in this hay meadow. So now FEMA is spending another \$7 million laying gravel on nearly 200 acres of land.

This is the kind of lack of accountability within our government that we are trying to get at with this bill Mr. TANNER and the other Blue Dogs have introduced.

Mr. TANNER. If you will yield on just that point, here is what the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security, which is where FEMA is now, said in regard to their financial statements. "Unfortunately, the Department made little or no progress to improve its overall financial reporting during FY 2005. The auditor was unable to provide an opinion on the Department's balance sheet."

What they are saying is, we don't know what these people are doing with this money and they can't tell us. Congress is not asking, what did you do with the money, but if they asked, they couldn't tell them. That is what this bill goes to, and I am glad you have that horrendous picture there about all these trailers.

They can't tell you and the auditor can't tell you what happened to the money.

Mr. ROSS. I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

At this time, I would like to introduce another gentleman from Tennessee who is very active in the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, another member who is not afraid to come to Washington, stand up and say he is a conservative Democrat, and that is my friend, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS from Tennessee.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Congressman ROSS, thank you for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here today to talk about our wonderful country. I have traveled some recently, and as I have traveled to other areas, basically in the war zone in Afghanistan and Iraq, I realize one of the greatest blessings I have had was at birth.

I was born in America, and to be an American citizen as a result of that, with all the hopes and all the opportunities and options of life any human being could expect to be given in this country. Some of those opportunities are, for folks like me, who live in a rural area, in a very small area, lowly populated, that one could also have an opportunity to run for Congress; and I took that opportunity in 2002 and ran and was elected.

I came to Washington knowing what the challenges were. I came to Washington realizing that a lot of times we see and hear a lot of smoke and mirrors, that transparency seems to be something that doesn't exist a whole lot, but I didn't really think we were going to hear of some of the things that have happened in this Congress.

The lack of oversight, the lack of hearings on how we spend our money,

the lack of hearings on the war in Iraq, and the lack of hearings on virtually anything. We are almost shut down unless it happens to be the idea of the majority in this Congress. Debate is limited to just what they choose to talk about.

That is not the America I knew growing up. That is not the America I want us to have today. So I want to talk some about fiscal irresponsibility.

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For years I heard Democrats being called tax and spend liberal Democrats. It became a buzzword, something that most folks didn't like, including me. But after I got here, I realized we needed to change that phrase. It needed to be changed to borrow and spend liberals, borrow and spend liberals, and mismanagement and spend liberals. Those are Republicans that I am talking about folks, not Democrats. Because during the Clinton administration when President Clinton left office in 2001, the deficit of this Nation was a little over \$5 trillion. Today it is \$8.4 trillion.

Also the Clinton administration gave this President over \$230 billion in surplus that could be used to start paying down the debt. Let's take \$200 billion in surplus. Over the last 5 years, that is a trillion dollars we could have paid down on our debts. Instead, what have we done? We have gone from \$5.3 trillion to \$8.4 trillion. That is a \$3.1 trillion increase.

Just think, if we had managed government as it was managed during the 1990s, with budget restraints in place, similar to the ones that the Blue Dogs are trying to get passed, those 12-point items, think of where we would be today if we continued with \$230 billion in surplus. We would be \$1.25 trillion less in debt. We would now owe a little over \$4 trillion instead of \$8.4 trillion.

Whose fault is it? It is the mismanagement of this group. How is that the case? Because during the Clinton administration, during the last years it was 18.4 percent in gross domestic product that was being spent at that time under the budget restraints that we lived under, pay as you go. Today it is 20.1 percent, the gross domestic product.

Let me repeat those figures. The last year of the Clinton administration, it was 18.4 percent of the gross domestic product that America was spending on government. In this administration for the last 5 years, it has grown, the gross domestic product, numbers have increased obviously because we have seen the gross domestic product increase, but the number is 20.1 percent.

Does that tell you that somebody is fiscally conservative? It doesn't to me. Folks talk about commonsense approaches. Commonsense to me is the application of knowledge based upon your experiences of life.

We have too many blue blood trust fund owners in this Chamber that don't understand how to manage money. If



you have that trust fund, you don't need to worry about where your next dollar is coming from. It is coming from the labors and fruits of your parents or grandparents and the blue blood trust fund boys and girls in here don't know how to figure out how to balance the budget. Some of us have had to work all of our lives, and we know when you spend that hard-earned tax dollar of those that we are extracting it from, that it is a sacrifice from them.

It is my hope that this Congress wises up and stops being as partisan as they quite frankly have been and start addressing the issues in a transparent way with oversight and accountability.

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Speaker, I think Congressman DAVIS makes a fine point because I think it is one of the reasons so many of our constituents feel disconnected from Washington. They cannot relate to what is going on on the Hill. Most of us come from a real-world background. We have run businesses, and we have certainly run our personal finances in such a way that you could never manage the way we are mismanaging our Federal dollars.

We are now borrowing \$26 billion per month. That is an outrageous figure, and it is highly irresponsible. As a result, we are spending \$15 billion per month just on interest payments alone. There are so many good works we could be doing in government if we were not being so fiscally irresponsible. This is reckless borrow and spend profligacy.

To go back to what Congressman ROSS mentioned, those mobile homes were well-intended to help people who needed temporary housing in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Are those being utilized? No. We don't as a Congress historically look back. We are not using legislation like Congressman TANNER's to audit and use performance measurement criteria, to see that if we are going to make the investment in those mobile homes, someone is actually going to live in them.

The concept of return on investment, something in the business world that we live by, is just absent from this Congress. The American public expects us to do a better job in that regard.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. So what you are saying is that we need an audit of America, just like we would our businesses.

Ms. BEAN. That is exactly right.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. I agree with Congressman TANNER on that. Just audit America and we will figure out what the problems are.

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for our people back home to understand that Congress appropriates the money for the executive agencies to spend. Of course the President has to sign those appropriations bills and put them into law and then the executive agency spends that money. But it is inherent upon us, and the framers of the Constitution presumed, that Congress would then provide oversight to

make sure that the executive agencies were spending the money like it was designed to be spent by Congress or desired to be spent and not wasting it and that is where we have gone wrong with this.

It could have happened maybe with the other side, but you have one party controlling the White House, the House and the Senate; and the House and the Senate seem to have just abdicated their oversight responsibility.

Why couldn't we have hearings to find out about those six Mercedes and over \$6 million? Why couldn't we have hearings to find out about the FEMA mismanagement?

The Department of Defense is the worst. There is an article that was published in Vanity Fair this month that I could commend that talks about some of the corruption going on in this government. And the reason for that it basically says is because Congress has abdicated its oversight responsibility, and in many cases the Department of Defense has been complicit in just allowing these things to go on without asking the tough questions.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. When you talk about our national defense, I want to talk about Iraq. In Iraq, the maximum petroleum that was being produced in Iraq was 3.5 million barrels a day. That is over a billion barrels a year. At \$70 a barrel, it has been running \$60 to \$70 a barrel for the last year almost, you are talking about \$60 billion to \$70 billion. Where is that money going, Mr. President? Where is that money going, Mr. Secretary of Defense? Where is that money being spent? Are we producing that as we told the American public we would be?

I understand it is down to a million and a half barrels; but even at that, we are still talking in terms of \$30 billion to \$40 billion. Why are we still sending money to help rebuild Iraq?

I think there are many things that we need oversight on, and the mismanagement that we are seeing of this administration and of this Congress is something that every American ought to be screaming about today.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS), the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BEAN), and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) for joining me for this Special Order this evening.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to demonstrate that if given the opportunity as Democrats, we are prepared and ready to lead this Nation. We are prepared to lead this Nation in restoring fiscal responsibility and accountability to our government. We are not just here to point out what is wrong with this Republican administration and Republican Congress. We are here to offer up real commonsense solutions to fix these things.

We have talked about them in the last hour, the 12-point reform plan for curing our Nation's addiction to deficit

spending through budget reform. We have talked about Mr. TANNER's bill, House Resolution 841, to require congressional hearings when a Federal Office of Inspector General report documenting fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement in the government results in a cost to the government of at least \$1 million.

We have talked about the need for other ideas that we have that we are advancing, like the idea of the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA) with H.R. 5315, a bill that would require a Federal agency to produce an audit within 2 years that complies with the standards established in the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996. If they can't do that, the Senate would hold reconfirmation hearings on any Cabinet-level official whose agency cannot fully account for its spending within 2 years.

Mr. Speaker, this past hour has been about accountability. It has been about our government being accountable for every tax dollar it spends.

Mr. Speaker, as members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we are ready, willing and able to lead this Congress if given the opportunity.

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. We call this the Blue Dog Coalition, not Blue Dog Democrats. We are all Democrats, but we invite the Republicans to join us so we can bring some sense to this fiscal irresponsibility. I hope some Republicans will join this coalition because it is not limited just to Democrats. Most Blue Dogs are conservative Democrats, at least when it comes to fiscal matters. And we are also hawks on defense spending, so we invite Republicans to join us.

Mr. ROSS. I appreciate the gentleman making that point. We would welcome Republicans to join us. We would welcome an opportunity for Republicans to give us a hearing and a vote on these bills that we are trying to submit to restore some fiscal discipline and commonsense to our national government.

#### ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the profound honor to address you in this Chamber. It is a privilege that has been experienced by only a small number of Americans throughout the years.

I come to the floor this afternoon and evening to address the issues that are important to us today. I intend to bring up the issues that have to do with our border control, border security and enforcement of our Nation's laws, and to talk about the facts behind them, the reasons that the American people clearly see this issue as a necessity for enforcement, and the reasons why establishing a guest worker/