

I will commend the chairman of the committee for all he did and by not voting “yes” on the rule because even he, a Democrat chairman, saw the error of their ways in what they did.

Mr. DREIER. He was quoted as saying he believed it wrong that they were denied. Tragically, this was done in the aftermath of the unveiling of this report that we put forward simply stating the facts of what has taken place in the last 9 months.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. I would just conclude by concurring with the gentleman from Georgia on this. Although we are in the minority here, this is not an issue for the minority; this is for half of America. And it doesn’t matter whether the Americans watching tonight are Democrat or Republicans. Their voices are being silenced because they cannot have their voices heard through us in the Rules Committee and have their important issues made part of the process.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and now yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), a hardworking member of the Rules Committee.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the ranking member from California for not only putting together this Special Order tonight, but also talking about the Rules Committee which I think is so important. I have had an opportunity to serve on the Rules Committee for 9 years. For 9 years previous to this, I have seen the Rules Committee as being part of the process to make sure that the agenda of policy is done properly by the Speaker of the House through this committee. I would like to note to the gentleman from California, as he remembers that, Republicans utilized this committee to make sure that we balanced the budget, to make sure that we had responsibility and the opportunity to make sure that the American people benefited from that which we did here in Washington, D.C. by cutting taxes.

Republicans balanced the budget when they said it was not possible in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. We went in and we balanced the budget. We utilized the Rules Committee to make sure that we had responsible government.

I have now seen during the last 10 months that we have been in the minority that it is also true that the new Democrat majority utilizes the Rules Committee to do things that I don’t think that the American people can completely understand, and that is that they want to raise taxes, they want to raise spending, and they want to make sure that what happens is that loopholes are there in place for them to do earmarks despite the debate that has taken place on this floor.

So I am pleased to join the gentleman from California tonight in summarizing that the Rules Committee is a very difficult place for all Members. It is a difficult place whether you are in the majority or the minority, but it

is still the place where the political work gets done, and nothing has changed. The Democrat Party is still here to raise taxes and raise spending and to take away from the American people that which they earn, and that is called their hard-earned money.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Dallas for his very thoughtful remarks and hard work.

I recommend to my colleagues going to rules-republicans.house.gov to see a copy of this very, very important report that we have just unveiled, because it is on behalf of the American people, not any bipartisanship, the American people, that we are fighting on behalf of their rights.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members be able to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

BLUE DOG COALITION

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, what we have just witnessed on the House floor is an example of why the American people are sick and tired of all of the partisan bickering that goes on up in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, there are 47 of us who are fiscally conservative Democrats who want to put an end to the partisan bickering. We are a group of conservative Democrats who quite frankly don’t care if it is a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. We want to know if it is a commonsense idea and does it make sense for the people that send us here to be their voice.

Mr. Speaker, there are 47 Members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. As you walk the Halls of Congress, it is easy to identify which Members are members of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition because you will see this poster as you walk the hallways of the Cannon House Office Building, the Longworth House Office Building and the Rayburn House Office Building.

This poster not only serves as a doormat to Blue Dog Coalition Members of Congress, but also as a daily reminder to Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle and to the American people that our Nation is in debt.

Today, the U.S. national debt is \$9,010,742,245,690. If you divide that enormous number and put it in perspective by every man, woman and child in America, every one of us, our share of the national debt is \$29,735. It

is what we have coined the phrase “debt tax,” and that is one tax that cannot be cut and that is one amount that is not going to fund America’s priorities but rather is going to simply pay interest on the national debt and to pay down the national debt.

I had a constituent from back home in Arkansas in my office today. She said she was in my office a couple of years ago, and everybody’s share of the national debt was some \$27,000. Again, today it is \$29,735. Under this Republican administration, we have seen the largest debt ever in our Nation’s history. We have seen the largest deficit ever in our Nation’s history.

Contrast that with the past administration, the Clinton administration. President Clinton was the first Democrat or Republican in 40 years to give us a balanced budget; and yet here we are 7 years later with the largest debt ever in our Nation’s history, and as members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we want to restore fiscal discipline and commonsense to our Nation’s government.

That is why there was a lot of talk about the first 100 hours on the House floor in this new Democratic majority, and we accomplished more in the first 100 hours I would dare say than the previous Congress did all together. In fact, I believe we have done more on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in the past 9 months than the previous Republican Congresses have done in 9 years.

Unfortunately, these bills are then sent to the Senate where too many of them remain. But I am proud of the work that we are doing in the House under this new majority. And, Mr. Speaker, we are doing it with fiscal discipline. We are passing these bills, a new vision for America, putting America’s priorities where they ought to be, and that is putting our families and children first again. But we are doing it in a sensible and responsible way, a way in which we pay for it.

One of the first things to happen on the floor in this new Congress was to reinstitute the PAYGO rules. PAYGO is an acronym for “pay as you go.” It is what we do at the Ross home in Prescott, Arkansas. It is what most American families do.

Mr. Speaker, for the past 6 years, a Republican-led Congress and a Republican President gave us the largest debt ever in our Nation’s history, the largest deficit year after year. To put it in perspective, to put it in perspective, this President has borrowed more money from foreigners in the past 6 years than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

We are going to put an end to that, and we did so when we reinstated the PAYGO rules on the floor of the House of Representatives. Every bill that comes to the floor of the House in this new Democratic Congress must be paid for. Now, some of the Republicans say, oh, that’s a disguise to raise taxes. The Republicans now believe that the only

way to create new revenue, the only way to pay for a program is to raise taxes. Not so. As conservative Democrats, we know the way you pay for programs is to cut wasteful spending. There are a lot of examples of wasteful spending.

I have got 8,000 brand-new, fully furnished mobile homes sitting in a cow pasture in Hope, Arkansas, mobile homes purchased by FEMA destined for Hurricane Katrina victims that never quite found their way to the gulf coast. Now FEMA, our government, is spending a quarter of a million dollars a month to warehouse these mobile homes which have created another bureaucracy in and of itself back home in Hope, Arkansas. And they are not doing anyone any good.

You want to talk about accountability, I had a tornado a few months ago hit Dumas, Arkansas. They needed 30, that's right, 30 of these mobile homes, while 8,000 of them sat in a cow pasture 2½ hours away in Hope, Arkansas. I called the director of FEMA. He came up with every excuse in the book why he couldn't help these 30 homeless people. He said it wasn't worthy of a declaration for a Federal disaster.

This tornado devastated this small delta town of 5,000 people. There were 150 homes destroyed or heavily damaged. Over 25 businesses were destroyed. The electrical grid system for the town was destroyed. They went 5 days without electricity. Lots of people were injured. Thank God no one died. And we needed 30 of those mobile homes sent 2½ hours down the road to help these folks. And, instead, the response I got was they weren't worthy of a Federal disaster declaration.

It took me going on CNN, and, finally, 30 minutes after I was on "NBC Evening News" talking about this tragedy, FEMA had a change of heart and decided to let the people of Dumas have these 30 mobile homes to house the homeless who were victims of this tornado.

This is an example of wasteful spending and this is a symbol of why people are fed up with our government, and it is an example of why we need to restore accountability, accountability to our Nation's government.

So when I say we are going to pay for our programs in the future, it doesn't mean raise taxes. It means cut wasteful spending, eliminate the programs that do not work so we can fund the programs that do.

□ 1930

From 1789 to 2000, our national debt rose to \$5.67 trillion, but by 2010, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. This is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just a decade, in just 10 years.

Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget, and again, the debt tax, D-E-B-T, is one that cannot be repealed, and every man, woman and child in America, your share, our

share, my share, your share, Mr. Speaker, of the national debt is \$29,735.

Current national debt, again \$9,010,742,245,690 and some change. Some say why do deficits matter; can't y'all just print more money? It doesn't work that way, and besides deficits reduce economic growth.

Think of the economic good times we had in the 1990s when President Clinton gave us the first balanced budget in 40 years, and look at the economy today. We propped up the economy through much of the last few years through low interest rates and allowing folks to purchase homes that maybe couldn't quite afford it, and now that's coming back to haunt this administration.

Deficits reduce economic growth. It's time to restore fiscal discipline to our national government. It is time to reduce our debt and deficit so that we can create new jobs and economic opportunities for working families.

Why do deficits matter? I would argue they burden our children and grandchildren with these last liabilities. For the last 6 years, this Republican Congress and Republican administration has spent money like you wouldn't believe. They have spent money and haven't paid for their spending. They have left it for our children and for our grandchildren. That is simply wrong.

Growing up at Midway United Methodist Church outside of Prescott, Arkansas, I heard a lot of sermons about being a good steward, and the American people have elected us as Members of Congress to make the weekly trip to our Nation's Capital and be good stewards of their tax money. And that's why I'm proud to help lead and cochair the Blue Dog Coalition, because we're doing our best to demand accountability, to demand fiscal responsibility and to give this Congress a good dose of common sense.

Why do deficits matter? Because they increase our reliance on foreign lenders. Foreign lenders now own 40 percent of this debt. Much of the rest of it's been borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund, with absolutely no provision made on how or when it's going to be paid back. That's why, Mr. Speaker, the first bill I filed as a Member of Congress was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security Trust Fund.

The U.S. is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders. Foreign lenders currently hold a total of about \$2.199 trillion of our public debt, and I believe this is every bit as much critical to our national security as anything else. Compare this to only \$623.3 billion in foreign holdings back in 1993. So who are these countries? Who are these foreign investors that are funding our government, that for the past 6 years funded tax cuts for folks in this country earning over \$400,000 a year, while the rest of us were pretty much left to fend for ourselves?

Topping off the list, Japan. The United States of America has borrowed \$637.4 billion from Japan.

Number two, China. The United States of America has borrowed \$346.5 billion from Communist China.

The United Kingdom. The United States of America has borrowed \$223.5 billion from the UK.

OPEC, and we wonder why gasoline is so high. The United States of America has borrowed \$97.1 billion from OPEC.

Korea. \$67.7 billion is the amount of debt that the United States of America has accumulated with Korea.

Taiwan, \$63.2 billion. The United States of America has borrowed \$63.2 billion from Taiwan.

One of the founders of the Blue Dogs, JOHN TANNER from Tennessee, put it best when he said, if China decides to invade Taiwan, we'll have to borrow more money from China to defend Taiwan. That's crazy.

It is crazy that we borrowed and continue to borrow all this money from foreigners. And as members of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition and this new Democratic Congress, we're saying enough is enough, and we're trying to restore fiscal discipline, common sense through the passage of the PAYGO rules, pay-as-you-go.

If a Member of Congress has an idea and it's worthy of being funded, that's fine and dandy, but don't borrow the money from Taiwan or China or OPEC. Show us how you're going to pay for it. That's the new rules of the House of Representatives, and those are the rules that were in place back in the late 1990s when we saw the first balanced budget in this Nation in 40 years, a balanced budget that continued from 1998 through 2000.

The Caribbean Banking Centers. The United States of America has borrowed \$63.6 billion from the Caribbean Banking Centers.

Hong Kong. The United States of America has borrowed \$51 billion from Hong Kong.

Germany, \$52.1 billion. The United States of America has borrowed \$52.1 billion from Germany.

And rounding out the top 10 list of foreigners that the United States of America under this Republican administration has borrowed money from to fund our government and tax cuts for those earning over \$400,000 a year, and this one will surprise a lot of people, Mexico. Yes, the United States of America has borrowed \$38.2 billion from Mexico to help fund this debt which, as of today, is \$9,010,742,245,690 and some change.

That's what the Blue Dog Coalition is all about. We're about trying to restore fiscal discipline and common sense to our national government, and I'm proud of our Blue Dog members. We're 47 members strong. There's 47 of us that are not afraid to come to Washington and take a stand for common sense, for fiscal discipline and to restore accountability to our government.

Well, we talk about the debt and the deficit. Another thing that's important to point out, Mr. Speaker, is our Nation's been borrowing about a billion dollars a day, but before we borrow a billion dollars today, we're going to spend a half a billion, with a B, a half a billion dollars of your tax money paying interest on the debt we've already got, and until we get our fiscal house in order, we will not be able to meet America's priorities.

What do I mean by that? Interest payments on debt dwarf other priority. 2008 budget authority in billions. The red indicates the amount of money we're spending of your tax money paying interest on the national debt. And until we get our fiscal house in order, we can't stop those interest payments, which means many of America's priorities are going unmet because so much of our tax money, Mr. Speaker, is going to pay interest on the national debt.

The red indicates the amount of money in the fiscal year 2008 budget as presented by the President that's going to pay interest on the national debt. Now, we say we love our children. We say that we want them to have a world-class education. We say that we want our children to be competitive in this 21st century global economy. We say one thing; we do another. Look at the light blue. That's how much we spend educating our children compared to the red, which is the amount of money we spend paying interest on the national debt.

Veterans, and we're creating a new generation of veterans in Iraq and Afghanistan tonight, and it's time that our country did right by our veterans. It's time that our Nation, the United States of America, honored our veterans and kept our promises to them, and yet in the President's budget for 2008, the green, that's how much we're investing in veterans health care and veterans programs. And again, contrast that to the red. Look at the amount of money we're spending paying interest on the national debt. Contrast that to the green box, the amount of money we're spending taking care of our veterans.

And homeland security, "homeland security," a new word, a new buzzword since 9/11. Oh, we feel safe. We go through the airports and we take off our shoes and we do all that stuff to then board a plane where half the belly of the plane is filled oftentimes with freight that remains totally unchecked. All the containers entering our ports, very few are checked. "Homeland security" is a nice buzzword, but look at the amount of money we're investing in homeland security and protecting the citizens of this country and keeping America safe. Look at the amount of money in the President's budget for homeland security contrasted with the red box. Purple box, homeland security; red box, the amount of money the President proposed that we spend simply paying interest on the national debt.

This does not reflect my priorities, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure you that the President's budget does not reflect the priorities of this new Democratic Congress. It is time that we put families and children first again. We do that by investing in our children, ensuring they receive a world-class education. We do that by honoring our veterans, including a new generation of veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, and we do that by protecting our homeland. We do that by protecting our homeland.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of talk about Iraq and what we should or should not do. I voted to go to Iraq. Most Members of this Chamber, both Democrat and Republican, did, and we went there, we were told, because of weapons of mass destruction. They no longer have weapons of mass destruction. We'll save that debate for another evening, Mr. Speaker, about whether they ever did or not, but we were told that they had weapons of mass destruction and they were never found, which, at best, our intelligence in this country failed us.

And I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, there's not a more difficult decision that Members of Congress are forced to make than whether or not to send our men and women in uniform into harm's way, and when we're asked to make these decisions, we've got to know our intelligence is right. Our intelligence failed us in the decisions we had to make leading up to this war in Iraq.

I've got a brother-in-law. He's been in the Iraq region several times. He's in his, I don't know, 19th year in the United States Air Force. My first cousin is an officer in Iraq. He was in Iraq when his wife gave birth to their first child. He's back in Iraq. He's there for a year and a half, and he will be there when his wife gives birth to their third child. He's not complaining. He's proud to serve his country. He does whatever's asked of him. That's what our men and women in uniform do.

But this war has not only affected my family. It's affected everybody's family. Just in the last month, I've had to make three telephone calls to wives and mothers in my district who have lost a loved one in Iraq, including one just an hour or so ago before coming to the House floor. We can never do enough for those families. We can never do enough to honor and remember those who have served our Nation in Iraq and Afghanistan and all over this world.

But at some point we've got to ask ourselves, I mean, we went there because of weapons of mass destruction. We said that we would stay until Saddam was overthrown; we did. Then we were told we would stay until he was captured; he was. Then we were told that we would stay until he was tried and executed; we did. And then we were told we needed to stay until the new Iraqi Government was in place and they had open and free elections; and they did.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to move the goal post on our troops. We continue to redefine what our ultimate victory is. And I'm here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, if our ultimate victory is convincing the folks of Iraq to live like we do, we will be there for the rest of my life.

It's time for a new direction in Iraq, and I bring this up because we're spending some \$16 million an hour of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, \$16 million an hour in Iraq.

□ 1945

I think we should demand accountability for how that money is being spent, and I think we should demand a new direction. I think we owe that to our men and women in uniform.

Well, I am very delighted to be joined this evening by some of my Blue Dog colleagues as we discuss the Blue Dogs. I have kind of set the stage, by explaining the debt, why it matters, how we have gotten into the mess we are in and what we are trying to do as conservative Democrats to fix it. We are not just talking about it; we have legislation to accomplish it. In the Iraq war, we have H.R. 97, the demand accountability on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq. We talked about that on the floor of the House many times.

Tonight, some of the things I want to talk about is the Blue Dog fiscal accountability package, taking the next steps to restore fiscal accountability to our Nation's government. We have the Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act, we have the balanced budget amendment, and we have a resolution strengthening the budget process; and we will talk about these in more detail as the evening goes on.

But at this moment, I would like to yield to my friend from Tennessee, fellow Blue Dog member, LINCOLN DAVIS.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. To the gentleman from Arkansas, thanks very much for your leadership on many of the issues that our Blue Dog Coalition championed here in the House. We championed them for many years, about 1994, 1995, when the Blue Dogs were established.

Basically, this group of individuals initially offered both sides, both caucuses, the opportunity to participate in the Blue Dogs, Republican and Democrats alike.

I have always continued to feel very confident that in America today we need American Democrats and American Republicans more than ever. What I mean by that is that we need Americans first and political parties next. Certainly those two political parties have done a tremendous job in driving many of the debates on many of the important issues important in America.

It has also given America a history as being the country in the world that championed civil rights, individual rights, and civil liberties; and we continue to do that. In many cases, as we

have engaged in battlefields throughout history, it has been to bring about democracy and freedom.

But as we talk about this, I want to digress just a moment and talk about a particular situation that is being considered today, which will be what's called combat training for our airmen. In many cases we put our soldiers who are in the Air Force in the battlefield, the battle zones, in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, in my opinion, without proper training for EMS, in the event there is something that happens that they are in the battlefield, they may be injured. I don't think they are properly trained, and, in many cases, we need to do that. So we are actually talking now about locating CBAT, which will be combat training for airmen in different areas.

I want to read a comment that I have prepared for the potential location of this particular facility.

From the Manhattan Project to TVA to the Apollo project to the Spallation Neutron Source and so much more, the Tennessee Valley Corridor and its key institutions, communities, businesses, and congressional leaders have always exemplified the phrase, "National Leadership through Regional Cooperation."

Key leaders in our region continue to support our Nation by working to enhance and advance the corridor's key science technology and national security assets.

With that, one of the big challenges in warfare is adequate training for our combat troops. Afghanistan and Iraq have placed a new demand on the airmen of our Air Force for needed combat air support. These increased demands include prison guard duty, combat convoy support, and significant expanded security force duty.

With these additional responsibilities, the Air Force has acknowledged its airmen are lacking the ground combat skills necessary to meet today's demands. To address these needs, the Air Force has proposed, as former Air Force Secretary Roche has described it, a new program to "bring together our battlefield airmen under a common training and organization structure to strengthen the combat power they bring to the fight."

Weapons training, tactical field cooperation operations and land navigation training, basic combat skills, physical fitness training and basic medical training will be a part of the core curriculum provided by new Common Battlefield Airman Training (CBAT) program.

The proposed location for this new Common Battlefield Airman Training program has now been narrowed down to three potential sites, one of which is in my district, Arnold Engineering Development Center in Arnold Air Force Base near Tullahoma, Tennessee.

Key leaders in the Tennessee Valley Corridor and I are convinced that establishing CBAT at Arnold Air Force Base would be the best course of ac-

tion, an exceptional investment for the Air Force and the Nation. Arnold Air Force Base and the Arnold Engineering Development Center are already home to the world's premier flight simulations testing facility and continue to be vital national resources in the development of many of the Nation's top priority aerospace and national defense programs.

Arnold, with its history of extensive combat training during World War II, had abundant land available for CBAT training, with a dedicated 200-acre campus, small arms firing range and 9,000 acres for additional required training. In short, middle Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Corridor have a world-class facility ready and willing to house this important new training operation.

The Coffee County community, the middle Tennessee/north Alabama region and, indeed, the entire Tennessee Valley Corridor strongly support our Nation's Armed Forces and their training needs as they continue to serve and defend our Nation. A better trained corps of airmen will not only give them the ability to operate more effectively in a combat zone and a better chance of survival, but will also help them better defend the United States in our post-9/11 world.

I strongly support and encourage all others to support Arnold Air Force Base's pursuit of this new CBAT program.

As we continue to train our soldiers who are on the battlefields throughout the world, certainly in the two hot spots today, perhaps we should say three, which would also include the area around the Balkans, we need to adequately train them. It's not right; it's not American to send someone into the battlefield without being properly trained.

I know we have others who want to speak here tonight; but I would like, if I could, before I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas, I would like to read an editorial that I sent to one of our local papers, and it deals with PAYGO, as we will address our deficits here in Congress:

"At a time when the White House is attempting to position the Republican Party as fiscally responsible, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan bluntly said in his new book 'The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World' that his party over the past several years put politics over fiscal discipline and lower government spending." At least one honest Republican.

"During the past several years while we were witnessing the largest growth of government since the 1960s and a ballooning deficit, Mr. Greenspan was correct in advocating for a return to pay-as-you-go rules. These rules, re-enacted earlier this year after they helped restore fiscal discipline in Washington during the 1990s, require Congress to offset the cost of new spending or tax cuts with savings elsewhere.

"The Blue Dog Coalition, a growing band of deficit hawk Democrats with a deep commitment to the financial stability and national security of the United States, has been pushing to re-implement PAYGO for several years. Their bark was finally heard earlier this year when they pushed the new congressional leadership to enforce the policy.

"When PAYGO was in place in the 1990s, spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) declined from 22.1 percent to 18.5 percent by 2001. As a result, huge budget deficits became a budget surplus. Shortly after President Bush took office, the Congress unwisely let PAYGO expire, causing an explosion in government spending and yearly budget deficits. Our national debt grew by \$3 trillion over this period, and by 2005, spending had clawed its way back to 20.1 percent of GDP."

Let's think about that a moment: \$3 trillion increase since this President has been in office. What does that mean?

We roughly spend \$450 billion a year today on interest alone. That's \$1.2 billion a day. But let's just take the last 5 years since 2001, or 6 years since 2001, and look at how that \$3 trillion is impacting our budget.

For instance, today, if we had continued down the path and just had a balanced budget, not necessarily a surplus but just a balanced budget, we wouldn't be spending \$150 billion-plus extra in interest. Think of what that would do. We are spending today over 125, \$130 billion in Iraq, supposedly, in Iraq, probably more than that. But, in essence, what we have done in the last 6½ years, or last 6 years and 9 months of this administration, under control of the Republican White House and under the control of the Republican leadership on the other side of the aisle, we have increased just our portion of the interest, not retiring the debt, by over \$150 billion a year. That in itself, that figure itself, alone, is over six times what the entire budget of the State of Tennessee is in one year.

So I think it's time that we again reclaim for this Nation fiscal responsibility and continue to be the strong defense hawks that our caucus, our Blue Dogs, has been.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his commitment to our men and women in uniform. I especially appreciate it as the Arkansas 39th Brigade, our Arkansas National Guard, they have only been home for about 33 months from a year on the ground in Iraq. They have been called up and are now training at National Guard armories all across Arkansas. They will be doing that through the end of the year. They will be going to Mississippi in January and February and then sometime in March headed back to Iraq for another year of duty.

We owe it to them and their families to ensure that they are properly trained and to ensure that we are investing in them the very best equipment and technology to give them a

fighting chance, coming back, returning to their families safely.

If you have got any comments or concerns, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. If you have any comments, questions or concerns, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

Again, the Blue Dog Coalition is a group of 47 fiscally conservative Democrats that, quite frankly, feel like we have been choked blue by the extremes of both parties, and we are just simply trying to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. We are in the middle, and that's what we believe America is.

I want to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his commitment to our troops, for his commitment to fiscal discipline and for sharing with us the piece that he recently submitted to a newspaper in his district. Thank you, LINCOLN DAVIS.

I mentioned the Blue Dogs have three bills that we believe can go a long way toward fixing this mess, cleaning up the mess here in Washington. One of the bills to do that is the Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act. It strengthens our commitment to fiscal responsibility and accountability, and reinstates statutory PAYGO rules.

It implements multiyear discretionary spending caps. It closes a loophole in the law that has been used to add billions of dollars in routine spending, and it requires the Congressional Budget Office, commonly referred to as the CBO, to estimate interest costs produced by spending in any bill. We will go over this and explain what all this means.

I am pleased to introduce and to yield to a fellow Blue Dog from the State of Indiana, who is the author of this commonsense piece of legislation that has been embraced by my fellow colleagues, conservative Democrats in the Blue Dog Coalition, and that's BARON HILL.

Mr. HILL. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding his time. I also thank him for his great leadership with the Blue Dog Coalition and making sure that our message of fiscal discipline does get out.

I would like at this time to take a little history lesson about how we have gotten to the point where we are right now with a \$9 trillion deficit. That figure is hard to believe, \$9 trillion, our Nation's government is in debt.

Back during the 1980s, there was a Republican President who came up with an idea called supply-side economics. During the campaign of the 1980s, that candidate was criticized for this economic policy. It was claimed to be very risky.

As a matter of fact, one of the candidates that was running on the Republican side called it voodoo economics. Basically, what it was in the 1980s was a policy that would dramatically cut taxes with the idea that if we cut taxes dramatically, there would be more money that would come to the coffers

of the United States Government and deficits would no longer be around.

The trouble with that is that it did not work in the 1980s. I have to say that the Democrats who were in the majority in the House and the Senate at that time endorsed this concept and passed this piece of legislation into law.

So taxes were dramatically decreased, military spending went dramatically up, and deficits went dramatically up during the 1980s.

□ 2000

During the 1990s, this policy was rejected under a Democratic President who was elected. He was of the opinion that we needed to get our fiscal house in order. And so during the 1990s, the supply side economics theory was rejected and PAYGO rules were put into effect in the 1990s.

What happened? Those PAYGO rules worked, and around 2000 and 2001 our government, for the first time in a very long period of time, actually produced surpluses. And it was projected that these surpluses would amount to trillions of dollars, projected out in the 21st century.

Then we had another election, and the old policies of the 1980s were reinstated again, those policies in the 1980s called supply side economics that caused huge deficits. PAYGO rules were thrown out the window again, not reinstated.

And here we are again, as Mr. DAVIS from Tennessee has already indicated, during that time period where PAYGOs were thrown out the window and supply side economics were reinstated, we've increased our deficit by \$3 trillion, and now we're facing a \$9 trillion deficit. The second largest expenditure in our Nation's budget is the interest that we pay on that deficit. This has got to stop. The gentleman from Arkansas earlier said, this is crazy, and it is crazy. When the Chinese Government is buying our debt, buying our paper, loaning us their money, affecting our foreign policy, we have to get our fiscal house in order.

And I'm so proud that I'm a member of Blue Dog Democrats. I joined the Blue Dog Democrats back in 1998 when I first got elected. I served three terms, and then the good people from southern Indiana decided I needed a little bit of a rest, and I took that rest for 2 years, got reelected 2 years later, and immediately joined the fiscally responsible group called the Blue Dog Democrats, and I'm glad that I am.

Now, Blue Dogs just don't bark. They also put into place policy. And one of the things that we have done is introduce the Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act. What does the Fiscal Accountability Act do? It reinstates statutorily the PAYGO rules that have led us out of this debt in the past and into surpluses. They were instrumental in producing the surpluses that we enjoyed in the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

This bill also closes a loophole in current law that allows almost any spending to be designated as emergency spending.

Now, for those who are listening on C-SPAN, what does that mean? You know, we can pay PAYGO rules in the House, and all PAYGO rules means is if we're going to spend extra money or we're going to reduce taxes, you've got to figure out a way to pay for it. It's pretty pure and simple, but it requires discipline.

One of the ways that Congress gets around the PAYGO rules is by enacting spending measures. For example, we may have an emergency spending measure on the war in Iraq.

Well, Members of Congress from both parties use that spending measure to insert other nonrelated emergency spending measures into the emergency spending in order to get around the PAYGO rules. The Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act will stop that practice; and it's the Blue Dogs who are leading the charge and making sure that we stop playing games with our Nation's budget, because we really do have to get serious here now about doing something about our Nation's budget. It's swirling out of control. I think most people are shocked when they learn that the Chinese Government is buying a lot of our debt in this country, affecting our foreign policy. This kind of practice needs to stop. And the Blue Dogs are leading the charge in making sure that it does get stopped by passing the Fiscal Accountability and Honesty Act.

Now, other things that we are doing, we're offering a balanced budget amendment and we're trying to pass a resolution strengthening the budget process. When I talk about the Blue Dogs are not just about bark but about policy as well, I mean it. We're putting our actions where our words are, and we're here tonight to talk about that and to ask the Congress to pass the Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act, which implements PAYGO rules and stops the clowning around with emergency spending measures.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have this opportunity to join my fellow Blue Dogs to talk about fiscal responsibility. I applaud the leadership of the Blue Dogs on this particular issue. We're going to keep on barking. We're going to keep on implementing policy. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding me this time, and I yield back my time to him.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Indiana's Ninth Congressional District, Mr. HILL, for his sponsorship and for authoring this very important legislation, the Fiscal Honesty and Accountability Act of 2007, one of three key pieces of legislation that we believe can go a long way toward restoring common sense, fiscal discipline and accountability to our national government.

Another one of those is a resolution strengthening the budget process.

We're going to talk more about that. I yield to the gentleman at this time, though, from Tennessee, LINCOLN DAVIS.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. My friend from Arkansas, in the presentation earlier I had intended to discuss the 12 individuals that lived in counties that I represent before they lost their lives in Iraq. Four of those actually were not in my district, but there are 12 individuals that either live in the county I represent or in the district I represent.

I made a commitment some time ago that each day that when I said my prayers for those in special prayer need, that these families would always be a part of my prayer list. And I keep a list of those in my wallet, of those individuals. I hope I don't have to add a new name. Occasionally I'll have to take this out and redo it and add a name to it. I hope I don't have to add another name until we're able to settle and resolve and bring our soldiers home from Iraq and from Afghanistan.

These individuals have honored us and our Nation, and I think that we, as Americans, need to be sure that we honor their name and their families, and that we keep them in our hearts and constantly in our minds so that we don't ever forget the commitment that they gave, and they gave all for this Nation.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for those thoughts, and he is absolutely correct. We must keep all the soldiers who have died in service to our country, those who have been injured in service to our country in our hearts and in our prayers. And on this evening I hope we'll especially remember Sergeant James Doster from Jefferson County, Arkansas, the latest casualty from Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District.

The gentleman from Tennessee mentioned those who've died in service to our country, and we've talked a little bit about the Iraq war. And I want to deviate for a moment and let you know, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. DAVIS and I are part of a group outside of the Blue Dog Coalition, but a group of Democrats and Republicans that have come together, 14 Democrats, 14 Republicans that have created this bipartisan compact on Iraq debate because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, I voted three times to bring our troops home in a responsible and in a manner that would be responsible. But the reality is this: That the reason I voted three times is because we don't have a veto-proof majority in the House of Representatives. And we can continue to have those votes, but the reality is the President will veto those actions and so we really, at the end of the day, haven't been successful in a new direction in Iraq.

Finally, you know, if there's one issue that shouldn't be a Democrat or Republican issue but should put us all in the context of being Americans first, it should be how we move forward on this Iraq debate. And there are 28 of us,

14 Democrats, 14 Republicans that have come together to create this bipartisan compact on Iraq debate. And I welcome, as I go through these points, I would welcome the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVIS), any comments or thoughts he might want to interject. But basically, here's the compact.

We agree, 14 Democrats, 14 Republicans, we agree that the U.S. Congress must end the political infighting over the conflict in Iraq and commit immediately to a truly bipartisan dialogue on the issues we are facing.

I would yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. How can anyone in this Chamber or any American let politics, partisan politics, have a play in the decision-making as we talk about our young men and women who are willing to give their life and those who've given their lives on the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan?

I think that it's time. I travel my district and I tell folks that bipartisanship seems to have escaped us here in Washington. I talked to some of the folks who were here years ago and people who visited Washington saying that Democrats and Republicans would get together after a debate, whether they disagreed on certain issues, but that they would get together after that debate and spend time in the evening as friends or families would spend time together. That needs, we need to recapture that here in the U.S. House.

I read a book recently, or a quote in a book recently that was made by that great fellow from Britain, Mr. Churchill. He'd been speaking at Fulton, Missouri in 1951, where he gave his Iron Curtain Speech. And he and two or three other individuals were still on the train and still awake. Mr. Truman, the President, and a bunch of his cabinet and staff had retired for the evening. And they were talking about how the circumstances of our life and circumstances of our birth influenced our success or failures in the world that we lived in. And what Churchill said is that: If I were to be born again, I'd want to be born in America. We need to change America to where people like Churchill and others will be saying again: I'd like to be an American if I was born someplace today.

I don't think that's happening today in the world. We've got to change that, and I think the partisan rancor that we have here on the floor is prohibiting us from projecting to the rest of the world and to the American citizens the best of America. And I hope that this compact will help lead us all into being less partisan and more bipartisan on this floor and in America.

Mr. ROSS. There are eight points that we make in this bipartisan compact on Iraq debate on how we move forward. The second one, we agree that efforts to eliminate funding for U.S. forces engaged in combat and in harm's way in Iraq would put at risk the safety and security of our servicemembers.

In other words, as long as we've got troops in harm's way, we're going to support them.

We agree that there must be a clearly defined and measurable mission for our continued military involvement in Iraq. Again, stop redefining victory. Stop moving the goal post. This mission must be further and continually defined so that the military and the country are aware of the end goal of our mission in Iraq and what progress toward that goal is being achieved.

We agree that the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future course. The government must continue to make progress on the legislative benchmarks outlined in section 1314 of the recent Supplemental Appropriations Act, public law 110-28. Demand accountability from the Iraqis.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. If the gentleman would yield, what that means is we're asking the Iraqis to occupy their own nation instead of our American soldiers. That, in fact, is what we're asking. We're asking the Iraqis to be their own policemen instead of the policemen on the beat being the American soldier. I think that should be expected by everyone, regardless of politics.

Mr. ROSS. We agree that it is critical for members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including members of the reserve components, to have adequate rest and recuperation periods between deployments.

We agree that a safe and responsible redeployment of U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq, based on recommendations from our military and foreign policy leaders, is necessary to transition the combat mission over to the Iraqi forces.

We agree that the continued military mission of U.S. combat forces must lead to a timely transition to conducting counterterrorism operations, protecting the U.S. Armed Forces, supporting and equipping Iraqi forces to take full responsibility for their own security, assisting refugees, and preventing genocide.

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We agree that U.S. diplomatic efforts should continue to be improved and that the U.S. State Department must engage in robust diplomacy with Iraq's neighbors in the Middle East to address the Iraq conflict.

We had a military surge, and we now know that didn't work. That is what President Bush wanted, and that's what he got. What we are saying here, among these eight components, and don't get me wrong, it is only one of the eight components, one of the eight components is it's time for a diplomatic surge in the Middle East. Fourteen Democrats and fourteen Republicans have signed on to this, and I believe it is time for a new direction in Iraq. It is time for a bipartisan direction. It is time for us to all come together as Americans first.

I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. In essence what that component says is that in a bipartisan way we want to be sure that the Iraqis have a surge in leadership for their own country, take over the control of their own country; that the Iraqis develop the military that they need to occupy their own country themselves. And, secondly, that they become the policemen in the field, on the roads, riding the Humvees, and not our soldiers. I thank my friend from Arkansas for each week that you bring to the American public the views, the ideas of the fiscal conservative Blue Dog Democrats, deficit hawks and defense hawks here on the House floor.

Mr. ROSS. Again, these views on Iraq are not necessarily those of the Blue Dog Coalition. We require a two-thirds vote for an endorsed position. These are our views, those of us that believe we need a new direction and how we think we can get there in a bipartisan way.

Another one of the bills being put forth by the Blue Dogs, and this one was written by Heath Shuler from North Carolina, Charlie Melancon from Louisiana, and Charlie Wilson from Ohio, and it's called a Resolution Strengthening the Budget Process. It strengthens and increases transparency of the budget process. It ensures that Members have a sufficient amount of time to properly examine legislation and determine its actual cost. No more of being forced to vote on these 300- and 400-page bills after seeing them for 15 minutes and knowing the cost of what we are voting on. PAYGO rules now require that.

It requires that a full Congressional Budget Office, CBO, cost estimate accompany any bill or conference report that comes to the House floor and ensures that lawmakers have at least 3 days to review the final text of any bill before casting their votes.

We can't make Members of Congress read the bills they are voting on; but if you give them 3 days from the final text to the day of the vote, it gives them the opportunity to read them. Right now, and many times under the Republican-led Congress in the past 6 years, there wasn't an opportunity to read the bills because they would let us see the bills 15 minutes or an hour before we were voting on them, sometimes 300- and 400-page bills.

Commonsense ideas that we are putting into legislation.

Another integral part of the Blue Dog fiscal accountability package is this, and I have done my best to go through it and explain to you what it is that we are trying to do there. It's a resolution aimed at strengthening and increasing the transparency of the budget process. All too often Members of Congress are forced to vote on legislation without knowing its true cost implications. This measure will ensure that Members have a sufficient amount of time to properly examine legislation and determine its actual cost.

And then, finally, the balanced budget amendment. And I want to thank

the Blue Dog leader Kirsten Gillibrand from New York for authoring the balanced budget amendment, which would provide for a constitutional amendment requiring Congress to balance the Federal budget every year. Forty-nine States do it. Most American families do it. And it is time that the United States Congress did it. It allows for flexibility during times of war, natural disaster, or an economic downturn, and it prohibits cuts in Social Security benefits from ever being used in order to balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, these are just three pieces of legislation that have been endorsed by the Blue Dog Coalition, authored by the members of the Blue Dog Coalition, that we believe can put us on a path toward restoring common sense, fiscal discipline, and accountability to our Nation's government.

THE STATE OF HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the floor tonight to talk, as I often do, about health care, the state of health care in America, some of the things that we face as a country, as a Congress. And, Mr. Speaker, we have reached a point where it is kind of a unique time, and it occurs from time to time in our Nation's history in political cycles that we have the political reality of unfettered election-year politics meeting head on with the perennial challenge of redefining or reforming America's health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the history of health care in America over, say, the past 60-plus years going back to the 1940s is that of a very highly structured, highly ordered scientific process coupled with a variety of governmental policies, policies each aimed at achieving a specific objective; but rarely do we get the opportunity to reexamine the policies and what follows on from those policies and how they continue to affect things years and decades into the future.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back to that time in the middle 1940s, the time of the Second World War, some significant scientific advances occurred. In 1928, for example, Sir Alexander Fleming rediscovered penicillin. It actually had been discovered in the late 1800s, but Sir Alexander Fleming in England discovered that the growth of a bacteria called staphylococcus could be inhibited by the growth of a certain type of mold on the agar plate. Well, it took some additional research. It took some additional input from other scientists who actually came to this country and developed the process of fermentation that allowed for the large-scale production of that compound that we now know as penicillin, a compound that when it was first discovered was priceless. You couldn't get it at any

cost and by 1946 had come down to about 55 cents a dose, all because of American ingenuity coming into play in the mid-1940s. In fact, soldiers injured during the invasion of Normandy on D-Day were oftentimes treated for their wartime-acquired wounds that became infected with penicillin.

Another individual, an individual we have honored on the floor of this House during the last Congress, Dr. Percy Julian, an African American scientist or, actually, an organic chemist, who didn't discover cortisone. Cortisone had been discovered earlier. But the extraction of cortisone from the adrenal glands of oxen was a laborious time-intensive process, and as a consequence, cortisone was only available as a curiosity, as an oddity. But Dr. Julian perfected a methodology for building cortisone out of precursor molecules that were present in soybeans and, as a consequence, ushered in the age of the commercial production of cortisone.

So there in the 1940s, we had the development of two processes that allowed for the commercial application of an antibiotic, an anti-infective agent, that previously was unavailable on the scale that it was made available after the Second World War, and an anti-inflammatory, cortisone, for treating things like rheumatoid arthritis, Addison's disease. Cortisone now on a commercially available basis. These changes profoundly affected the practice of American medicine starting at about the time of the Second World War.

But what about on the policy arena? Did anything significant happen during the Second World War? Well, you bet it did. What happened during the Second World War is President Roosevelt said in order to keep down trouble from inflation, he was going to enact some very strict wage and price controls on American workers. And he felt it was necessary to do that because, after all, the country was at war.

Well, employers were looking for ways to keep their workers involved and keep them on the job, and they came up with the idea, well, maybe we could offer benefits. Maybe we could offer health insurance, retirement plans. It was somewhat controversial as to whether or not these could, in fact, be offered at a time of such strict wage and price controls, controversial as to whether or not these added-on benefits would be taxed at regular earnings rates. Well, the Supreme Court ruled that they could, indeed, be offered; that they did not violate the spirit of the wage and price controls, and, in fact, they could be awarded as a pretax expense.

Fast forward another 20 years to the mid-1960s, and now the administration and the Congress are locked in the discussion and the debates that ultimately led to the passage of the amendment to the Social Security Act that we now know as the Medicare program. Suddenly we have a situation where the body of scientific evidence,