

Many hospitals have dramatically reduced infection rates by implementing patient safety procedures. I will be introducing the Healthy Hospitals Act to provide financial incentives to hospitals for savings gained from eliminating these infections, and require public reporting of infections so health care providers and patients can work together to save lives and money. We need patient-centered health care that promotes patient choice, patient safety and patient care quality.

To learn more about eliminating preventable health care-associated infections, I invite my colleagues to visit my Web site at Murphy.house.gov.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET CONTINUES TO SHORTCHANGE VETERANS AND MILITARY RETIREES

(Mr. WILSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation as a government to provide assistance to the men and women who have bravely served our Nation in our military; but once again, President Bush sent us a budget this week that significantly shortchanges veterans health care.

While our brave troops are fighting abroad as of right now, the President proposes a \$3.5 billion cut in veterans health care over the next 5 years. His budget also provides less than veteran service organizations say is needed to meet the growing needs of veterans, including the fact that we have a growing robust amount of veterans with the Iraq-Afghanistan war.

For the fifth year in a row, the budget raises health care costs on 1.3 million veterans, imposing \$4.9 million in increased copayments on prescription drugs, and new enrollment fees on veterans over the next 10 years.

The budget also increases TRICARE health care premiums for the Nation's military retirees, and includes several other changes in military health care that have been rejected by Congress in previous years.

If these proposals are not successful during the 2008 fiscal year, the budget for military health care will continue to be underfunded by at least \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Speaker, America's veterans deserve better, and they will get it from this Democratic House.

CAMERAS IN THE SUPREME COURT

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court is the most powerful Court in the world. These nine black-robed individuals rule on constitutional matters that affect all Americans for lifetimes. The third branch of government holds its session in public, as it ought to be.

The theory behind public court proceedings is that the more public and

open, the more likely they are to be fair. More courts throughout the vastness of America are expanding on this public trial concept by allowing unobtrusive cameras in the courtroom. This allows citizens to view court proceedings. When I was a judge in Texas, I allowed cameras to film criminal trials, including a capital murder case. I found that this enhanced the concept of a fair public trial.

Those that have never been a trial lawyer or a trial judge say that lawyers play to the cameras; but lawyers don't play to the cameras, they play to the jury or the court.

So open Supreme Court proceedings to cameras. Let America see what takes place. And to those judges who are opposed to this openness, maybe they shouldn't be doing what they do when the camera is not rolling.

And that's just the way it is.

KUCINICH 12-POINT PLAN FOR IRAQ

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, we are sacrificing our entire domestic agenda for an illegal war in Iraq.

When you look at the President's budget, reductions in education and health care over a period of time will cause many necessary programs to be cut for the American people. Meanwhile, the White House is discussing whether or not to bring refugees from Iraq to the United States.

Now, think about it a minute. We are prosecuting an illegal war in Iraq, we are illegally occupying the country, we are building permanent bases in Iraq, and now we are talking about bringing refugees here. The real humanitarian thing to do would be to end the war by ending the occupation, closing the bases and bringing our troops home.

That is exactly what my 12-point plan would do. I reached it with the help of people from the international community, the U.N., people who have experience in peacekeeping. They say we can bring in an international security force once we get agreement from the countries in the region, and we can bring our troops home.

We have to stop this disaster in Iraq, bring our troops home, end the occupation.

CONGRESSIONAL INACTION JEOPARDIZES WALLOWA COUNTY ROADS, RESCUE SERVICES AND PILT

(Mr. WALDEN of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act amounts to another breach of faith to

more than 600 forested counties and 4,400 school districts across our great country.

For Wallowa County, Oregon, this means the road department and the sheriff search and rescue budgets will be slashed in half. There are more than 700 miles of roads in Wallowa County maintained by a current staff of 14. Soon only seven will try and keep up with this responsibility; that is one person for every 100 miles of road in Wallowa County. That is the same distance as between Washington, DC, and Richmond, Virginia. County Commissioner Mike Hayward says, "Impact to our roads and rescue services will put our citizens and visitors at risk."

Loss of the county payments program will also have a significant negative impact on more than 18 county governments across America whose Payment in Lieu of Taxes funds could be reduced by as much as 20 percent.

This Congress must keep the Federal Government's word to the people who live in timbered communities and pass H.R. 17. Time is running out for them.

BUSH SLASHING FUNDING TO EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS IN 2008 BUDGET

(Mr. HILL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, the President's budget serves as a blueprint as to what his priorities will be for the upcoming year.

At a time when our economy is becoming increasingly competitive, it is essential that we fully fund education programs across the board. Unfortunately, education is not prioritized in the President's budget.

Funding for No Child Left Behind remains about \$15 billion below the level promised when the bill was first signed into law in 2001. How can we hold our schools accountable when the President refuses to provide the funds needed to improve many of these schools?

The President finally makes good on a 6-year-old promise to increase the amount of money given to low-income students through the Pell Grant program, but it comes at a price. The President proposes recalling all Perkins loans and eliminating nine other higher education assistance programs.

At a time when college is becoming more out of reach for many Americans, we should be looking to strengthen all college assistance programs so more high school seniors have a chance to attend.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats, this one included, will once again make education a priority for our Nation's students.

AFGHANISTAN

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to stress the importance today of our partnership with the people of Afghanistan.

The 9/11 attacks were planned in Afghanistan, and a number of those who planned it are still at large, including Osama bin Laden. President Hamid Karzai's leadership is vital, as is his continuing work to bring stability and security to Afghanistan; he is an important ally in the global war on terrorism. Unfortunately, reports suggest that progress in Afghanistan continues to be undermined by Taliban and terrorist forces operating out of Pakistan.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow Afghanistan to become a failed state again; therefore, we must ensure that terrorist operations in Afghanistan stop and terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens across the border in Pakistan are eliminated. And we need more cooperation from Pakistan. Let's not neglect the situation in Afghanistan. We do so at our peril.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION NOT PREPARED TO SEND TROOPS TO IRAQ WITH PROPER SUPPLIES

(Mr. SARBANES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, as we know, President Bush wants to send another 22,000 young American men and women into harm's way in Iraq in the face of overwhelming opposition, even within his own party and his own administration. Now we are learning that the military does not have all the equipment needed to safely send these troops to Iraq. The Washington Post reported last week that the increase in troop levels will create major logistical hurdles for the Army and Marine Corps, which are short thousands of vehicles, armor kits and other equipment. Even the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Force Development said, "We don't have the armor kits and we don't have the trucks," and it will take months for the Army to obtain the necessary supplies.

This is simply one more piece of evidence that the administration's proposal to increase troops in Iraq is terribly misguided. It is another example of how the rhetoric of supporting the troops is not matched by the reality.

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FORMER BORDER PATROL AGENTS IGNACIO RAMOS AND JOSE COMPEAN

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, you know, we are discussing national security every single day on the floor of this House, and our Border Patrol agents seem to be the forgotten sol-

diers fighting this war on terror. They guard our border every single day and protect our country from terrorists, from human traffickers, from drug traffickers.

Former Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean were recently convicted of shooting a drug smuggler while they were patrolling and protecting the border. Then they were sentenced to a decade in prison. You may have read that our own U.S. Attorney had this drug smuggler brought from Mexico, gave him immunity to testify against our agents, and then the smuggler was released.

Now the drug smuggler is suing the U.S. Government for damages. As soon as Agent Ramos began his sentence in a Federal prison, he was assaulted by drug smugglers and drug users who were inmates in that prison. Ramos was doing his duty, protecting Americans from the thugs and the drug smugglers. Now we have failed to protect him.

BUSH WANTS TO MAKE TAX CUTS FOR WEALTHY PERMANENT WHILE INCREASING TAXES ON 30 MILLION

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, last month during his State of the Union message, President Bush said that it is possible to balance the budget without raising taxes, but that is not the case. The President's health care proposal would increase taxes on more than 30 million Americans.

You didn't hear that during the State of the Union address, but the President wants to tax Americans who have what he calls gold-plated health coverage. The overwhelming majority of these Americans are middle class workers who oftentimes accepted better health care coverage over pay increases during negotiations with their employers. Many of these workers either need the substantial coverage for themselves or a sick family member.

The President's tax increase proposal is the latest assault on employer-provided health care. Employers with older and sicker workers pay higher insurance premiums, not because they have gold-plated insurance, but because their insurance companies charge them for more coverage. At a time when 1 million more Americans are becoming uninsured every year, the administration should not provide employers another reason to drop their health care coverage for their workers.

HOPE SHINES AFTER THE DISASTER

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, a deadly tornado inflicted

enormous damage in my Congressional district. Yet even in the darkest times, the victims of the storm were enveloped in the incredible generosity of its neighbors. By Saturday, over 1,400 volunteers provided 22,000 meals and snacks and distributed 1,000 health kits.

Tim Miller and his three sons helped the Suggs family gather their belongings after the storm left. Tim Miller said, "I'm just doing what I can to help."

Villages resident Al Seiden said, "Despite our house being destroyed . . . if you look around, there are at least eight people, volunteers, friends and neighbors who have come in and helped us . . . The spirit of this community is unbelievable."

Wendy Spencer, the COE of the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism adds, "We are receiving so many offers to help, which is wonderful. Our goal is to maximize this generosity to be as effective as it can be for meeting the needs of the tornado survivors now and in the weeks and months to come."

Congratulations to all these volunteers. Great job.

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge American Heart Month, which is observed each year throughout February. I anticipate that many of my colleagues will attend events in their districts commemorating Heart Month, as I will.

As we do, I urge all of us to pay special attention to the effects of heart disease on women. The good news is that heart disease deaths are beginning to decline among women.

The bad news remains, however, that heart disease is still the number one killer of women in this country. Although awareness among women about their risks for heart disease is increasing, awareness remains particularly low among minority women.

Let's take the opportunity during American Heart Month to talk with the women in our lives and in our community about their risks for heart disease and the preventive steps they can take to decrease these risks.

SUPPORT THE METHAMPHETAMINE REMEDIATION RESEARCH ACT OF 2007

(Mr. WALZ of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 365, the Methamphetamine Remediation Research Act of 2007. In Minnesota, methamphetamine usage has increased dramatically over the past decade. With that being said, legislators, law