

Democratic President and Republican-led Congress, in 1997, those principles of PAYGO were continued in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

In 1999, we saw for the first time in 30 years a balanced budget. And we could see surpluses, Madam Speaker, as far as the eye could see. It looked great for America at that point in time. We had money to deal with national security. We had money to fix the problems that we know exist in Medicare and Social Security, the long-term problems, which are so important. Those two programs are so important to the future of this country.

What happened? In 2001, we got a new President, President George W. Bush, commonly known in these circles as Bush 43. And this administration, along with the Congress back then, decided that PAYGO wasn't a good idea because they couldn't do the policies of their tax cuts they wanted, as much as they wanted to do and live within those rules of PAYGO, so they abandoned the PAYGO rule, the PAYGO principle.

As a result, from 2000 to today, 2007, you have had a swing of several trillion dollars in terms of the surpluses versus the deficit. So we are in a bad situation. We are in a bad situation; and during the campaigns last year, people running for the House and the Senate across this country campaigned on this issue, that we had to restore fiscal responsibility to our government. You heard from four members of the Blue Dog, freshmen members, who are brand-new here tonight. This is their first term as Members of Congress. They campaigned on this issue. They understand it. They understand the importance of it. Their constituents back home do.

Madam Speaker, our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, our majority leader, STENY HOYER, our Ways and Means chairman, CHARLIE RANGEL, and our budget chairman, JOHN SPRATT, and other Democratic leaders, in addition to the Blue Dogs, vowed to put an end to the reckless fiscal policy that has existed in our government for the last 6 years. And under the leadership of Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER, and with the help of the Blue Dogs, we put in place this PAYGO principle on the very first day when this new Congress took power in early January of this year.

That is what the American people wanted us to do. They wanted us to stop acting foolishly when it comes to fiscal management. We are like a board of directors, Madam Speaker, of a major corporation. It is our job to manage the resources, the fiscal financial resources, of this country in a prudent way for our stockholders, who are our people back home.

And we said we have to stop spending more than we take in. There are lots of tools that you can use, as has been said here earlier, but the one that we have in place right now, the one that we have been able to get in place, given

the current political environment, is this PAYGO rule, and we need to abide by it. We don't need to abandon it.

Congress without those tools in place has not exhibited the willpower, if you will, to make tough choices when it comes to spending or tax cuts. So that is why it is important that we have tools like PAYGO. If you don't have the ability, the will or the backbone to make choices about how we responsibly spend the taxpayers' money, then what are we doing here? This Congress, under the leadership, under the Democratic leadership of NANCY PELOSI and STENY HOYER has shown that it has the ability and the will and the backbone to be good stewards of the taxpayers' tax dollars that they send here for us to spend. Every single bill, Madam Speaker, that is passed by the House this year has complied with PAYGO rules. Whether it was the farm bill, SCHIP reauthorization, or AMT relief, every bill has complied with the PAYGO rules. And do you know what, Madam Speaker? Seventy-five percent of the pay-fors have been spending cuts and not revenue raisers.

Sadly, very sadly, the Senate last week failed in their duties as leaders of this country and as responsible stewards of our taxpayer dollars when they passed an AMT bill that was not paid for. The Senate was held hostage by the Republican caucus in the Senate and they blocked a House AMT bill that was paid for from even being heard on the Senate floor.

The Blue Dogs, Madam Speaker, and the House leadership are standing behind PAYGO for one simple reason: it is the right thing to do. It may not be the easy thing to do or the politically easy thing to do, but, Madam Speaker, I didn't take this job because I thought it was going to be easy. I took this job to do right by the people of the Second Congressional District of Florida and the American people.

The House of Representatives will again pass an AMT bill this week that is paid for. It is possible to do it. The Senate will have another opportunity to do what is right and responsible. And I strongly urge the Senate to have the gumption and the will and the good sense to keep the promise they made to the American people to be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars and pass an AMT bill that does not violate the PAYGO rules and that is paid for.

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Again, I want to thank my fellow co-chair, MIKE ROSS from Arkansas, for his steady leadership on this issue and so many others, but also steady leadership in forming these Tuesday night Special Orders, in which we have had a chance to come talk to the American people about issues of much importance.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Florida, the administrative co-chair of the Blue Dogs, Mr. ALLEN BOYD from Florida's Second Congressional District, for being a part of this

Special Order this evening, as he is so many Tuesday evenings.

What we are talking about here, Madam Speaker, is the Republican Congress, the Republican administration, after having a balanced budget under President Clinton for the first time in 40 years, gave us the largest debt ever in our Nation's history, largest deficit ever in our Nation's history, and there has been a lot of talk about all this.

Mr. TANNER was talking earlier about how this administration has borrowed more money from foreigners than the previous 42 Presidents combined. That has to be paid back with interest. And to put it in perspective, the Federal Government has sent \$709 billion abroad in the form of interest payments since President Bush took office, and \$155 billion in 2007 alone. The same amount would fund any of the following: The amount of money this administration has sent to foreigners to pay interest on the debt that we have borrowed from them to fund tax cuts in this country for folks earning over \$400,000 a year. With the interest paid on this debt, this foreign debt, the amount of your tax money, Madam Speaker, that we have sent overseas, with that amount of money, we could have built 12,000 new elementary schools, 7,000 new veterans clinics, and I might remind you, Madam Speaker, we have a new generation of veterans coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq. And get this: We could have funded all road and bridge construction and improvements for 10 years.

It's about priorities, and it's time this Nation got its priorities in order. It's time we got our fiscal house in order. Make no mistake about it, Madam Speaker, for the second time this week we are going to send to the Senate an AMT fix that ensures that no, not one, additional taxpayer is liable for the AMT tax. Not one. Madam Speaker, we are paying for it, and as conservative Democrats we are reaching across the aisle and we are begging, we are begging Republicans to join us in doing the right thing and fixing this the right way.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2082, INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. CARDOZA (during the Special Order of Mr. ROSS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-487) on the resolution (H. Res. 859) providing for consideration of the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2082) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1585, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. CARDOZA (during the Special Order of Mr. ROSS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-488) on the resolution (H. Res. 860) providing for consideration of the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4351, AMT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

Mr. CARDOZA (during the Special Order of Mr. ROSS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-489) on the resolution (H. Res. 861) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4351) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide individuals temporary relief from the alternative minimum tax, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4299, TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

Mr. CARDOZA (during the Special Order of Mr. ROSS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-490) on the resolution (H. Res. 862) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4299) to extend the Terrorism Insurance Program of the Department of the Treasury, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman GARRETT for this privilege of this time.

Madam Speaker, I believe the cornerstone of all human freedom is that of religious freedom. Indeed, a small separatist church congregation in England possessed a desire so strong to practice their faith freely that it compelled them to cross the ocean in a little wooden ship called the Mayflower.

While theirs was a quest to be able to practice the faith of Christianity, a

central tenet of their Christian faith was the belief that all human beings were given the right by God to embrace whatever religious conviction they truly held in their hearts, and that human beings should protect that right for each other.

Madam Speaker, today we considered and passed H. Res. 847, "recognizing the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith." Of course, Madam Speaker, there will be those who will criticize any effort to recognize a particular faith or holiday. However, Madam Speaker, aside from the debatable aspects of this resolution, or any other, those who are even slightly acquainted with history know that the Bible, the founding document of the Christian faith, was the essential rationale and substance that inspired our Declaration of Independence and was, further, the bedrock foundational document of the Western world.

The objective of this resolution is to honor those Judeo-Christian principles that have shaped American history and policy since the founding of our Nation and that have informed and influenced our ideas of justice and equality 7 years into the 21st century. Indeed, Madam Speaker, it was the Christian principles hailed in this resolution that led our country to be the very first beacon of religious freedom in the history of the world and, further, to finally reject the practice of human slavery that had plagued civilization across the world for nearly 7,000 years.

Madam Speaker, I believe that it would be wrong for this body to ever pass any law that would compel or forbid any person in this Nation or any other nation to accept or reject any article of faith, so long as they did not deprive their fellow Americans or human beings of those same constitutional rights. However, in recognizing the influence of Christianity upon Western civilization, we are also commending the unshakable commitment of Christian principles, the very ones that compelled our Founding Fathers to resolutely declare that all men are created equal by God himself, and that because they are created equal, they are also created free, Madam Speaker, and that includes being free to embrace the religion of their own conviction.

Religious freedom is a central component of the Christian faith this resolution references. Indeed, the message of the one born on Christmas Day was from a savior who came to offer every member of the human family ultimate and eternal freedom, even at the cost of his own life.

Madam Speaker, as we enjoy our religious freedom in this season of peace, may we not forget that at this very moment American men and women in uniform are fighting a battle across the world so that all Americans might continue to freely exercise their faith, and that that right might ultimately some day be extended to all of mankind. President Roosevelt probably said it best, Madam Speaker. He said in his

Christmas Eve Nation message to the Nation, December 24, 1941, "Our strongest weapon in this war is that conviction of the dignity and brotherhood of man, which Christmas Day signifies more than any other day or any other symbol. Against enemies who preach the principles of hate and practice them, we set our faith in human love and in God's care for us and all men everywhere."

So, Madam Speaker, with those feelings in mind and with love in my heart for people of every faith, let me here on this floor exercise my own religious freedom and wish you and everyone else under the sound of my voice a happy, holy, and merry Christmas.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. As I come to the floor tonight, the first week of December, standing here in the Nation's Capitol of the greatest Nation on Earth, today, and has ever been, I think about our constituents back home in the great State of New Jersey and across the country as well as they look to our Nation's Capitol and expect us to do the responsible things on their behalf and on the behalf of freedom and liberty around the world as well. And a portion of that responsibility, of course, is handling their hard-earned tax dollars as they send them to us here in Washington to administer this government and spending, some of which was just addressed by the other side of the aisle.

For the next hour, I would like to engage in a discussion of these issues and shed some light on them, perhaps pointing out some of the fallacies in some of the arguments that we just heard from the other side of the aisle on these points.

As we begin there, I think there is no place better to begin as to try to address some of those points that have been raised. So at this time I would be honored to have a fellow colleague join us at the floor right now. I yield the floor to Ms. FOXX.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you so much, Congressman GARRETT. I appreciate your putting together this Special Order tonight and focusing on spending and on where we are here, as you said, in the second week of December in the greatest country in the world.

I was listening for a few minutes to our colleagues who preceded us, who called themselves the Blue Dog Democrats, and I was really fascinated to hear them talk about how fiscally responsible they have been, and I know that you're going to talk a little bit later about the total tax increases that they have proposed, the total spending that they have proposed. And I am fascinated that our colleagues can stand