

Federal leases for resources removed by private companies from public lands, and it is supposed to be a guardian of our Nation's precious public resources.

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that the cozy relationships between MMS officials and oil and gas companies have allowed these companies to underreport the resources they remove from Federal lands and underpay the royalties they owe to the Federal Government. Evidence that MMS has failed to detect and pursue these violations by oil and gas companies is especially troubling as gas prices continue to rise, corporations make record profits, and average Americans are struggling to fill their gas tanks and make ends meet.

Most hard-working, taxpaying Americans would be outraged to know that these companies are cheating the Government out of these royalties which are a critical source of revenue for the U.S. Treasury and which would allow us to invest in other priorities.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE OF JANIE GALMON

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, it is a great honor, we all know, to represent the American people here in the people's House. We all work long hours. We spend a great deal of time here. And I would like to, at this moment, mark the extraordinary service of a woman who has chosen to retire after nearly 50 years of working here in the Capitol. I am referring, of course, to the very famous Janie Galmon.

My colleagues may not know her last name, but they are very familiar with Janie's fried chicken, which has been prepared for us on Wednesdays on a regular basis. She is someone who was working in this Capitol when President Kennedy was assassinated, and she regularly has shared with us stories about that.

She always showed up to work at 5 a.m. regardless of how late we were in the night before. We could be here, and she can be working downstairs mid-night, 1 o'clock, but she was always back here coming in with our friend, Sally, at 5 o'clock in the morning.

She has provided extraordinary service and sustenance to so many of us. Janie, after a half century, has chosen to retire. I want to wish her congratulations, a very happy retirement, and a very, very merry Christmas.

#### CARING FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS

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

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, first let me wish a happy and

safe holiday to all our men and women in uniform who are serving here and abroad.

After watching the Department of Veterans Affairs face a \$1 billion shortfall during a time of war, I came into this Congress convinced that if we had the money to fight a war, we must have the money to treat the warrior.

One of the first votes that this Congress took was to increase funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. And one of our last votes of the year will be to provide \$6.7 billion in new funding to the Department to ensure that our Nation's veterans get the care they have earned.

The way the government spends its money is a true indication of its priorities. With this appropriations bill, our new Congress has shown that America's veterans are a top priority.

#### CONGRATULATING MAYOR CECIL PRUETT

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and to congratulate Mayor Cecil Pruett of Canton, Georgia, on a tremendous career and a well-deserved retirement. A true public servant and outstanding leader, Mayor Pruett will be retiring this month after 12 years as mayor of the City of Canton in Cherokee County, Georgia.

Mayor Pruett has always strived to better his community, and his broad experience has served his constituents well. The mayor was formerly the president of the Georgia Municipal Association, president of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Atlanta Regional Executive Committee.

An educator, he remains active in leadership posts at Reinhardt College, Georgia Baptist Children's Home, North Georgia Regional Development Center, and his own church where he serves as a deacon.

Mayor Pruett oversaw substantial economic growth in Canton over his 12 years, but he has always worked to preserve the small town charm that is a hallmark of Cherokee County. A southern gentleman in every way, Mayor Pruett and his honest leadership will be sincerely missed. We wish Cecil and his wife, Myrna, a happy and a healthy retirement.

#### DEMOCRATIC ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR

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

Mr. HODES. Madam Speaker, as we prepare to complete this first year of the new Democratic Congress, I would like to take a moment to reflect on some of the major accomplishments that we have achieved on behalf of the

American people. As a member of the majority makers, the historic class of 2006, we have helped to restore integrity, idealism and imagination to the people's House. We increased the minimum wage for the first time in a decade and fully implemented the 9/11 Commission recommendations to better protect our Nation.

Since then, we have worked to ease the financial burdens that middle-class families face, passing the most sweeping college affordability package in more than 60 years, and yesterday, we approved an historic energy bill to declare our energy independence and help us address global warming, saving Americans anywhere from \$700 to \$1,000 a year in gas prices.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand with fellow Democrats for an American agenda, real security, healthy families, a thriving economy, with opportunity for all, not just a few at the top, and a sustainable future for our planet. I look forward to 2008.

#### SCHIP

(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 so interesting to look at today's Whipping Post and see the myriad and vast range of the issues that are coming before us. And many of these are issues that should have been addressed months ago.

One of those that we are going to address first off this morning will be S. 2499. This is an issue that is going to deal with Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program. This should have been handled months ago. It has been running under a continuing resolution.

Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the congressional leadership has decided to finally take the politics out of this and to support SCHIP as it was currently put in place in 1997 by a Republican Congress and to keep the focus on children of the working poor who need access to health care.

I support this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to do likewise and to continue to support SCHIP as it was originally put in place in 1997 by a Republican Congress.

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#### PRESIDENT BUSH IS OUT OF TOUCH WHEN HE SAYS THE ECONOMY IS STRONG

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

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, earlier this week President Bush showed us that his view of the economy does not match that of the overwhelming majority of Americans. That is when he tried to convince the Nation that the economy was strong for everyone.

Does the President realize that on his watch, poverty has increased every single year, and that overall household income has decreased?

Does the President realize that at a time when Americans have less money in their wallets, they are trying to squeeze every dollar to pay higher food, gas, education and health care bills?

Madam Speaker, how bad does the economy have to get for the average working man and woman before the President realizes that there is a problem?

This Democratic Congress is not satisfied with the status quo. Over the last year, we have made progress to ease the economic crunch for middle-class, working-class families. We have passed legislation to make college education more affordable, increased the minimum wage, addressed the subprime mortgage crisis, and cut taxes for middle-class families.

We are proud of these accomplishments. We also realize that with most Americans struggling, this economy is just not working.

#### DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS ONCE AGAIN SUPPORTS ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

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

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, yesterday the Democratic Congress once again supported energy independence and security. This legislation, which the President is now expected to sign, includes an historic increase in fuel economy standards for vehicles and significant new support for alternative fuels.

This comprehensive Democratic energy bill provides a dramatic shift in our Nation's energy policy, including new standards for buildings, homes, lighting and appliances, and makes great strides in our fight against global warming. It is also something that we can feel good about, because it reduces the price at the pump through increased efficiency standards that reach 35 miles per gallon by 2020. This is the first increase in CAFE standards in 32 years and will save the average driver between \$700 and \$1,000 a year.

Madam Speaker, the protection of our environment is both a spiritual and moral issue, and Congress has failed for too many years to address this issue. I am proud that the Democratic Congress has worked to bring this historic legislation to the floor.

#### DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO MOVE OUR NATION FORWARD, BUT PRESIDENT BUSH IS BLOCKING THE WAY

(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, all year this Democratic Congress has

worked to live up to our promise to move the Nation in a new direction. In many ways, we have been successful, raising the minimum wage, fully implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and making college more affordable. We are proud of these accomplishments, but there are many other important bills that have been passed with strong bipartisan support here in Congress, only to be vetoed by President Bush.

We sent the President a bipartisan bill that restored harmful cuts to No Child Left Behind, job training programs, and research grants for cures for life-threatening diseases. President Bush said no with his veto pen.

We sent him a bipartisan bill that would ensure 10 million children have access to quality health care. President Bush said no with his veto pen.

We sent him a bill that would bring our troops home from Iraq by the end of next year. Again, President Bush said no with his veto pen.

Madam Speaker, President Bush has stood in the way of real progress, but know that we in Congress will continue to fight to move our Nation in a new direction.

#### IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THE ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the energy bill that will finally take our energy policy in a new direction, and I urge the President to sign it into law. This bill makes a big step toward greater energy independence and energy security.

The bill includes an historic increase in fuel economy standards, the first since 1975. This increase will save American families an estimated \$700 to \$1,000 a year at the pump and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. We must pursue an energy policy that moves the U.S. towards energy independence, reduces the cost of gasoline to consumers, enhances the development of alternative energy, and substantially reduces threats of global warming.

This bill also sends a clear signal to the rest of the world that the U.S. is finally serious about getting our energy and environmental policy in order. However, we still have more work to do on this issue, and this new Congress is committed to get the job done.

#### A COMMITMENT TO PASSING A GOOD SCHIP PROGRAM

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

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Madam Speaker, I first want to thank Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER and all the Members who are so committed to the SCHIP program. This Congress sent

the President very good legislation that would have ensured that millions of low-income children of hardworking Americans could keep health coverage, and it would allow States to enroll millions more who qualified for the CHIP program but aren't covered because the States have not received enough funding. We also had a way to pay for this.

But each time, the President has vetoed that legislation, and here in Congress a number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to stand with the President blocking the way for this vital program to reach more children. We wanted to insure 10 million children. The President and the Republican leaders only want to insure 6 million children. And that is the crux of the problem here.

Today, we will extend the SCHIP program through March of 2009, but an important aspect of these earlier bills is not included. This past August, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued a directive to State SCHIP directors effectively informing them that they would no longer be able to insure children in families where incomes exceed 250 percent of the poverty level, \$43,000 for a family of three. This is a tragedy, and we will fix it.

#### TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE TRENT LOTT

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

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I hadn't intended to give a 1-minute today, but I just got off the telephone with one of my dear friends, the Senator from the great State of Mississippi, the Honorable TRENT LOTT.

Today is his last day in the United States Senate. After a distinguished career in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, he is resigning effective, I assume, today or tomorrow, whenever the other body goes out.

I have known TRENT LOTT for the 23 years that I have been in the House of Representatives. When I first got elected, he was the minority whip here in the House. He is one of the wisest, in terms of political knowledge, men that I have ever been around in my political career. He is a great guy personally. He has a great family. He has served not only his State, but his country, with exemplary distinction for the many-odd years that he has been in the House and the Senate.

We are going to miss the Honorable TRENT LOTT of the Magnolia State of Mississippi, and I want to wish him and his family the very best this holiday season and in the years ahead.

God bless TRENT LOTT and his family.

#### COMMENDING HEATHER LASHER TODD FOR HER SERVICE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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