

and neither should our Federal Government, for that matter. But banking greed seems to rule the day.

And that's just the way it is.

WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I stand today for our veterans. The American public has heard the revelations of poor conditions at Walter Reed and other military medical centers around the country.

The fact that we are not providing adequate support and resources for the brave men and women who fought for our country is a national disgrace. We must ensure soldiers have the training, resources and care while in combat and when they return home.

Next week, I will be visiting Walter Reed to talk to administrators and patients about the care our veterans are receiving. I will also visit Jefferson Barracks and the John Cochran Hospital in Missouri. By evaluating our current facilities, we can determine the strengths to build upon and weaknesses to address.

I remain determined to ensure our veterans are receiving the care and support they have earned and been promised, and I call upon every Member of this House to join in fighting for those who have fought for us.

FISCAL YEAR 2008 BUDGET

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, next week we will mark up the budget for fiscal year 2008. That budget will set the tone for the year and will affect the fiscal direction of our country.

Simply chasing higher spending with higher taxes, as the Democrats want, fails to address the unsustainable growth of government spending. Also, entitlement spending currently consumes more than half the budget and is projected to grow by nearly 6 percent per year, faster than the entire government costs now. We must take immediate and substantive steps to ensure we can meet commitments in the future.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans will put forth a budget that balances the budget by 2012, without raising taxes, by keeping our economy strong, creating jobs and by reforming and strengthening entitlement programs.

Let's work together to balance the budget, but let's make sure we do it the right way. The question will be answered this month, which is, will Democrats work with us toward these goals or go back to the days of tax and spend?

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS PROVIDING PROPER OVERSIGHT OF POOR TREATMENT OF WOUNDED SOLDIERS

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

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, the American people are rightfully outraged by the stories coming out of Walter Reed.

On Monday, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee held its first hearing at Walter Reed to determine how long these problems have been going on and how best we can fix the problems as soon as possible. Three other hearings are scheduled throughout the week.

But this administration has some tough questions to answer. First, when did they know that wounded military personnel were not receiving the treatment they deserve? The President said he wasn't aware of these problems until the Washington Post investigation, but several GAO reports have been released outlining some of these problems. Was the administration ignoring these reports or just ignoring the problem?

And, second, why did the administration choose to privatize services at Walter Reed? And how did they go about choosing a company with ties to Halliburton?

Our soldiers deserve better, and I am confident that this Congress will provide the necessary oversight so that we can fix these problems immediately.

FIRST AMENDMENT AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS ARE STILL BEHIND BARS

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, if there is anything we learned from the conviction of Vice Presidential aide Scooter Libby yesterday, it is that the first amendment and the freedom of the press are still behind bars. The need for a Federal media shield bill has never been more apparent.

Yesterday, Mr. Libby was convicted of lying to a grand jury. That is reprehensible, and he will be held to the strictest account.

But as the Washington Post editorial page pointed out this morning, his chief accuser, Joe Wilson, also lied about who sent him to Africa, what he found there, and about whether his wife was a covert CIA agent. The Washington Post even called Joe Wilson today a "blowhard."

Ironically, while Mr. Wilson was lying to the press and creating a partisan furor, Mr. Libby was telling the truth to reporters, and that is what got him in trouble.

The case presented us with a long spectacle of reporters being jailed and threatened with jail time for not re-

vealing confidential sources. Because there is no Federal media shield law, the real losers in all of this difficult and tragic case are not actually reporters or the press, but the American public.

My own colleague, Congressman RICK BOUCHER, and I will be reintroducing the Free Flow of Information Act. I urge my colleagues in Congress to take it up expeditiously. It is time to restore the fabric of the first amendment freedom of the press.

GI BILL

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

Mr. CARNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our Nation's veterans. The GI bill has provided education to many of our Nation's fine, honorable men and women. Unfortunately, there is a provision which excludes our National Guard and Reserve from receiving their GI bill benefits after they have left the military.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1330, which will give the National Guard and Reserve members up to 10 years to take advantage of their GI bill education benefits. This proposal is similar to the benefits extended to active duty members of the military right now.

This bill extends a much-deserved and needed benefit to our troops. Because the National Guard and Reserve are playing an ever-increasing role in combat operations, they are finding it harder to achieve their educational goals while they are enlisted. This bill will better allow troops to serve their country honorably and then reward them with higher education when they return.

The National Guard and Reserve are becoming indistinguishable from the active duty now. They are in need of this benefit. We owe this to our troops and to our military families back home.

I urge all Members of Congress who care about our troops and military families to sign on to this legislation.

□ 1230

WE MUST LIVE UP TO OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED OUR NATION

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

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I participated in a Government Reform hearing at Walter Reed Hospital.

During that hearing, we heard from soldiers wounded in the defense of our Nation and their families. Like most Americans, I was disappointed and saddened by what we learned. What we heard represents an absolute failure of military leadership and accountability.

Defense Secretary Gates has called for a review of all service branch medical facilities. Yesterday, the President announced the creation of a bipartisan commission to examine all U.S. military and veterans care facilities. The commission will be headed by former Senator Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala.

In addition to the Government Reform Committee, I serve on the House Armed Services Committee and on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Both committees have upcoming hearings on the care and condition of soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital.

We take seriously the health care of those who have provided service to our Nation. There is no excuse for what happened at Walter Reed Hospital. We must live up to our obligations to those who have served our Nation at such personal sacrifice.

HONORING OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR TROOPS

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

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, honoring our soldiers means honoring our commitment to these soldiers.

Supporting the troops means several things: It meant, first of all, making sure that the mission was essential to the United States before putting them in harm's way. Secondly, it meant making sure, if they were in harm's way, they had the equipment that they needed. And, third, after they had borne the battle, we had an obligation, if we were going to support the troops, by providing medical care for them. This administration has failed on all three levels.

How did this VA medical care disaster happen? This is absolutely shameful. In a House hearing on Monday, the top military brass said there was enough money in the budget to provide care. So what was the problem here? Was it a lack of real support for the troops?

This administration owes these soldiers and their families an apology and a pledge to start really supporting the troops.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET AND HOMELAND SECURITY

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, the President's fiscal year 2008 budget perpetuates more of the same wrong priorities that have failed the American people over the past 6 years.

One of the most egregious offenses of his proposed budget this year is that, while he calls for nearly \$2 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy over the next 10 years, he once again refuses to fully fund our homeland security programs. In fact, his budget provides only a 1

percent increase, despite numerous unmet homeland security needs.

The President drastically cuts grants to first responders, State homeland security and firefighter assistance, and eliminates programs like local law enforcement terrorism prevention, staffing for adequate fire and emergency response, and metropolitan medical response. He even freezes funding to secure critical infrastructure needs like our ports, railways, and transit systems.

Mr. Speaker, giving tax breaks to the wealthy at the expense of protecting the homeland is not the priority of most Americans. Democrats will fight for a budget that makes keeping our Nation safe a top priority.

THE DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS AT WALTER REED

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

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, the situation at Walter Reed Medical Center is an embarrassment to our country. The deplorable conditions for outpatient care at Walter Reed are not fit for men and women who have sacrificed to serve our country. The delayed and mishandled care of these individuals has harmed their recovery and placed significant strain on their families.

This is not the way our combat veterans deserve to be treated. These conditions demonstrate a catastrophic failure of planning on the part of the administration.

Although the Army has stated its intention to remedy the situation quickly, we must act for those who are currently held at Walter Reed, for it is clear that the Army is not currently equipped to do so. It is unacceptable for those who served us abroad to languish in a no man's land at home.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming days I will introduce a bill to allow Walter Reed outpatients the option of moving to a VA facility closer to their homes and families while still getting their military pay and benefits. We must show that our country supports our troops not only in word but also in action.

THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN CRISIS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, the King of Jordan offered a challenge to America and the world to allow Palestinian children and Israeli children to live in peace, as well as children around the world.

I for one, Mr. Speaker, accept the challenge and cite this government and particularly this administration for its slowness and its inattentiveness to the crisis and the solution and resolution

of a roadmap for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The King was right. In 2002, the Arab states did stand up and offer suggestions. Many of them may not have been those that we might have agreed with, but it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we now come to the table for the crisis is spiraling out of control. People are dying. Children are without opportunities. And the Iraq war only fuels the fire of dissent and confusion.

It is time now for our soldiers to come home. It is time now for us to take leadership in the Palestinian and Israeli crisis. And, yes, it is time now for us to treat our soldiers at Walter Reed and elsewhere with dignity. I join my colleagues in that fight for soldiers and for peace.

CALLING FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY THE TORNADO IN DESHA COUNTY

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

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on February 24, a tornado hit Dumas in Desha County, Arkansas. The Governor called out the National Guard for nearly a week. For 6 days, there was no electricity to this delta county. 650 people remain out of work because their workplace has been severely damaged or destroyed, and 150 homes were either heavily damaged or destroyed. And here we are more than a week later still waiting for the President and the Director of FEMA to declare this forgotten delta county a Federal Disaster Area. In fact, the FEMA spokesman, John Philbin, in the Arkansas News Bureau, Stevens Media, is quoted today in an Aaron Sadler story as saying "The damages or need for Federal assistance are not readily apparent."

Mr. Speaker, the people at FEMA certainly did not visit the same Dumas and Desha County that I did. The people of Dumas and Desha County need the help of the Federal Government, and I implore the President and the Director of FEMA to assist this forgotten delta county.

□ 1240

WATER QUALITY INVESTMENT ACT OF 2007

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 214 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 214

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 569) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to authorize appropriations for sewer overflow control grants. The first reading of the bill