

make grants to community-based, non-profit health clinics that do not charge for their services, for the purchase of ultrasound equipment. The centers that receive these grants will be better able to offer free examinations—under medical supervision—to women who might otherwise have no access to such critical care.

I respect our code of law and our society founded on religious freedom for all Americans. I believe the Ten Commandments are a concise set of values that represent the historic foundation of our nation's laws and our common view of what is right and wrong. Stories of murder, rape, drug abuse, and school violence dominate the media and reveal our society's need to be reminded of our moral compass. That is why I am reintroducing my legislation to have the Ten Commandments prominently posted in the Capitol building as a symbolic reminder of our heritage and the values we aspire to govern by.

I am reintroducing my Right to Carry Reciprocity bill that would allow for a person to carry in all 50 states if he possesses a valid permit in his home state. I believe that a person's right to self-defense should not be limited to within a state line. Today, 46 states have laws permitting concealed carry of firearms, and 38 states, accounting for two-thirds of the U.S. population, have Right to Carry laws, which dramatically reduces their incidence of violent crimes. In fact, the FBI statistics show 9 of the 10 states with the lowest violent crime rates are RTC states. It is important to note this bill would not create a federal licensing system, but merely requires states to recognize each others' carry permits, just as they recognize drivers' licenses and carry permits held by armored car guards. This bill has enjoyed bipartisan support in the past with 102 cosponsors, and I look forward to again working with my esteemed colleagues for its passage in the 110th Congress.

I am also reintroducing two bills pushing further reforms to the United Nations. On March 15, 2006, the U.N. replaced the discredited Human Rights Commission with a new Human Rights Council. Unfortunately, the new Council looks set to fail just as miserably as its predecessor. While making superficial structural changes, no reforms were implemented. The new elected membership includes such human rights violators as China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. My legislation would require the Secretary of State to withhold from the U.S. contribution to our U.N. dues an amount equal to the U.S. percentage of the cost of the Council (approximately \$500,000 a year). The U.S. should not support the U.N. Human Rights Council until it upholds the ideals of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and its membership is made up of free and democratic nations.

My other U.N. reform legislation deals with financial accounting for the renovation of the United Nations building in New York. There have been numerous reports of wasteful spending in this project, and my legislation would prevent U.S. federal funds from being used for this endeavor unless the President submits a report to Congress affirming the United Nations is abiding by internationally recognized best practices in contracting and resource management.

I am excited to again introduce legislation to help all American savers. My legislation, the

Simple Savings Tax Relief Act of 2007, simply eliminates the taxation of interest earned in savings accounts, such as passbook savings accounts or bank certificates of deposit. I think at least some of this interest should be tax-free, as we have been working towards other forms of non-earned income. This legislation would end a punitive tax, especially assist low and middle-income earners, and ultimately contribute toward the goal of encouraging individual responsibility and taking charge of one's own financial destiny.

Because I believe that health care access for all begins with tax parity, I am pleased to again sponsor the Health Care Tax Deduction Act of 2007. This would allow deductions for amounts paid for health insurance premiums and unreimbursed prescription drugs. This would provide much needed relief to individuals struggling with the high cost of health insurance and prescription drugs through a tax deduction, and tax parity with those of us who have employer-provided tax-deductible health insurance. Expansively, this benefit extends to all IRS-defined health insurance premiums such as an HMO, PPO, a traditional indemnity plan, a new HSA, and also long-term care premiums. Right now, under the current tax code, in order to claim health care expenses individuals must file an itemized tax return. My bill would simplify and extend this tax preference for all filers.

Because Members of Congress should put our money where our mouths are, I am pleased to reoffer my Deficit Accountability Act of 2007. It would prevent any automatic pay adjustment for Members of Congress in the year following a fiscal year in which there is a Federal budget deficit. It is needed to hold Members accountable for the Federal budget, and any resulting deficits.

My last piece of legislation is one of inspiration, the Museum of Ideas Act of 2007. It would create a commission to develop a plan for establishing a Museum of Ideas. In our Nation's Capital, we are enriched with museums exhibiting arts, natural sciences, modes of transportation, musical instruments, tools of industry and production, live plants and live animals, and other such tangible artifacts of our universe, we lack a museum of the conceptual, of thoughts, concepts, and philosophies throughout the history of the world.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on all these important pieces of business for the Nation.

#### IN CELEBRATION OF ERMA CRAVEIRO TROWE'S 90TH BIRTH- DAY

#### HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th birthday of Ms. Erma Craveiro Trowe, a wonderful friend and loving community member.

Erma's life story is quite fascinating. She was delivered by her grandmother on January 8, 1918 in Lanare, California. She was a graduate of Caruthers High School and California State University Fresno, formerly known as Fresno State College. Upon the completion of her studies, she pursued a successful career

as a teacher at Madison Grammar School, Ahwahnee Middle School and St. Anthony's School in Fresno, California.

On February 21, 1938 Erma married Joe Craveiro. Their home was in Fresno's Kearney Park neighborhood, where they raised their four children: Audrey, Jerry, Bob and Thomas. They also operated a dairy and grew alfalfa, cotton and sugar beets.

Aside from her commitments to her family, career and the ranch, Erma has a lifelong involvement in various community activities. She is a member of the Fig Garden Women's Club, served as a Cub Scout Mother, and volunteered on the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA). Erma was also instrumental in the development of the Houghton-Kearney Elementary School.

Further, Erma has been a very dear friend to the Costa family. She was my belated mother's best friend and actually drove her to the hospital at the time of my birth.

Erma's life has been an exceptional role model for all women. She attained a higher education degree, had a career in an important field, is a person who has demonstrated endless devotion to her family and has cared deeply about the welfare of her community. It is for these reasons that I join Erma Craveiro Trowe's family and friends in wishing her a blessed 90th birthday and continued health and happiness in the years to come.

#### PRESIDENT'S SURGE AND ACCELERATE POLICY

#### HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 4, 2007

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, President Bush's war in Iraq has now gone longer than America's involvement in World War II. Now we learn President Bush intends to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq. The great question across the land today is: is more of the same, the answer? Will more of the same stabilize Iraq, or for that matter the Middle East?

In all this long war in Iraq, we cannot help but wonder, what if?

What if we had not gone to war?

What if we had listened to that very important and vocal minority who stood against the war when the President lead us down that misbegotten road? Oh yes, I agree we are where we are today and we need to get out of this mess together. I have been patient since my "no" vote on this war four years ago and my "yes" vote almost 17 years ago for the first Gulf War.

Of course, there are others who are also asking what if. They are the family and friends of the young men and women who served their country. They are the loved ones of those who have not been lucky enough to make it home. They are those who sacrificed marriage, children, jobs, all in the name of a war many now casually say was a mistake.

They are those, like my son-in-law, who sacrificed seeing the birth of his and my daughter's first child.

These moments are painful for families across the country as we recently celebrated the holiday season. These moments make us want to dwell in the hope of the question, what if?

But we must not dwell, because in reflection we sometimes miss opportunity. The President is set to announce that he wants to see a "surge" force of approximately 20,000 extra soldiers to support the ongoing civil war in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, it does not take a rocket scientist to calculate the odds that more troops will mean more wounded, more fatalities, more losses to American families. Is the President ready for 20,000 more grieving families? Worse yet, has the President considered what this will do to the existing all volunteer force?

Retired Army Colonel Douglas McGregor has been quoted as saying, "It will break the force, which in my estimation is broken already. It will leave you with no strategic reserves." Retired Army Colonel David Hunt has said, "Everyone we met was on a second tour, at least, and many were on their fourth or fifth combat tour in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The soldiers are tired; the families are going nuts. It's not the solution."

But then, Madam Speaker, the President has not shown that this is truly about the sacrifice of our men and women. If it were, all of the options presented to the President would be open for consideration, not just the ones that already fit into his ideological philosophy. The report from the Iraq Study Group would not have been as casually tossed aside as were the advisements of the Presidents own military leaders—career servicemen and women who have given their entire professional lives to protecting America.

Over 3,000 have already lost their lives, and that's only the Americans. One journalist in particular, is asking what if on his own. Keith Olbermann, host of Countdown with Keith Olbermann has asked:

"What if he had already sacrificed 3,003 of them—and was then to announce his intention to sacrifice hundreds, maybe thousands, more?"

"This is where we stand tonight with the BBC report of President Bush's "new Iraq strategy," and his impending speech to the nation, which, according to a quoted senior American official, will be about troop increases and "sacrifice."

"The president has delayed, dawdled and deferred for the month since the release of the Iraq Study Group.

"He has seemingly heard out everybody, and listened to none of them.

"If the BBC is right—and we can only pray it is not—he has settled on the only solution all the true experts agree cannot possibly work: more American personnel in Iraq, not as trainers for Iraqi troops, but as part of some flabby plan for "sacrifice." (Countdown, MSNBC, 1/2/07)

Madam Speaker, the President's proposal reminds me of the ostrich who would rather stick his head in the sand, than face the reality that Americans want our soldiers home now. Not after another 20,000 have had to die for a strategy that is entirely wrong.

In Olbermann's words, "The additional men and women you have sentenced to go there, sir, will serve only as targets." Which is exactly what they will be, bodies to absorb the surge in the number of insurgents which this senseless war has created. This senseless, endless war, as Mr. Olbermann states has succeeded in two ways:

"It has succeeded, Mr. Bush, in enabling you to deaden the collective mind of this coun-

try to the pointlessness of endless war, against the wrong people, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

It has gotten many of us used to the idea—the virtual "white noise"—of conflict far away, of the deaths of young Americans, of vague "sacrifice" for some fluid cause, too complicated to be interpreted except in terms of the very important-sounding but ultimately meaningless phrase "the war on terror."

And the war's second accomplishment—your second accomplishment, sir—is to have taken money out of the pockets of every American, even out of the pockets of the dead soldiers on the battlefield, and their families, and to have given that money to the war profiteers." (Countdown, MSNBC, 1/2/07)

Which, Madam Speaker, brings me back to the question of what if? In light of all of the evidence to the contrary, what if we, as Congress, allow the President to send tens of thousands of more men and women to keep a peace that does not exist?

Madam Speaker, it is my hope that four years from now, I will not have to look back on this question of what if with the same heavy heart that I do for the past four years.

#### RECOGNIZING BRADLEY JOHNS FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

#### HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 5, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Bradley Johns, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 393, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Bradley has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Bradley has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Bradley Johns for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout. I am honored to represent Bradley in the United States House of Representatives.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE UNI- VERSAL RIGHT TO VOTE BY MAIL ACT

#### HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 5, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act of 2007—a bill to allow any eligible voter to vote by mail in a federal election if he or she chooses to do so.

In my home state of California, voters already have this right. California is one of the twenty-eight states that already provide this convenient alternative to voters.

While I love the ritual of going to the polls to vote, I know that getting to the polls on Election Day is often difficult. For some, it's impossible.

That is why I have introduced a bill that builds upon the growing trend of states to bring the polls to the voters. I believe we should try to meet our constituents halfway by increasing access to the electoral process.

What I am proposing is not new or even untested. States ranging from my home state of California, to Wisconsin, to North Carolina, to Maine have already adopted this voter-friendly policy.

With mail voting, citizens can vote from the convenience of their own homes. They will have more time to mull over their choices and make informed decisions, and they will be able to do so on their own terms.

Not surprisingly, studies have shown that some of the biggest supporters of voting by mail are parents, who must schedule time to go to the polls around so many other obligations.

Studies have also indicated that adding the option to vote by mail does not create a partisan advantage for one political party over the other.

Republicans and Democrats both benefit from similar increases in voter turnout when voters are given the choice to mail in their ballots.

In fact, overwhelming support for voting by mail is consistent across nearly every demographic—including age, income level, race, education, employment status and ideology. It is a win-win for all Americans.

After adopting a universal right to vote by mail system in 1978, California saw a thirty percent increase in the use of mail-in ballots.

In my district of San Diego, over 40 percent of voters opted to mail in their votes during the 2006 election.

Other States that have implemented this policy have seen the same degree of support from voters, which is why it is hardly surprising that States offering the option of mail-in ballots often experience greater voter participation.

There is also an extremely low incidence of fraud with voting by mail when compared to other methods of voting.

As the former President of the League of Women Voters of San Diego, I care deeply about the integrity of our electoral system.

Twenty-eight States have already proven this option works, and it is safe. It is time to give voters in the remaining States this convenient, secure and affordable alternative.

While I am proud to be from a State where citizens already have this right, I believe democracy works best when all citizens have an equal opportunity to have their voices heard.

Right now, an uneven playing field exists between States that already offer the option of mail-in ballots and States that do not.

When the same election is more accessible to voters in California than it is to voters in Michigan, the system is unfair.

States that fail to offer this choice stand to compromise their leverage in Federal elections by curbing the greatest level of voter participation.

We should follow the lead of over half of our Nation's States and ensure a uniformity of rights for all voters.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this effort to strengthen the democratic process and give American voters the choices they deserve.