

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, Thomas Friedman wrote an op ed in the New York Times titled, "Remember Iraq."

In the article, Mr. Friedman laments that in the last couple of months "the air has gone out of the Iraq debate." Mr. Friedman, unfortunately, seems to be correct. We haven't been talking about Iraq as much lately.

The media is partly to blame for this, but the consumers of the media take some responsibility as well. Without new sensational stories to run, war coverage becomes monotonous, and we can be desensitized to the depictions of war. But it is the media's ethical responsibility to focus on the issues that matter the most rather than what sells the most papers and boosts ratings.

When reports of the terrible toll of the Iraq war fall off the front page and disappear from nightly TV coverage, it can be easier to put the sacrifices our men and women in uniform are making in Iraq out of one's mind. It can be easy to forget the suffering of the Iraq people, whose lives continue to be plagued by violence. The enormous costs of the war don't seem as real when they are not thrust in our faces every day.

But it is also the ethical responsibility of this Congress to continue to debate an issue as important as the war. We are partly to blame for letting the air out of the Iraq debate as well.

In the absence of the required number of votes needed to override an inevitable Bush veto on any Iraq-related legislation, we in Congress must do a better job of challenging the administration's false rhetoric about the Iraq war. While the war in Iraq is disappearing from the newspapers, problems in Pakistan, Turkey and Iran are sure getting a lot of attention.

Why aren't we making the connection between the problems in these countries with the problems we have created in Iraq? An enduring foreign military presence will destabilize any region. An enormous endless American military presence in the heart of the Middle East is a recipe for disaster.

We in Congress need to do more to educate our constituents of the incredible costs of this misguided war in Iraq and the danger it presents to the peace and security of the entire region.

The Middle East is a house of cards, and we are shaking the table. It is no accident that since we began our misguided war in Iraq, we have seen more problems among Iraq's neighbors. Turkey is a very important ally to the United States, and the threat of a Turkish invasion into the Kurdish region of Iraq is a real problem for us. The last thing we need is another front opening in an already unmanageable war.

We must also discuss the connection between the President's so-called war on terror, with the problems we are watching unfold in Pakistan. We must not forget that the al Qaeda forces, who might long ago have been defeated

if we hadn't been distracted in Iraq, have invaded northern Pakistan and hundreds of Pakistani soldiers have been killed. Most experts agree that Osama bin Laden is probably hiding in that region in northern Pakistan.

Meanwhile, General Musharraf has imposed a state of emergency through Pakistan dissolving the courts and suspending the constitution. Thousands of angry lawyers in Lahore and other cities Monday have taken to the streets to protest the embattled Pakistani President. Pictures in our newspapers of the lawyers being beaten and arrested by the police are ominous warnings of further trouble to come.

This is worrisome when it happens in any country, but down right terrifying when it happens in a country that possesses nuclear weapons. It is difficult for anyone to say exactly how this connects to our failed war in Iraq, but it surely isn't helping.

The point is that President Bush's irresponsible policy in the Middle East has destabilized the entire region. He has created a ticking time bomb. Rather than trying to defuse the situation with the diplomatic surge, Bush's answer was a military surge and to ratchet up the rhetoric against those who dare oppose him.

We must make it clear every single day that it is because we care so strongly about the safety of our country, the wellness of our military and the help of those who serve, that we demand an end to the war in Iraq. As Mr. Friedman pointed out, when we, as a country, allowed the debate over Iraq to fizzle, we are not merely procrastinating and delaying the eventual confrontation. We are committing negligence.

The daily cost of the war is staggering and cannot be ignored. For every day the war in Iraq continues, more American lives are lost, more Iraqis are killed, more of our tax dollars are spent, and political reconciliation in Iraq becomes less and less likely as the vital struggle for power continues to rage. Perhaps the most important measure of progress, the stability of the region, seems to be slipping further and further out of balance.

Countless proposals have been offered to change the course of this President's war in Iraq. There is no shortage of good ideas on how, when, and why we need to end the war in Iraq. I am of the opinion that we must end the war in Iraq as soon as possible and only provide funding to bring our troops home safely and quickly.

Others in the Democratic Caucus offer different answers but remain committed to the ultimate goal of ending the war. We demand a new direction. Let's bring our troops home to their families as soon as possible and refocus this country's resources on the issues that matter the most to the American people. It's time to end the war in Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

#### SUBPRIME MORTGAGE CRISIS

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

Ms. CLARKE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening feeling compelled to speak on an issue that has had an adverse and devastating impact in my district and many districts across this Nation. The phenomenon known as subprime lending, which has grown so rapidly over the past decade or so, has made it possible for many New Yorkers with modest incomes and poor credit histories to purchase homes.

The question is, at what cost? The Federal Government has found that subprime loans made up 32 percent of all mortgages in New York City last year, which is up from 28 percent in 2005.

However, an estimated 364,433 subprime loans remain outstanding. As a result, as we stand here tonight, Brooklyn has 4,864 homes facing foreclosure.

When certain unscrupulous lenders aggressively and deceptively convince vulnerable borrowers seeking relief in their pursuit of the American Dream to accept unfair and abusive loan terms, many of these same borrowers have, unfortunately, lost their homes, leaving them displaced, penniless, and bankrupt.

Today, mortgage finance programs in the subprime lending industry are growing more severe, with soaring loan default even diminishing home prices. These defaults have depreciated about \$71 billion in housing wealth. I must tell you this evening that this crisis will and is currently affecting State economies.

It has been estimated that there will be 1.3 million foreclosures from mid-2007 through 2009 in subprime mortgages, resulting in an estimated loss of \$102.4 million in property taxes.

Also, it has been reported that the subprime mortgage crisis will cost States \$917 million in lost property revenue through the end of 2009 and more than \$103 billion in lost property values, including \$9.5 billion for New York.

What is alarming to me is that there have been reports which have found that embedded within this American crisis there appears to be real racial disparities when it comes to subprime lending. For example, one report stated that blacks and Hispanics are 30 percent more likely than whites to be charged with higher interest rates. Additionally, in New York, blacks are five times and Hispanics almost four times more likely to pay higher interest rates for homes.

Even in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, which is located in my district, an astounding 44 percent of blacks and Hispanics earning between \$40,000 and \$50,000 received their loans from subprime lenders. We must make a conscious and focused effort to address the subprime lending crisis in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods in New York City and across the Nation.

What is so ironic about this issue of the subprime mortgage crisis is that as a former New York City council member, my colleagues and I saw this crisis arise as representatives of the municipality. We even passed legislation, anti-predatory lending legislation, yet the legislation went nowhere due to the threat of litigation by the financial services sector. Now the crisis is upon us. Hundreds of thousands of Americans across this country are facing this crisis.

I am supporting and will champion any and all measures that ensure that all borrowers, especially those living in underserved communities, are no longer hurt by the recent events and tactics occurring in the mortgage market.

It is our responsibility, and in the public interest, to make certain that we eliminate predatory practices that have the potential to financially harm mortgage consumers living in America.

If we do not, I believe that we will generate an environment where predatory lenders will continue to actively sell high-cost, high-risk mortgages in many communities, including underserved communities, making the American Dream of all Americans an American nightmare.

□ 2045

#### FORECLOSURES ARE ALL ACROSS THE NATION

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, listening to my colleague from New York, Representative CLARKE, it reinforced for me how important it is to deal seriously with the whole question of subprime lending and how vast foreclosures are all across the Nation.

I, like others, have been working with the coalition in my community, and many of them have come up with excellent ideas about what to do. But rather than just massaging the problem, than coming up with solutions, one solution that was put on the table the other day that I liked was the idea that rather than foreclosing on individuals who cannot pay the mortgages, why not rent the property to them and let them continue to live in it paying rent? Who knows, the time may very well come when they can go back to paying the mortgage.

Their lives never would have been disrupted. Plus we're finding that fore-

closed properties oftentimes end up being lose-lose situations; that is, it's a loss for the lender as well as a loss for the homeowner, because in many neighborhoods, once a foreclosure occurs and people move out, the houses are boarded up, and of course, vandals prey upon them, destroy everything that was in it.

And so I simply wanted to appreciate all of those individuals who are part of the coalition of community groups and organizations with whom I've been working. And I join with others across the Nation to say to our government that we must correct the subprime lending process. But we also must do something that will aid those individuals who find themselves in tough situations right now.

So I join with Representative CLARKE.

#### CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material thereon on the subject of my Special Order tonight, which is the Second Chance Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus and our Chair, CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK, I'm pleased to anchor this Congressional Black Caucus message hour today.

Let me commend all of the original cosponsors on this piece of legislation; the lead sponsor, DANNY DAVIS, who's joining me this evening in this Special Order; cosponsors STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, JOHN CONYERS, ELIJAH CUMMINGS, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, BOBBY SCOTT, HANK JOHNSON, BARBARA LEE, MAXINE WATERS, and the list goes on. The majority of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus are signatories to this very, very important piece of legislation.

The purpose of the Second Chance Act is to reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and help States and communities to better address the growing population of prisoners returning to communities. The bill will focus on four areas: jobs, housing, substance abuse, mental health treatment and families.

Nearly two-thirds of released State prisoners are expected to be arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years of their release. Such high recidivism rates translate into

thousands of new crimes each year and wasted taxpayer dollars, which can be averted through improved prisoner re-entry efforts.

The Second Chance Act of 2007 allocates \$360 million towards a variety of re-entry programs. One of the main components of the bill is the funding of demonstration projects that will provide ex-offenders with a coordinated continuum of housing, education, health, employment, and mentoring services. This broad array of services will provide stability and make the transition for ex-offenders easier, in turn, reducing recidivism.

I sat here this evening, Mr. Speaker, and enjoyed the speeches by many of my colleagues talking about National Bible Month. I am so pleased that they chose that subject matter, and I hope that the many Members that spoke this evening about the Bible and where it specifically says "when I was in prison you visited me," they will remember that their good talk and great conversation about the Bible apply to ex-offenders and that they will support the Second Chance Act.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to yield to my colleague and good friend, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and the convener of this Special Order. Let me thank the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, recognize that 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, 42 Members in the House, represent a basic conscience that has to craft for America the next steps.

I want to thank my good friend, Congressman DANNY DAVIS. He has been persistent in recognizing that there has to be a second chance. And I'm glad to join my colleague and my champion, my fellow champion of human rights, BARBARA LEE.

Let me also thank Congressman JOHN CONYERS, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee; the subcommittee Chair, BOBBY SCOTT. We worked very hard on this legislation as it was crafted by the authors and the staff to make sure this legislation started to move.

Congresswoman TUBBS JONES, I'm very glad that you raised the question of National Bible Week. As I listened to my colleagues give extremely personal stories of their life, let me say, as someone who represents an inner-city district and has spent much of her political life as much as her personal life in churches, as a Seventh-day Adventist, we are committed to the teachings of the Old and New Testament.

But in many different faith communities, I recognize that the Bible is one vessel, one language that speaks to the language of the Good Samaritan. Many other religious documents speak to it, but it speaks about taking care of our fellow brothers and sisters. And it's a story that I love, on the road to Jericho, on the road that addresses the question of helping others. That is what the Second Chance bill is all about.