

develop and implement quality measures and improve State reporting of quality data.

A recent national poll from CBS News finds that 81 percent of the American people support this bipartisan legislation, including large majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

I have heard many of my colleagues say that they wanted more time to review the bill, but we have already debated the issue more than was necessary. We are acting expeditiously because the short-term fix CHIP expires on November 16 and we cannot allow the 6 million children who are currently enrolled in the program to lose their coverage because we cannot make up our minds.

When it comes to health of our children, there is no time for uncertainty. That is why I am glad that we were able to pass the legislation a few minutes ago. And I strongly urge the Senate and President to follow suit with a great sense of urgency. This urgency is needed because there are 10 million very good reasons why we should support this legislation. As I have often said, our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see. I think we ought to be about the business of urgently making sure that we send children into the future who are healthy.

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

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

CALLING FOR REDEPLOYMENT OF OUR TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, before the invasion of Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was interviewed on television by George Stephanopoulos. Mr. Stephanopoulos asked Secretary Rumsfeld what invading Iraq would cost. Rumsfeld answered, "Under \$50 billion."

Mr. Stephanopoulos then replied that outside estimates say it would be up to \$300 billion, to which Rumsfeld replied, "Baloney."

Well, it may have been baloney to Rumsfeld then, but he must eat his words now because the cost of the occupation has climbed to over \$400 billion so far. And it's going to go up, up, and up because our leaders in the White House seem simply not to care how much this occupation costs. It's like that old joke: We could say they are spending like drunken sailors, but we wouldn't say that because that would be an insult to the sailors.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated yesterday that the occupation of Iraq could cost the taxpayers \$1.9 trillion by the year 2017. Of that amount with over \$500 billion going to just pay off the interest on the debt we're piling up, it is going to cost \$500 billion. That's \$500 billion that would fly out of our treasury and land in Japan and in China and the other countries that are lending us the money for the occupation. That is far more than what the SCHIP bill would cost us.

It is incredible to me and to most of my colleagues on this side of the aisle that the administration would rather give our country's money to foreign governments and investors than invest it in the health care of America's poor children. And it is incredible to me that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who lecture us daily about fiscal constraints, did not make a peep about this fiscal catastrophe.

The next question is, what are we getting for this money? The answer is, we are getting a slap in the face from the Iraqi leadership.

Thomas Friedman, the New York Times columnist who has won three Pulitzer Prizes, reported yesterday that the Iraqi leaders who are supposed to be working on the political reconciliation needed to end the conflict have been more asleep at the switch than ever. Mr. Friedman writes: "Study the travel itineraries of Iraq's principal factional leaders. Did they all rush to Baghdad to try to work out their differences" after General Petraeus testified before the Congress? "No. Many of them took off for abroad. As one U.S. official in Baghdad pointed out to me," and this is Mr. Friedman speaking, "at no point since the testimony by General Petraeus . . . have you had the four key Iraqi leaders in the same country at the same time. They saw the hearings as buying them more time, and so they took it."

With American troops and innocent civilians continuing to die in Iraq, you would think our leaders in the White House would be on the phone ten times a day with the Iraqi leaders demanding that they get out of their La-Z-Boy recliners and get to work. But the White House shows no desire to knock heads together. What does the White House do instead? It sends us a request for another \$46 billion for this occupation.

We must tell the White House, "Sorry, we've run out of blank checks." Then we must use our power of the purse to defund the occupation. Instead, we must fully fund the safe, orderly, and responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, and that includes the withdrawal of all military contractors, including those trigger-happy Blackwater boys who have given our country a black eye.

Mr. Speaker, from now on every time the administration tells us it needs more money for its senseless occupation of Iraq, we have the perfect one-

word answer, and that word is "baloney."

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

EARLY EDUCATION WORKFORCE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Early Education Workforce Act.

Our youngest children are our most precious resources. Research shows that a child surrounded by a safe, stimulating and caring environment will literally develop a stronger brain. That child enters kindergarten ready to succeed and is more likely to graduate from high school, hold a steady job, and avoid prison.

Early education not only benefits the child and the adult he or she will become; it also helps to ensure that America has the educated workforce we will need to address challenges as a Nation in the future.

I believe in research-based policy. If we don't know something is going to work, I hesitate to invest Federal dollars. Unfortunately, in many cases research is ambiguous at best, but high-quality early education is a great exception.

We know it works. The research continues to mount as experts from all fields, economists, neurologists, police officers and teachers, come to a consensus that it pays to invest early in our children.

Our States are making great progress in ensuring that every family has the option of sending their children to high-quality child care and preschool. However, in Hawaii and around the country, we are facing a major roadblock. We simply do not have a stable, adequate supply of qualified early education childhood professionals. If we

don't have the teachers, we don't have quality programs; and this is a major problem because quality is a key ingredient in early education.

A poorly designed program or an understaffed one is not going to produce the results we owe our kids, so we must address this problem. We must recruit and retain early educators. And how do we do that? We can start by passing this authorization bill to streamline professional development opportunities, open doors to early education degree programs, and begin to address the woefully inadequate compensation our preschool teachers and child care workers receive.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill on behalf of our children and to honor and encourage the people who dedicate their lives to preparing our youngest children for success.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BE PREPARED

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

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, "Be prepared" is the motto of the Boy Scouts of America. Unfortunately, for those Californians now in harm's way, the leadership of the U.S. Forest Service doesn't have the same commitment. Three years ago, the fleet of airplanes with firefighting capabilities available to the Forest Service declined dramatically, due to both attrition and accidents. I contacted the head of the Forest Service and aggressively suggested that steps be taken to ensure a surge capability in firefighting aircraft should a major conflagration erupt.

Much to my chagrin, the leadership at the National Forest Service was not responsive and our fire fighting aviation assets were permitted to dwindle. I continued to push the case for preparedness, focusing on the certification of specially designed Russian firefighting airplanes, so that water bombers would be available if our own depleted air assets were insufficient to handle an emergency. The availability of large American aircraft, like the DC-10, converted for firefighting purposes, was also suggested as a possible backup should the current number of firefighting aircraft prove inadequate.

The bureaucratic response from the U.S. Forest Service was disheartening, which is an understatement. The leadership did everything they could not to do anything. They bent over backwards to justify not taking steps to be prepared for the worst scenario. It appeared to be "good ol' boyism" and bureaucratic obstructionism with a vengeance. After all my pleas and demands, the Forest Service refused to take the steps necessary to be prepared for the worst. That intransigence was the order of the day at the Forest Service as late as December of last year, 2006.

The people of California are now suffering. It was only the intervention of Gov. Schwarzenegger that kept the privately developed fire fighting DC-10 available for the awe-inspiring part it is now playing in the current battle against the flames that have engulfed huge chunks of California. That DC-10, however, as well as the Russian waterbombers, is still not permitted to fight fires on the Federal lands in California, or elsewhere.

When the fire is extinguished and an evaluation is done, one thing that must be determined is whether or not a lack of aviation firefighting capacity undercut the courageous efforts of those confronting this enormous blazing inferno. Did people lose their homes because the waterbombers weren't there to save the day? One way or the other, those who made the decision to do nothing at the U.S. Forest Service will be held accountable.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 29, 2005.

Mr. DALE BOSWORTH,
Chief, Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHIEF BOSWORTH: I write once again regarding the issue of the availability, in case of emergency, of the Russian fleet of firefighting aircraft as addressed in your letter of August 25, 2005.

Your letter represents an unacceptable and unwarranted change from what you stated in a meeting in my office on July 1, 2005. At the conclusion of that meeting it was my clear understanding that the United States Forest Service (USFS) would undertake specific steps to see that Russian air-tankers would be available to use in an emergency, should enough American firefighting assets not be available to respond to an extraordinary challenge.

In your most recent correspondence of August 25, you once again assert that Federal Aviation Administration certification is a prerequisite for any action to be taken by the USFS to ensure Russian firefighting planes could be used if necessary. However, as you expressed to me in our meeting, this is an USFS internal rule, not required by any statute. Such a policy, I believe, and you agreed, can and should be put aside if it could endanger life and property in this extremely volatile fire season. If another significant fire explodes in addition to the

wildfires now raging in Southern California, USFS assets may be stretched dangerously thin. I think that we can agree that bureaucratic procedures and regulatory impediments not required by law should not get in the way of these Russian planes being made available and used if life and property is otherwise in danger. If steps must be taken to ensure the interoperability of these Russian assets with our existing fleet in case of such an emergency, then why not take those steps? You seemed to agree with that logic at our July meeting.

Your letter, however, represents a reversal of what I believed was agreed upon in our conversation. That is no small matter. After Hurricane Katrina, the American public will not stand for decisions, in the face of an impending calamity, made with more mind to political turf protection than helping people. Steps must be taken to ensure that all options are available in case we face massive wildfires in the West. If the worst case scenario occurs and all options that could have been available are not, there will be a severe accounting. In the meantime, I find the USFS's inaction to be deplorable.

I look forward to your prompt response and, above all, action in response to this matter.

Sincerely,

DANA ROHRABACHER,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 8, 2006.

Mr. MARK REY,
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. REY: Let me first express my regret about the death of your firefighters, especially Pablo Cerda, in the Esperanza fire. Pablo was one of my constituents, a Fountain Valley High School graduate. His tragic death is one of the primary reasons for this letter.

Your June 21, 2006 response to my April 5, 2006 letter was not responsive to the specifics that I requested. Your letter contained the same information that has been relayed to me in the past by your agency. There has been a disconnect between presentation information and the written responses, as indicated in my September 29, 2005 letter to Mr. Bosworth. For example, your second and third paragraphs which mention an initial attack response rate of 98.5 for the 2005 fire season are misleading. Initial attack rates have nothing to do with the availability of aircraft to support the firefighters on the ground. Initial attack concerns the use of resources nearest to the fire, not the availability and position of the federally funded aircraft to attack the fire.

I am still concerned that we have neither the correct tools nor the operational plans that are required to reduce the fire risk to California. Your response did not specifically answer my questions regarding the operations, logistics, and communications compatibility plans that must be in place if we are to use foreign assets to support firefighting in the U.S. In addition to my concerns about the availability of the Russian fleet of firefighting aircraft in case of emergency, I now have concerns about the overall management of our fire tanker fleet. The newest large tanker aircraft that is available, a DC-10 tanker, was created with private financing. This aircraft was not used until the day after the fire crew was overwhelmed in the Esperanza fire when the DC-10 tanker was used for six drops. The request and funding for the operations of this aircraft was done by the state of California, not