

us more dependent on foreign oil and will cause energy prices to increase.

Raising taxes on the energy sector will inevitably be passed to consumers at the pump. If the Democrat energy tax increase is passed, motorists will consider today's \$3 gasoline to be a cheap deal. Families and small businesses in Kansas do not want higher fuel costs, which is why I refuse to accept a plan that raises the price of gasoline.

By raising billions of dollars through tax increases imposed on the oil and gas manufacturing industry, but not raising taxes on other manufacturing sectors, Congress picks winners and losers and American manufacturing jobs suffer.

Instead of encouraging more domestic energy exploration, production and investment, the Democrat energy bill instead makes these activities more expensive for American companies trying to supply America with energy.

This bill is woefully inadequate when it comes to American energy independence. It harms consumers by raising energy costs. And it wreaks havoc on American manufacturing jobs.

I urge my colleagues to reject this proposal.

AMT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the AMT Relief Act of 2007, which will provide middle class tax relief to over 23 million hard-working families who would otherwise be hit by the Alternative Minimum Tax next year.

For six years, the White House and the Republican congressional leadership failed to dismantle the Alternative Minimum Tax. As a result of their inaction, a huge middle class tax increase is now hanging over the heads of millions of unsuspecting Americans. This Republican tax tsunami will come crashing down on middle America next year if we fail to take action today.

On the Republicans' watch, the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans got over half the benefit of the Bush tax cuts—while the Nation's debt soared past \$9 trillion. Make no mistake: There are consequences to this kind of borrow and spend mentality. Every year, each taxpayer must pay a \$3,300 "debt tax" just to cover the cost of financing the debt. This legislation takes a different approach. Rather than digging ourselves deeper into debt, this bill pays for our actions today by closing a loophole in current law that permits a minuscule number of hedge fund managers to defer billions of dollars in compensation in offshore accounts.

To those who say Congress should not pay its bills, this legislation says "there is another choice." We can provide fiscally responsible tax relief without running up the national debt. We can take responsibility for our expenses today, without placing the burden of our choices on future generations.

I urge my colleagues to make the right choice. Let's pass fiscally responsible AMT re-

lief and give our citizens the government they deserve.

DR. AULAKH, PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN, HAS SUCCESSFUL TRIP TO EUROPE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, recently, Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, made a very successful trip to Great Britain and Belgium. Belgium is the European headquarters of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's shadowy "intelligence service."

Dr. Aulakh spoke at three Gurdwaras and the crowds responded enthusiastically. They chanted pro-Khalistan slogans and they overwhelmingly supported the message of freedom for Khalistan, the Sikh homeland. This was a blow to the Indian occupation and oppression in Punjab, Khalistan.

Their support should be rewarded, Madam Speaker. We should go on record supporting a free and fair vote on the matter. And we should stop our aid to India until such time as they recognize basic human rights.

Madam Speaker, I would like to add the Council of Khalistan's recent release on Dr. Aulakh's European visit to the RECORD at this time.

DR. AULAKH'S VISIT TO EUROPE VERY SUCCESSFUL

WASHINGTON, DC, Dec. 6.—Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, has recently returned from a very successful trip to Europe. He traveled to Gurdwaras in Belgium and Great Britain. He spoke at the Gurdwaras in Sint-Truiden in Belgium and in Slough and Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Belgium is the European headquarters of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

At every stop, slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" filled the air. Enthusiastic crowds greeted Dr. Aulakh's message of freedom for Khalistan, the Sikh homeland that declared its independence from India on October 7, 1987.

"I would like to thank my hosts in Europe for helping to make the trip so successful," Dr. Aulakh said. The show of support for liberating the Sikh Nation, Khalistan, from Indian occupation shows that the flame of freedom burns brightly in the hearts of the Sikh Nation despite India's many years of oppression."

India has refused to allow so much as a vote on the matter of independence for Khalistan. It has refused to grant the people of Kashmir the plebiscite on their status that they were promised in 1948. It continues to kill and harass Sikhs and other minorities.

The Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, more than 300,000 Christians since 1948, over 90,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, and tens of thousands of Tamils, Assamese, Manipuris, Dalits, and others. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs "worse than a genocide."

Indian police arrested human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra after he exposed their policy of mass cremation of Sikhs, in which over 50,000 Sikhs have been arrested,

tortured, and murdered, and then their bodies were declared unidentified and secretly cremated. He was murdered in police custody. His body was not given to his family.

The police never released the body of former Jathedar of the Akal Takht Sardar Gurdev Singh Kaunke after SSP Swaran Singh Ghotna murdered him. Ghotna has never been brought to trial for Jathedar Kaunke's murder. No one has been brought to justice for the kidnapping and murder of Jaswant Singh Khalra.

According to a report by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), 52,268 Sikhs are being held as political prisoners in India without charge or trial. Some have been in illegal custody since 1984! Tens of thousands of other minorities are also being held as political prisoners, according to Amnesty International. We demand the immediate release of all these political prisoners.

History shows that multinational states such as India are doomed to failure. Countries like Austria-Hungary, India's longtime friend the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and others prove this point. India is not one country; it is a polyglot like those countries, thrown together for the convenience of the British colonialists. It is doomed to break up as they did.

"The desire to reclaim the sovereignty that Guru Gobind Singh declared for us still resides in every Sikh heart," said Dr. Aulakh. "As Professor Darshan Singh, a former Jathedar of the Akal Takht, said, 'If a Sikh is not for Khalistan, he is not a Sikh,'" Dr. Aulakh noted. "We must continue to press for our God-given birthright of freedom," he said. "Khalistan must and will be free soon."

CONGRATULATING DR. HAROLD DODGE ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE MOBILE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise to honor the long and distinguished career of Dr. Harold Dodge, on the occasion of his retirement as superintendent of the Mobile County Public School System.

With a career spanning over four decades, Dr. Dodge has dedicated his life to education, serving as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. Beginning his career as a teacher and a coach at Deep Creek High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, he went on to serve as principal at Oscar Smith High School, Indian River Junior High School, and E.W. Chittum Elementary School in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Prior to coming to Mobile, Dr. Dodge served as superintendent of Cumberland County Schools in Cumberland, Virginia; Montgomery County Schools in Christianburg, Virginia; and University City School District in University City, Missouri.

In August of 1998, Dr. Dodge took the reigns of the Mobile County Public School System, the State's largest school system with over 65,000 students and 8,000 employees. Under his leadership, the school system has implemented a nationally recognized strategic

plan that encourages sustained parental and community involvement while focusing on making children proficient in learning.

After 10 years of extraordinary work as superintendent of the Mobile County Public Schools, Dr. Dodge will turn his attention to college students as a professor at the University of South Alabama. He will be an associate professor in the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, training principals and superintendents in the university's master degree program.

There are few individuals more dedicated or more committed to students than Harold Dodge, and this commitment has not gone unnoticed. In 2006, Dr. Dodge was named Alabama's Superintendent of the Year. Earlier this month, he was named an Outstanding Civilian Service Member, the second highest public service honorary award given to civilians by the United States Army, and the Mobile Area Education Foundation named its Fund-a-S.T.A.R. grant program for classroom teachers after him. The city of Mobile named Thursday, December 6, 2007, both the Mobile Area Education Foundation Day and Harold Dodge Day.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing a dedicated community leader and friend to many throughout Alabama. Dr. Harold Dodge is an outstanding example of the quality of individuals who have devoted their lives to education. I know his colleagues; his wife, Jean; his family; and many friends join me in extending thanks for his many efforts over the years on behalf of the city of Mobile and the State of Alabama. I wish him the best in all his future endeavors.

AMT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of extending Alternative Minimum Tax relief to millions of American taxpayers. Congress never intended for the AMT to hit so many people. The Senate has already passed a clean bill to provide a one-year AMT patch for the 2007 tax year. I urge my colleagues in the House to do the same and pass AMT relief for the nearly 20 million new taxpayers who will otherwise be subjected to this tax increase if Congress fails to act.

While I rise in strong support of extending AMT relief, I rise in opposition to the AMT bill being considered on the House floor today. H.R. 4351 would not just provide a one-year AMT patch; it would also permanently raise billions of dollars in new taxes on other citizens. Rather than provide a stand-alone patch

or offset the costs by reducing federal spending, the Democrat leadership solution is to pay for the AMT fix by raising taxes on other taxpayers.

Instead of debating a bill that will never be signed into law, we should be working together in a bipartisan way to take actions similar to what the Senate has done. Because of the ineffectiveness of Democrat leadership decisions, millions of American taxpayers will either be forced to pay an average of \$2,000 more or have their tax refunds delayed next year. A delay in tax refunds could have been avoided by earlier congressional action, and we must act swiftly to ensure the tax increase does not become a reality for millions of American families.

The AMT tax was created nearly 40 years ago to ensure a small number of very wealthy taxpayers would pay a fair portion of taxes. Because the AMT was not indexed for inflation, millions of Americans are now being threatened by the higher AMT tax, which effectively takes back tax cuts enacted in 2001, 2003 and 2004 for those taxpayers.

The Federal Government should be finding ways to lower the burden on American taxpayers. Instead, H.R. 4351 would permanently raise taxes. This proposal to address the government's shortsightedness to index the AMT for inflation should be soundly rejected in favor of a permanent AMT fix or a patch that does not raise taxes on others.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting against H.R. 4351 so we can begin consideration of a real solution that we can send to the President for his signature. Providing a one-year AMT fix is the least we can do as an alternative to a permanent solution. The time for partisan tax-shifting games has concluded. Let's put the American people first and defeat this massive tax increase bill.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1585,
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZA-
TION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this final, bipartisan Defense Authorization agreement for the critical investments it makes in our military readiness, troop protection and wounded warrior care. I am also proud that this conference report cracks down on contractor fraud, provides a 3.5 percent pay increase and improves health care benefits for our military families and restores workplace fairness for the Defense Department's hardworking civilian employees. Finally, consistent with this Congress' commitment to

chart a new direction on the war in Iraq, this legislation requires the DOD to regularly brief Congress on its planning to responsibly redeploy our forces out of that misguided conflict.

To help restore our nation's military readiness, this bill creates a \$1 billion Strategic Readiness Fund to address equipment shortfalls and provides an additional \$980 million to properly equip our National Guard and Reserve.

We authorize \$17.6 billion—an increase of \$865 million—for the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles that have been so successful protecting our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. We commit \$4.8 billion for anti-IED efforts. And we allocate a total of \$6 billion to up-arm our Humvees, add armor to other combat vehicles and provide body armor for our troops.

Because we must never force those who have been wounded abroad to battle bureaucratic red tape in order to get the care they need when they come home, this legislation includes the Wounded Warrior Act, designed to correct the disgraceful conditions uncovered at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and ensure seamless, high-quality care that our returning veterans have earned and deserve.

Improving accountability through more regular and vigorous oversight is a consistent and recurring theme of the new Congress. Consistent with that commitment, this bill requires the DoD and Department of State to issue detailed regulations governing the conduct of private security contractors employed by the federal government. Additionally, to enhance our accountability efforts, we strengthen whistleblower protections for those willing to bring waste, fraud and abuse to the public's attention.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation prohibits fee increases in the TRICARE program, and the 3.5 percent pay increase provided to our military families—while larger than the President's request—is really the least we can do. Moreover, I am gratified that the NDAA conferees saw fit to include important contracting out and workplace protections for DoD's civilian employees in this final report. They go to work every day to serve their country, and it is only appropriate that the nation treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Finally, having worked for several years to reconstitute the core functions of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, AFIP, in the aftermath of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure, BRAC, Commission, I am delighted by the establishment of a Joint Pathology Center mandated by this report. Furthermore, I believe the expanded nursing program housed at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, USUHS, will be a valuable resource to military medicine, and I welcome the program to my district.