

alone bill, H.R. 4104. It is identical to the bill already agreed upon by House and Senate negotiators. It could be passed today by unanimous consent and immediately sent to the Senate.

Members who are tired of the political games should cosponsor this bill and urge Speaker PELOSI to take it up today.

PERU TRADE AGREEMENT BY, FOR AND ABOUT WALL STREET

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. It's a beautiful day within the D.C. beltway. And under the dome, another day, another free trade agreement. But on Main Street America, things are not so bright. The dollar is dropping like a rock with skyrocketing oil and gas prices.

We are borrowing \$2 billion a day from overseas to buy things that we don't make here in America anymore. We have lost 5 million manufacturing jobs, 40,000 in Oregon. But this isn't the same old failed trade policy, they tell us. Not yet another platform to exploit cheap labor. It is decorated with negligible environmental and labor protections.

And the burgeoning middle class in Peru, all three of them, are going to go on an orgy of buying U.S. goods after this passes. But the destructive, multinational, corporate-written chapter 11 core that led to the failure of NAFTA, CAFTA and other trade agreements remains at the center of this policy.

This agreement is by, for and about Wall Street, plain and simple. It doesn't address our current economic crisis. It is not in the best interest of American workers, the U.S. economy, or our national security.

FUNDING OUR VETERANS

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

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, this is day 39. That is 39 days so far that our veterans have not had the use of the increased funding for their benefits in health care. That is \$18.5 million a day not able to be used.

The work on this bill has been done for months. But instead of sending this bill to the President, the Democratic leadership decided to use our veterans as a smoke screen in an effort to pass billions in unrelated domestic spending.

They failed in their scheme when the Senate yesterday split the bills to consider these funding issues separately and on their own merits. But today, with Veterans Day quickly approaching, the Democratic leadership is going to put our veterans aside to consider billions in bloated domestic spending instead of bringing a clean veterans bill to the floor.

I won't stand for it. The American people won't stand for it. I'm standing

with our veterans. Send a clean Veterans appropriations bill to the President now.

ENDING ILLEGAL LOGGING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, illegal logging is a scourge of poor countries and rich countries alike. It damages the environment, often very fragile ecosystems, it disrupts the lives of poor, indigenous people. It corrodes their governments through bribery and often violence. Illegal logging also hurts rich countries as our timber and lumber manufacturing industries lose to those who cheat and bribe, over a billion dollars a year in lost sales in the United States.

We can do something about it. Yesterday, the Natural Resources Committee passed out my illegal logging bill to give the tools for the first time, to our government, to do something about it. Later this morning, we can pass the Peru Free Trade Agreement, with not just the strongest environmental protections ever in a trade agreement, but with specific provisions to halt the illegal mahogany harvest in Peru's forests. This can be the most significant Congress ever in the global fight to end illegal logging by passing these bipartisan measures.

LEAVE POLITICS OF DISRESPECT BEHIND

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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, it is a rare opportunity to rise in support of commonsense decisions coming out of the other body, so it gives me great pleasure to rise in full support of the majority's decision on the other side of this Capitol to separate the Labor-HHS approps bill from legislation that funds our military installations and veterans health care. I certainly hope the majority on this side is paying attention.

While the other body has said "no" to politicizing veterans health care, "no" to putting the security of our military installations at risk, and "no" to budget-busting pork, it appears that the majority on this side is, well, a little tone deaf.

So, Madam Speaker, our veterans and men and women in uniform deserve better. They deserve quick action from the leadership in this House to pass a clean veterans bill and provide the funds they need. Let's leave the politics of disrespect behind. Let's pass a clean veterans bill.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX FIX

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, if nothing is done soon, 27 million families across the country will be obligated to pay the alternative minimum tax, the AMT. Over 100,000 of these middle-class families live in New York's 19th District. They will have to go through the tedious process of computing their tax returns twice, and they will end up having to pay thousands more than they otherwise would.

The AMT is an unfair tax which in 1970, when it first took effect, only affected 155 households in the entire country. The people who pay it lose the opportunity to take many of the deductions and exemptions that make the tax code friendlier to families. Under the AMT, it doesn't matter what money is spent on health care, on property tax or on education; everyone pays the same amount of tax regardless.

Tomorrow, we will consider legislation to allow almost 73,000 of my constituents to escape the AMT. Today, millions of middle-class families are in danger of being ensnared by a tax that was never intended to affect them.

COMMENDING FOUR FIRST DISTRICT OHIO SCHOOLS

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

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Speaker, everybody knows that the key to America's future is providing an excellent education for our children. As a former schoolteacher myself, it gives me great pleasure to recognize four schools from my congressional district, Ohio's First, which have truly lived up to this commitment. Elm Avenue Primary School, Hilltop Primary School, Our Lady of Visitation, and St. James School in White Oak have recently been named 2007 Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence.

Achieving test results in the top 10 percent of the State is truly an accomplishment. Some, like St. James, have received it in the past. On Monday, I presented them a flag that was flown in their honor over this very building, and the atmosphere was really electric. These kids were filled with enthusiasm and pride for the job they had done, and they are to be commended, as are their teachers, their administrators, the parents, but especially the students.

I want to commend all those schools for the excellent work they have done. This is the future of America. And if this is our future, America's future is bright.

DEMOCRATS COMMITTED TO OUR VETERANS

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

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, regardless of how my colleagues choose to characterize it, the new Democratic

Congress has an impressive record of honoring our veterans and our troops. Since taking control of Congress, we have provided real support for our veterans by passing the largest veterans funding increase in history.

But don't take my word for it, listen to what veterans organizations are saying about our historic veterans funding bills. The American Legion called it "an impressive commitment to this Nation's servicemembers, veterans and their families."

The Veterans of Foreign Wars said: "The record funding level acknowledges the deep debt this Nation owes to its defenders and that the care and services provided to them is the ongoing cost of war."

The AMVETS wrote: "Overall, AMVETS believe these funding levels will ensure VA will be able to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion."

Madam Speaker, for most of the year President Bush opposed the investment in America's veterans. This legislation simply would not have been possible without a Democratic Congress and their commitment to our veterans.

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REMOVE THE EARMARKS FROM THE DEFENSE BILL

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

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, the day after the House passed the Labor-HHS spending bill containing more than 2,000 earmarks, we got a look at the Defense bill. What we're finding is troubling to say the least.

Again, there are more than 2,000 earmarks in this bill, a bill that is intended for the military. Now, we all know that earmarks draw funds away from more urgent priorities. Nowhere is this more clear than with the military spending bill. Simply put, every dollar that Congress has earmarked in the Defense bill is a dollar that troops won't have for critical equipment.

What's so important that it diverts money away from soldiers? Well, air-dropped into this conference report and this Defense appropriation bill, \$3 million for a golf program for kids. This earmark might be par for the course in any other bill, but in the Defense bill, it's clearly indefensible.

I don't believe that earmarks like this represent the sentiments of the country when it comes to military spending, and I urge my colleagues to reject the bill until the earmarks are removed.

HONORING FILIPINO VETERANS

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, in honor of Veterans Day I rise to recognize a special group of veterans whose

story and service this Congress must honor.

During World War II, thousands of Filipino soldiers were inducted into the United States Armed Forces by President Roosevelt following the invasion of their country by Imperial Japanese Forces. These Filipino soldiers fought valiantly with us in the name of freedom. They were to be entitled to full veterans benefits, but such promises were reneged by Congress with the passage of the 1946 Rescission Act.

Ironically, the very democracy that these veterans fought to defend was used to take away the recognition of their service. We have a duty to fulfill what President Truman called a "moral obligation" to take care of these veterans.

There are 18,000 still with us today. Let us make this right. Support the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

VOTER REGISTRATION

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, several States held elections this week, and now the 2008 Presidential elections are just 1 year away. This is a good time to reflect on the importance of voting and the integrity of our election process.

The right to vote is one of the most important freedoms granted to citizens in the United States. It's a right and a privilege that should not be taken lightly.

Our voter registration process needs to be reformed in order to ensure that only American citizens are eligible to vote. It is alarming that eight of the 9/11 hijackers were registered to vote.

The sanctity of the ballot box must be paramount. If we can't ensure the integrity of our elections, our representative form of government breaks down.

When a person gets a driver's license, they can check a box to register to vote, and there's no guarantee that the person's eligibility to vote will be verified. There are House seats that have been decided by just a few votes per precinct. The American people deserve to know that elections will be won and lost by legal, rightfully registered voters.

HONORING VETERANS DAY

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

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor, as many of us have today, the Veterans Day this weekend that's coming up.

Congress has spent a lot of time this week talking about veterans. We've talked about how this Congress provided the largest increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration. We've debated which side cares

more about veterans and who's to blame for the delay.

I think the American people can see who really is holding up the latest VA appropriations bill, but I'm here to remind each and every Member of Congress that, as you go home this weekend and speak to veterans and their families in their district, to honor them, ask yourself what have you done to honor your pledge to our veterans and their loved ones?

I hope the President also takes a hard look in the mirror before he decides on how he intends to honor veterans on Veterans Day.

We have to remember that in honoring our country's veterans that you cannot honor a veteran without honoring their families. They don't come alone. They have parents. They have loved ones. They have children.

And the bill that takes care of that is the bill that we're voting on today, which is the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. In order to support veterans, you've got to support their family. Be family friendly, vote for the appropriations bill.

IN RECOGNITION OF BRIAN EISELE

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise today to bid a fond farewell to a member of my staff, Brian Eisele. Brian will be leaving our office to join the staff of South Carolina Senator JIM DEMINT. Although I will miss his presence, I am confident Brian will be a tremendous addition to Senator DEMINT's staff.

Brian came to the Hill earlier this year as an intern for Congressman BILL SHUSTER of Pennsylvania. His hard work, professionalism, thoughtfulness and personal integrity have been an enormous asset to the people of the 2nd District of South Carolina. He will certainly be difficult to replace.

A graduate of the University of South Carolina, Brian is the son of David, an Iraq war veteran, and Denise Eisele of Aiken, South Carolina. South Carolina is proud of its native son, and I'm excited for Brian's success. I wish him all the best in the years to come.

Brian has a bright future as a capable and competent public servant, and I look forward to working with him in the future.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th.

CELEBRATE VETERANS DAY

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

Mr. ISRAEL. Madam Speaker, there is bad news and good news this Veterans Day. The bad news is the study by Harvard Medical School that there