

Now almost every State has gone to lotteries, casinos, or some type of gambling in a desperate attempt to get more revenue because property taxes just don't raise enough money since so much land has been taken off the tax rolls. Because of this, I believe gambling addiction is going to become a real problem in this country in the years ahead.

Another part of this problem is that government at all levels keeps putting more and more restrictions on the land that remains in private hands. The Washington Post had a headline a few months ago that said: "Judge Saves Land From Development." It might also have said: "Judge Preserves Land for Wealthy" or "Judge Keeps Young People From Buying Homes."

Preventing more land from development is driving up the cost of homeownership and putting it out of reach for many young families. It is also forcing more people into apartments or townhouses or homes on postage-stamp-size lots, leading to new problems from congestion.

The Washington Times pointed out that more than five times as much land, more than five times as much land, has been set aside as national parks, wilderness areas, Federal forests, and Federal grazing areas than has ever been developed. Today, you could put every family of four in the State of Texas and give them 3 acres of lands each and leave the whole rest of the country empty. Over three-fourths of the population lives on 3½ percent of the land.

USA Today reported last November 30 that the U.S. now has 37 million acres of private land under some type of protective trust or restrictive easement, a 54 percent increase just since 2000. Also, conservation of private land from 2000 to 2005 averaged 2.6 million acres a year, which USA Today said was almost half the size of New Jersey, each year. This is information from the Land Trust Alliance, which represents 1,200 of the 1,667 local, State, and national land trusts.

Another group, the Nature Conservancy, manages 1,400 areas in the U.S. and now has assets of \$4.14 billion. Some people will recall The Washington Post series about the sweetheart deals the Nature Conservancy was doing for its wealthy contributors and board members. The Nature Conservancy had income of \$1.8 billion in 2004 and 2005 and has set aside 15 million acres. According to its tax returns, the Nature Conservancy in fiscal year 2005 received over \$97 million in government grants, over \$14 million in government fees and contracts, and over \$165 million from sales of land almost all to government. All this is always reported in the news as the greatest thing since sliced bread; but unless these activities are slowed, which is very doubtful, young people will find it extremely difficult to find places to start small businesses or build new homes. Also, there will be less money

for people to travel to and enjoy all the parks, preserves, national forests, and recreation areas we already have.

Mr. Speaker, if we keep taking more and more property off the tax rolls, we are going to really cut back on government services. Much worse, if we keep destroying private property and restricting development, we are going to slowly do away with the dream of homeownership and we are eventually going to bring about a lower standard of living for our children and grandchildren.

OUR MILITARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I have long believed that how we treat the most vulnerable in society says a great deal about who we are as a Nation. So you can imagine that I, along with tens of millions of Americans, was appalled at the recent revelations in the media about the care at the outpatient facility at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Now, let me say, having visited Walter Reed more than once with my wife to visit injured Hoosier soldiers returning from battle, that there are, in fact, dedicated caregivers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, doctors and nurses and members of the facility staff who spend their days and nights helping the wounded. But the now infamous Building 18, a decrepit former hotel outside the main gates of Walter Reed, has come to public notice. It housed more than 80 soldiers. With moldy walls, soiled carpets, leaky pipes, mice, and cockroach infested, this facility was a national embarrassment.

I am outraged that our wounded warriors were forced to endure these terrible conditions. Our troops deserve better care, and they deserve it as soon as possible.

But more than the filthy living conditions, Mr. Speaker, the dirty secret of the military health care system in this country is that our injured veterans, after navigating the dangers of the battlefield, must navigate a bureaucratic morass to get the care they deserve. After receiving lifesaving surgeries at military facilities, wounded soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines must negotiate an overwhelming amount of red tape. I have seen it firsthand, working with families attempting to make their way through our veterans' and military health care system.

I was at the President's speech this morning at the 47th annual gathering at the American Legion as the President said that these bureaucratic delays as well as these living conditions must come to an end. The President said, "It is unacceptable to me. It is unacceptable to you. It is unacceptable to our country. And it is not going to continue."

I applaud the President and Secretary Gates for all they have done to hold the entire chain of command responsible for the conditions at Walter Reed, but we must do more to fundamentally bring reform to the system whereby we provide health care services to our veterans.

Today, the American Legion signed an agreement, for instance, with Walter Reed Army Medical Center to establish an office at the facility to assist in the transition of wounded servicemembers from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is a good start. The hope is that the legion office will significantly alleviate the long backlogs in out-processing wounded soldiers. Thank God for these veterans who are willing to help.

As a fiscal conservative, I have long called for smaller, more accountable government. In the area of military health care, we need now, more than ever, more accountable government. I appreciate the President's emphasis on the need to improve the delivery of services and not just throw more money at it. Washington D.C. and especially this Congress under current management and, quite frankly, prior management often solves problems by throwing more money at it. But assuming Congress enacts the President's 2008 budget, the VA health care budget alone will be up 83 percent since he took office.

Money alone is not the answer. We must change the way we serve the medical needs of those who have served us in uniform. We need substantive reforms, and it is my hope that the Dole-Shalala Commission and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs task force that the President announced this morning are able to meet those immediate needs.

The President said, and I would echo today, "We have a moral obligation to provide the best possible care and treatment to the men and women who have served our country. They deserve it, and they're going to get it."

But let us not just solve the problem with more money, with changes in the chain of command. Let us work in a bipartisan way in this Congress to fundamentally bring changes to our health care system that serves our military, that serves our veterans, that ultimately will rise to the level that each one of them deserves.

The Old Book says if you owe debts, pay debts; if honor, then honor; if respect, then respect. One of the ways that our Nation discharges a debt that we cannot ever fully repay to those who have worn the uniform is to ensure that they receive the medical treatment that they so richly deserve. And I commit myself to that today.

THE ENUMERATED POWERS ACT

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

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss and to support the Enumerated Powers Act introduced by Congressman SHADEGG. The Enumerated Powers Act is most important to protect the tenth amendment. We understand that with the word "federalism."

People perhaps, though, are not so aware of where the concept of federalism originally came from. They think some brilliant founders got together in Philadelphia in 1789 and came up with the idea of federalism, but, in fact, that is not quite true.

The concept of federalism dates way, way back to 18 years after the arrival of the Pilgrims in the Plymouth Colony. It goes to the time when the State of Connecticut was being founded and a great preacher by the name of Hooker preached a series of sermons outlining how the government in Connecticut should be structured. Those sermons resulted in what was called then the "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut." And what it said was that Hartford had certain enumerated powers and of anything not specifically enumerated for Hartford to handle, the other towns would have those powers.

So it was that we started with the idea of federalism, that is, that there is only specific power granted to the central organizing authority, in this case the U.S. Constitution.

□ 1745

Now, the Enumerated Powers Act requires that all bills introduced in the U.S. Congress include a statement setting forth the specific constitutional authority under which the law is being enacted. It would, of course, enforce, then, the reexamination of the proper role of the national government and it will fundamentally alter the ever-expanding reach of the Federal Government. The Enumerated Powers Act requires scrutiny of the Federal Government to slow this reach, particularly in the sense that it will require that there be a properly cited constitutional authority to precede the legislation proposed.

Now, the Constitution gives the Federal Government only 18 specific enumerated powers. But ignoring the principles of Federalism in the Constitution, starting with FDR and continuing through LBJ's Great Society right down to the modern day, Congresses have displayed a willingness to ignore the 10th Amendment in order to greatly expand the Federal Government.

The size and scope of the national government has exploded over the last seven decades. Congress has created ineffective costly programs, incredible annual deficits and a huge debt exceeding \$7 trillion that will be passed only to our children and grandchildren. State and local governments are now dependent upon the Federal Government for funding, and the Feds now tamper with issues that are best understood by States and localities, with education and welfare reform being two cases in point.

I believe that Ronald Reagan had it right: "I have always felt that the nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'"

We need to uphold the entire Constitution, not just the parts we choose to use for our own ends.

UMBRAGE TAKEN AT COMMENTS REGARDING DEMISE OF VICE PRESIDENT

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I was watching television last night, I think it was the O'Reilly Show, I am not sure exactly, but I believe it was the Bill O'Reilly Show on Fox Network, and they had an excerpt of another show from which were taken some remarks by a well-known comedian and political advocate in which he was inferring that the country would be better off if the Vice President of the United States died. I took great umbrage at that. I was very, very upset about that, because Vice President CHENEY has been an outstanding servant of this country for a long, long time.

I had the pleasure of serving with Vice President CHENEY when he served in this body as the Republican whip. He worked very hard in the Ford administration as the chief of staff. I don't know that anybody has ever really been able to question his integrity, because he is a man of integrity, and he has been trying his best to assist the President of the United States in dealing with some very, very troubling issues, not the least of which are the war against terror and the war in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I won't mention the comedian, the political pundit, who made the remarks on television on HBO just recently, but I will just say that I think it is very, very bad taste for anyone to infer, even infer, that the Vice President of the United States, Mr. CHENEY, who has done such an outstanding job for this country over a long period of time, should be better off dead. That was the inference that was made. I think it was wrong, and I hope that doesn't happen in the future.

I may take issue with political leaders on the other side of the aisle, and I may very much in very severe ways disagree with them, but in no way would I ever indicate that they should be better off under the ground than on top of the ground, even though we have severe differences. And for anyone to infer that the Vice President should die really, really bothers me, especially in this time we are in, these very troubling times.

Vice President CHENEY is a great man. He has done an outstanding job for this country and he should be respected, even if you disagree with him.

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

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. GOHMERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BLUE DOG COALITION

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

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this evening, as every Tuesday evening, I rise on behalf of the 43 member strong fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are a group of fiscally conservative Democrats that are doing our best to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Federal Government. Part of that is accountability.

This evening I am pleased to be joined by another gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. BERRY, from Arkansas's First Congressional District, as we talk about restoring not only common sense and fiscal discipline to our national government, but accountability to our Federal agencies.

Mr. Speaker, a week ago, Saturday, February 24, 2007, at about three in the afternoon, not one but two tornadoes devastated the rural delta county of Desha County. The county seat is Arkansas City. It was spared. McGehee was spared for the most part. But Dumas, a town of about 5,000 people, was hit, and hit hard, as you can see from this photo provided to me by Agnes Ross at the Dumas Clarion. This is what was left of the Fred's Dollar Store. My district director's dad was in the meat locker of the grocery store, Matt Butcher, next door, which was also destroyed. In fact, Mr. Speaker, 150 homes were either destroyed or