

not they suggest that this Congress and this President is not paying enough attention to the domestic concerns, woven into the crisis of where we stand today is the conflict in Iraq.

I think Americans understand Afghanistan more than we might think they do. They know that this Nation was attacked on September 11, 2001. They know that when the Nation is attacked, the Commander in Chief, leaders of this government have the responsibility of defending the honor and the security of America. They see Afghanistan as defending that honor and that security. They know that the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, those who collaborated were the basis of the attack against the World Trade towers and other sites in this country. They know that our lives have changed because of the horrific tragedy of 9/11. And they are willing to accept that. They faced up against new laws that seem to undermine their liberties, and within reason they are willing to acknowledge that things must change. I am grateful, however, that there are those of us who understand that the greatest success of a terrorist is to cause you to terrorize yourself. So many of us have asked to modify and assess the PATRIOT Act. We are looking to redo the FISA law that deals with electronic surveillance. But mostly in debating this question, Americans understand that their lives have changed.

But the Iraq War continues to be a questioning action by this administration. All of us have tried to give respect to the basis and the reason of this direction that this government took in the fall of 2002. I, for one, was very hesitant to speak about a war for oil. I recognize that there might have been many deliberations that have occurred that might have caused this administration to make this unfortunate leap of preemptive attack.

I have come full circle now, however, and I am enormously disappointed in the thought process and the respect not given to the American people. For the American people, over 56 percent, want this war to end, want these troops to come home, want to see a troop reduction.

So this debate today was not a frivolous debate. And the leadership of the Democratic Caucus, the leadership of this Congress took great pains to try to address this in a fair and dignified manner. They worked very hard to bring a concise document that spoke to the safety and security of the troops, the respect of the troops, the acknowledgment of their hard work; but yet to insist that a plan be laid out by this administration to reduce the number of troops in Iraq while at the same time ensuring that if there are outstanding conflicts, firefights, terrorists to be fought, that we'd have the troops on the ground.

I believe that this has been the most misdirected war that history will record. I believe that it beats out the Civil War, the War of 1812, World War I,

World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf. For any of those who opposed those wars, and I was not there for all of them, if there was any opposition for reasons that I don't know, this has to be the single most dangerous and devastating action that this Nation could have ever taken. There is no sense for it. There is no basis for it. But if there was a case that you could make, you could make the case that the military has done every single thing that it was asked to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is why I was moved to write the Military Success Act of 2007. It indicates that Congress recognizes that the military, in the invasion of Iraq, as authorized by a resolution given to the President in 2002, going into Baghdad was probably one of the best executed military operations in modern history, alongside of the Persian Gulf. The armed services successfully toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein.

And as I close, it lists a whole series of successes. And then it indicates that every single aspect of the 2002 resolution has been complied with. And, therefore, that means that the task of the 2002 resolution has ended. And it calls then for the troops to come home, for them to be acknowledged, for them to be given free, with no attachment, \$5,000 for each returning troop from Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, this was a difficult debate, but I think and know that we made the right decision. But we could do even more. We can affirm that these troops need to come home, and we can celebrate them for the heroes that they are.

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 30 SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) is recognized for one-half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

We are here tonight with part of the 30 Something Working Group, and we are going to talk about what this House has been doing this week. We are here, it's late into the evening, and we have been working throughout the day on a variety of issues, and we are going to be at work tomorrow. I wanted to talk with my colleagues tonight. And we are going to have a full house. We are going to be joined by Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut, Mr. MEEK from Florida, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ from

Florida, and Mr. RYAN from Ohio. We are going to have a discussion about some of the things that this House has been doing.

We took several significant votes this week, including the vote that was just discussed on Iraq. And we are going to discuss the policy in Iraq and the vote that we took today.

I wanted to start by talking about the President's veto earlier in the week of the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. Now, the President has found his veto pen, something that on appropriations bills he had not used until this Congress. And I think it's instructive to begin this debate by reminding my colleagues, as if they needed reminding, that we are talking about an administration that took office after 4 consecutive years of record surpluses, 4 consecutive years of budget surpluses, that were forecast to continue as far as the eye can see. In fact, the 10-year projection for budget surplus beginning in 2001 was more than \$5 trillion of surplus over that 10-year period.

□ 2245

Well, what have we seen instead of that? We've seen seven consecutive budget deficits in the 7 years of this administration, deficits that are forecast to continue as far as the eye can see. And instead of that \$5 trillion in surplus, we've seen more than \$3 trillion in deficits in just 7 years.

So, this administration that's now lecturing us on fiscal responsibility and vetoing our appropriations bills, criticizing us for spending, this administration saw more than \$8 trillion flip from a projected \$5 trillion surplus to \$3 trillion in deficit and counting. So, that's the context of what we're talking about.

So, we sent to the President the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, which includes programs like low-income energy assistance, home heating, the LIHEAP program. Now, I don't think there's anyone in this country that has not been affected by the price of oil. And home heating is something in the Northeast where I'm from in Pennsylvania, and in Connecticut where Mr. MURPHY is from, and in Ohio where Mr. RYAN is from, the price of home heating has continued to skyrocket. And we're going to get into some of the numbers, but that's one of the things that's in this bill. Well, I don't think that's excessive spending, to help people who would otherwise have their heat turned off.

We're talking about funding for community health centers. We're talking about funding for Head Start, a program for early childhood education. Is there anything more important in this country than early childhood education, making sure our children get off to a good start and begin their educational careers in a way that we're able to ensure that they get off and they're positioned to have the best start possible.

Now, what about medical research, the National Institutes of Health?

That's what we're talking about in this bill, funding for medical research. Is there anyone in the country that thinks we shouldn't be spending money to find cures and treatments for debilitating diseases across the board? That's what this bill is. That's what the Labor-HHS-Education bill funds, and the President vetoed that bill. And we're going to have a vote in this House to override that veto, and it's going to be a very close vote. We were two votes shy of having a veto override majority when the bill passed the House the first time. Two votes. That's what stands between us and overriding the President's veto.

And I would remind my colleagues as well that we were able to override the President's veto just last week. This is not something that can't be done. We had a Water Resources Development Act that had not passed in 7 full years. It's supposed to be reauthorized every 2 years. Congress after Congress, in recent years, has been unable to pass that bill, so we passed it. And we faced a Presidential veto; the President vetoed it. We were able to override that veto overwhelmingly, 300-plus votes in the House; they got 79 in the other body. And what's in that bill? That's another bill that the President, and I outlined his record on fiscal responsibility and he wants to lecture us on spending, for infrastructure improvements in this country. Building levees in New Orleans, does that sound like pork? Building flood prevention infrastructure all across this country.

There were projects in that bill in almost every congressional district in the country to prevent flooding, to help the waterways infrastructure in a way that we're investing for the first time in 7 years in flood prevention infrastructure. So we overrode that veto overwhelmingly. We do have the opportunity to do it again on the Labor-HHS-Education bill. And we're going to talk more about that.

At this time, I want to yield to my colleague Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I thank my friend from Pennsylvania, and I appreciate his promptness in being here as I share with him today. We trust that the other members of the 30-Somethings will join us here today, but it falls very often on the new members of the 30-Somethings to make sure that we are here to begin the sharing of good news with the American people.

And I hope there is good news, Mr. ALTMIRE. I hope that people throughout this country who see the President's veto of this incredibly important bill, and you laid out very clearly and very succinctly what the President has vetoed, what he has said no to. We're talking about health care for kids. We're talking about good schools. We're talking about Head Start, medical research, home heating assistance for the elderly. And these are the basic building blocks of a compassionate society, and the President has said, very firmly and clearly, no to those.

And as you said, we're not very far away from having the requisite number of votes here on the House floor to override that veto. And I know that's kind of inside baseball for a lot of people, whether we have two-thirds or three-fourths or whatever the percentage is that we need. But it's important because, as you said, the President has found his veto pen for the first time in his tenure in office. And I think it's important to try to figure out what's different this year than as was the case in the last previous 6 years of his Presidency? And it's kind of funny because, if you look at the record, as you said, Mr. ALTMIRE, it seems a little odd to be having lectures from this administration on fiscal responsibility because this President and the Republican Congress over the last 6 years have increased Federal spending by 50 percent, 50 percent just over 6 years. We've put \$3 trillion on top of the deficit, on top of the debt that this country owes, as we've watched the President and this Congress continue to spend and continue to borrow. We've seen the amount of foreign-held debt, and you know, this is something that Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN have been talking about for years and years and years. We've seen the amount of foreign-held debt during that time double. This is all under a Republican-controlled Congress, both Houses, and a Republican administration. And during that entire time, the biggest piece of the budget that has exploded has been the funding for this war.

Now, those of us who paid attention when the President initially rolled out his plans to invade Iraq, his very rosy and optimistic projections of our success there and the cost of that war, well, remember that he told the American people, his administration told the Congress that he thought that this war wasn't going to cost more than \$50 or \$60 billion to get the job done? And also, if you remember, that the Iraqis were going to welcome the Americans as conquering heroes. Well, we know that that \$50 to \$60 billion was a figure of fiction, historical fiction now, Mr. ALTMIRE, because now the estimates are that this war has cost us not \$50 billion, not \$100 billion, not \$500 billion, but \$1.3 trillion. And if we look forward to the projections associated with carrying out a war for the next 10 years, as this President has told this country he's planning to do, or that his war planners intend to do, we're talking about a \$3.5 trillion commitment before this is all done. Now, that is a number that is almost impossible to get our hands around. I mean, what does \$3.5 trillion mean to anybody? Well, what it means is that we're going to borrow more and more and more. We are going to put our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren into hock in this country.

And so, when we hear this President sitting down and telling the American people that he's going to get tough on spending, and the way he's going to do

that is by denying education to kids and health care to the sick and heat to the elderly, well, during that time he and his Republican Congress have spent like drunken sailors when it comes to a very mismanaged and misguided war in Iraq, you can't help but wonder where his priorities are and where this Congress' priorities were for the last several years.

So, it's all got to be, I think, in relation, Mr. ALTMIRE, because we're making choices here, as we have for the last 6 years. We've chosen not to spend on American hospitals and American children. We've chosen not to spend to help our elderly get what they need in order to keep their house heated for the winter. And instead, we've chosen to build Iraqi buildings and Iraqi hospitals. We've chosen to put more and more troops in harm's way in a war that is making this country less safe in the long run rather than more safe. This is all about choices, and it's time that we started making some different ones.

And that's why we got sent here, Mr. ALTMIRE. We got sent here to start investing in this country, to start making sure that our priorities look to this country, to the United States of America, first. And that's what the Labor-HHS appropriations bill does. It is the foundation of that compassionate government that we all believe in. It's about medical research. It's about schools. It's about hospitals.

And I hope, as you said, that there will be enough Republicans here who will join us, and we only need a handful, so that we can reverse that and bring back some common sense to our spending priorities in this country, Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I wanted to mention one other issue that was in that bill. We talked about home heating assistance. We talked about health care for children, medical research. We talked about the Head Start program, but it's the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. And one of the programs that's in that bill that the President thought was excessive spending was additional 200,000 slots for job training for dislocated workers. And I can tell you, coming from western Pennsylvania where we know about dislocated workers and the need for job training and people to readapt when companies move and with the loss of manufacturing jobs, those are critically important programs that the President considers to be excessive spending. That's what we're talking about with this bill. That's what type of spending we're talking about.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. ALTMIRE, if you would yield for a moment.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Yes, I would.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Really, when it comes down to it, the only thing that's different here is the party that's writing the budget. I mean, really, when you look at it over time, what's different about the last six

budgets that this Congress passed that over time expanded Federal expenditures by 50 percent and the budget that we've passed, which simply reflects the fact that it costs a little bit more to heat your home if you're a senior, that it costs a little bit more to run a school than it did last year? What's different? I mean, the fact is is that it seems like it's just base partisan politics in the end, that all that really is different is that the Democrats are writing this budget this year and the Republicans were writing the last six budgets. And it is not a coincidence that over the last 6 years we saw nary a veto from this President while his party was in charge of the Congress, and now all of a sudden we have seen a flurry of vetoes on bills that reflect many of the same priorities, we think adjusted to make a little bit more sense for our communities, many of the same priorities that were reflected in the budgets for the last 6 years. And I think to a lot of us that came here to change the culture of this place, as much as we care about resetting our priorities and putting funding back into our communities, we also were sort of hoping that there was a little bit of a message sent in this election to change the partisan rancor that has really enveloped this place, and the President, by vetoing bills very similar to ones that he has signed in the past simply because a different party controls the House, I think does a disservice to the process and a disservice to the mandates that a lot of voters sent us here with, Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And the last thing for context, before I turn it over to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ from Florida, you will remember, Mr. MURPHY and I both being freshman, the excitement of that first week in Congress and the things that we did that first week when we were first sworn in at the beginning of 2007. Well, perhaps the most important thing that we did was return to pay-as-you-go budget scoring, which is very simple. It's the same thing that we all do in our own checkbooks at home and the same thing every business in America has to do. It says that you have to have money on one side of the ledger if you want to spend it on the other, pay-as-you-go. If you want to decrease revenue or you want to increase spending, you have to find a way to pay for it, an offset, you have to find an offset. And every spending bill and every authorization bill that we have passed out of this House this year, every single one of them has been compliant with pay-as-you-go. It has paid for itself; it's been budget neutral.

So, the context of this debate with the President about his willingness to veto these bills and saying it's excessive spending, the American people should be aware of the fact that that's in the context of our returning to pay-as-you-go budget scoring. That's what led to the record surpluses of the 1990s that I referred to earlier. And the failure of this Congress to renew pay-as-

you-go budget scoring in 2002 is what led to the record deficits that we're mired in today.

So, when you hear about the vetoes of these spending bills, please keep in mind that we're talking about bills that are compliant with pay-as-you-go budget scoring, bills that are budget neutral and that have the appropriate offsets when there are spending increases.

I would yield at this time to my good friend, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much, Mr. ALTMIRE. It is a pleasure again to join my colleagues in the 30-Something Working Group. And I'm so glad that our newest members of the Working Group, Mr. MURPHY and Mr. ALTMIRE, have been holding down the fort for the last little while talking about spending priorities, because that is actually the most glaring difference between the Republicans and the way they handled this institution and the Democrats and the way we are handling it.

Let's take the problem that we're facing here now that you've been talking about, and that is that the President vetoed the Labor Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. And I am proud to sit as a member of the Appropriations Committee with Mr. RYAN. And I can tell you that the difference in the overall spending plan that the President put forward versus our 12 bills combined amounts to \$22 billion. Now, \$22 billion might sound like a big number, but let's put it in context.

□ 2300

Twenty-two billion dollars is approximately what we are spending in Iraq in 2 months. That's the difference between what Democrats in Congress are proposing to spend for all 12 bills combined, the difference between the President's proposal and the Democrats' proposal. That problem underscores the fact that the President only has one spending priority, and that is the war in Iraq. The problem is that the only spending priority that matters to President Bush is the war in Iraq. It's not even the war in Iraq and Afghanistan because he has so clearly shortchanged what was going on in Afghanistan when we started, which is where the war on terror, or the pursuit of bin Laden was ongoing that we abandoned when he shifted the focus of America to the war in Iraq, that it has blocked out the sun. His spending priority, his only one, the war in Iraq, has blocked out the sun and made it impossible for us to move forward on things like education, like expanding access to health care for children, like making sure that we can pass a stem cell research bill that the vast majority of this country supports.

I will just give you an example of one of the things that resulted from the veto of the Labor-HHS bill and that is the increase in Ryan White title IV

funding for AIDS programs for families. We have an explosion of AIDS in this country. We absolutely need to make sure that we get a handle on it. There hasn't been an increase in title IV funding in years. Now that we are in charge and are making sure that we move this country in a new direction, we are focusing on the domestic priorities of Americans. Americans want us to withdraw our troops from Iraq in a responsible way and focus on things that they care about when it comes to their everyday lives. That is literally what the Labor-HHS appropriations bill does. It is an expression of our values. And our values reflect the needs of Americans when it comes to their health care, when it comes to their education, when it comes to their environment at work. And the priorities and values reflected in the Republicans' agenda is the war in Iraq.

Now, I think the American people clearly stated what their intentions were and what they wanted Congress to do last November 7, and we have repeatedly, and we did again tonight just before we came on the floor this evening for the 30-Something hour, they have repeatedly urged us in Congress to begin a responsible withdrawal of our troops, to stop sending the troops over for tour after tour, the same men and women, the same strain on their families, sending them over there without the equipment that they need, sending them over there without the proper training, with tours of duty that are beyond the appropriate length of time, stretching families, causing divorces, causing strain, psychological impact on children, but they don't care. It just doesn't matter. The President's priority is Iraq, and everyone else's opinion be damned.

I will be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It is not just the President. It is enough Members of Congress on the Republican side primarily that are standing by the President. They have to go to the voters next year and say, in my last term in Congress, I stood by President Bush. The thing is that when you talk about the war funding, the waste, the no-bid contracts, the Pentagon losing billions of dollars and nobody knows where it is, you don't hear our friends on the other side, Mr. Speaker, come up and pitch a fit about that. But if you want to talk about \$1 billion or \$2 billion more in health, education, job retraining, all of a sudden the sky is falling. All of a sudden the party that raised the debt limit five times and borrowed \$3 trillion under President Bush is now concerned with a shift in funding to college education, Mr. MEEK, to community health clinics, Mr. ALTMIRE, to Head Start, to these fundamental programs that this country has stood behind. And the kicker is SCHIP, \$35 billion over 5 years, and the President says that's too much spending so we can't provide health care for 10 million kids, poor kids, but we can just turn

around without a blink of an eye and ask for \$200 billion to keep the war going in Iraq, without any kind of deadlines or timelines or any kind of shift in the focus. That's the frustrating part.

Before I yield to my friend, I would just like to say there has been a pattern here. On September 11 or after September 11, Mr. MURPHY, it was go shopping. And then during the whole SCHIP debate, it was, well, they can go to the emergency room, these kids. Then during Katrina it was, "You're doing a good job, Brownie," consistently these flippant remarks that the President tends to make that lacks an understanding of the seriousness of some of these situations.

So it is frustrating as we are trying to make some investments into the United States of America, into this country, and the President consistently, with a small band of Republican supporters, is able to veto this, and unfortunately, we don't have enough votes in the House yet to override these vetoes.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so very much, Mr. RYAN, and I want to thank the Members and Mr. ALTMIRE for hosting this hour and anchoring this hour for us. It is always good to see Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. She has been busy. There are a lot of appropriations bills coming through the floor. And Mr. MURPHY has so much to offer to this 30-something.

Mr. RYAN, I appreciate the fact that you took us down Memory Lane, especially what this administration has done. Being one that pays attention to history and appreciates those that have contributed to this country, whether it be in battle or service in the military and those families that are waiting for their loved ones to come home, whether it be a son or a daughter or a sister or a brother or a mother, waiting, I think it is important for us to recognize right here in the moment, I can't help but think and reflect on the contributions of those Americans before me, the sacrifices that they have made that was just regular order that we call here in Congress, it was just another day. But these were heroes and sheroes that stood on behalf of this country and wanted to carry out the will of the American people. Sometimes we get caught up here in Washington about what we think. I think it's important to note that seven out of 10 Americans have a bad feeling about what is going on in Iraq, the direction that we are going in. This New Direction Congress has tried to steer this administration in the right direction, but I'm just going to put it on the lap of those that are in Congress. The President is not running again.

I actually got up pretty early this morning and had a chance to go down to Morning Journal and have a chance to sit there and take calls from the American people. As you know, you get a cross section of Democrats, Republicans, independents, what have you.

But I think it is very, very important for us to realize, four Republicans tonight voted in the affirmative on H.R. 4156, which is the Orderly and Responsible Iraq Redeployment Appropriations Act of 2008. I think it is important that people note that in that bill, it put forth \$50 billion under the \$200 billion that the President called for. And the veto that you were talking about a little earlier as it relates to the health centers, as it relates to the research that has to take place dealing with the illness that many Americans are facing, family members that have cancer right now that need that research, need those dollars. The President vetoes those dollars.

So I think it is important for the Members here on the floor and the Members that are listening to what we are saying here on the floor and the staff members that are listening and the Americans that are listening that we pay very close attention. Everyone has to be a part of this paradigm shift in Washington, DC. It just can't be the majority we have here in the House and the one majority we have in the Senate, because if we had 60 votes, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, we would be able to move the agenda that the American people call for.

So my contribution tonight would be to, well, one, to our Republican friends on the other side of the aisle that don't allow us to have enough votes to be able to override the President, that the American people will hold them in judgment. To the Members in the Senate that feel that whatever the reason may be to not allow us to override the President, because the President is not running again, but you are, that the American people, independent, Republican, Democrat, first-time voter will let their voice be heard in 2008. That's the good thing about this whole thing, the fact that I know in this democracy that people are paying attention to what is going on.

You cannot justify, ladies and gentlemen, when you look in the face of 10 million children that have to receive health care and say that, well, it's okay for the President to veto and for me to stand by the President and not by those children, it's okay for us to continue on in a war with no accountability, and then we have the Blackwater incident, and then we have other incidents that are there. So the only thing that I am excited about is the fact that the American people are paying attention. But if it was about politics, I would just sit in my office and allow the President to do what he does and a very small majority as it relates to Republicans standing by the President because I know one day the Americans will rise up and the American spirit will rise up and we will see a different America. That is what I am praying for and I am hoping for very soon.

Mr. RYAN, I think you are 110 percent right. I think we need to remind the Members of the past. We need to make

sure that we recognize those Members that were once Members of Congress but decided to follow the President, and the American people took them out of office, and as far as I am concerned, if you don't want to stand on behalf of those that sent us here, then you are making a career decision. The bottom line is we have men and women in harm's way right now.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is a perfect segue for what I wanted to get into right now, and we are going to, I think, conclude on this topic because this is certainly the most important issue facing the country today is the war in Iraq. I think anybody would agree. What this House did today is, as the gentleman from Florida talked about, try to get a handle on this situation and try to put a plan in place where none exists today on what our mission is going to be in Iraq.

I was going to talk a little bit about what we did today in the House, what the bill said, and I will turn it over to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ to go into a little bit more detail. H.R. 4156 requires the redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq to begin within 30 days of enactment with a target for completion of December 15, 2008. It requires transition in the mission of U.S. forces in Iraq from primarily combat to force protection and diplomatic protection, limited support to Iraqi security forces and targeted counterterrorism operations.

The bill prohibits deployment of any U.S. troops not fully equipped and trained. Is there anybody who can disagree with that? Waivable with a presidential national security certification. So it gives the President the ability to waive that requirement if he feels it is necessary. It extends to all U.S. Government agencies and personnel the limitations of the Army Field Manual on permissible interrogation techniques. That means no torture, something that this House has voted on in the past. It is in the Army manual today. It just says you have to abide by what is in the Army Field Manual as it is currently written. And finally, as we discussed, it provides \$50 billion to meet the needs of the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan but defers the consideration of the remainder of the President's nearly \$200 billion request.

So this is a responsible course of action. The House passed it today.

I will yield to the gentlewoman from Florida at this point to give her views on this issue.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. ALTMIRE.

Here is the bottom line. There is a dramatic and stark difference between the Republicans' priorities and the Democrats' priorities. There is one priority, and only one that you will ever hear from the other side, and that is to continue to fund the war in Iraq, continue to put our troops in harm's way, continue to have their families separated from them, continue for them to have longer and longer tours of duty,

more and more strain, more and more tours of duty.

Here are our priorities. We passed the largest increase in veterans benefits in the 77-year history of the VA. We passed legislation to increase the minimum wage. We passed legislation to expand access to health care for 10 million children. We passed legislation to cut the student loan interest rate in half. The list goes on.

And what do you hear from the Republicans? Nothing. You hear, let's put more money into the war in Iraq. Let's lengthen the time that the men and women fighting on our behalf spend there. Let's send them over there for more and more tours of duty. Do you ever hear anything from that side of the aisle in terms of an agenda, in terms of getting anything done? All I hear is "no." All I hear is, "not going to do that." All I hear, again, is, "Yes, Mr. President. Whatever you say, Mr. President."

Our criticism of them, Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN, if you remember, in the 30-Something Working Group in the 109th was that they were the bobblehead Republicans who did nothing more than shake their head up and down and do whatever the President said. And nothing has changed. Well, guess what. A year from now, which is just about a year from now, they will be called to account just like you said, Mr. MEEK, and we will see just how many fewer Republicans there will be here that serve in this chamber, because I think the American people have had it up to here.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I just want to make a point. It is not like we are out on a limb here. We just saw a poll that came out a few days ago from CNN that shows that seven in 10 Americans oppose this war. That is the highest number, 68 percent, 70 percent of Americans oppose this war, the highest number since the war began.

□ 2315

We are seeing almost by the week, by the day, new generals, new senior retired American military officials coming out and breaking with this President. We have already seen the Iraq Study Group, we have already seen dozens of foreign policy experts come out and plead with this President. Even many of his best friends, many of his father's advisors have pleaded for a new course.

The Democrats are on the side of the American public. The Democrats are on the side of the foreign policy community on Iraq. The Democrats are on the side of an increasing number of retired military generals and officials on this issue. As you said, there is just a very loyal, very recalcitrant block of Republicans who refuse to abide by the growing will of the American public on this issue. There will be a price to be paid for this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield. What is clear

here is there is a threat of panic running through the caucus on the other side of the aisle because we are up to 16 of their incumbent Members who have decided to bail and who recognize that the ship is listing and has been listing badly and is in danger of just completely going down. There doesn't appear to be any likelihood of the ship righting itself in the near future. They aren't expected and aren't expecting to get their act together and focus on an agenda that the American people support because they have been a one-note, tunnel-vision party for far too long.

So you have 16 that have decided to retire already, with, we are sure, more to come. It's just not surprising because they do not share the priorities of everyday working families, Americans who want the Congress to focus on a new direction and not give them more of the same.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. It's interesting, and I think you made the right point. It seems like the President has one priority, and one and only one, and that is the funding of the war. What is interesting is when you look at the Labor-HHS bill, some of the other bills we are trying to pass that increase the Pell Grants and some of the other things, we are not getting the level of support we should.

These vets need those programs. These veterans that are coming back, it's not like they are making a lot of money, many of them with their kids they are trying to send to college. So why wouldn't this apply? The vets aren't just fighting for the Defense appropriations bill that passes out of the House or the VA benefit package that passes out of the House. The veterans are fighting for America. They are fighting for a strong country that does research and development. Veterans have family members who get cancer. So they are very concerned, I would think, Mr. Speaker, with investments at NIH to continue cancer research. They have kids that may need health care. They have kids that go to school. They may have a kid that wants to participate in a Head Start program. In each instance, Mr. ALTMIRE, our fearless leader in this 30-Something group tonight, these vets are fighting for what makes America great, and that is freedom, that is investment, that is a strong economy. Those are the kind of things we are investing in.

So to say your only priority is the war and spending what is now projected by the end of the year \$1.3 trillion in the war. The President says, and a small group of recalcitrant Republicans say here in the House: We can't fund it because we don't have the money to put in the health care and everything else.

Mr. MEEK. Will the gentleman yield for a second? I know you're an appropriator and we are talking about appropriations. You and Mr. MURPHY are kind of throwing around these big words tonight. Let it be known that

some of us in the room just want to break it down a little bit here in this Chamber.

I can't go back to my district and tell Ms. Johnson and Ms. Rodriguez or Ms. Jones who worked their entire lives that because the President decides to veto the Labor-Health bill, and I think it's important that we share this with the Members, we can't tell those individuals to suck it up. I am sorry that you weren't in the Defense bill. I am sorry that it had nothing to do with Iraq and Afghanistan, that we can't be for you.

One thing I can say here in this House is that we are for them and that we are standing for those individuals, and they are Republicans and they are Independents and they are Democrats and they are nonvoters and individuals thinking about voting for the first time. They are the sick and shut-in on that sick and shut-in list when people go to wherever they worship, or whatever the case may be. They are the individuals counting on this Congress to stand for them.

The Congress is doing what we are supposed to do, Mr. ALTMIRE. But the bottom line is that the President has to do what he has to do, and he has to be the President of the United States of America, not just to secure the issue in Iraq. We have Americans here right now that need our support and our help.

I am glad that we are here and I am glad that we are putting the pressure on the minority party to do the right thing on behalf of their constituents and the American people.

Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Thanks to all my colleagues who participated tonight. Thanks, especially, Mr. Speaker for the time allotted to us. Please, to continue the discussion, anyone can go to www.speaker.gov and go to the 30-Something Working Group and we can continue this discussion by e-mail.

I thank the Speaker.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for the remaining time until midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BURGESS. I thank the Speaker. The hour is late, the time is short. I do want to talk a little bit about health care this evening. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, in order to clear the air from the last 40 minutes, let's start off with a Bible verse. Let's start off reading from the Old Testament from the book of Habakkuk, Chapter 2. "I will stand upon my watch, and I will set me upon the tower, and I will watch to see what he will say to me, and what I shall answer. And the Lord answered, Write the vision, make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie. Wait for