

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

heavily damaged. Depending on whose numbers you want to rely on, somewhere between 600 and 800 workers were displaced from work, because wherever they worked was destroyed or heavily damaged. That community of Dumas and much of Desha County went without power for five days.

It was bad enough that the Governor cut short his trip to the National Governor's Association meeting here in Washington and flew home, and I was privileged to join him in going to Dumas and spending the afternoon visiting folks and reassuring folks that help was on the way. It was bad enough that the Governor called out 150 members of the Arkansas National Guard.

That was February 24, 2007. More than a week later, the President still has not declared Desha County a Federal disaster area and FEMA has not responded to my request to move 150 mobile homes that were purchased for Hurricane Katrina to Dumas and Desha County to be used for temporary housing while these good folks in this forgotten delta county get their lives put back together and rebuild their homes.

Mr. Speaker, this is one example of the damage. Again 150 National Guard soldiers called out; 150 people's homes either destroyed or severely damaged; 600 to 800 workers temporarily displaced from their job because wherever they worked was destroyed or heavily damaged; no power for 5 days. And yet the Federal Emergency Management Agency says that this forgotten delta county, Desha County, is not worthy of a Federal disaster declaration. They want to talk about all these rules and regulations and all this bureaucratic this and bureaucratic that.

You would expect that from the IRS, Mr. Speaker, you would expect that from most Federal agencies. But when I think of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, when I think of FEMA, I think of first responder. I think of one Federal agency that should be able to cut through the bureaucratic red tape and get something done. If FEMA can't do it, no Federal agency can do it, and FEMA is not.

I guess what infuriates me more is a week after these two tornadoes struck Dumas and Desha County, and here is another good photo of one of the houses that was destroyed, we can't convince FEMA that that home is destroyed, but we believe it was destroyed, it is certainly uninhabitable, but what gets me is, a week ago Saturday, the tornadoes hit Dumas. The President has yet to declare it a Federal disaster area, FEMA has yet to help with temporary housing, or anything else, for that matter, and yet the following Saturday, and my heart goes out to the people in Alabama and Georgia, we were fortunate in Dumas and Desha County, we did not have a loss of life. We did have a couple of dozen injuries, some of them very serious, but the good Lord was working overtime in Dumas, Arkansas, a week ago Saturday. There is no doubt about that. Peo-

ple go through and tour this town and they scratch their head. How in the world did no one die? And for those who did die in those tornadoes that came about a week later in Georgia and Alabama, our heart goes out for those people.

But it really galled me to see the director of FEMA with the President in Alabama and Georgia holding hands singing "Kumbaya" and talking about the new and improved FEMA. The new and improved FEMA has forgotten this delta county.

And this story gets better, and is hard to believe. But you can see here, this is one of the 150 homes that is either destroyed or badly damaged. Dumas is a rural community. It is not like there are a lot of rental houses available there. People, even those with insurance, need a place to live while they get their life put back together and their homes rebuilt, which could take up to a year. And this story gets better, or a better word, this story gets more tragic. Some of you are aware of this, Mr. Speaker.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast in August 2005, one of the first things FEMA did was they ordered thousands of brand new, fully furnished mobile homes; not the camper trailers. We are talking brand new, fully-furnished mobile homes, 14 to 16 foot wide, 60 foot long, built-in microwaves, coffee tables, end tables, sofas, dining room sets, built-in central heat and air with the unit ready to drop out of the back. Most of them are equipped, or filled, I should say, with Ashley furniture.

Hope, Arkansas, because it is the old proving grounds from World War II, and it is an old military airport and they had some inactive runways and tarmacs, well, FEMA approached the City of Hope, which is also in my district. Hope used to be known as the birthplace of President Clinton. Now we are known as the largest trailer park in the world.

So FEMA entered into an agreement with the City of Hope to store these mobile homes in Hope. Not store. Actually, it was to be a FEMA staging area where they would transition through there on their way from wherever they purchased them to the gulf coast region. That was shortly after August 2005, Hurricane Katrina.

They kept delivering these mobile homes to Hope. They kept bringing more and more mobile homes to Hope. This an aerial photo that I took Saturday. This is current. I took this Saturday at the Hope Airport from a small plane. This is a current aerial photo.

All these white things, those are mobile homes that were purchased for Hurricane Katrina victims August 2005. And the staging area quickly became a storage area where more and more mobile homes arrived, but none of them ever left. Why? Because, at the time, FEMA said, oh, we don't place mobile homes in flood plains.

Well, they knew that they don't place mobile homes in flood plains be-

fore they bought them. And guess what? Everybody that lost their home in Hurricane Katrina and needed a home lived in a floodplain. So these homes were never placed.

Then President Bush was at the Democratic Caucus last month at Williamsburg, and he and I talked about this after the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, BENNIE THOMPSON, questioned him specifically about these mobile homes, and the President told me, we are saving them for future disasters.

In Dumas, Arkansas, a week ago Saturday, the people were struck not by one but by two tornadoes; 150 homes destroyed or badly damaged; 600 to 800 workers out of work because wherever they worked has been destroyed or heavily damaged; 150 members of the Arkansas National Guard called out; and yet, that was a week ago Saturday, on Monday, the Governor and I toured Dumas and on Tuesday at 9 a.m. in a conference call I asked David Paulison, the Director of FEMA, to release 150 of these 8,420 mobile homes. That is how many are currently at the Hope Airport from the photo taken Saturday. There is 8,420 of these parked at the airport in Hope today.

I respectfully requested 150 of these be moved to Dumas, which is only 3 hours away, to provide temporary housing for the people of Dumas and Desha County while they rebuild their homes.

□ 1800

I am still waiting on an answer. So I called him back again Thursday. He still couldn't give me an answer. They still have not declared this forgotten delta county a Federal disaster, and they have yet to move a single one of these mobile homes. If what I saw in Dumas is not a Federal disaster, Mr. Speaker, I doubt we will ever see another Federal disaster again.

And, Mr. Speaker, if they refuse to move 150 of these 8,420 mobile homes from Hope to Dumas to help folks, isn't that what FEMA is supposed to be in the business of doing? Then do you really believe any of these will ever be moved for the public good to help people? It is reprehensible; I am appalled by it. I am ashamed of our government, Mr. Speaker. This is a symbol of what is wrong with FEMA. This is a symbol of why so many people in this country have given up on their Federal Government.

And the story gets better. Shortly after Hurricane Katrina and all these mobile homes showed up in Hope and they weren't moving them to the people that needed them on the gulf coast, Mr. Speaker, I spoke up and brought a photo similar to this to the House floor and I said, FEMA, if you do not move these homes to the people who need them on the gulf coast, they are going to start sinking into the cow pasture, the hay meadow, thinking that would get FEMA off high center and they would start moving them to the people

that needed them. What did FEMA do? They showed up with \$7 million worth of gravel to put under them. Folks, you cannot make this up; it is too unbelievable.

And so if I appear frustrated this evening, I am because a week ago Monday, Governor Beebe and I toured Dumas and the Back Gate community. And in Back Gate, at least a week ago, and perhaps tonight, there were 30 people crowded in a metal building, calling it home because they have no place to live. I talked to Agnes Ross at the Dumas Clarion earlier today and she said she ran into somebody on the streets of Dumas earlier today, an elderly woman that had no place to go, no place to live, and yet 8,420 brand new, fully furnished mobile homes are sitting there at the airport in Hope, Arkansas, 3 hours from Dumas.

When the Blue Dog Coalition talks about restoring accountability to our government and making Federal agencies answer for their action, or a lack of action, this is a good example. This is about as good as it gets. And, Mr. Speaker, I am not here to beat up the President or beat up the director of FEMA. I tried for a week to go through the proper channels and get this done, but for the life of me I am imploring the President and the director of FEMA, Mr. Speaker, to move just a few of those mobile homes from Hope to Dumas to help these folks, provide them temporary housing while they try to get their lives put back together and their homes rebuilt.

MARION BERRY, a Congressman from the First District of Arkansas, is from Gillette. He doesn't live but a few miles from Dumas. He knows these people, too. This storm affected his area, and he is very aware of what is going on and the lack of attention from FEMA. At this time I would yield to him. I want to thank him for joining me this evening to talk about trying to help the folks of Dumas and Desha County, this forgotten delta county.

Mr. BERRY. I thank the gentleman from south Arkansas, and I certainly appreciate his leadership in this matter.

I would also encourage everyone that can hear my voice to keep in our hearts and minds and certainly in your prayers our men and women in uniform, especially those on the battlefield this evening. Reach out to them and their families and let them know that you understand and appreciate the sacrifice and commitment they make out of the goodness of their hearts.

My esteemed colleague from south Arkansas is absolutely correct. We have these horrible tornados almost every year in Arkansas. We had two in the First Congressional District that I am privileged to represent last year. We have had as many as a hundred in one day all across Arkansas.

I have served in this Congress since 1997, and from 1997 to January of 2001 we had a director of FEMA that remains distinguished to this day and al-

ways will. His name was James Lee Witt. He knew how to run an agency. He didn't make excuses. When a tornado hit, you didn't have to call FEMA, you didn't have to call the director, you didn't have to call anybody. They would just show up, Johnny-on-the-spot. They knew what they were doing. They were trained. They could make decisions. They helped people start putting their lives together. They helped communities and local governments clean up the mess. They provided the necessary financing to get the economy going again. They worked with the public schools to get them repaired and back in order.

Today, FEMA is a worse disaster than the storms. If they show up at all, which they haven't in Desha County, and my colleague, Mr. ROSS, is absolutely right, I just live right across the river from Desha County, it is part of my home. Today, if they show up at all, it is for a photo op. I saw this past Saturday on CNN, FEMA has a new truck, a communications truck. They were so proud. They were explaining that this communications truck, and I would love to know how much it cost, was the secret to their success because they were going to be able to use that truck to take pictures and broadcast them back to FEMA headquarters and they would get the same information they could have gotten from CNN 3 hours ago. All of this would be hysterically funny if it was not so tragic.

This is not a funding issue. It is just a simple matter of incompetence from the top to the bottom. This administration simply does not know how to run a government agency.

I have not talked to Mr. Paulson. I have talked to him on previous occasions, and he defines the word "bureaucrat," which is a sad thing to have to say about anyone. It is the job of the Congress to hold these people accountable.

I have had conversations with Secretary Chertoff. And he assures me that these trailers that are down in Hope, we are going to take care of those. This was over a year ago. He appeared before the Appropriations Committee and explained that in just a few months these were all going to be moved out and everything was going to be wonderful. They are just sitting down there going to ruin. Nobody is using them. But they wouldn't let the victims of tornados in my district last year use them. They won't let the good people of Desha County use them this year. This just doesn't make any sense.

It is the job of the Congress, and that is the reason my colleagues and I are here this evening, to begin the process to hold these incompetent bureaucrats accountable for the terrible way they are running this agency. For crying out loud, if you can't do anything else, give us a "no" answer. Tell us something. Don't just let it stay out there and twist in the wind.

I can tell you this: You don't have to be all broke out in brilliance to look at

these pictures or drive through that community and know a terrible disaster took place, and they are deserving of the help of the Federal Government. What a sad thing it is to go from an agency and a government only 6 years ago that would come to the aid of the people when a disaster happened, to this horrible mess that we call FEMA today that is so incompetent all they can do is spend money where it doesn't help the people. It is time that they at least appeared before this Congress and make some kind of a pathetic explanation as to why they are operating the way they are at this time. And let's hope that by some stroke the administration and the White House, who is ultimately in charge, will at least have the credibility and feel responsible enough to get control of that agency, because we know there will be more disasters that will happen to the American people, and we are going to need help from our Federal Government.

We cannot continue to operate this way. What a sad thing it is to see this agency and the way they treat people who have had their lives destroyed, their jobs destroyed, their homes destroyed, and yet they are not even deemed worthy by the director of FEMA or the Secretary of Homeland Security of a little bit of help and a little bit of recognition by the Federal Government so they can get some help on their own.

And can you imagine, if the Secretary of Homeland Security can't see that FEMA works, can you imagine the mess that the rest of Homeland Security is in? What a terrifying thought that these people are in charge of anything, but certainly in charge of our homeland security and in charge of the very Federal agency that is charged with bringing assistance and helping the people when these tragedies take place.

I would join my colleague in recognizing tragedies that took place in Alabama and Georgia and the loss of life and how terrible that was, and we hope they get treated better. They certainly deserve to be treated well. They deserve all the help it is possible to give them at this time.

Let's hope that we are not back here in 2 weeks to hear stories from Alabama and Georgia about how, well, FEMA came and they had their picture made with us and they gave us a big hug, and then they left and nothing happened. They deserve better. And let's hope that they get better. We also deserve to have help for the people in Desha County in south Arkansas in the First Congressional District. They deserve to be treated better, also.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that my colleague, Mr. ROSS, will not rest, nor will the Arkansas delegation, nor will the Governor of the State of Arkansas rest until we see the recovery taking place and the wonderful community of Dumas, Arkansas, begin to be restored and the economy begins to prosper again, and the people begin to put their lives back together.

I thank my colleague for his leadership, and I will yield back.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for joining me this evening and talking about the lack of accountability within the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

To recount, February 24, 2007, a week ago Saturday, not one, but two tornadoes devastated the town of Dumas and the Back Gate community in Desha County. The Governor declared it a State disaster, called out 150 members of the Arkansas National Guard who were there for nearly a week. It took crews of more than a hundred working for 5 days to restore electricity to that delta county. Some 600 to 800 people remain out of work because of the damage done to their workplace. And yet here we are, a week ago Saturday in Dumas, horrible tornadoes. And the ironic thing is that FEMA has a staging area with 8,420 brand new fully furnished mobile homes 3 hours away, filled with Ashley furniture and built-in microwaves ready to be set up, and the mayor and the county judge, Marion Gill, the mayor of Dumas, Mark McElroy, the county judge in Desha County, they have got sites available. The zoning is cleared with city water, with water and electrical and sewer hook-ups, and yet FEMA, which is supposed to be in the business of helping people, refused to move a single one of these to the more than 150 people who lost their home, like this family right here.

□ 1815

This is one of the 150 homes that were either totally destroyed or heavily damaged. Yes, some of these folks had insurance, but yes, we have 8,420 mobile homes 3 hours away that are not doing anybody any good sitting at the airport in a hay meadow. They were purchased to help people.

There is no place to rent in Dumas. These folks in Dumas and Desha County need a place to live temporarily. We are not asking that they give these mobile homes to them. We are asking for temporary assistance. That is what FEMA is in the business of or supposed to be. Allow these folks to temporarily live in 150 of these 8,420 brand new mobile homes, filled with Ashley furniture.

They are not doing anybody good in Hope. Let us get them moving, Mr. Speaker, to Dumas, Arkansas, and let these folks in Dumas who lost their homes or had their homes heavily damaged live in them temporarily while they get their life put back together and rebuild their homes.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time we have raised this issue. Here is the timeline, talk about accountability and restoring accountability to our government: Saturday, February 24, two tornadoes devastated the communities of Dumas and Back Gate in Desha County. Monday, February 26, I surveyed the damage on the ground and in the air along with Governor

Beebe and other elected officials. Governor Beebe named Desha County a State disaster area and announced his plans to request a Federal disaster declaration.

Tuesday, February 27, I held a conference call with FEMA Director David Paulison, along with Senator LINCOLN from Arkansas and staff for Senator PRYOR. In the call, I conveyed my support of Governor Beebe and requested FEMA expedite their decision and action as well as encouraged FEMA to use 150 manufactured homes from this supply of 8,420 of them from Hope, Arkansas, just 3 hours away, for the families without shelter in Desha County.

Later Tuesday, my staff talked with FEMA again regarding the status of the disaster declaration, and they expressed that they did not read the laws as we did and that they are still working with Arkansas to gather information. In other words, the bureaucracy began.

Wednesday, February 28, I joined with both senators, Senator LINCOLN and Senator PRYOR from Arkansas in sending a letter to President Bush and FEMA Director Paulison supporting Governor Beebe's request for a Federal disaster declaration.

Thursday, March 1, 2007, I again talked with FEMA Director Paulison regarding the lack of a response and movement of these mobile homes from Hope and expressed my displeasure with his office. It had been 6 days since the tornadoes and the communities were just beginning to regain electricity in parts of the town. At that point, FEMA says the reason for not declaring a disaster area is the high rate of insured homes and the fact that the State is capable of taking care of the damage.

Supposedly, they told CNN, FEMA did, that the State has a surplus this year, and they do not need their help. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the craziest thing I have ever heard of. The city and county is a very rural area. It is in the delta region. They lost half their sales tax base when a big retail store left about a year ago. They had a Fred's Dollar Store and a grocery store left, and they have been destroyed. They have, at least for a short period of time, perhaps up to a year, lost much of their tax base. At the same time, they are struggling to pay for a new county hospital and new city hospital there in Dumas, and they are not getting any help from the one agency that we thought was supposed to be there to help us in the time of need, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Friday, March 2, 2007, I again joined with Senators LINCOLN and PRYOR to send another letter to FEMA in support of Governor Beebe and the immediate need for mobile homes in Desha County.

Saturday, March 3, during an address in Memphis, Tennessee, at the 55th Annual Mid-South Farm and Cotton Gin show, I commented on the lack of response from FEMA one week after the tornadoes.

I went to Hope, and I stood in front of these 8,420 mobile homes to highlight the waste of taxpayers' money, the fact that these brand new, fully furnished manufactured homes are just 3 hours away from Dumas, yet they are not being put to good use. They are not helping the people some 3 hours away in Dumas.

Then, Tuesday, March 5, 2007, that is today, I joined Senators LINCOLN and PRYOR in sending a letter in support of Governor Beebe's request to the U.S. Small Business Administration to request small business disaster loans be administered in Desha County to help the 25 businesses which were destroyed and the more than 800 employees who are now without a job or a place to work nearby, some 600 to 800 depending on which day it is and which businesses are able to get back up.

My office hand delivered letters from me and photos I took, this photo right here. We delivered an 8x10 copy of this photo along with a letter today to President Bush, to FEMA Director Paulison, and to the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff, making one final plea to assist these folks in this forgotten delta county.

Well, we have gone on long enough on this, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is important. As members of the Blue Dogs, we talk about accountability, and you cannot talk about accountability and the lack of it without talking about FEMA. Again 8,420 brand new mobile homes sitting there at the Hope airport, not doing anybody any good, and I have got 150 homes either totally destroyed or damaged like one 3 hours away.

It has been more than a week. FEMA refuses to send a single mobile home to assist these folks. If they are not going to move them 3 hours away to a disaster area, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you these mobile homes will never be put to the public good. They will never go to help people if they are not going to help people 3 hours away in their time of need.

I am, once again, Mr. Speaker, imploring the President and the director of FEMA and the Secretary of Homeland Security to do the right thing and to get some of these mobile homes moving to Dumas, where tonight 30 people are living in a metal building. They need our help, Mr. Speaker.

That is what the Blue Dog Coalition is all about. We are about trying to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our national government, and we are about accountability.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have what is called the Iraq War Accountability Act, and we are going to be talking about that more this evening.

Mr. Speaker, as you walk the halls of Congress, it is easy to know when you are walking by an office that belongs to a member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. Why? Because you will see this poster. A poster reminding Members of Congress and reminding the people who

walk the halls of Congress that our Nation is in debt.

Today, the U.S. national debt is \$8,811,969,377,773 and some change, and if you divide that by every man, woman and child in America, your share, Mr. Speaker, of the national debt is \$29,245. It is time that this Nation get its fiscal house in order, and one of the ways we do that is by restoring accountability to our Federal agencies, which is what this business with FEMA is all about, trying to restore accountability and common sense and cutting through the bureaucracy and red tape to help people in their time of need.

At this time, it is a pleasure for me to yield to my friend from the State of Ohio (Mr. WILSON). We are pleased to have Mr. WILSON as a new Member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, and at this time, I recognize Mr. WILSON.

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe when the Katrina accident happened that we were out of line as much as we were and not responsive, as has been indicated here this evening, and it is even harder to believe that after the correction of that, we are back in the same boat again.

I know they changed FEMA directors. Mr. Brown was terminated and went on. And then now we have a new group of people running FEMA, but it does not seem to be any better.

Mr. Speaker, the Blue Dogs stand for accountability. We stand for accountability in a lot of different ways. We feel that there are some truly misguided priorities that are hurting our country and hurting us as people here.

Mr. Speaker, just Sunday evening, millions of Americans watched "60 Minutes." We heard what the Blue Dogs have been talking about for more than a decade.

In the report, the U.S. Comptroller General, the Nation's top accountant, urged people to wake up to our budget crisis before it is too late. These are his words, Mr. Speaker.

"What's going on right now is we're spending more money than we make." Couldn't be much more simple. "We're charging it to a credit card and expecting our grandchildren to pay."

Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely wrong. The Comptroller General is absolutely right. Our fiscal mess is outrageous, and we as Blue Dogs stand for accountability. Reckless budgets and irresponsible spending has got us into the fix we are in, and now it is the responsibility of this Congress to help us get out.

The administration has had misguided priorities that have been painfully clear. They send pallets of cash to Iraq while our veterans at home suffer in dirty, broken-down facilities, not getting the medical care that they need after putting their life on the line for our country. Recent reports of the deplorable conditions and the roach-infested rooms at Walter Reed are an

outrage, and they are unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, it is an understatement to say that our brave veterans deserve so much more than the way they are being treated.

We must hold this administration accountable for this reckless approach that has allowed millions of dollars to go missing in Iraq while our brave young men and women who need proper medical care have gone without it. We must provide real oversight to keep this from happening again, just like we need to provide real oversight as we work for a responsible budget.

Mr. Speaker, what will happen if we do not clean up this fiscal mess? We only need to listen to the words of the Comptroller General again in last Sunday's "60 Minutes" presentation. He said, "We suffer from a fiscal cancer. It's growing within" our country. "And if we do not treat it, it could have catastrophic consequences for" America.

As Blue Dogs, Mr. Speaker, we will shine a bright light on this cancer and nurse our budget back to health. Our future and the future of our children and our grandchildren depend on it.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WILSON), an important member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, for sharing your thoughts with us this evening as we try to, Mr. Speaker, talk about the need to restore fiscal discipline and accountability to our government. You gave a good example of putting an end to the debt and the deficit spending, and we have had examples this evening about restoring accountability to government, and the accountability and lack of it within FEMA.

We are going to hear about other areas where we need to restore accountability within our Federal Government this evening, and we will talk some about the Blue Dog Coalition's Iraq War Accountability Act.

We support our troops. In fact, we support them so much we want to make sure this \$12 million an hour that is being sent to Iraq of your hardearned tax money, Mr. Speaker, is going to support our men and women in uniform. Unfortunately, as we have learned, much of it is not, and that is why we have this legislation, H.R. 97, the Iraq War Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, if you have got any comments, questions or concerns for us, you can e-mail us at bluedog@mail.house.gov. That is bluedog@mail.house.gov.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield to another member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS), my good friend, who every day is working to represent the constituents of his State.

I share, too, the concerns with the lack of accountability that has taken place over the last 4 years as we have

put America's finest men and women in uniform in harm's way, fighting this war on terrorism, but specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and only to find that too often we have not done the necessary planning, we have not put the necessary resources in place nor have we taken the time to ensure that their work is focused on in a way that brings results, the kind of results that all Americans as taxpayers want to see when we invest in our Nation's interests.

The Iraq Accountability Act is an important step to try to reinstate credibility through this war effort, and therefore, we are urging our colleagues throughout the House to embrace this effort. This is not a partisan issue. This is all about making sure that when we invest \$25 billion in reconstruction, when we need that kind of investment here at home, that it, in fact, is not taken in by sole source contracting single bids; that, in fact, that the work actually takes place at a level of quality so that the Iraqi government or the citizens can, in fact, benefit from that investment of infrastructure.

□ 1830

We just saw recently about the construction of a police station that was so shoddily built with U.S. taxpayers dollars that, in fact, it has been deemed unusable.

So as fellow Blue Dog members, we really urge in a bipartisan basis for us as a House to come together. We are the people's House, after all, and it is important that we put partisan politics at the water's edge. We are in a real mess in Iraq. There is no doubt about that. I have every hope, as do most Americans, that, in fact, we do the right thing in ensuring that this effort takes place in a way that brings our American troops home as safely and as quickly as possible.

However, if this surge is not successful, as I asked Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in the Foreign Affairs Committee just 2 weeks ago, that I think it is absolutely critical that we understand what our backup plan is. I think the American public is getting tired of us pursuing these efforts without the sort of time invested effort that is going to ensure that if this effort is not successful, we have a backup and that we are not simply winging it, because I think too often that has been the history of the recent past in this engagement.

Mr. Speaker, and my colleague, Congressman MIKE ROSS, I would like to shift this effort of accountability and transparency back to our Nation's shores. I was very moved by the comments Congressman MIKE ROSS made when he talked about the devastating impact of those tornados in his district back in Arkansas. I saw the devastation on television shortly after it occurred.

I e-mailed my friend, Congressman MIKE ROSS, and asked him how it was there. He talked about the horrific

challenges his constituents were facing, and I felt for him. I felt for him because whether we like it or not, natural disasters occur throughout the country, whether it is in Florida, whether it is Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi. I know, because just in January we had a similar natural disaster in California, called the freeze.

This devastating freeze has now impacted the State of California over \$1.3 billion. Now, when you have a freeze that impacts communities in many counties such as we had in California in January, it doesn't take on the same sort of graphic visuals that a tornado or a hurricane does, but it is the worst freeze we have had in over 10 years. Governor Schwarzenegger immediately declared the State a disaster, an area designated as 31 counties eligible for State aid, and the State has been putting money in there.

We have signed a bipartisan letter to the President asking for Federal support. The estimate is that the freeze has affected not only \$1.3 billion in losses, and those numbers are adding up, but over 12,000 farm workers, as well as farmers, have been impacted. The livelihood of these farmers, these farm workers and the communities they live in have threatened the economies of these towns where we have had 50 percent, 70 percent unemployment just in the last 4 to 6 weeks.

I was talking to a good friend of mine, Sarah Reyes, who heads up the community foodbank back in Fresno County. She told me that in the last 6 weeks they have fed over 91,000 families, 91,000 families that don't have jobs, that are out of work. But still, even though we have sent this letter, the Governor made the declaration, 31 counties have been impacted, the administration has yet to declare the freeze a Federal disaster.

So you ask why, why is our Governor, Governor Schwarzenegger's request being ignored? Why is the letter that has been signed by both Democrats and Republicans among the California congressional delegation being disregarded? Why is the administration acting so casually about a situation that puts families out of work and family businesses at risk?

Mr. President, the freeze may not make the sort of pictures that we have seen in Florida or in Arkansas or in Louisiana or in Mississippi; but I can tell you, if you come to those communities and visit and meet with those farm workers who are out of work, you talk to those farmers and their families who have invested their entire lives in their family farm, you will see just as dramatic an impact as any devastation of any other natural disaster. So I think it is time for the administration to focus on the accountability in its efforts in California for those families that have been so impacted by this devastating freeze. Accountability is what people expect their government to do. They expect their government to solve problems.

When the President spoke here in the State of the Union in January and said that folks are less concerned about the partisan squabbling that takes place and they are more concerned about doing the people's business, I agree with the President. In fact, this is part of the people's business, being accountable, being transparent, and making sure that after action that has already taken place, clearly 6 weeks, now going on to 7 weeks, after the initial disaster, that yet we have no response from Washington.

Ladies and gentlemen, folks in California and those 31 counties expect better. My constituents expect better, and I am hopeful that soon the President and the administration will step up to the plate and take FEMA's recommendation and that the Office of Management and Budget will suggest to the President that, in fact, California is deserving of the same sort of support and response and accountability that all of our citizens expect.

I thank the gentleman from Arkansas, my dear friend and colleague, Mr. MIKE ROSS.

Mr. ROSS. An important member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of fiscally conservative Democrats who spends many a Tuesday night here on the floor with me talking about the need to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Federal Government.

Why? Because today the U.S. national debt is \$8,811,969,377,773 and some change. For every man, woman and child in America, their share, our share of the national debt is \$29,245. It is what those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition have coined as the debt tax, d-e-b-t, and that is one tax that cannot go away and cannot be cut until our Nation gets its fiscal House in order.

Why is this important? Our Nation is borrowing nearly \$1 billion a day. In addition to billing \$1 billion a day, we are spending about half a billion every day paying interest on the debt we already got before it goes up another \$1 billion today, a half a billion dollars a day. What could we do with that?

Just in my district alone, give me three days' interest on the national debt, and I could complete I-49 across the western side of Arkansas. Give me another three days' interest on the national debt, and I could complete I-69 through the delta region of south Arkansas, two important interstate road projects that could help create economic opportunities and lift up one of the poorest regions in our country.

Yet these priorities continue to go unmet. Why? Because of a lack of fiscal discipline, because too much of your hard-earned tax money is going to pay interest, not principal, but just interest on the national debt. Year after year, it is hard now to believe, but from 1998 to 2001, we had a balanced budget in this country and a surplus, the first time either a Democrat or a Republican had given us that, in about 40 years.

Yet, we have squandered that, this administration and this Republican Congress, for the past 6 years, year after year, have given us the largest deficit ever in our Nation's history and the largest debt ever in our Nation's history.

In fact, to put it in perspective, the total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion. But for 2010, the total national debt will have increased to nearly \$11 trillion. That is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years. Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest-growing parts of the Federal budget, the debt tax we call it, d-e-b-t; and it is one tax that cannot be repealed.

Our Nation is spending more money paying interest on national debt than we are educating our children. If that is not wrong, I don't know what is. It is morally wrong.

Well, you could see the current national debt is at an all-time high. Why do deficits matter? Because they do reduce economic growth. They burden our children and grandchildren with liabilities. They increase our reliance on foreign lenders who now own 40 percent of our debt. Mr. Speaker, this administration in the past 6 years has borrowed more money from foreign central banks and foreign investors than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

Mr. Speaker, you might be surprised at who they are. It is kind of like David Letterman and his Top 10 list. Here is the Top 10 list of people that we have gone out and borrowed money from in the last 6 years. The United States of America goes out to other countries and borrows money to fund tax cuts in this country for folks earning over \$400,000 a year.

Here is the Top 10, we have borrowed, the United States of America has borrowed, \$637.4 billion from Japan; China, \$346.5 billion; the United Kingdom, \$223.5 billion. You will love this one, OPEC, the United States of America has borrowed \$97.1 billion from OPEC; Korea, \$67.7 billion; Taiwan, \$63.2 billion; the Caribbean Banking Centers, \$63.6 billion; Hong Kong, \$51 billion; Germany, \$52.1 billion.

Rounding out the Top 10 countries, where the United States of America has gone and borrowed money from foreign central banks and foreign lenders, you will not believe this one, Mexico. The United States of America has borrowed \$38.2 billion from Mexico to fund tax cuts in this country for people who earn over \$400,000 a year.

We are trying to fix this, and in this new Democratic majority, I am proud to tell you that not in the first 100 hours, but the first 24 hours, the new Democratic leadership listened to the 43-member strong fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition and re-instituted what is known as the PAYGO rules, which means pay-as-you-go. Those were the rules that were in place on this House floor from 1998 through 2001 when President Clinton gave this Nation its last balanced budget.

Some Republicans will have you believe, oh, that means they want to raise taxes to fund a program. Not so. That means that we think you should review programs and find programs that don't work and cut them to pay for new programs. Pay-as-you-go does not mean raise taxes to fund a new program. It means restore accountability to our government, no more rubber-stamp Congress.

It means we are going to demand accountability from our Federal agencies; and when programs don't work, and when agencies don't know how to administer them, we are going to cut them and use that money to fund other programs that can work.

Well, we have talked a lot this evening about accountability, and I am real proud to be joined by one of the authors of our Iraq War Accountability Act. We support our troops. In fact, the gentleman here with me tonight, from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURPHY, is an Iraqi war veteran. My brother-in-law is serving tonight in the Middle East.

We support our troops, but we also want to make sure that this \$12 million an hour of your tax money that is being sent to Iraq is accounted for, and that it is being spent on our troops to protect them so they can return home safely.

For the remaining 5 or 10 minutes we have got this evening, I recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, a new member but an important member of the Blue Dog Coalition, Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Congressman ROSS. I will make sure that when my wife and I retire today we will pray for your brother-in-law over in the Middle East. He is one of our heroes, and we are proud of his service to the country.

I rise today to bring an end to the pattern of systemic neglect from the White House. Last November, American families sent Democrats to Congress to bring about change. There are now 49 new Members in the House of Representatives. Five of those Members are veterans. Of those five, I am proud to say they are all Democrats. I am also proud to say that three of the five are from the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in Admiral SESTAK, Commander CARNEY, and myself.

Change from the neglect our military veterans are currently experiencing, as they try to get the health care they deserve, Americans have seen now the past few days what is going on in Walter Reed. It is our opinion that this is criminal neglect.

□ 1845

But when the people voted for change in November, they voted to change from the strategy in Iraq that has American troops refereeing a civil war while too many Iraqis sit on the sidelines, and a change in the way we pay for the war in Iraq.

The American taxpayers have spent more than \$400 billion in Iraq. If they were to see an invoice, just one invoice,

taxpayers would see the widespread waste, fraud, and abuse. And that is why, as Blue Dogs, we stood together with the Iraqi Accountability Act. Fifty-eight Members of Congress agreed to this act. Congressmen ALLEN, ALTMIRE, ARCURI, BACA, BAIRD, BARROW, BEAN, BERRY, BISHOP, BOSWELL, BOYD, BOYDA, BRADY, BRALEY, CARDOZA, CASTOR, CHANDLER, COSTA, DAVIS, DONNELLY, ELLSWORTH, GILLIBRAND, GONZALEZ, HARE, HARMAN, HERSETH, HILL, HODES, HOLDEN, ISRAEL, MAHONEY, MARSHALL, MATHE-SON, MCINTYRE, MCNERNEY, MELANCON, MARCHANT, MILLER, MITCHELL, DENNIS MOORE, GWEN MOORE, PETERSON, POMEROY, ROSS, SALAZAR, SCHWARTZ, SCOTT, SHULER, TANNER, THOMPSON, WELCH, FILNER, WALZ, CLARKE, ELLISON, SIRES, HOLT, REYES.

All of these Members, all 58 Members are cosponsors to the Iraq Accountability bill, and they signed on because they have seen what is really going on. They have seen that over the past 4 years families of my district of Bucks County, Pennsylvania and northeast Philadelphia and across the country have heard a lot of bad news from Iraq.

But we are also hearing about money lost and weapons missing. Recently here in Congress we heard from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. He spoke to the Armed Services Committee, and he told us about \$9 billion that has simply vanished. But as many as 14,000 weapons have disappeared, weapons that could be in the enemy's hands right now. These are dollars and these are weapons that were sent to the Iraqis that have gone missing because of mismanagement and fraud. It is not just about the money, but it is also about the safety of our troops. Those missing weapons could arm an entire division of the Muqtada al-Sadr army, an entire division.

Mr. Speaker, it is long past time that we kept track of the money and the weapons that we are giving to the Iraqis and replace the fraud, waste, and abuse with proper oversight, responsibility, and accountability.

The legislation that the Blue Dogs are supporting addresses the glaring lack of oversight and accountability in Iraq and addresses how taxpayer dollars are spent on the war. It puts forward commonsense proposals that ensure that fewer resources are wasted and more resources get to the troops on the battlefield.

This legislation calls for transparency in how Iraq's war funds are spent. It urges the establishment of a Truman committee-type commission to track and curb the fraud, waste, and abuse. It calls for the Iraqi war to go through the normal budgeting process, not through emergency bills or supplementals. These are measures everyone should agree on regardless of the political party.

American families are frustrated with the war in Iraq. This legislation will go a long way toward providing

the change that we all seek and the transparency that we all deserve. It is time for answers, Mr. Speaker, and it is time for accountability, and it is time to put an end to the pattern of neglect.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his work in helping write the Iraq War Accountability Act, which calls for transparency on how Iraq war funds are spent. It creates a Truman-like commission to investigate the awarding of contracts, the need to fund the Iraq war through the normal appropriations process and not the so-called emergency supplementals that hide the funding, and using American resources to improve Iraqi assumption of internal policing operations. Another example of how the Blue Dogs are leading the way, Mr. Speaker, in trying to restore accountability to our government here at home as well as in Iraq.

And in closing, Mr. Speaker, as I began this Special Order this evening, I talked about the terrible tornadoes that devastated Dumas and Desha Counties in my district, and I enter into the RECORD two letters addressed to the President, one February 28 and one March 5, 2007.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, February 28, 2007.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We are writing to support Governor Mike Beebe's request for a Presidential declaration of major disaster for Desha County in Arkansas. Currently, the State of Arkansas and local communities are beginning the process of recovering from the heavy rains, high winds, and tornadoes that touched down in Arkansas on Saturday, February 23rd. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 501(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, we ask that the State of Arkansas receive a federal disaster designation for the damage assessed in Desha County.

As you are probably aware, we represent a predominantly rural state where municipal governments are often ill-equipped to respond to disasters of this magnitude. We have no doubt that all available resources at the state and local level are being used, but federal assistance will be needed to help the affected communities recover.

We would also like to specifically request that Desha County be approved for the FEMA Individuals & Households Program (IHP) to include Temporary Housing and assistance with Mobile Homes and Travel Trailers, Small Business Administration disaster loans, and Direct Federal Assistance. The availability of rental property is restricted with the closest jurisdiction being approximately 45 miles.

As you know, many of the manufactured homes and travel trailers purchased by FEMA for use in the Hurricane Katrina disaster are currently sitting unused in Hope, Arkansas. It is our belief that these manufactured homes and travel trailers should be made available to those Arkansans left homeless by Saturday's storms. The inability of FEMA to find a permanent home for these manufactured homes and travel trailers in areas affected by Katrina has been a source of frustration for the Arkansas delegation and our constituents. However, their close proximity to the disaster in our state provides a perfect opportunity to put some of them to a good use.

Mr. President, we respectfully request your swift consideration and approval of this request. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

BLANCHE L. LINCOLN.
MARK PRYOR.
MIKE ROSS.

MARCH 5, 2007.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH
*President of the United States,
The White House, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, I am writing to you because I have great concerns regarding the lack of a federal disaster declaration for Desha County, Arkansas, and the desperate need for temporary housing for this storm-ravaged Delta County.

On February 24, 2007, two terrible tornadoes hit the towns of Dumas and Back Gate in Desha County, Arkansas. While my heart goes out to the people in Alabama and Georgia who were recently hit by deadly tornadoes, I write to you because I am concerned that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has now forgotten about our situation in Arkansas. The tornadoes that passed through our state destroyed or heavily damaged more than 150 homes; caused 800 people to be out of work because 25 businesses were destroyed; required the Governor to send in the National Guard to enforce security and for clean up purposes; and forced the town to be without electrical power for five days. In this small town, with an estimated population of 5,300, this level of damage and destruction has been overwhelming.

Desha County has still not been declared a federal disaster area, and one of my greatest concerns is the fact that there is no alternative housing for those residents who have been displaced. Nearly 9,000 brand new, fully furnished mobile homes sit less than three hours away at a FEMA staging area in Hope, Arkansas, and all I ask that you make wise use of our taxpayers' money and instruct FEMA Director David Paulison to move 150 of these mobile homes to Desha County for temporary housing.

Last week, I toured the devastation in Desha County with Governor Mike Beebe and strongly supported his request to you for a federal disaster declaration to assist those businesses and individuals that have been damaged or left without shelter. I also joined Arkansas's U.S. Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor in support of that request. At that time FEMA Director Paulison informed me in a phone conversation that the Governor's request had been passed on from the FEMA Region VI office to FEMA's Washington, DC office and was pending his review.

Mr. President, as you and I spoke a month ago at the House Democratic Caucus Retreat in Williamsburg, Virginia, the need to put to use the nearly 9,000 brand new, fully furnished mobile homes stored in Hope could not be greater. It has now been more than a week since these storms hit our state, and I respectfully request that you do what is right and declare Desha County, Arkansas, a federal disaster area. Such a declaration would enable area businesses to take advantage of federal resources and allow you to begin moving mobile homes from the Hope Airport to Desha County for temporary housing.

I have toured the devastation in Desha County and seen first-hand the effects of this storm. I have also enclosed a photo taken Saturday of the nearly 9,000 fully furnished mobile homes purchased for Hurricane Katrina victims but never used that sit unused in Hope, Arkansas. I again ask that you declare Desha County a federal disaster area and make 150 mobile homes available so that

victims can have access to temporary emergency shelter. This is the right thing to do and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

MIKE ROSS.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that recognition. I want to thank the leadership on the Republican side for the opportunity to address once again the House of Representatives and talk about some important issues that our Nation is dealing with, and bring the latest version of the Official Truth Squad. This is a group of folks who have determined to try to bring some sunlight and some truth to the issues that we talk about here in Washington. And after the last hour, Mr. Speaker, a lot of truth needs to be shed, because the amount of misinformation and disinformation that our friends on the other side of the aisle have put forward needs to be corrected, and so we are here as the Official Truth Squad to do just that. It is a great privilege, and I want to thank the Republican Conference, the Republican leadership for that opportunity.

The Official Truth Squad started as a group of freshmen last term who were frustrated by, as I said, the disinformation and the misinformation that was perpetrated and brought forward on this House floor day after day after day after day, and we thought that it was appropriate to get together and attempt to bring some light to issues, attempt to bring some facts to issues. And we have a favorite quote.

We have a lot of favorite quotes, but one of our favorite quotes is indeed one of my favorite quotes that I think crystallizes exactly what the mission is here. And in Washington it is so difficult to try to get to the second clause of this sentence. But this is from Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Senator Moynihan, a former United States Senator from the State of New York and a former United States representative of the United Nations, a wonderful gentleman, a very wise individual. And he said, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts." Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.

So it is in that spirit, Mr. Speaker, that we come to the floor tonight and talk about a number of issues, and try to shed some of that light, try to bring some facts to the table.

We get visited oftentimes here in Washington by folks who are constituents, folks from back home. They come here and they visit us, and they talk about the kinds of issues that are important to them. And today, Mr. Speaker, and yesterday in Washington we have been visited, all of us have

been visited, I know, by members of the VFW, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. And it is very humbling to sit and to talk with members of the VFW, to listen to their stories, to hear their concerns, to appreciate the challenges that they have and the issues that they believe Congress ought to be addressing.

These are truly heroes. They are truly heroes from previous conflicts that our Nation has been involved in. And it is distressing when you talk to these members of the VFW and you hear their same kinds of concerns about facts.

Many of them from my district came, and they wanted to know why there was not the kind of correct information that was getting out on the floor of the House of Representatives, why we weren't talking about the truth as it relates to, not just our veterans, but the current situation in the world. They were extremely concerned that so many of our friends on the other side of the aisle were distorting the truth, were not bringing real information to the American people, and were causing great challenges for all of us to try to do the right thing as it relates to our Nation and to our members of the military right now who are defending liberty around the globe, and to assist veterans in their time of need. And so I shared my concern with them about the information that was being brought forth, especially about the situation in Iraq.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have heard what the strategy of the Democrats is as it relates to Iraq. They have preemptively surrendered. One of their Members has defined what has been described as a slow-bleed policy. It kind of gives you chills when you think about it, Mr. Speaker, a slow-bleed policy. That individual was interviewed 2 or 3 weeks ago, and during that period of time when asked how is he going to institute this, how is he going to institute this slow-bleed policy on the military as a Member of the House of Representatives, an influential Member of the House, a member of the majority party, a member who has an opportunity to do great things, and what he has said is, "They won't be able to continue. They won't be able to do the deployment. They won't have the equipment."

Mr. Speaker, that is chilling. That is chilling.

It is made all the more disgusting because of the comments of our own Speaker who said that funds would never be cut off from our troops in harm's way. And here the individual who is charged with developing the strategy for the majority party in the House of Representatives on Iraq says, "They won't be able to continue. They won't be able to do the deployment. They won't have the equipment."

Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but I get e-mails and communications sent to me from constituents who are serving in Iraq. I know men and women