

France, from 1944 to 1952. I wonder if this debate took place in this Congress during that period of time: Bring our troops home. Why don't those people stand up a government over there? Why can't they get their act together? I wonder if that debate took place. I don't know. I might go look it up and try to find out.

Japan we defeated in 1945, unconditional surrender. And yet MacArthur established the occupation of Japan and, in fact, was heavily criticized when the Korean War broke out for still being the czar of Japan. And occupation forces remained in Japan until some time in the mid 1950s. I wonder if that debate went on about Japan. The last time I checked, which was the day before yesterday when I was talking to some soldiers at Fort Hood, we still have troops in Korea, and that war technically ended in 1954 I believe it was, 1952 or 1954, and we still have troops there. And I don't know if during the 1950s we had debates about why can't those people get their act together? Why do we have to defend that country? Why do we have to defend them? I don't hear that debate anymore, and there are still American soldiers standing watch in Korea.

I am not saying that we are going to occupy for this period of time, but where is our commitment to the commitment that our soldiers have given us? That deeply concerns me. I worry about it. And I can tell you our fighting men and women worry about it too.

So I guess that is why we get up here on the floor of the House and we want to let the American people know what we saw and what we heard and what we experienced. And I know the fighting generation that are living today; those soldiers are a great generation. The question is, will we be also ranked as a great generation, the people back home, for standing behind this great generation as they have done an outstanding job in defeating our enemy.

THE NATIONAL DEBT AND THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this evening, as on most Tuesday evenings when Congress is in session, I rise on behalf of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are a group of 47 conservative to moderate Democrats that simply want to come here, put an end to the partisan bickering, and restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

This evening, as we begin this hour-long conversation, we are going to focus on Iraq, and specifically we are going to focus on how your tax dollars are being spent in Iraq.

You have heard a lot of talk this evening about Iraq. And I can assure

you as long as we have our men and women in uniform in harm's way, we are going to support them. They are doing everything that has been asked of them and then some. My brother-in-law is in the U.S. Air Force. He has been in the region several times. My first cousin is in the U.S. Army, and he is in Iraq this evening. It has affected all of us in one way or another. We have all had family or friends serve there.

This evening we are going to specifically focus on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq. For the last 5 years, the President has pretty much asked for a blank check, and if you ask him to be held accountable for how your tax money is spent in Iraq, he will tell you that you are unpatriotic. It is time that we stood up to this President and demanded the kind of accountability on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq just as we demand accountability from local and State governments when they receive a Federal grant. To put it another way, \$16 million of your tax money is being spent in Iraq every hour; \$16 million of your tax money is being spent in Iraq every hour. That is \$16 million an hour that can't go to replace the bridge in Minnesota that fell. And, by the way, there are thousands more structurally deficient bridges in this country, and this should have been a wake-up call for all of us to get about the business of rebuilding this Nation's infrastructure and begin to invest in America again.

Just in my congressional district during the month of August, some people think we go home and go on vacation for a month, but what we really do is we go home and see the people, which I think is an important part of this job. If you are going to represent folks, I think it is important you get out of Washington and you go home and you see them. And as I traveled my 29 counties and 150 towns in Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, every town I went to I learned of a project, of a need. On the western side, they want to finish I-49, which can create jobs and economic opportunities. An interstate where construction started on it back when I was about 5 years old entering kindergarten. I am now 46 and have a daughter in college.

When I go to the eastern side of my district, I hear a lot of talk about wanting to complete I-69, which was announced 5 years before I was born. In the central part of the district, I hear a lot of talk about four-laning U.S. 82, four-laning 167, how we need money to invest in getting off the Sparta aquifer and having more and more commercial and residential people getting their water from other alternative water sources. As I traveled and toured Millwood Lake, I learned about how this wonderful recreational lake, a lake that contributed to the economy, it is now becoming very difficult to fish in about a quarter of it and they are worried about the rest of it. Why? Because of the neglect. The neglect in our

Nation's infrastructure, the neglect in our waterways, in our highways. And yet we continue to spend \$16 million an hour of your tax money in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, I say it is time to start investing in America again, and we are going to talk more about that this evening.

During the past 6 years, we have had a President that has given us the largest debt ever in our Nation's history, the largest deficit ever in our Nation's history, for the past 6 years, during the time that we had Republicans controlling the White House, the House and the Senate. We have passed a budget this year that will put us back in balance by 2012 and will begin to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

But this is what the new Democratic majority inherited in January: a debt that is \$8,993,600,200,089 and some change. That is a big number. What does it mean? If you break it out and divide it by every man, woman and child living in America, including those born today, each one of us, our share of the national debt: \$29,704. It is what those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition refer to as the "debt tax," d-e-b-t, which is one tax that cannot be repealed, that cannot be cut. And that is one of the reasons that we are not able to invest in America's priorities, investing in our homeland, investing in our veterans, investing in education, investing in rebuilding America's infrastructure. No. We are too busy paying interest on this debt.

Our Nation is borrowing about a billion dollars a day, but before we borrow a billion dollars today, we are going to spend a half billion today paying interest on the debt we have already got. That is above and beyond the \$16 million an hour that we are sending to Iraq, much of which goes unaccounted for.

So we are going to spend this hour addressing that and other issues surrounding Iraq. And I am absolutely delighted to be joined by a number of my Blue Dog colleagues. I mentioned there are 47 members in the Blue Dog Coalition, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the four newest members: CHRISTOPHER CARNEY from Pennsylvania's Tenth Congressional District, GABRIELLE GIFFORDS from Arizona's Eighth Congressional District, BART GORDON from Tennessee's Sixth Congressional District, and ZACH SPACE from Ohio's Eighteenth Congressional District.

At this time I am pleased to yield to a fellow Blue Dog, someone who has become very involved in this conservative-moderate Democratic movement on Capitol Hill, someone who is not afraid to take a stand for what is right, and that is my friend JOE DONNELLY from Indiana's Second Congressional District.

Mr. DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. ROSS.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor to have the chance to speak here again in the House.

Almost \$9 trillion in debt. I just came back from a month in my district, as Mr. ROSS had indicated, going to see constituent after constituent, talking about issues of critical importance to them. And I met a good friend of mine named Jim Fleming from LaPorte, Indiana. And Jim's company makes defense aerospace products. And he said, JOE, we try everything we can. We employ hundreds of people. We work extraordinarily hard. And, JOE, we get beat out by China on bid after bid. Not even competitive with our prices but below our cost of production. And, JOE, what saddens me so much, Mr. Fleming said, is that we have over \$1 trillion in debt to China. So I know when it is time for you to stand up, it is only made more difficult because of the debt that we have, a debt that we assumed because it was easier to do than to make the hard choices like the PAYGO system that we put in.

We look at Iraq now. We have lost \$12 billion that came in in currency in a plane, shrink wrapped, Mr. DAVIS, on pallets, never to be seen again once it came off of that plane. Think of what \$12 billion could have done in help creating the Hoosier Heartland Highway in my district.

We paid a gentleman Ahmed Chalabi and his group, the Iraqi National Congress, \$300,000 every month for information that they basically made up in the back room over a Coca-Cola.

□ 2130

Just one more example: instead of probing and finding the answers, we just threw money away. And, Mr. ROSS, think of what \$300,000 could do in your district every month, or to my good friend, who you will see, Mr. Michael Arcuri, in his district in Utica. \$300,000 could provide health care for an incredible amount of Americans.

So we have come to this Congress to try to make sure, through our PAYGO system, that the debt goes no higher, that we start to reduce it, that in Iraq we get answers, answers that, instead of letting \$12 billion disappear, that those funds be used either in our district, or to provide up-armored Humvees and MRAP vehicles that will save our soldiers lives. Appropriate armored vests, the kind of things that will protect our soldiers, not feather someone else's nest.

Mr. ROSS, I'm proud to stand here with you tonight and have this opportunity.

Mr. ROSS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DONNELLY. Absolutely, sir.

Mr. ROSS. You mentioned something that really piqued my interest, and that is making sure that we are providing our soldiers with the best technology in armored vests. And I want to thank you for raising that this evening.

I've got a constituent in my district whose son is getting ready to go back for the second time, Arkansas National Guard, 39th Brigade, being asked to go back for a second time. And when you

sign up for the National Guard, you're supposed to spend 1 year out of 5, and now they were there in 2003 and 2004, they're being asked to go back again by Christmas of this year or early next year. And he raises a very important issue. This is a constituent from Garland County in Percy, Arkansas, near Hot Springs, and that is, he wants to ensure that our men and women in uniform, his son, has the best armored body gear and protection available. There are a lot of tests going on right now; there is a lot of debate going on. There have been hearings on this in the Congress. But 5 years into this war you would think, if our government, if this administration is sending \$16 million an hour of your tax money to Iraq, the very least they could do is ensure that our brave men and women, our soldiers that do everything that is asked of them, have the very best in body gear and protection.

Mr. DONNELLY. There is no question, Mr. ROSS, that when we look at our soldiers, nothing but the best is acceptable.

As you mentioned the soldiers in your district, we just had, about three weeks ago, our South Bend, Indiana, National Guard unit head over to some of the most dangerous duty in Iraq. And, again, they went with their pride and with a determination to do well. And our job, my job, your job is to make sure they have the very, very best. And it's not appropriate to see money disappear, to see it wasted at the tune of \$300,000 a month it was. To some gentleman who is making up stories in the back room when we think he's providing information. Our job is to make sure that the young men and women of Arkansas, New York, Indiana, Delaware, Pennsylvania and all our States have the very, very best armored equipment, armored vehicles. Their safety and their return home to their loved ones is the utmost importance.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman. And he makes some very good points.

And regardless of how you feel about what's going on in Iraq, and I personally have voted three times for a new direction in Iraq, but one of the things that I think we can all agree on is that we need more accountability for how our tax money is being spent in Iraq. And we need to ensure that money is going to provide our men and women in uniform with the very best equipment that's available to them today, not what was the best equipment 5 years ago, but what is the best equipment today to best protect them as they perform their duty and service to our country. And that's one thing that we can all agree on.

At this time, I'm pleased to introduce another fellow Blue Dog, a new Member in his first term in the 110th session of Congress who is rapidly and quickly becoming very involved and immersed in the fiscal issues of the Blue Dog Coalition, and that's my friend, Mr. MIKE ARCURI from New

York's 24th Congressional District, who just returned from a trip to Iraq.

Mr. ARCURI. I thank my friend from Arkansas for yielding, and I would like to thank you for what you do for the Blue Dog Caucus.

You know, the thing that first attracted me to the Blue Dog Caucus was the fact that they believe so strongly in fiscal responsibility in the pay-as-you-go idea, and the fact that we have to tighten our belt, we have to make some very difficult decisions. It's not easy when there are things that we need for our district and things that we know we need here domestically, and yet we can't spend more than we have. And it's no different than we would in our own home. You don't buy things that we can't afford. We can't enact legislation, we can't create bureaucracies that we can't pay for. And that's why I'm so proud to be a member of the Blue Dog Caucus.

I did just return from Iraq just a few days ago. And I couldn't help, while I was there, noticing immediately the amount of money that we have spent in Iraq. You know, when you look at the fact that you ride along and you see that we have literally created, built whole cities in the middle of the desert, in the middle of this expansive environment we have actually created cities and the amount of money, the amount of cement, the amount of wood that we've used to build these bases and the amount of material that we have there. I can remember that in one of the bases we pulled up to one area, it was huge, and there was nothing but electric transformers in a huge field; and those were transformers that they were using to put new electric and bring new power to different places in Iraq. And then we drove a little further and there was another area with nothing but Humvees and another area with nothing but bulldozers. And you can't help but realize just how much money and how much time and expense we're expending to rebuild Iraq.

And during the course of our conversation while we were there, we were talking about some of the things to one of the members of the military, one of the things that they needed there. And I couldn't help but think back in my district in upstate New York, back in Utica, there are things that we need that we don't have. We need improvements to our airport that we don't have. We need improvements to our roads. And much like your district in Arkansas, we have been waiting for a connection between Utica and the city of Binghamton, a Route 12 extension. We've been waiting for years and years, since before I was born, for that; and still we talk about it. And yet we spend billions of dollars. You quoted the figure \$16 million an hour we are spending in Iraq. We continue to spend it, and we've been doing it for years and years.

And while we continue to spend that money, we continue to spend resources that are critical to us while countries like China are continuing to invest

their money in their own economy, in creating jobs within their country. We need to be spending our money to create jobs in our country.

And, you know, while I was in Iraq, the one thing that I was struck by probably more than anything else is the incredible job that our troops are doing. Anybody that you talk to that's been to Iraq, the first thing they talk about is the incredible job that our troops are doing. And I couldn't help but think that any just cause anywhere in the world that we ask our troops to perform and complete, I have utter confidence that they can do it. Our military is just an incredible organization. They do what is asked of them and much, much more. And they have done the same in Iraq. And I think that it's time that we give them more direction in terms of a mission and that we start to give the Iraqi people a little more ability to stand on their own. I think when we start to bring our troops home, when we start to allow them to stand up and handle their own affairs, they will do it, and they will do it in a good way and in a fine way and we will be there to help them.

But, you know, there was a book written about 2,500 years ago by the Chinese general Sun Tzu, and it was called "The Art of War." And in that he writes an interesting paragraph and he says that in any extended confrontation, regardless of how wise a nation's counselors are, no country can win in a prolonged war.

This war has been prolonged far too long. It is time, I believe, for us to focus upon what is important here domestically, that we stop focusing on spending so much money in Iraq and we begin to focus again on the things that are happening here in this country. So I believe that it's time that we allow the country of Iraq to stand up for itself, and that we begin to bring our troops home.

I thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from New York for his insight on his recent return from a trip to Iraq.

I was last there August 11, 2004, when we had the 39th Brigade from Arkansas' National Guard there. Now they're ready to go back, and I hope to be able to go back while they're there because the least we can do is go there when our troops are there from our respective districts and let them know that we support them and make sure that some of this millions of dollars is being spent on providing them the very best equipment that technology and money can afford to buy.

What we're talking about this evening is the cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The gentleman from New York is absolutely correct, we need a new direction in Iraq. Basically, we're there fighting their civil war for them. And as long as they're shooting at us instead of shooting at one another, there is no incentive for them to learn how to get along. No one fought our Civil War for us, and I'm absolutely

convinced that the only people that can decide the fate of Iraq are the Iraqi people.

We have had a lot of victories there. We went there because of weapons of mass destruction. We now know there are no weapons of mass destruction. It's debatable whether there ever was or not, but that's an issue that we can debate all night. But hindsight is 20/20. We stayed until Saddam was removed from power. We stayed until he was brought to justice and executed. Clearly, he was an evil dictator. We have evil dictators all over the world, many of whom remain in power today. We stayed until a new Iraqi Government was installed. We stayed and tried to train their police and military force. And yet this administration continues to move the goal post on our soldiers. And so how many victories are they going to have to accomplish before we allow them to come home and allow the Iraq people to decide the fate of their own country?

The cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom, this is one statistic that is not debatable. You want to know how well it's going? In 2003, we spent \$53 billion of your tax money in Iraq. In 2004, that increased to \$75.9 billion. In 2005, that increased to \$84.7 billion. In 2006, that increased to \$101.7 billion. And in 2007, \$135.2 billion so far. The administration is getting ready to come back here shortly for more. That's \$11.3 billion a month, that's \$370 million a day. You do the math. That's between 15 and \$16 million an hour of your tax money going to Iraq and, as Congressman DONNELLY mentioned, much of which is unaccounted for.

At this time, I yield to my friend, fellow Blue Dog member from my neighboring State of Tennessee, and that's LINCOLN DAVIS, an active member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition that's never afraid to speak his mind. We're glad to have him here with us this evening. And sorry about Tennessee's loss this Saturday. We're looking forward to playing y'all in football.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. You're starting us off on a bad note.

It's good to be here this evening and to engage in conversation and dialogue certainly on the situation that we are in today in Iraq, and certainly in this country.

I want to deviate just a little bit and talk a little bit about my study hall period. Folks say that Members of Congress had recess. When I was in school and we had recess, we played most of the time; but I can assure you for the last several weeks of the month of August I did a lot of traveling in the district I represent, listening to a lot of people, the chamber of commerce, business people, individuals on the street, country stores, wherever I might have been, restaurants, coffee shops. We talked about a lot of things. People are worried about the war in Iraq. People are worried about the war in Iraq to the point where we know we can't lose

there or we can't allow this nation to go into anarchy, but how do we prevent that from happening?

And as I listened to those debates and those dialogs, I realized that people were seriously concerned about what we're doing and how we're engaged. I hear people talking about whether we should have gone or not. That's legitimate, and I think historians, probably political scientists over the next several years, next decades and next centuries will obviously gauge that and will judge that. We can talk about whether the war was prosecuted right or not; and, quite frankly, I think there are some questions there as to whether or not this administration, Mr. Speaker, and whether this White House, Mr. Speaker, has engaged the way that would bring about a quicker resolution to where it would win much quicker in Iraq.

But when I went home on Sunday, I drove back down through the Shenandoah Valley, down Highway 81, hit Interstate 40, went across the Cumberland Plateau, and I realized what a beautiful Nation we have. When you look at those hills along the Blue Ridge down through the Shenandoah Valley and then the Cumberland Plateau near the Cumberland Gap and realize the beauty of this vast Nation that we have and the people who live here.

I had an opportunity, my first day off, to spend about 7 hours fishing at a great warrior's old mill, Sergeant Alvin C. York, in Palmyra where I live.

□ 2145

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. ROSS, I had an opportunity with my oldest daughter and two of my grandchildren to go fishing. We were going to spend probably a couple hours there. We wound up spending over 7 hours. The last day that I spent in my district, I did the same thing, not intentionally. My middle daughter called and came up on Sunday, and I spent, as I did my first Monday home, my last Monday home I spent fishing in the rivers there below Sergeant York's home in the mill pond. Now, Sergeant York was a great American hero. But we have had other great American heroes, as well, Eisenhower being one of them.

I want to mention something about Eisenhower in just a moment. But first of all, I want to talk about what someone that America respects greatly said a few years ago. Clark Clifford and Richard Holbrooke wrote a book in 1991 called "Counsel to the President." After Winston Churchill had made his "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri, they were traveling back on the train from Missouri. President Truman and many of his staff members had already retired for the evening. The three people who were basically sitting in the room at that time were Charles Ross, who was the press secretary for Truman, and Clark Clifford and Churchill. They talked about how our lives are influenced strictly by the accident of our birth.

What Churchill said, and I am quoting him as quoted in the book, "If I were to be born again, I would wish to be born in the United States. Your country is the future of the world. You have natural resources, the spirit, the youth, the determination, which will steadily increase your global influence." He was correct in making that assessment over 60 years ago as he made this speech. He was correct then. And we are correct today to say that America's presence in the world today is recognized.

But why has it changed? Why would a great Brit, who is considered the Brit's Britishman, say, "If I were to be born again, I would love to have been born an American"? How many people in the world today would say that? I would say that because when God put my soul in the body of a woman who lived in America, it was a great blessing for me just to be born in this country. We have got to regain and recapture throughout the world that spirit that folks from nations abroad have seen in this country, and I think we can recover it, to where we are looked upon, as Ronald Reagan said, as that shining light of freedom that folks can look at and aspire to.

We need an Eisenhower moment in Iraq. It has been said that after Eisenhower was elected President in 1952 that as he was ordered up he asked, as a general, from the military people in the field, the Army, if he could be able to have a few small planes that he would fly over South Korea and in parts of North Korea. It is also said, and his memoirs pretty much confirmed this, that after they landed he was silent for a few moments. And he basically said, We cannot win this war the way that we are fighting it, but we can't afford to lose it, either. We cannot win this war the way we are fighting it. He knew we would have to engage in a much greater, larger war that would include perhaps even China, which would have stretched America's resources and I think America's fiber to the breaking point.

Eisenhower understood that we were in a war that we should not have been in. Now some will question what I am saying. But that was Eisenhower's comments. It is a war that we are not ready to win. It is a war that we can lose, and we can't afford to lose. In his first 6 or 8 months of his Presidency, he brought about a resolution of a cease-fire in Korea. Did we stay there? Sure, we have been. Will we stay in Iraq? Sure we will. Every resolution that we passed on this floor that calls for a date certain authorizes this administration and authorizes the Defense Department to keep adequate personnel in the field and military presence in the field to help protect the resources, the assets of this country and protect our friends in the area and to help train the troops and the soldiers of the armies, the policemen, and the civilians of Iraq. We will be there several years from now, just as we were in

South Korea, as we were in Western Europe. It is how we stay that makes the difference. It is how we stay that will make the difference.

The way we are there now I don't believe is the way we ought to be. We can no longer be the army for Iraq. We can no longer be the policemen in the streets, on the beat, providing security for the folks in Iraq. The Brits just pulled out. This great British leader named Winston Churchill, his country just pulled their troops out of Basra. Are we going to have a surge in Basra with American troops?

Mr. Speaker, let's ask the President that. Is that our intention now, that we will have a surge and resupply the troops there? Because it seems in southern Iraq obviously there is a lot of turmoil, a lot of killings, basically a civil war between the Shias, now some folks say are happening. In northern Iraq where the Kurds are, we are not there operating as the army or the policemen on the beat. In northern Iraq where the Kurds are, they are providing their own autonomy.

It is my opinion that the longer we stay in Iraq, the worse we will be. We need an Eisenhower moment in Iraq, not a General Custer moment, not a charge into the Little Big Horn to where we get destroyed. It is time that we reassess our situation in Iraq to a war that we win in Iraq.

I am saddened as I watch TV. I am seeing Iraq being sold by TV commercials as if we are selling an automobile to the American public. That saddens me when I see some of our wonderful soldiers, and I applaud them, who are saying, We cannot cut and run. I agree with them. We can't cut and run. But we don't need to be selling this war on TV commercials as the right thing to do.

The thing that we have not done, in my opinion, is that we have allowed Afghanistan to be left pretty much as an island to themselves. Oh, we are there. But just think what we could have done if we had spent the time and resources and kept the number of troops in Afghanistan that we moved to Iraq.

It is my belief that Karzai would have probably been, and still may be, someone that we may call their George Washington. We now see troubles in Pakistan. We are now seeing countries in Central Asia after the dominance of the Soviet Union for many years, many are floundering around trying to figure which is the best route to go. Each feels, I believe, that democracy is the best route to take. Many are struggling with their democracies in Central Asia. Just think of what we could have done in Afghanistan if, in fact, we had stayed there, helped build that country to take out those that would do harm to them, to destroy Afghanistan. We could have helped build a democracy that I believe would have been infectious, and an epidemic of democratic nations would have been springing up all over to continue to bloom and to progress in Central Asia.

It would have been infectious, in my opinion, in the Middle East, as well, and we would have seen I think the tumbling of the strongman-type governments. In every one of those countries surrounding Iraq, there is a strong person who runs those countries. If we had stayed and continued in Afghanistan, we would have seen, in my opinion, a much different Middle East than we see today and a much different Central Asia.

One of the real problems we have today is I think even Pakistan would have seen the success in Afghanistan and might have wanted to move further in that direction. In fact, the Taliban-type warriors and al Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden did attack us. I keep hearing these folks from the side saying, If we don't fight them there, we will fight them here. What do you think happened on September 11? They were here. And we have forgotten who attacked us. It wasn't Iraq. It was Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network. They are now, in some folks' opinion, in the areas of Waziristan and Pakistan. If, in fact, we allow, or if, in fact, Pakistan were to fall, guess who gets the nuclear weapons?

So our foreign policy, in my opinion, needs to be revisited. All of us need to start being American Democrats and American Republicans, not right-wingers and left-wingers. It looks like we have chosen up sides here and we have started to listen to the talk shows on one side or we look at the liberal communications on the other side, and all of a sudden that is what drives us in this country. It is time we start being Americans again, American Democrats and American Republicans, and look at our failures. Eisenhower understood it. George Custer found it out. We don't need a Custer move. We don't need to have advertisements telling us we need to have a war in TV commercials.

We need honesty, Mr. President. We need honesty. My request to you is that you have an Eisenhower moment, one of honesty. Let's get on with making sure we rebuild that area, put our troops out of the kill zone and stop requiring them to be the soldiers. Because if in Basra and southern Iraq and northern Iraq our troops are not there, and the only place where it seems the most violent actions that take place is where our troops are, that should tell us something.

We need to be sure that we keep enough troops to keep Syria or Iran, or quite frankly even our friend called Turkey, from invading Iraq for their own beneficial gain and let Iraq work its problems out. It is time. We have given them a government. They have accepted their government. They have elected their government. It is time for them to start leading and taking on the responsibility. I call upon this President, this administration, and this Congress to work together to make that happen.

□ 2200

We have built and helped build in South Korea over a period of 30–40 years one of the strongest democracies in the Asian-Pacific rim and Asia, the strongest economy called South Korea. It took a long time. It will take a long time to resolve the differences in the Middle East. It will take a long time to resolve the differences in Iraq. But we cannot do it the way we are doing it today.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee. He raises an excellent point. All this started after 9/11, and we all know Osama bin Laden was responsible for 9/11. We now have some 25,000 troops in the Afghanistan region. Contrast that to be a quarter million troops in the Iraq region. Eighty-something percent of the people in Afghanistan want us there. Contrast that with Iraq. 71 percent of the Iraqi people don't want us there, and 60 percent of them think it is okay to kill a U.S. soldier. I believe it is time for a new direction in Iraq. Three times this year I have voted for a new direction in Iraq.

Let me be perfectly clear: As long as we have got troops in harm's way, I am going to support them. As I indicated, my brother-in-law is in the Air Force. He has been in the region. My first cousin is in the U.S. Army and is back for the second time in Iraq right now.

Back home in Arkansas, young people I have taught in Sunday school and duck hunted with will soon be going back for a second tour of duty in Iraq. I will be there every step of the way to support them. But I also want this administration and this Congress to give them a mission that is obtainable, one that will take them out of harm's way.

I have had too many soldiers from my district die in Iraq. Just in the last few weeks, Specialist Donovan Witham from Malvern, Arkansas, gave his life in Iraq. Just a few days ago, I was able to spend some time with his family in their living room letting them know that his service to this country will not be forgotten. I will make sure of that. His family remains in my heart and in my prayers, as do all the family members of the nearly 4,000 troops that we have lost in Iraq.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, one of the things we really need to make sure of is that the American public as they watch this Blue Dog Coalition group here talk tonight, every one of us to the "T" comes from rural areas basically. We love America, we love our troops, we visit them.

I have been to Iraq five times and Afghanistan twice. I went for a reason, to tell our troops thank troops thank you, we love you, we appreciate you. We pray that an umbrella of safety will be put over our troops. We work for those back home to be sure that their families are recognized and that our communities uphold them and undergird them.

I don't want anybody to have a misinterpretation of what we are saying

here tonight. This is about America, and it is not about TV ads that try to justify a war going on in Iraq. I am ashamed those things are on TV. We support our troops, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. ROSS. I appreciate the gentleman joining me and his commitment to our brave men and women in uniform. I thank the President for going to Iraq. He was there, I think it was his third trip, he was there for a few hours. I spent a day in Iraq. You have been several times. I think it is important that we go and we let our soldiers know we support them and make sure some of this money over there is being spent on them and providing them the best equipment that money can buy. They deserve nothing less.

But the type of folks that I think the President needs to spend a lot more time listening to are the type of Members of Congress that have served in the military, like PATRICK MURPHY from Pennsylvania. PATRICK, not too long ago, was known as Captain MURPHY and spent not a few hours in Iraq, but a few months in Iraq, nearly a year. PATRICK MURPHY from Pennsylvania's Eighth Congressional District, a fellow Blue Dog member who helped write H.R. 97, which is a bill endorsed by the Blue Dog Coalition to provide for Operation Iraqi Freedom cost accountability to ensure that this \$16 million an hour of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, which is going to Iraq, is being spent on our soldiers.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Congressman-Captain PATRICK MURPHY.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas. It is an honor for me to be here tonight.

I would like to say to the gentleman from Arkansas, that is exactly right. One of the things I plan on talking about tonight are really two things, the small business tax cuts that we established in this Congress this past May, and also the Iraq Accountability Act, because I think it is telling.

There are a couple of housekeeping things if I may mention, Mr. Speaker. I know the gentleman from Tennessee was just speaking about an Eisenhower moment and talked about reaching out to those Americans from both sides of the aisle and letting them know about this common sense leadership we are trying to propose. What he mentioned was we need to listen and look at some common sense solutions. I think that is what people appreciate about the Blue Dogs. We are willing to reach across the aisle when need be to move our country in a new direction.

I know there are a lot of folks back home I know, some of which are my wife right now. My wife Jenny is at home. I left this morning. I spoke at the Rotary Club and I was at a school for the first day of classes starting back today back in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Then I had a meeting,

and then I rushed down here in Washington.

It is an honor for me to be here tonight. It is tough as far as leaving your wife, and we are blessed with a 9 month old daughter Maggie Murphy, who we had her swimming out there yesterday. She was adorable.

I know this is a different form of public service. I know the gentleman from Arkansas mentioned that I served in the military. I am very proud of my military service. I am very proud that I wore that U.S. Army uniform for the first time back in 1993, and now that we are here in 2007, I am proud to be a Member of Congress. This is a different form of public service, but one just as important. I know the sacrifices that we have to give up, leaving our families to come down here to Washington and then to go back home on the weekends. It is a tough schedule, but one that we promised to do to the best of our abilities.

I know my colleague over here from New York, Mr. ARCURI, MIKE ARCURI just got married the other day. I want to congratulate him on his marriage. I think he believes in what we all believe in, that we love our troops so much, I think he spent his honeymoon going over to see those troops in Iraq, leaving his new wife, Sabrina, to go over to those troops.

We had a conversation on this floor tonight when we were voting talking about his trip over there, how he went and let those troops know, especially the ones that are from New York, from his district, that he cares about them, that he took the time out of his schedule to be there with them, to break bread with them and let them know that he is fighting for them here in Washington.

I believe those troops understand what the stakes are right now. They understand that this United States House of Representatives, this body supports the troops 100 percent. We may disagree with our colleagues on the foreign policy and the foreign aspects of it, but never question the commitment and the honor that our troops are serving with. I believe that is why we all take time out of our schedules to let them know we care for them, to make sure that we draft the most effective policy to support them and do everything possible to make sure their families back at home know we are supporting them 100 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk first, because after I left that Rotary Club this morning and then I was at that opening day of school at the Abrams Hebrew School in Yardley, Pennsylvania. I went down the road to two small businesses that are in Yardley, Pennsylvania. My district, as you know are, is all of Bucks County, northeast Philadelphia and a small slice of Montgomery County.

But when you look at Bucks County, there are 60,000 small businesses in Bucks County. Ninety-nine percent of our businesses are small business. And

what we passed in this House, I am very proud about, is \$1.3 billion in tax cuts for those small businesses. We did it not just writing a blank check and passing that debt that we talk about to our kids, we did it in a fiscally responsible way, the way that Blue Dogs believe, a pay-as-you-go system.

Everyone is real quick to write tax breaks and tax cuts, but never figure out to how to pay for it. Just increase our debt. Increase our debt. When the President signs \$1.7 billion in tax cuts, it sounds great. Everyone wants a tax break. I want a tax break. But how are you going to pay for it, Mr. President? Not on the backs of our kids. Not on the backs of the next generation. We need the pay-as-you-go.

So when my daughter was born 9 months ago, when Maggie Murphy was born, she was born in Lower Bucks Hospital, she was born in this country owing \$29,000 to our national debt. We owe \$9 trillion in this country. A lot of that debt we owe to foreign countries, China, Korea, Japan. We borrowed \$367 billion from Mexico.

So that means per month, per month we average about \$21 billion just to pay the interest on this debt. It is like a credit card. You have to pay interest on your credit card before you even get into paying the principal off. Per month we have to pay \$21 billion in interest.

To make a comparison, budgets are choices. Budgets are moral documents. Per month in the Federal Government we spend \$21 billion just on the interest, but we only pay \$5 billion on the Federal level on education. And to keep America more competitive, we need to invest in education. So that is why it is important that we partner with small businesses. That is what we do with the \$1.3 billion in tax cuts.

How it worked out, I had two business owners, one was a CEO, his name is Neil Matheson today, and when he started a business, he was the only employee. You fast forward it, now it is a 250 person business. They have 140 of those employees in my district, and I am proud that many of them live and work in Bucks County. I talked to him. And another president of a small business was Kevin Kruse.

I talked to Neil Matheson and I talked to Kevin Kruse, and I talked to them about the challenges they faced before I was running for Congress and then I talked to them when I became a Member of Congress. We passed this, and they talked about how important this bill was that we passed.

Per year, they commented, Kevin Kruse specifically commented, big corporations which employ Americans, big corporations can sell if they needed some money infusion, they can sell stocks or go public. Small businesses don't have that option. So they have to worry about their cash intake and their cash flow.

So what Mr. Kruse said today when I was with him, he said this tax cut that the Democratic Congress passed, that

the Blue Dogs championed, saves my business \$13,000 more in deductions per year now because we established it through the IRS Tax Code through a pay-as-you-go system. That is serious money. That is serious money. That is why they stood with me today when we talked about it.

Before I joined the House of Representatives, Mr. Speaker, I talked about more accountability and greater oversight in Iraq and over the Iraqi war operations. I am a proud Member of the Blue Dog Coalition. I have been calling for accountability in Iraq on the floor of this great body for 8 months now. In fact, some of my Blue Dog colleagues have been demanding common sense oversight on the floor of this House for more than 4 years before I even got here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem with these repeated calls for action is they seem to be falling on deaf ears down the road at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House.

Mr. Speaker, the American public and our families at home are demanding some answers. Earlier this year we introduced House Resolution 97, to set up a Truman-type commission to track fraud, waste and abuse in Iraq. This was after the reports from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction came to the House Armed Services Committee, came to the committee that I have the honor to serve on, and he said there is \$9 billion missing and 14,000 weapons that are missing in Iraq. But recently, the Government Accountability Office, again, nonpartisan, came and reported that now the number of weapons that are missing in Iraq went from 14,000 to 190,000. Think about that; 190,000 weapons, and 110,000 of those weapons were AK-47 rifles.

Now, when I was in the military when I joined, I used to sing a cadence when you are running in the morning, we call it PT, physical training. The cadence said, "Used to date a beauty queen; now I date my M-16."

See, you held that M-16 rifle to you as if it was your girlfriend or your loved one, because you can never miss it. When you are in the field at night and you fell asleep and you had a few hours to catch some shuteye, you tied it around your leg so no one would steal it from you.

That is called accountability. That is what the Blue Dogs stand for. That is why I joined this organization when I came to Congress. I was honored to be selected and to be part of them.

You think about 110,000 weapons just missing in Iraq. Just missing. Imagine those weapons in the hands of Muqtada al-Sadr's militia.

The accountability is not happening in Iraq. It is not our troops' fault, it is the Iraqi people's fault, because they are not stepping up to the plate. You know, you lose a weapon in the U.S. military, you are probably going to be court-martialed. In Iraq, you are probably given a new one. That is a major difference and one that we can't stand for.

These rifles are like the ones I used to carry when I was in Baghdad, Iraq. When I was there four summers ago, Mr. Speaker, August was called fire month. The month of August in Iraq is called fire month because it gets so hot. Imagine our troops over in Iraq right now, in 130 degree weather, with all that equipment on, every day working their tails off to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, that oath that they took when they became members of our great military.

You look back at January when the President made the decision to escalate our troops over there. I spoke out against it. I thought it was the wrong policy. But the President overrode our decisions in Congress and he said, just give us 6 to 9 months for a political solution.

You look now, and I said then I am against the policy but I hope this surge works. I hope the escalation of troops works. I want our troops in Iraq to succeed. I spent months of my life there, and I care for the Iraqi people and I love our troops.

But now it has been 9 months. Now you look at what is really happening. They said 6 to 9 months to allow a political solution to happen. Nine months later, you had the Iraqi Parliament take a summer vacation. Take a summer vacation, when our troops are fighting every single day.

You had the Shia government that is in power now, before the Sunnis were in power, now it is the Shia, it is a democracy, they have to reach across the table and work with the Sunnis. They have got to put their personal beliefs aside for one Iraq.

So the Shia leadership, President Maliki said, okay, we are going to reach these benchmarks. We are going to do these commonsense things that we pledged to do now for years. They still haven't done them. Things like sharing oil revenue with the Sunnis, they haven't done them.

So what political solution do we have right now, Mr. Speaker? We have the Sunnis saying I quit. I quit. You don't see our troops quit. You see our troops standing up every single day.

For those listeners at home, you make sure when you see a troop, whether it is in a restaurant or airport or train station, you don't have to give them a long speech. You might not agree with the foreign policy of the United States of America. But I ask my fellow Americans, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that you tell those troops when you see them out there in every day America, say thank you very much for serving our country. That is all you need to say. It means the world to them.

I took my wife out, I had a date night the other night. I took my wife out, we went to Red Lobster. My wife's grandmother watched our little daughter. We went to date night, and, Mr. Speaker, after dinner she went to the restaurant to use it at the Red Lobster.

I am waiting in the car, and waiting to get into the Red Lobster was a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard. He was there with his family. I took the keys out of the car. I ran up to him real quick. I was dressed not like a Congressman, I was just like a regular guy, just a regular shirt and I had shorts on him. I said to him, I said, hey, troop, I just want you to know that I appreciate your service to our country.

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Then we started talking a little bit and at the end I told him I was a congressman and gave him my card. I said, If there is anything I can ever do, you let me know, and I will keep you in my prayers.

He got choked up and said, Thank you, Mr. Congressman, I appreciate that.

I told him, Just call me "Patrick." You don't have to call me "Mr. Congressman."

We have meetings in Washington on the Armed Services Committee. I am also honored to serve on the Intelligence Committee. We also have meetings of the Blue Dog Democrats. We talk about these things at the Blue Dog Democrat meetings. We care with every fiber of our being for these troops.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a meeting with the Blue Dogs at 5:00, or 1700 as they say in military time. I passed around a sheet talking about how can we take care of our troops.

When troops get orders to deploy, sometimes they don't have a lot of time. Sometimes they have rent. Well, they don't need to have an apartment if they are in Iraq or Afghanistan for 15 months, so they want to break their lease. There is Federal law, there is the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, so they can break their lease. It is a commonsense bill that this Congress passed. There is a bill that says expand that now to allow our troops who have cell phones, a 1-year or 2-year program, why not allow the troops to break their cell phone contracts. Their cell phones are from Verizon or Cingular, and they don't have cell phones over in Baghdad or in Afghanistan. That commonsense approach says let them break their cell phone lease under Federal law. That is the type of backing that they need.

To get back to the Iraq Accountability Act, Mr. Speaker, you look at what this Iraq Accountability Act has done to shed light on fraud, waste and abuse. The report that I just mentioned about the 190,000 weapons is a disgrace when you talk about accountability.

Last month, there were a total of 73 criminal investigations related to contract fraud in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan; 73 criminal investigations. That is 73 investigations on contracts totaling \$5 billion. That is billion with a "b," Mr. Speaker. The charges so far identify more than \$15 million in bribes. If there is ever a time for a new direction in Iraq, now is the time, Mr.

Speaker. If there is ever a time for accountability and oversight, now is the time, Mr. Speaker.

And as long as my fellow Blue Dogs and I are here in the House's great body, we will keep calling, we will keep fighting for what American families and what American troops deserve, and that is civilian leadership that is just as smart and savvy as those troops on the ground.

I want to thank again the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. ROSS, for allowing me to speak. I appreciate your leadership role with the Blue Dog Democrats.

When I was home, Mr. Speaker, and I was talking to those families in Bucks County, many told me, Mr. Congressman, I like that are you a Blue Dog and that you are standing up for fiscal responsibility and you stand up for change. I like the fact that you stand up for a new direction. I like the fact that you talk about that \$9 trillion in debt that we have right now and how it is immoral to pass it on to our kids, because it is. I like the fact that the Blue Dogs stand up and say you have a pay-as-you-go system, not a pass-the-buck system. That is what happened before. That's leadership.

And, Mr. Speaker, to the gentleman from Arkansas, to my colleague from the great State of New York, it is a great honor to be among your midst as a fellow Blue Dog.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his insight as someone who has served in the war in Iraq as a captain in the Army, and we appreciate his service here in the Congress and his insight into helping us draft proposals like H.R. 97 to restore accountability and common sense on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq and ensuring that it is directed towards our brave men and woman in uniform and protecting them and keeping them safe.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a new direction in Iraq, and that is what this Blue Dog hour has been about this evening. I thank my colleagues who have joined me.

If you have any comments or questions, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. That is BlueDog@mail.house.gov. We stand here on behalf of 47 fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog members that make up the Blue Dog Coalition.

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for half the time before midnight, which is approximately 50 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to come to the floor of the House this evening and do as I do many times late in the day after the official business of Congress has concluded and talk a little bit about health care.

Health care is going to be one of the things that we hear about a lot over

the next 14 to 16 months before the next Presidential election. There are a lot of areas that I could discuss, but I want to concentrate on two areas. Those are the physician workforce itself, who is actually going to provide the care. And we are coming up on the 4 year anniversary of a law that was passed back in my home State of Texas that dealt with significant medical liability reform, and I would like to spend a few minutes talking about that also this evening.

We have to, as a Nation, look at the effects that some of the policies that we have generated here in Congress, quite honestly some of the policies that we have had that have been prevalent in our Medicaid and Medicare system that have resulted in physicians not continuing their practices, or, I am afraid to say, in some instances young people even deciding that the practice of medicine may not be for them.

Now, right before we left on break, we had an opportunity to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program. It was a program that is now going on 10 years since its inception, passed by a Republican Congress, signed into law by a Democratic President, so truly a bipartisan effort 10 years ago. It is going to expire at the end of this month.

Mr. Speaker, every one of us who stood in this Chamber and raised their right hand and swore an oath on January 3 that we were going to do the country's business this year, every one of us knew that the Children's Health Insurance Program expired at the end of the fiscal year, which is less than 30 days away.

Still, we waited until the absolute last minute before we broke on our August recess. A bill came to the House floor after some fairly contentious committee proceedings. Regular order in the committees was not adhered to. We didn't go through a subcommittee process. We got a big bill dumped on us right before we had a full committee hearing, and as a consequence, there was no time to evaluate that in my Energy and Commerce Committee. It was brought to the House floor and it passed largely on partisan lines. It is strikingly different than the bill passed in the Senate, and the President had already indicated that he would not sign but veto the bill passed in the Senate. And I have to believe that the bill that was passed at the last minute, in the waning moments before the August recess by the House of Representatives, I have to believe that the President feels the same way about that bill as well.

It is significant, of course, because there are a lot of people who depend on the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think I can name one person in this body on either side of the aisle who wouldn't be for a reauthorization of this program if we could simply sit down and do it in a reasonable fashion. Unfortunately,