

best example at the hearings was the decision that the poor soldier has to make about whether to take his veterans benefits or his DOD benefits and how difficult that decision is, and how some of them are just driven crazy about how you arrive at that decision, since the amounts can be very different, the kind of decision where you need somebody holding your hand all the time.

My colleague talked about poor judgment from the beginning when we went to the invasion and now when we see soldiers coming back home. I indicated earlier that a colossal example of poor judgment was closing the premier military hospital in the middle of a war.

If I could just quote in closing from Vice Chair Cody, who testified before us at the Oversight and Reform Committee hearing: "You are trying to get the best people to come here to work, and they know in 3 years that this place will close down and they are not sure whether they will be afforded the opportunity to move to the new Walter Reed National Military Center. That causes some issues."

Well, as I have said, we are not going to give \$3 billion for bricks and mortar in the middle of a war anyway, so that is why I am introducing a bill tomorrow just to send the signal that we are not going to close this hospital.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for her vision as well.

Let me close by saying this to my colleagues and friends: we are not talking about what we call a Third World country when we talk about Walter Reed and the facilities. We are talking about the richest country in the world, a country where we can spend \$177 million per day on the war, and that was prior to January of this year. Now we spend over \$200 million, not per year, not per month, not per week, but per day on the war. A country where one out of every 110 persons is a millionaire.

In this, the richest country in the world, where our soldiers and our veterans have made it possible for us to have these riches, these liberties, I think that we have to provide better services for them before, during, and after any injury that they may receive.

So I am honored that we had the time tonight. I want to thank the Speaker for allowing us to have this time tonight.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressmen AL GREEN and FRANK PALLONE for arranging this Special Order hour. Today I rise to register my concern about the conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and to show my support and dedication to increasing the quality of health care services, for our veterans as well as our men and women in uniform.

The Nation has been horrified by the Washington Post's recent reports of the appalling conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Thanks to the diligent investigative reporting of Dana Priest and Anne Hull, we now know that our soldiers recovering in outpatient

units are being forced to confront cockroaches, mice droppings and toxic black mold as they heal. Even worse, many become lost in an uncaring military bureaucracy that subjects them to long waits just to get their most basic needs addressed.

The administration is now scrambling to control the damage from this scathing exposé of its neglect of our wounded warriors. Almost as distressing as the conditions at Walter Reed is the fact that it took a report from the Washington Post to get the administration to address this unacceptable situation. We now know that our wounded warriors have been complaining about these problems for years, not just at Walter Reed but at military hospitals and outpatient facilities across the country. Their pleas, however, seem to have fallen on deaf ears. We owe a debt of gratitude to the reporters and editors at the Washington Post for uncovering this abominable situation and forcing this administration to act.

Time and again, when those of us who oppose America's involvement in Iraq stand up and question why our brave men and women in uniform must fight and die in a war of choice, we are accused of "not supporting the troops." But, Madam Speaker, supporting the troops is about more than lip service. The hypocrisy and irony of the situation at Walter Reed is scandalous and immoral. The same administration that hides behind the troops to avoid changing its policy in Iraq is guilty of abandoning the very men and women who must make the sacrifices required to carry out this failed policy.

The sheer audacity of the administration's rhetoric in comparison with its actions is staggering. The administration trumpets its support for the troops but then, in the next moment, sends them into battle without the proper training and equipment. The administration says it supports the troops, but then falls short in providing them with a safe environment to heal the wounds they received while fighting so valiantly and selflessly for our country.

Thousands of our brave men and women serving the administration's failed policy in Iraq have paid a heavy price. Since March of 2003, 23,677 service members have been wounded in Iraq. Our military and VA health care systems are in crisis, apparently unprepared for the influx of casualties that war unavoidably creates. These health systems have been overwhelmed by troops returning from battle seeking health care and, in many instances, are unable to provide these men and women with the services they so desperately need. It is estimated that in the coming years over 700,000 veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will enter the military and veterans health care system. Yet, because of Republican budget cuts, many of our brave soldiers are returning home with mental health ailments to discover that they will receive a third fewer psychiatric visits than they would have just 10 years ago.

The number of soldiers navigating the bureaucracy of Walter Reed since 2001 has nearly doubled, yet the administration continues to move forward with the planned closing of the hospital. The president's budget continues to shortchange veterans' health care, providing an increase in fiscal year 2008 but then cutting the budget in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 to below the 2008 level and freezing the funding level thereafter. The administration's lack of planning for the war

seems to include a total disregard for the service members who are returning home bearing the scars of the conflict.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers have done their duty. Now we must truly support them, not by blindly continuing a failed policy, but by getting them out of harm's way. We will continue to insist that our service members receive the health care they deserve. We will continue to hold oversight hearings about the conditions faced by our wounded service members and veterans at Walter Reed as well as at other military and veterans health facilities across the country. But the best way to support these brave young men and women is to begin a fully-funded withdrawal. Let's really support our troops by giving them the equipment and supplies they need to get out of Iraq safely in the next 6 months.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order earlier tonight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOREN). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

CONGRESSIONAL IMMIGRATION CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, welcome to the chair. I hope you enjoy your duration up there, as many years ago, it must have been 1995, I had the privilege of my first time in the chair. I hope you enjoy it as much, and I hope everybody at home is watching you in your day of glory.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

I feel compelled to respond to many of the remarks that have been made here on the floor about the condition of the health care treatment for our veterans. I won't deny that there were unacceptable conditions in Building 18. I don't believe there has been any empirical data or quantifiable information that says it has gone beyond some of the rooms within Building 18.

But I know when I go out to Walter Reed and when I go to Bethesda and when I go to Landstuhl and I look those people in the eye that are there every day with compassion fatigue that are giving their heart and soul and everything they have for the health care interests of our brave soldiers who have been wounded defending our freedom, a lot of that freedom and a lot of that mission have been opposed by the people on this side of the aisle, there is a strong commitment in all of those

hospitals by the personnel that are there. They work long hours, and they give the best service with everything that they have. And I will agree that there is a bureaucratic problem and we ought to find a way to put some software in place and put a system there so we can track patients and they don't get dropped from the system and they can be expedited through with the most efficient and high-quality care possible.

But this being an issue that is being stampeded and run up the flagpole goes beyond trying to fix the problem. It is an effort to try to undermine the mission of our soldiers overseas, and I think that is deplorable, Mr. Speaker.

So I stand with the people that serve America, those that put their lives on the line, those that have lost life and limb. I stand with the people who stand there and help them. And we need to be supportive and encouraging and fix the problems we have and remove the politics from this debate.

I yield back to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BILBRAY. I appreciate that, Mr. KING.

At this time it is my privilege as the new chairman of the Congressional Immigration Caucus to actually recognize Congressman NATHAN DEAL of the great State of Georgia, who actually has agreed to serve as the subcommittee chairman on the Immigration Caucus for Birthright Citizenship.

At this time I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. BILBRAY.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this topic of dealing with the ever-increasing problem of illegal immigration in this country, it is certainly one with many facets. But the one that I would like to address briefly tonight is the issue that relates to birthright citizenship. Let me define it, first of all. It is the extension of citizenship to any child born on American soil, regardless of the legal status of the parents of that child.

The United States does just that. But we are in an ever-increasing minority in the world community. Currently, there are approximately 141 nations that do not grant birthright citizenship.

□ 2020

And there are only about 35 countries that do, the United States being one of those. In fact, every country in Europe no longer grants birthright citizenship. Ireland was the last of those countries, and in 2004 by popular vote, they no longer grant birthright citizenship. Israel doesn't, Japan doesn't, virtually every country on the face of the earth with the exception of the United States have recognized that the right of citizenship is indeed one of the most precious rights, and it should not be extended to those who have broken our law and who are illegally in our country.

Just as the overall immigration issue has many facets, so does the issue of birthright citizenship. First of all, there is the question of, how do you solve the problem? The real difficulty comes from the fact that the current interpretation is based on an interpretation of the language of the 14th amendment.

Many legal scholars believe that the intention of the 14th amendment, which had as its primary purpose to settle the issue of citizenship for individuals who were formerly slaves, has been perverted to extend it to birthright citizenship for anyone born on American soil. There are certainly legitimate arguments that can be made on both sides of the issue. But the one that I think focuses most clearly on whether or not it was the intention of the writers of the 14th amendment to include this issue is demonstrated in the language that comes out of the debates that surrounded the adoption of that amendment.

The reality is, though, that many of the court cases upon which people rely today to say that we automatically extend citizenship to anyone born on our soil regardless of the legal status of their parents, comes from a day and a time when the United States did not have immigration laws in place, did not have in place laws that distinguished between those who were legally in our country and those who were not. We, of course, now live in a day and a time when those laws are in place, albeit they are not very well enforced most of the time.

But what is the cost of this issue of birthright citizenship? I think there is a legitimate argument that can be made to say that birthright citizenship is one of those magnets that contributes to illegal immigration in the first place. Consider the latest statistics from the Center for Immigration Studies in which they say that there are approximately 383,000 children born every year to illegal immigrants. That is, about 42 percent of the births to all immigrants in this country are to illegal immigrants to this country, and that births to illegal immigrants now account for one out of every ten births in the United States. One out of every ten children born in this country is being born to someone, a parent, who had no legal right to be here.

What are the financial costs associated with it? We all know that illegal immigration in and of itself places huge financial strains on local governments in providing education, in providing health care, and on State governments in the same way, and also on the Federal Government.

The Center for Immigration Studies found that the cost to United States taxpayers for the cost of illegal immigration is approximately \$10.4 billion a year. And a large part of that cost is attributable to babies born to illegal immigrants.

In my State of Georgia, for example, I am told that a non-Caesarian section

child delivery with no complications costs approximately \$2,720. Now you multiply that figure, and probably my State's cost is less than the national average, but you multiply that by the 383,000-plus births every year, and you can instantly see that just in that initial health care delivery cost, it is a very significant sum.

But what does birthright citizenship then also do to our system? First of all, in 1996, when we passed the Immigration Reform Act, one of the things that many people have bragged about was a provision that said in general terms that if you are illegally in this country, you are not going to be entitled to any social benefits other than education at the elementary and secondary level and emergency medical care.

Now, we make a mockery of that by virtue of birthright citizenship because even though we say we are not going to extend those social services, by giving a child of an illegal immigrant citizenship status, you immediately have TANF, Aid to Families With Dependent Children, whatever term you call it in your community, those kinds of welfare social benefits flow through the child. There are also food stamps and housing subsidy benefits, and who are you going to deliver them to, a new child? Of course not. Those social benefits in the form of cash and other indicia of benefits flow through the hands of the illegal parents.

And are you going to deport the parents, an illegal immigrant who has given birth to a child who is a United States citizen? I say you probably are not, and the statistics bear me out.

So I would simply say, Mr. Speaker, if somebody is concerned about these issues, the next time they have to wait in line in the doctor's office or in the hospital or in the waiting room of the emergency clinic, or the next time that they are in the grocery checkout line and somebody is paying for food with food stamps and it is fairly apparent that they are not legally in this country and you want to know why, the why lies in birthright citizenship that is being granted to a child of that illegal immigrant.

Now, as I say, we are in the distinct minority in the world community of continuing to allow this practice to occur. I, along with Mr. BILBRAY and Mr. KING and many others in our conference, are authors of legislation that would attempt to correct this serious problem that we have.

Many who would dispute whether or not this is a part of the magnet that draws people into our country and to cross our borders illegally should take reference to a statement contained in one of the publications from the Department of Homeland Security. I would like to read from that publication. It says, "An industry has developed around this practice," that is, crossing the border illegally specifically to give birth, "with travel agents specializing in birth tours and clinics

providing post-natal care, which includes transportation services. For those seeking entry into this country, it is a small price to pay for legal entry and social benefits that accrue with citizenship."

So our own Department of Homeland Security acknowledges that it is indeed one of those magnets that causes us to have a problem with illegal immigration.

In 2002, it was reported by the Los Angeles Times in a study that they did looking at South Korea, and what they found was that since South Korea allows dual citizenship, that is both South Korea and United States citizenship, for a child born in the United States, they found that South Korea was hosting these so-called birth tours which were intended to bring pregnant women to the United States so they could deliver their child here and that child would be a United States citizen.

□ 2030

Now, they probably returned back to South Korea with that child. So what would be their motivation? Well, first of all, they would be entitled to the benefits of American citizenship, but another added advantage, since South Korea is a country that requires universal military service, it is a way of excluding that child from the requirements of South Korea that they be inducted into their military services. So it has consequences, not just to us, but to some of our allies such as South Korea.

So I would simply thank Mr. BILBRAY for the time you have allotted me tonight to speak on this issue. Hopefully, we will see some action on this issue of birthright citizenship. It can stand alone, or it can travel as a part of a more comprehensive immigration reform package; but I submit that unless we address this problem, it is only going to get worse. It is going to only magnify the ever-increasing problem of illegal immigration, and I would urge my colleagues to join with me and you and Mr. KING and others in sponsoring the legislation that we have tailored to try to address this problem.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you very much to Mr. DEAL for taking a leadership role on this issue. It is quite appropriate you are pointing out how broad the problem is of this automatic citizenship given to people that have no obligations, no responsibilities, and are leveraging the fact that some people think that everyone born on U.S. soil somehow gets automatic citizenship. The fact is I think that the Korean parents are a good example.

The subject to the jurisdiction clause of the 14th amendment does not only mean that you can be arrested. It means that you must, according to common law, be totally obligated. You must be able to be tried for treason and be forced into the military.

Can you imagine if these terrorists from Korea were told, sorry, you are

now going to be drafted into the United States Army? People would come unglued. They would say that is inhumane, that is outrageous, how can you do that. Well, it is just as outrageous to give automatic citizenship to the people that have no obligations and no responsibility to the Federal Government, to give them citizenship, as it is to require them to be tried for treason against the United States or to serve in the military when they are not, quote, unquote, subject to the jurisdiction in a manner that applies to the 14th amendment.

This thing we have to understand, that rights and responsibilities come together, and as these legal Korean tourists come to our country, they have certain rights and certain responsibilities, but they do not have total responsibility, and thus they do not have birthright citizenship.

I think that is a clause to get into. I just wish that the people who would be as outraged about us drafting a Korean tourist or trying them for treason will be just as outraged about the people leveraging and taking advantage of our hospitality and then trying to demand rights where the rights obviously do not exist historically or in fact.

I appreciate the fact that you took a leadership role on this after I got my 5-year sabbatical that the voters gave me from Congress. You picked up the baby and actually carried it, and I really appreciate that and your leadership will be appreciated.

It is astonishing that back in the 1990s when we first brought up this issue, some people were saying, well, what is this issue. But more and more when you go talk to the American people, they want to know what has kind of been tagged this, what they call it, "anchor baby" issue because they see this huge open door for abuse.

In California alone, I want you to know and I just say this to the people, how big a problem, how big a price tag can automatic citizenship to foreign nationals and illegal aliens can be. How big can it be? Just in California, it costs the State of California to pay for the births of the children of illegal aliens \$400 million a year, and that is a price tag to people who are illegally in the country.

Let us face it, that \$400 million could sure provide a lot of basic health care to legal Americans, both immigrants and U.S. citizens, that is being denied those people of need, while we accommodate those who have broken our laws and their families and encouraged them to emigrate.

So I thank you very much for taking this leadership role, and I greatly appreciate the fact that Georgia is represented on the Immigration Caucus, and that is a great advantage for us. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to serve on the Immigration Caucus, and as someone who grew up on the Mexican border between San Diego and Tijuana, I saw this issue as it has evolved over the last 45 years.

I grew up in an area where illegal immigration was just sort of a matter of fact. You saw people going north, and I got to tell you, as a young man, you never knew where they were going. They were all going to a place called L.A. or norte, norte, and you never understood what was the impact in the communities beyond the border.

But, seriously, I think the one thing that I would ask those of you that live beyond the border, you do not see on the border, like those of us that grew up there, I happen to have had the privilege to serve as a life guard in a small community on the border called Imperial Beach. In that job, I had the experience of rescuing illegals when they were drowning in the Tijuana River. I recovered their bodies when they did not make it, and in the 1980s, some of you may not remember a thing called the bonsai charges, where the coyotes, the smugglers, would organize illegals into huge groups at the border and rush them up the freeway.

I would just ask any of you to consider what your reaction would be if you were driving along at 65 miles an hour, 55, and you saw massive pedestrians running at you on the freeway in a manner that you do not have a chance to stop. Well, let me tell you something. After seeing what happens when somebody gets hit by a vehicle at 55, 60 miles an hour, I became committed as a member of the county board of supervisors in San Diego to finally say stand up and say this is wrong, this is immoral, this is outrageous.

Americans should be ashamed that we do not control our frontier, that we do not guarantee our sovereignty on U.S. soil. And the immigration issue is an issue of sovereignty. It is a concept of protecting the land that our forefathers have given to us and also protecting those rights and those privileges that should and can be rendered to those who are citizens and legal residents.

But, sadly, we have found excuses to look the other way. Be it political correctness or some sick concept that encouraging illegal activity somehow is going to be good for America, it is sad that we allow not only illegal immigration but all the illegal activity that happens along the border.

I am really encouraged, though, to see colleagues like the gentleman from Georgia and Mr. KING, people from the interior, that get it, that understand that the immigration problem is not something at the border that can only be addressed at the border, but is something that is in our neighborhoods every day; that it is on the street corners, we see it every day; and that the American people, though they have been ignored on this issue for too long, are saying we are going to hold both parties accountable if you do not address that.

I think in all fairness, as a Republican, I think we can all agree that a

degree of the problems in the last election was that voters did not believe Republicans were doing enough and are going to demand that Democrats and Republicans put their partisanship on the side and take care of this problem.

I am glad to see the kind of general support that we have seen working on this issue and the community support on this; and at this time, if I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to Mr. KING.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for organizing this Special Order here this evening, and I also thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL) for making his presentation and making a compelling case for why we have to end this thing we call birthright citizenship, anchor babies, or more appropriately, more accurately, as automatic citizenship. It was never part of the concept constitutionally that we should grant that kind of a thing, for all the reasons that Mr. DEAL said and all the reasons that Mr. BILBRAY said, and a lot of other reasons besides.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would submit this, that I am going to roll out some facts and figures here, and I would ask that you maybe could pay attention and take some notes on this because it is important for us in this country not to be establishing an immigration policy based upon anecdotes or based upon emotions or based upon somebody's feelings, but base it upon some empirical data. We need to base our policy on some facts.

I would point out that I wrote a letter to the White House last year. It was off of a request of that White House liaison that took place last April, and by June 23, I was finally frustrated with my e-mails and phone calls to the liaison who promised to get me some answers.

□ 2040

So I put it in letter form, hard copy, sent it to the White House, sent it as an e-mail also, and instructed my staff to call the White House every week to get answers to the questions. Because it occurs to me that facts don't work for the people that are for open borders, but facts absolutely support the people that stand up for the rule of law and that stand up for national sovereignty and stand up for national border protection and enforcement in our workplace to shut off the jobs magnet.

I think we should start with a simple basis. If you go back to the beginning of Western Civilization and the Greeks, they would ask. They would look at things. They were proud. They lived in the age of reason. They said, I think, therefore I am. We are going to do deductive reasoning. We will start with the most logical, obvious questions, and we are going to reduce it down. If we can narrow ourselves down to a conclusion, we will come to a conclusion. If we can't, we will need more data.

They were proud of the way they could think and reason. That's the

foundation for Western Civilization. Had they not developed that age of reason, we would never have had the Age of Enlightenment. Without the Age of Enlightenment, we would never have had the United States of America. So we are founded upon reason.

Questions start from the beginning. Is there such a thing as too much immigration, legal or illegal? That is one of the questions I asked the President.

Then I asked, would you separate that into, is there such a thing as too much illegal immigration? And then, is there too much legal immigration? Then, the question that follows is, within those two categories, illegal in one category and legal immigration in the other category, if there is such a thing as too much, how much is too much? I will submit in the category of the illegal, one is too many.

I don't think the White House can take that position, neither can most of the Democrats and many of the Senators, Democrats and Republicans; one is too many. Is there such a thing as too much legal immigration? Yes, there has to be. Otherwise, you have to be willing to accept everybody on the planet that wants to come to America, and that might actually be everybody.

I would argue that this million or so that come in legally in a year is kind of an acceptable number, but is probably twice as many as the American people like to have. American people don't only want to eliminate all the illegal immigration, they want to reduce legal immigration, and they want to go back to an immigration policy that is designed to enhance the economic, the social and the cultural well-being of the United States of America.

Call it a selfish policy, if you like, but any Nation that subordinates their immigration policy to the people who will illegally cross the border from other countries doesn't have much of a policy and doesn't have much of a destiny if they don't have control of their own destiny. We have got to be in control. We have got to set that policy.

So I went on down this list of things, and if there is such a thing as too much legal or illegal immigration, then how much is too much? And how many do you believe would be legalized by the Senate version of the bill that passed last year?

Of course, before, I believe it was the Bingaman amendment, it was between 100 and 200 million would be legalized with a path to citizenship into the United States. Under the Senate version of the bill that probably would have had enough votes to pass with the majority of the Senate. Well, there were some caps that were put on because of that amendment that I just referenced, and then the number came down to, and this is the number I would ask of the White House, how many do you believe would be legalized by the Senate-passed version of the bill?

I can tell you at this point that, according to the Heritage Foundation, according to Robert Rector and accord-

ing to some real good solid statistical analysis done by Senator JEFF SESSIONS of Alabama, it comes to about 61.1 million people. The lowest number we could come up with about 53 or 54 million people; 66.1 million is the most reliable number over the next 20 years that would be legalized. By the Senate version, it has got to be nothing but amnesty.

I looked back, and how do you quantify that? In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed an amnesty bill. He called it an amnesty bill. He was straight up honest about it. It was one of the two or three times he failed me, but at least he was straight up honest. Some will say that was to legalize 300,000, some will say it was 1 million, but not many will say that it actually brought in 3 million, some 3.1 million people who became citizens through this amnesty that was passed in 1986.

I have met some of those people. I have looked them in the eye, and I can tell you, they do not respect the rule of law like the rest of the Americans do. Therefore, they want amnesty for the rest of the illegals that are in this country, because they see it was good for them. Well, if something is good for someone, that is not a measure that it is a good policy for America. It is only a measure that it is good for someone.

But regardless, that was a series of questions that I asked of the President. In addition to that, I asked, would you be willing to agree to a hard annual cap that would control the aggregate of all of the different immigration policies that are out there and say that, from an annual basis, it never exceeds a certain number?

Now, I would start with 1 million and ratchet it down for the American people if I could. We could probably assimilate 1 million people in this country a year if we had good assimilation policies. That letter, with those questions, and those five questions as I recall that went to the President on June 23, and the White House got a call every single week until September.

Finally, I got an answer back, not from the White House, not from Secretary Chertoff, but a subordinate of Secretary Chertoff. The answer that came back was a cut and paste to somebody's constituent response letter and didn't answer a single question that I had asked.

So I wrote a letter back that said, Dear Mr. President, thanks for the letter that was in response to my letter full of questions, but you really didn't answer any of my questions. Would you like to try again? I would really appreciate it. I am the ranking member of the Immigration Subcommittee, and we have to set an immigration policy here.

Finally, I got a letter back, and it said, immigration is too complicated and too serious a policy to reduce it to numbers.

What a shocking thing. That is a single piece of all of this. So when you add to this, you can add that we have a

major problem on our borders. We are seeing \$60 billion out of our U.S. economy that are wired into the Western Hemispheric countries other than the United States. Those are transmittals from the wages in America; \$30 billion goes to Mexico; \$65 billion worth of illegal drugs come across that southern border into the United States. We are watching 11,000 people a night pour across the southern border.

In fact, just yesterday was the anniversary of the battle of the Alamo when Colonel Travis and those brave Texan Americans were slaughtered at the Alamo. Santa Ana's Army was only half the size of a nightly number of illegals that come across our southern border.

Those are simply some of the pieces. There are many other statistics out there that are empirical data, and I pray that this Nation will look at numbers, look at reality and not be stampeded by hyperbole or anecdotes and establish a policy that is good for the economic, the social and the cultural well-being of the United States of America.

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. KING, first of all, I have to say I am so proud that you are our ranking member on the Immigration Committee. With you on that, leading the Republican side of that committee. Hopefully you will be able, and I know it is a tough sell; I am going to meet with your chairman and try to point out what is the obsession that the Senate and some Members of the House of Representatives have to give amnesty and reward 12 to 13 to 15 million people for breaking the law?

Do they really think we can defend the concept, the rule of law, by having up to 60 million people in this country celebrating the fact that they are here because they broke the law? You know, I am thankful that I was able to listen to you tonight, because I keep saying, and I was saying to a couple of Senators this week, what is the obsession, what is the motivation for giving amnesty and rewarding people for breaking our laws? What message have you seen? What agenda are you fulfilling? What political group are you fulfilling?

Now that you brought it up, you are right, you point out you gave amnesty to a group that originally was proposed to be 300,000, ended up with all the delays in the agenda to be 3 million; then you get all of their relatives coming in. This is the group that is lobbying and able to vote to encourage more people to come in, and this downward spiral has started. If we don't stop it now with the American people that really believe in the rule of law, that really believe in the concept of common decency that you do not punish somebody for waiting patiently to immigrate legally while you reward somebody who breaks the law, if we are not willing to stop this downward spiral now, it will continue to grow larger and faster down the line.

I think the American people here know this is not a Republican or Demo-

cratic issue; this is an American issue. If anybody doesn't believe that the rule of law is important, I can take you to a lot of places I spent a lot of time in other countries where people can buy off the law by politics or by money.

This amnesty, it just seems like the most un-American concept I heard. Let me tell you something, my son was sitting there, 19 or 20 years old, and he brought up the interesting issue, and I guess from the mouths of babes, he said, Dad, let me get this straight, Mr. KENNEDY says that if you break the law for 5 years, you now get rewarded for it? Does this mean that if I am willing to testify that I have driven without a license for 5 years, I get a license for free?

□ 2050

Because that is what people think they can do with immigration and make it work. It won't work with the traffic situation; it won't work with an immigration issue.

I am glad you bring this up, and just seeing a self-made special interest group that is driving us toward an abyss of the destruction of the entire concept of what this greatest Republic we call the "American experience." I yield to Mr. KING.

Mr. KING of IOWA. I thank the gentleman from California for adding to this subject matter in that way.

A piece that I left out was that the 66.1 million that would have been legalized by the Senate version of amnesty last year happens to be, and I believe coincidentally, the sum total of all Americans who have immigrated into the United States and become naturalized, most through Ellis Island, but done so legally. We are talking about doing that in one fell swoop.

So, in 1986 it was a 300,000, maybe a million number. That was a great big piece to try to swallow and get our brains around. In 1995, before the 1996 election, there was an accelerated effort, especially in California, to naturalize a million people so that they could go to the polls and vote in that Clinton/Gore election. And we all know where the incentive was, on which side of the aisle that was. That was perhaps 1 million in 1986. At most, it was 1 million in 1995 before the 1996 elections. That was an appalling number to think about a million people getting fast-tracked to citizenship or amnesty. And this is a time now we are seriously talking about 66 million people. Sixty-six times an amount that was too many in 1995, it was too many in 1986, it is absolutely too many today.

There is another component of this, too, and that is that we know on the left, and I am going to say on the part of Democrats, they recognize that they are going to pick up about two out of every three immigrants that would have amnesty. They have a strong political motive that subordinates the United States, our Constitution, their oath of office, by the way. That is the incentive. It is a political incentive on

the left hand side of the aisle. On the right hand side of the aisle we have elitists. They aren't all on the right hand side of the aisle; we have plenty of left-wing rich folks, too, that are capitalizing on cheap labor. They believe that they have some kind of birthright to always be hiring cheap labor and continue getting richer off the backs of the people they are hiring.

Think of this kind of like a barbell. On the one side, the weights over here on the barbell are the liberals that get all the political power that comes from illegal immigration. On the other side there are probably about 2-1 Republican conservatives that get empowered by getting rich off of cheap labor. In the middle is the handle of the barbell, that is the middle class, the middle class that used to be an ever-broadening, an ever more prosperous middle class that now is losing its purchasing power and being narrowed by the greed of the people that are politically greedy on the one side, and economically greedy on the other side.

I asked this question to the business community in America, because I know I will not convince the people on the other side of the aisle, where will you apply your trade once we have destroyed this America that is based upon the rule of law?

I will yield back to the gentleman from California.

Mr. BILBRAY. Let me say, what we are fighting for here is nothing short of the middle class. The fact is there are those on the left and the right that say we desperately need more poor people. You know why? It is because the major corporates want cheap labor on the right, and the left wants cheap votes. And they are willing to sell their children's birthright out, their grandchildren's future out just to be able to capitalize off of this illegal activity.

At this time, I have the privilege of recognizing the gentleman from California who has agreed to be the subcommittee chairman on the Border Security Policy Committee team for the Immigration Caucus, Mr. ROYCE.

Mr. ROYCE, I yield to you.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would like to start by congratulating Congressman BILBRAY for his position as head of the Immigration Caucus. I thank him, also, for taking on this tough, but very important, issue.

What I wanted to make as a point, Mr. Speaker, was that before 9/11 border security was not seen as a national security matter. But we, as an institution, asked the 9/11 Commission to give us direction, to look at how 9/11 occurred and to suggest steps that we should take. Today, thanks to the 9/11 Commission, we now know that national security must be the number one priority when it comes to border security policy.

The commission found that our immigration system has, in their words, "the greatest potential to develop an expanded role in counterterrorism." And I think that still holds true today.

The challenge we face for national security in an age of terrorism is to prevent the very few people who pose overwhelming risks from entering or remaining in the United States undetected. And terrorists, unfortunately, have used evasive methods to enter and stay in our country, including specific travel methods and routes over the border, liaisons with corrupt government officials, human smuggling networks, and immigration and identity fraud. This needs to be addressed. It is elementary. It is imperative as well to border security to know who is coming into the country. I don't think anyone today can say with any certainty that we know who is crossing our borders.

When I was chairman of the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, I held field hearings on the border in San Diego and in Laredo, Texas. One thing that was expressed at these hearings is that the border fence that was built in San Diego is very effective. The double fence on that border, according to the Border Patrol that testified at these hearings about the effectiveness of the border fence, is, as they said, a great force multiplier. The reason they wanted to expand the fence and the reason we passed legislation to do that and included an appropriation of \$1.2 billion to do it was partly because the Border Patrol told us that there were over 400 attacks on the Border Patrol and that if they could have that double border fence the way they had it in San Diego at other routes where the smugglers cross, that would help protect them. They said it expanded their enforcement capability; it has allowed them the discretion to redeploy agents to areas of vulnerability or risk. It is one component, they said, that certainly has been integral, in their words, to everything we have accomplished raising the level of our security in San Diego. What happened in San Diego? The crime rates on both sides of that border, which had been lawless, dropped by over 50 percent on the San Diego side and on the Tijuana side.

With the establishment of the border fence in San Diego, crime rates fell off dramatically, but also vehicle drive-thrus fell off. San Diego is no longer one of the most prolific drug smuggling corridors. It was cut by over 90 percent.

The bill that we passed last year puts a fence where it is needed most, in the areas that have the highest instances of drug smuggling, human trafficking, gang activity. All of the smugglers' routes, where there are roads, basically, through those areas, all of that will be fenced with a double border fence. It would allow the Border Patrol to better focus its resources and better protect our borders.

Now, we have some say that to finish that project would cost \$3 billion. Well, \$3 billion is less than the cost of the 250,000 inmates who have committed felonies, who are here illegally in the United States. The cost to the taxpayers in one year is more than the

cost of building that double border fence.

But the focus I want to make here, the point I want to make, it is a matter of national security. We had Kris Kobach testify at my hearings. He was chief adviser on immigration law to former Attorney General John Ashcroft. And he spoke of concern about terrorists illegally crossing our borders into this country. I will just share with you a couple of cases he cited.

Mahmoud Kourani was one; he was indicted in 2004. He paid to be smuggled out of Beirut, Lebanon; paid \$3,000 to the Mexican Consulate to be smuggled into Mexico. And at that point he paid a smuggling organization to bring him in the trunk of a car over to the United States. This is the brother of the Hezbollah general who was in charge of security in the southern sector of Lebanon at the time that the attacks occurred. He was involved in the attacks against Israel. I was there in Israel in August. I visited Rambam Hospital when the city was under rocket attack and saw some of the effects of Hezbollah there in that country, where there were 500 civilian victims in that hospital.

And I can just tell you that his brother pleaded guilty to providing material support to Hezbollah. He had been trained in Iran in every method of explosives, and he was sentenced to 5 years in our prison, along with some of his colleagues, who were also caught as a result of our operations.

□ 2100

Kobach went on to cite a second case involving Farida Ahmed, who was on a terrorist watch list. He was on that watch list because he was suspected of being an al Qaeda operative trying to get into the United States. Ahmed was caught in Texas at McAllen Miller International Airport on July 19, 2004. He was trying to get up to New York City. He produced a South African passport with pages torn out and with no U.S. entry stamps. He later confessed to entering the country illegally by crossing the Rio Grande River.

In 2005, 3,722 individuals from state sponsors of terrorism or countries with terrorist ties were caught trying to illegally enter the United States. I know some of the stories from border guards who have told me. One showed me his injuries that he sustained when he stopped an individual who originally was from Uzbekistan, had been trained, he said, in an Afghan training camp. This was the individual's second attempt to enter illegally into the United States. The first time he had tried to fly in through an airport and he was turned back. This time he came over the border. When he was caught, he was motivated enough, the individual, to bite the shoulder of the Border Patrol agent so severely that the Border Patrol agent had to be hospitalized.

The reality is that we have some very determined foes attempting to get

into the United States and our experience with Hezbollah agents frankly should awaken us to the fact that we should take the advice of the Border Patrol when they say to us, give us that double border fence. We have had over 400 attacks in 1 year or instances of violence against our agents. Give us the double border fence we need.

Well, we have got the appropriation. We have got the authorization. The first appropriation for \$1.2 billion. We need several billion more to finish the whole project. But we should take their advice. It's past time we strengthen operational control of our borders and ports through additional physical barriers and fencing and greater use of state-of-the-art technology and surveillance across our entire border.

The border fence is needed, it's needed now, so one of my goals, and I am sure the caucus's goals, is to ensure that the fence gets the funding it needs and that the entire 700 miles gets built as the act that was signed into law says it should be built.

I thank you again, Congressman BILBRAY; Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I will yield back to Congressman BRIAN BILBRAY of San Diego.

Mr. BILBRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. ROYCE. Seeing that you are the chairman of the Border Security subcommittee, it is good to hear today that the administration has found the money to finally fill in the border tunnels across our border. A lot of people when I say the fence isn't working, if the fence wasn't working, the cartels would not be spending millions of dollars trying to figure out how to tunnel under the fence.

Mr. ROYCE. If the gentleman will yield, I was in your fine city and had an opportunity to go down to visit some of the Border Patrol agents that I talk with and work with. One of them showed me a station across from the Border Patrol station on the U.S. side, and he said that in that station, they had actually filmed work on a tunnel, it was actually on Mexico property, that one of the cartels was building, digging a tunnel, and they turned over, he said, to the Mexican government, and the Mexican equivalent of the FBI arrested two Border Patrol agents, customs agents on the Mexican side who were involved with the cartels in actually supervising the digging of that tunnel.

The point I am making is that there is a degree of corruption here in some of the institutions in Mexico which have unfortunately led to a lack of cooperation in enforcement of our borders. And because of that lack of cooperation, I think it is doubly important that not only we go forward with the effort to fill these tunnels, but let's again get the fence that the Border Patrol says it needs built.

Mr. BILBRAY. I thank you for that. Because before the fence, as somebody that grew up down there and watched this game being played, any criminal on either side of the border could jump

across the border and avoid enforcement on the other. Even in Mexico, they had the area called the Zona Norte, the northern zone, and everyone knew that it was a criminal hideout because they could always jump onto the American side if the Mexican officials came. So this issue of creating a barrier is common sense and common decency.

As Governor Ruffo of Baja, California, once said, he said something in Spanish and said in Mexico, we have a saying, Good fences make good neighbors. Frankly, I think those people that always attacked the concept of having secure borders should just listen to Ruffo's advice that common sense does go a long way.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ROYCE. It is certainly true that the lack of border security leads to a criminal element controlling that border. In this case, it is the cartels. And it is important to remember again that the erection of the border fence in San Diego led not only to a reduction of crime on the U.S. side by more than 50 percent but again led to a reduction of crime on the Mexican side of the border and in Tijuana by more than 50 percent. Why? Because of the very point you have just made, the cartels lost control once the rule of law was applied to that sector of the border and law enforcement was able to get in control.

Mr. BILBRAY. I appreciate that. The fact is most Americans may not understand that it is so out of control that they have had over 30 police officers murdered in Tijuana and over nine Federal prosecutors assassinated in Tijuana. In fact, it was so bad that the Mexican government 10 years ago sent their army to the American border. You hear an outcry here when we talk about the possibility of sending our troops or our National Guard down to the border. I wonder where these people are that are so outraged about America exercising our sovereignty, using our resources, when they ignored the fact that Mexico did the right thing by bringing their troops up.

I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, your work on this and look forward to working with you.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about border control, but I want to make sure that the American people and everybody recognizes, in your district, the real problem exists that those who hire illegals are the ones who are creating the number one source of illegal immigration. When we talk about the violence at the border, when we talk about people dying, drowning at the border trying to come into this country illegally, the people that are at fault for that are those employers who provide the incentive for people to break our immigration laws and those who are profiteering off illegal immigration, and that is the illegal employers.

I would ask you and I would ask every Member of Congress and I would

ask everyone who is listening across the United States to take a look at H.R. 98 which is a bill that Silvestre Reyes, a very respected Democrat from El Paso, who is a former Border Patrol agent, and David Dreier, a Republican, former chairman of the Rules Committee, put together working with the men and women who actually have to control our frontier and control immigration, the immigration agents themselves. They put together a bill called H.R. 98, and it is so simple that there is no excuse for anybody not to support it, unless they think that there is an advantage to encourage illegal immigration.

In this bill, it says one thing. It says, let's get rid of the 37 different documents that anybody can prove they are legal to be in the country to work. Let's go down to one simple document, a tamper-resistant Social Security card to allow Americans and foreign nationals alike to prove that a Social Security number that they are required by law to provide for employment is actually their number and not one that they have taken or 20 of their buddies have taken from somebody else and are using because they have stolen a Social Security number. One document for any employer to know to check, to be able to verify electronically that whoever is in front of them is qualified to work in the United States. Because it is essential that we give employers a simple, verifiable way of knowing who is legal and who is not legal so that we can do what I think Democrats and Republicans who really care about America can do together and, that is, crack down on the employers who knowingly hire illegals. We all know who they are, we know where they are, and we need to eliminate the excuse for hiring illegals. We need to start cracking down on that.

I just ask that when we get into this issue, let's not talk about amnesty, let's not talk about excuses for rewarding people for illegal immigration, let's talk about working together and cracking down on the illegal employers, making it clear that if you want to come to this country and work, then you come here legally, you play by the rules, you get rewarded for that.

□ 2110

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people may not know, but I am privileged to have a mother who is a legal immigrant who came back to this country back in the 1940s. And as she reminds me so often, everyone who rewards illegal immigration is insulting those immigrants who came here and played by the rules. Anybody who talks about giving amnesty or any reward to those who have violated our immigration law is insulting the hard work, the patience, and the perseverance to be a legal immigrant and everyone who has played by the rules and stayed within the law.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say tonight that every Wednesday night we are going to try as the Immigration

Caucus to give a report to the American people about what is going on with the immigration issue. It is something that politicians have ignored for too long, but it is something that the American people are demanding that we finally address if we want to stay in this city representing the people.

So tonight I appreciate the time to be able to address this issue.

30—SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the Speaker for this time, once again allowing us to begin the 30-Something Working Group.

We have a lot of issues to talk about. And as everyone who has followed the 30-Something Working Group over the years knows, this is our attempt to let the American people know what is happening in their Congress and what the issues are that are being discussed, and we have requested some time here to be able to go into some detail on what these issues are. And I wanted to start today by talking about the situation at Walter Reed, which I know is a subject that is of great concern to everybody in this Chamber, and it is certainly the issue that I am hearing the most about as I travel around my district. And if we have some time after we conclude that discussion, we may move on to some other issues.

But I wanted to start by talking about the situation at Walter Reed. And I have put up here for my colleagues to take a look at the Newsweek cover from this week, and we see here that this is a national story. It is the number one story in the country, and it tells the story about how we are, unfortunately in many cases, failing our wounded. You can see it on the cover.

What we are talking about with the situation at Walter Reed is we have brave men and woman who are fighting for this country, who are putting their lives on the line, who are making every possible sacrifice, and they are coming home in need of medical treatment, in many cases serious health situations, long-term medical problems, and we have not seen the best quality of care that those men and women deserve. And the situation that has been uncovered recently at Walter Reed is something that was uncovered by a Washington Post expose'. It wasn't brought to light by the people at Walter Reed, it wasn't brought to light by elected officials, it wasn't brought to light by anyone except for a series of newspaper articles.

There are two issues that we need to discuss. The second of those issues is, why did it take a Washington Post news article before people started to talk about this issue, before people started to be held accountable for this issue? Which, as I am going to talk about in the time line of events, for those of you who may wonder how this

all came about, what were the complaints, how long has this situation been known, we are going to walk through that entire time line tonight. But the second issue is, why did that Washington Post news article become the first source for all of this to happen?

The number one issue that we need to deal with as a Congress and that we can promise the American people that we are going to deal with is we need to find a solution to this problem right now. We understand there is a situation that needs to be resolved. And to be candid, the American people aren't calling for another blue ribbon panel that is going to take a 2-year study and issue a report that is 2½ inches thick and sit on somebody's desk before anything happens. They want results right now.

We need to go into every military and veterans health care facility in this country and make a determination: Are the conditions substandard? Are there actions that need to be taken? And, if so, let's deal with that immediately. Let's not wait for the course of a long-term study. There is going to be room for that and there are going to be people held accountable, and that is not to say that we are not going to work hard to detail every single fact of how this came to be. But the most important part for our military men and women who were promised quality health care when they signed up is we need to restore their confidence and their trust in the system, which right now, justifiably, is lacking. Because we have military men and women every day who are coming back, not just to Walter Reed, but all across this country to Department of Defense facilities, and veterans who have put their lives on the line who are coming back and using the VA health care system and finding that the care in many cases, as has been described with Walter Reed, is substandard. This is outrageous and this is unacceptable, and this Congress is going to take the appropriate action to make sure that these things are taken care of and they do not happen again.

So, again, the two issues: number one, fix the problem now; number two, let's get to the bottom of why it took so long for people to be held accountable and for us to get to the point where this situation was known to the American people and especially to our brave men and women.

So I do have a time line of events that we in the 30-Something Working Group are going to turn into a chart which we will be able to display at one of our future meetings, but now I did just want to read some of these things that have happened in the past.

In mid-to-late 2004, a very senior Member of this Congress, with his wife, announced that he was going to stop visiting Walter Reed out of frustration. He said he had voiced his concerns about what he was seeing to his commanders, including Major General

Kiley, over the troubling incidents that he had witnessed. And this, again, is a very senior Member of this Congress, said his efforts were rebuffed and ignored. And he has a quote that says when he brought problems to the attention of Walter Reed, he was made to feel very uncomfortable. Now, that is unacceptable, and that was 2½ years ago. So right there we have a very senior Member of Congress voicing concerns and being ignored.

In November 2005, the Congress was then of course controlled by the Republican Party, and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee announced that, for the first time in at least 55 years, veteran service organizations would no longer have the opportunity to present testimony before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. So in November of 2005, we had an announcement from this Congress, then under Republican control, that we would not be investigating any situations and there would be no forum to bring before Congress complaints about what we were seeing at Walter Reed.

The pattern continues. In September of 2006, 13 Senators sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee to preserve language in the House Defense Appropriations bill that prohibits U.S. Army from outsourcing 350 Federal jobs at Walter Reed Medical Center. This is September of 2006. A similar provision was defeated by a close vote in the Senate of 50-48 during the bill's previous consideration.

Also in September of 2006, and again for my colleagues watching we are going to have a chart that will illustrate this and it be visible. But in September of 2006, Walter Reed awards a 5-year, \$120 million contract to IAP Worldwide Services, which is run by a former senior Halliburton official, to replace a staff of 300 Federal employees. So those employees were replaced in September of 2006, despite the fact there had been to that point complaints by very senior Members of Congress about what was happening at Walter Reed.

□ 2120

I would pause there to ask my colleague from Connecticut, Mr. MURPHY, if he is ready to weigh in on this issue. And if not, I can certainly continue down the time line.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. ALTMIRE. I want to let you get back to the time line because I think it is important for people to understand where this started, and to talk a little bit about where we are going, because so much of the news these days is filled with bad news, bad news for our veterans, bad news for the security of our country. And we talk about that a lot here. Mr. ALTMIRE, as you know, this place focuses on crises often and on bad news.

The good news is that things are changing. The good news is that there is a commitment now to make up for

the wrongs of the past. But it is fairly mind-blowing to people out there to think that it took The Washington Post to uncover what was happening in our veterans system. Because, Mr. ALTMIRE, as you know, veterans back in our districts, back in Pennsylvania and in Connecticut and throughout this country, have known what is going on with veterans for years. I mean, they have been down here in Washington, DC, month after month, year after year trying to tell this Congress that there are waiting lines for care; that the conditions are often substandard because of years of neglect in capital improvements; that they simply don't have the access to the funds necessary to pay for the rising premiums and rising copays.

And before this story in The Washington Post broke, you, Mr. ALTMIRE, and those of us in the 30-Something Working Group were yelling about this on the House floor. We got here with that mandate, to change things.

So you are going to run through, I think, some fairly amazing comments from some of the soldiers and staff at Walter Reed Hospital in terms of what they have been dealing with over the past several years. But we just need to remind people out there that you can't absolve this former Congress in the last 12 years from the catastrophes that we are uncovering within our medical system, specifically, in this case, within our veterans medical system simply because The Washington Post didn't get around to writing about it until last month, because if you were back home listening to this, you heard it time after time again.

I mean, here is the thing. We are talking about a substandard level of care for our veterans. We should be talking about the gold standard of care for our veterans. And we shouldn't be talking about just lifting up Walter Reed Hospital so that it meets the standards of dignity that every other hospital in our health care system abides by. We should be talking about raising up veterans care so that this is the highest standard. It is what everyone else in the medical community and the provider community seeks to meet. The people coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq, people coming home from Vietnam and previous engagements should come home to the best care this country can provide, Mr. ALTMIRE.

And I would like to yield back to you so you can continue to tell the story of what we have found at Walter Reed hospital.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Thank you, Mr. MURPHY. And I wanted to, before getting into some of the quotes that the men and women who have been in Walter Reed have, over the course of time provided, I did want to continue down the time line. And I had left off with the 5-year, \$120 million contract that was awarded to a former Halliburton official which led to the replacement of 300 employees at Walter Reed.

And I wanted to, then, quote from a New York Times article about that issue. It said: "The prospect of privatization at Walter Reed led to a large exodus of skilled personnel after the Army reversed results, actually changed the results of an audit conducted that government employees could do the job more cheaply."

So they had done a study that showed that things could be done in that manner. But they decided to reverse the results and move in the direction that we have described. And we have, unfortunately, seen the results.

I will move in, now, to some of the quotes. And it is troubling, I will tell my colleagues who are watching, to hear some of the complaints that were made. And I would remind, again, that in 2005, the Republican leadership of this Congress made a decision that they were going to not hold the joint hearings on this issue to allow some of these things to be brought to the attention, not only of the Congress, but of the American people. And it is unfortunate what the result has been, that 2 years went by and these things continued, and these quotes are the result.

And I am going to refer my colleagues to this chart as I am reading: "The mold, mice and rot at Walter Reed's Building 18 compose a familiar scenario for many soldiers back from Iraq or Afghanistan. Soldiers and veterans at other facilities report bureaucratic disarray similar to Walter Reed's. Indifferent, untrained staff, lost paperwork, medical appointments that drop from the computers, and long waits for consultations."

And what this describes, unfortunately, is that the problem at Walter Reed is not unique to Walter Reed, but it is a systemic problem across the country's military and Veterans Affairs facilities. And that is very troubling to me.

I have three VA hospitals in western Pennsylvania, one of which is in my district. And it is undergoing a \$200 million renovation right now. And I am hopeful that we will, at that time, have the premiere Veterans Affairs highest-quality facility in the entire country.

But the systemic problem facing our military health facilities and our Veterans Affairs facilities is shown by some of these quotes. So, again, my colleagues want to refer to this chart. From California, this says: "The room was swarming with fruit flies, trash was overflowing, and a syringe was lying on the table." That is from a facility in California.

From a facility in Fort Knox, Kentucky: "The living conditions were the worst I had ever seen for soldiers. Paint peeling, mold, windows that didn't work. I went to the hospital chaplain to get them to issue blankets and linens. There were no nurses."

So as troubling as the situation at Walter Reed is for those of us who are now delving into the details and learning the unfortunate facts, it is even

more troubling to think that these are problems that are happening all across this country.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. ALTMIRE can you yield for a moment? Because I want to talk about, as these revelations were coming out in The Washington Post and in articles that followed, this administration had a choice to make. They could open up this issue and they could allow for a vetting of these problems and put them out in the open air and come together, as Republicans and Democrats, to solve them; or they could try to paper over it and cover it up.

And some of the most disturbing things that have happened in this sequence of events, which are a little bit later on your time line, is what happened after these revelations came into the light. We know that in the days following that article that the soldiers at Walter Reed were told that they couldn't speak to the media about what was happening.

We know that the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, which I sit on, had to subpoena the former head, the fired chief of Walter Reed Army Medical Center after Army officials told him that he couldn't come testify at the hearing.

And so I am so thankful that we have a majority now in charge of this House which is actually going to do the work to uncover, I hope, not too many more abuses that we haven't already seen in the newspaper reports that have come out. But the fact is that right now we don't have an administration that is helping us try to correct this, Mr. ALTMIRE. And it makes our job even harder; but makes me, I think, and I think the American people are in the same position, that they are thankful that there are people here doing that work.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Well, the level of frustration I think that we are all feeling builds every day as more of these facts come out. And I think the most upsetting part is the fact that these are situations that were known within the military health apparatus, and nothing was done about it.

Complaints were made from patients. Complaints were made from families. Complaints were made, as I talked about earlier, not just from Members of Congress, but from very senior and influential Members of Congress, all of which were ignored.

And continuing with our around-the-country look at some other things that have happened, if my colleagues could refer to this chart.

□ 2130

This comes from Fort Campbell in Kentucky where they said: "There were yellow signs on the door stating that our barracks had asbestos." This was an open and operating military facility.

From Fort Irwin in California: "Most of us had to sign waivers where we understand that the housing we were in

failed to meet minimal government standards."

It is very troubling for me, and I am sure for my colleagues listening, to read and to hear these quotes and think of the fact that there is no group of people that should stand ahead of our men and women in the military and our military veterans when it comes time to allocate Federal resources. And we have a Federal budget that is approaching \$3 trillion, and we certainly spend a lot of that on the Defense, and rightly so, Department of Defense. And to hear these situations taking place, it is just very upsetting.

So, continuing, for my colleagues, to refer to the chart again: "Behind the door of Army Specialist Jeremy Duncan's room, part of the wall is torn and hangs in the air, weighted down with black mold. When the wounded combat engineer stands in his shower and looks up, he can see the bathtub on the floor above through a rotted hole. Signs of neglect are everywhere. Mouse droppings, belly-up cockroaches, stained carpets, cheap mattresses."

And I will move to the last chart we have with these quotes, and then we can discuss it a little further. This is from building 18, which is the subject of the Washington Post report on Walter Reed which began this whole investigation: "Life in building 18 is the bleakest homecoming for men and women whose government promised them good care in return for their sacrifices. 'I hate it,' said one soldier, who stays in his room all day. 'There are cockroaches. The elevator doesn't work. The garage door doesn't work. Sometimes there is no heat, no water.'"

Well, I do want to assure my colleagues and the American people and reiterate what I said earlier that by far the more important thing here is fixing the problem. We have outlined, I think, in pretty graphic detail what the problem is and the scope of the problem. We are not just talking about one facility at Walter Reed, although that has been the source of the beginning of this story. We are talking about facilities all across this country. And we do need a top-to-bottom review of every single facility. Let us find every problem that exists and let us fix it right now. That is the number one issue.

And we are not as interested in casting blame in this situation. There is no question people need to be held accountable for this problem. And the hearings that we have had and the hearings that this Congress is going to continue to have with the Armed Services Committee, with the Veterans Affairs Committee and with the Government Oversight Committee, we are going to get to the bottom of how this could possibly have happened, why it happened, who is responsible and who should be held accountable. But, again, that is the secondary issue. The primary issue is fixing the problem now. And I want to assure the American people, as I am sure my friend Mr.

MURPHY does, that this timeline that I was reading from is going to stop in March 2007, as far as the situation being ignored and the situation not being brought to light. This is a new day. It is a new Congress. And we are going to take action. And it is unfortunate, and I am regretful that it took this long. But we are here now, and the situation that we are describing is not going to be easy, but we have a commitment in this Congress for Members like Mr. MURPHY and myself that place no greater priority than finding the resolution to this problem and to our Nation's military men and women.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. ALTMIRE, you hit it right on the head. It is, fix the problem, hold people accountable, in that order. We need to start holding people accountable here. I think that is a lot of frustration that led to you and I coming here and 40 or so of our fellow new colleagues here. I think a lot of the impetus that brought us here was this sense that nobody was being held accountable for what was happening in the government, whether it be the failure of our military strategy in Iraq or whether it be the failure of many of our domestic programs here at home.

So we have got to keep the focus and the light of this place on finally holding this administration and the people in it and, frankly, even Members of this legislature accountable for their actions. But we have got to fix the problem first because people didn't send us here just to investigate and hold hearings and put out subpoenas. They want that responsibility of Congress to come back. They want us to fulfill that constitutional obligation. But they sent us here to get stuff done. And that is the miracle of what has happened here over the last 2 months is that we are fixing problems. We are not just talking about it. We are actually doing what we are saying.

The first 100 hours was all about that, Mr. ALTMIRE. It had to be for the two of us one of the proudest moments of our life to be here joining hands with many of our Republican colleagues and for the first time making this place work again. Passing new bills to fund higher education, reforming the Medicare prescription drug law, investing in stem cell research; doing it with Democrats and Republicans, making this place work again.

So here is the thing. We proved we can solve problems. We proved that we can work as Republicans and Democrats to fix things. And maybe we are confronted with our biggest problem; not just what we have uncovered in our veterans' system, what people like you and I have known for years, but the greater quagmire which exists in our military today in the situation we have got ourselves in Iraq. But we need to take both of these on, fix the problems to the extent that we can, and then hold people accountable because what we know is that we weren't ready for this war. We weren't ready for this war

with the equipment, the trucks and the kits we needed for our troops. We know that, when this war began, we were \$56 billion underfunded within the Army for the equipment that they needed. We know that, after the invasion, it took 18 months for American soldiers to receive body armor; 18 months of being on the front lines before they got the body armor that they needed. And we know the health care system wasn't ready for the legions of troops that came back.

I think I shared this on the floor the other night: A group of veterans came into my office and shared with me a statistic that was as interesting as it was sobering, that in conflicts earlier in this century, on average three wounded soldiers came back for every soldier that died on the battlefield. Today 16 soldiers come back wounded for every soldier that dies on the battlefield. And that is due to some of the advances in armor protection equipment. It is also due to the miracles of modern medicine and the response time that our medics and doctors in the field are able to perform.

But it means that we have more people coming into our hospitals with more complex, more lasting injuries. They need better care, and they need faster care. And it appears that no one at the outset of this war was thinking about this problem ahead of time. They weren't preparing our military for battle. They didn't have a plan to occupy that country. They didn't think, it seems sometimes, more than a few seconds about the political realities that would emerge on the ground as we invaded Iraq. And now it turns out they also didn't think about what to do with the veterans when they come back.

Mr. ALTMIRE, I never served in the military. I never fired a gun. I have never been shot at. I get to serve in this Chamber on a cold night like tonight in Washington, DC, in a nice, heated place indoors because my contemporaries, my classmates made a different decision. They decided to go overseas and protect this Nation. And there isn't a day that I get up that I am not grateful for the decision that my friends and my relatives and my classmates made to allow me to serve this country in a very different manner. So as unfathomable as it is to me to think about what it is like to be on the ground in Baghdad today, to have veterans comparing their experiences in our own domestic veterans' health care system to the situations that they faced on the ground in Iraq is unconscionable to me. Think about what it must be like to come back to this country maimed, injured, perhaps with legs, arms amputated, and to enter a system with flies, with garbage, with syringes. I mean, we know what is happening with soldiers coming back with PTSD and other mental health issues from what they have seen on the battlefield, and to think that we are putting them into a system which not only abuses the sense of honor that we

should have for those that come back. We should be celebrating them rather than putting them in these conditions.

□ 2140

But I am sure it aggravates what must be an unbelievably complicated transition back to life here in the United States. We need to start honoring their service again. And God forbid we ever have to engage in another military action in this country again. God forbid we have to send our brave young men and women overseas to fight.

You know that in our lifetimes we will see that moment. We hope we don't. We hope we are wise enough in this Chamber to prevent another foreign engagement from happening, but the chances are that you and I may vote sometime during our service here to do this again.

We better get it right that time. We better make the investment up front to make sure they are safe when they head over to that battlefield, and when they come home, the services are there for them.

We are going to fix it. We are going to fix it and hold people accountable, and we are going to do it in that order. The American people for a long time maybe didn't have confidence when people stood up here and said there is a problem and we are going to do something about it. In this Congress, that is going to be our hallmark. We are going to be able to go home in the coming weeks and months and tell people that what you read about, whether it be in Newsweek or the Washington Post, is going to be taken care of.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. You talked about investments, making investments in our troops and making investments in our veterans. As you know on this 30-Something Working Group, I have spent a lot of time talking about our Nation's veterans and our VA healthcare system, and I am going to spend a lot more time talking about our VA healthcare system, because, as I said, there is no group that should stand ahead of our Nation's veterans when it comes time to make funding decisions.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the decisions that have been made in past years. We have talked about this before, and I have another chart here that I would like my colleagues to take a look at. This is the underfunding, the chronic underfunding of the VA healthcare system.

We have talked before about the fact that President Bush has delivered seven State of the Union addresses now and he has only mentioned veterans healthcare in one of those seven State of the Union addresses.

I think as a Congress we have a responsibility when we talk about supporting our troops and we talk about supporting the brave men and women who we are sending off to battle, who were promised quality healthcare in

the VA health system when they signed up, we have an obligation to fund all of them at levels at which they can obtain this quality healthcare.

So let's take a look at what has happened in recent years. I refer to the chart.

In January of 2003, President Bush's budget cut veterans healthcare and eliminated 164,000 veterans from the roles of eligibility for VA healthcare. That was in January of 2003.

In March of that same year, this Congress's budget, the Republican budget that cut \$14 billion from veterans healthcare, passed. 199 Democrats voted against it in this Chamber, but, unfortunately, at that point the Democrats were in the minority and they couldn't prevent these cuts. We have seen what the result has been of that \$14 billion cut.

In March of 2004, the Republican budget that shortchanged veterans healthcare by an additional \$1.5 billion passed Congress, and this time 201 Democrats voted against it. But, again, being in the minority, Democrats were unable to prevent those cuts, and we have seen the result.

In March of 2005, continuing, President Bush's budget shortchanged veterans healthcare by an additional \$2 billion for 2005 and cut VA healthcare by \$14 billion over the next 5 years. 201 Democrats voted against that.

So I think, Mr. MURPHY, you would agree that you see a trend developing here over time of just cut after cut after cut to the VA healthcare system, and that is, A, not fair and not just, but it is also not sustainable, without encountering the types of problems and the systemic difficulties that we are seeing across the VA healthcare system.

So in the summer of 2005, after serious Democratic pressure, months and months of pressure and warnings that the shortfall was going to be detrimental to the VA, the Bush administration finally acknowledged that their previous budgets had been inadequate and the shortfall had been \$2.7 billion. The Democrats fought all summer to get this resolved. It is a disgrace that it had to come to that. We never should have been in that position.

Then, after months and months of this discussion, in March of 2006, almost a year earlier from today, President Bush's budget cut veterans funding by an additional \$6 billion over 5 years. Keep in mind, this is in the context of not mentioning veterans in his State of the Union addresses when he comes before this Chamber and outlines to us what his priorities are within his budget for the coming year. Veterans are not even mentioned. And I can see why. I wouldn't mention it either, if I had the same type of record on veterans healthcare as the President has. So in March of last year he proposed \$6 billion in cuts over 5 years.

Well, something happened in November of 2006. As we all know, the American people spoke up and said they

were fed up with this and weren't going to take it any more. I know I heard loud and clear throughout my campaign and certainly on that election day in November that veterans funding was a big part of why the American people were frustrated with the decisions of this administration and the decisions of this Congress up to that time.

As we have talked about many times, I said that my number one priority in considering the budget for the current year, which was left undone by the previous Congress, was veterans healthcare funding. I said I would never support a budget that did not at least maintain the current level of services for VA healthcare funding in the continuing years, and certainly in the current year.

Thankfully, under the new leadership in Congress we passed a budget for fiscal year 2007 that increased veterans funding by \$3.6 billion. I won't go back and read the numbers again, but you remember hearing about a lot of billions of dollars of decreases, \$14 billion over 5 years, \$6 billion additionally over 5 years in previous Congresses.

The first budget we had to pass in this Congress, in the climate of enormous pressure for fiscal responsibility, we had to cut over 60 programs to find the room in the new pay-as-you-go budget scoring to pay for this, because we are not running the country on a credit card as we have in years past. We are fiscally responsible and we do have an obligation to find the funding to pay for our priorities. And we did that. We found \$3.6 billion to increase funding for veterans healthcare.

I think in the time to come, very shortly you are going to see a further demonstration, a very strong demonstration from this Congress in a very difficult climate of our commitment to funding VA healthcare. That is going to be something that we are able to demonstrate to the American people, and to keep our promise to do what we said we were going to do and to do what the American people expected us to do.

But the unfortunate reality, Mr. MURPHY, is that these funding cuts from the past have had a terrible effect on the institutions, both in the VA and also the lack of attention in the Department of Defense health facilities, and has led to some very, very serious problems, as outlined by the Washington Post. But those issues have consequences, and they are in the past. We have a responsibility now in the new Congress as leaders and as the elected group from the American people that is charged with dealing with this to take action. As we have said many times tonight, we are going to take action.

□ 2150

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. ALTMIRE, we have to look at veterans' health care, care for our wounded as part and parcel of the cost of the war. The cost of the war is not just troops

on the ground, the equipment, the weapons. The cost of the war is all of that, which, of course, runs into the billions, racking up hour by hour, day by day, but the cost of the war also includes top rate, gold standard care for those troops when they return to this country.

Sometimes you talk about the cost of the war and veterans' health care. They are in kind of different silos in Washington speak, and we are figuring out how Washington talks versus the rest of the world.

Out there, what our veterans and soldiers talk about is a cost of battle, a cost of sending our troops overseas, which includes making sure, when they come back to this country, they get everything they need. That is part of our challenge. We came down here I think, not to speak for both of us, but to sort of change how Washington thinks about this world and start making it match up with the reality out there in our communities. We sat there for the last 2 years campaigning to get here, listening to people screaming and yelling about rising energy prices. We listened to families talk about how they couldn't afford to send their kids to college, and we heard seniors talking about how the Medicare prescription drug bill does not work. And they watch Washington do nothing about it. There is a disconnect that has happened over the past 12 years, and certainly over the last 6 years especially, and how people talk about their problems in the world and how Washington views them. There is no better example than veterans' health care.

To veterans and soldiers, the cost of the war includes taking care of soldiers when they return to the United States. We have to make people understand that again.

We sat for that very long debate about the escalation of the war. We listened to the people on the other side of the aisle make a ridiculously simplistic argument. They said, to support the troops, you must support the commander of the troops. Part of supporting the troops has to be supporting everything he asks you to do. You can't make an independent judgment about whether what he wants is right or wrong; you simply have to line up with him, or we are going to tell you that you are not supporting the men and women who fight for this country.

We know that is wrong. We know that the American people don't believe that, and we know this election was in part about separating what is right for the troops, the country and what the President has asked them to do and has vastly under-equipped them to do.

But you just detailed maybe example number one where what the President's policies are over the past several years has been the exact opposite of what is right for our troops, cuts to veterans' health care, increases in premiums. That is as bold and plain and simple and concise as you can make it.

You can't stand here and say, in order to support the troops, you have

to support the President when the President puts forth a budget, year after year, budgets that don't do justice for the veterans who return.

I think the American people have weighed in on that issue on whether or not we need to support the President on everything he does in order to support the troops, but there is yet another example.

Mr. ALTMIRE, I think we also have to talk about the issue of accountability here. Here is the problem, is that our military is stretched thin right now. This isn't just about supporting the troops; it is about supporting the generals that oversee those troops and supporting the commanders who are struggling to do more with less.

Let me read a quote from General Peter Schoomaker, the Chief of Staff of the Army. He says, "To meet combatant commanders immediate wartime needs, we pooled equipment from across the force to equip soldiers deploying in harm's way. This practice, which we are continuing today, increases risk for our next-to-deploy units and limits our ability to respond to emerging strategic contingencies." This was from a Washington Post story.

That is a pretty amazing statement to come from our Nation's top military brass. To come out on the record, flying in the face of what the President is telling the American people and saying that we are endangering the lives of our troops by overextending the limits of our equipment and our machinery within our Armed Forces.

So we also have to force the military commanders who are desperately trying to do the right thing with a very flawed policy and with an administration which pays no attention to the root causes of the insurgency which puts our forces in harm's way and who doesn't give the Army the resources they need to fight this battle and obviously doesn't treat the soldiers the way they need to be treated when they come home.

This is about supporting our troops and about supporting our commanders and about supporting our Armed Forces in general. They are being asked to do so much more with so much less. This is no secret. When we come and vote on the supplemental request from this President, you better believe that Members on this side of the aisle are going to make sure that there is a historic commitment to veterans, just like there was in the continuing resolution. We have to make that a priority in this new authorization of funding because we are beginning to talk like everybody else talks out there. We are beginning to understand that the cost of this war is the money that it takes to fight the battle on the streets of Baghdad, but it is also the cost of taking care of those soldiers when they come home.

Mr. ALTMIRE, you underplay your effect on that discussion. You were a real hero on that issue of making sure that

the veterans' care and funding were in that continuing resolution. I hope people back in your district understand what you did on that issue to ensure that those funds were part of that continuing resolution.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I appreciate the gentleman mentioning that.

I wanted to finish the time line. I want to make sure to get that in before we run out of time here, and then maybe move on to one other issue.

In September 2006, we talked about the replacement of the 300 employees by the former Halliburton official.

In October 2006, the Secretary of Defense's wife, Joyce Rumsfeld, the then-Secretary of Defense, was taken to Walter Reed by a close friend who was also a Walter Reed volunteer. When hospital officials found out that this was the case, Mrs. Rumsfeld's friend was banned from entering or continuing to volunteer at the hospital.

So the implication was they did not want them to see what was happening at the hospital. That is from a Washington Post article. I would not have mentioned that were it not printed in the Washington Post, that the Secretary of Defense's wife had a close friend volunteering at Walter Reed, and they were asked not to continue volunteering, again the implication that they would not like what they would be seeing there.

Then, moving to February 4, 2007, getting up almost to current time. The number of Federal employees providing facilities management services at Walter Reed by this time, a month ago, had dropped from 300 to fewer than 60. This is before The Washington Post article came out, immediately before. The remaining 60 employees, 50 of them were private workers. That is from the Army Times where we get those statistics.

And then everything begins to change.

February 19, The Washington Post expose comes out detailing mistreatment of veterans and housing on the grounds of Walter Reed Army Medical Center. That is the turning point. Unfortunately, we heard about the 2004 visit and the complaints registered by a senior Member of Congress. We heard, in 2005, the then-Republican Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman announced they were not interested in hearing from our Nation's veterans anymore; they were not welcome to address the committee to talk about some of these issues.

The Washington Post article comes out February 19, one week later, February 26, the soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were told that they were to wake up at 6 a.m. every morning and have their rooms ready for inspection at 7 a.m. This was new. More importantly, they were told that they were no longer allowed to speak to the media. I think we can see why that is.

So that is the time line of events leading up.

Let's look at what has happened this week. This is Wednesday, March 7.

Well, on March 5, in the new Congress here, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee began holding hearings to investigate the Walter Reed scandal; again, in the context of the previous Congress, that was unwelcome.

March 6 and 7, yesterday and today, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held hearings on the Walter Reed scandal, and today there was also an Armed Services Committee hearing. So we have three separate committees looking into this, actively reviewing the situation and actively looking for answers and actively looking for results.

□ 2200

So I would refer, once again, anyone interested in learning more about this story to the Newsweek article, and I once again put this chart up. It is a great article. It gives a good summary of the situation, and I would ask the American people and our colleagues to just continue to seek answers. We are going to do our best to get to the bottom of this. We are going to do our best to make sure that this system is resolved, and unless Mr. MURPHY wants to talk about this, I was going to, in our short time, move into one other issue because it is budget season.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Sure.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And we actually had booked this time to talk about the budget, and then these issues were developing this week.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Let me highlight one thing before we leave this subject. This is going to be a chart that we might see a few more times on the 30 Something Working Group hour here.

I just want to make sure the people know we are back to business here. This is 81 hearings that have been held on issues related to the Iraq War this year. I mean, you go through the list just the week right after we got back from recess, the last week of February, on Tuesday, the 27th, two hearings; on Wednesday, the 28th, five hearings; on Thursday, the 1st, three hearings.

Now, that may seem like a lot. It seems like, well, what is Congress doing with all these hearings. There was so much work to be done to uncover all of these abuses. I think that is going to kind of level out over time, but right now we needed to get back to the work of starting to do some oversight when it comes to this war, to start uncovering many of these abuses. We will continue this chart going forward.

This idea that you presented that we have got two jobs, fix it and hold people accountable, we are doing both. This continuing resolution that kept the government running had historic levels of funding for veterans care. I think we are going to be able to do something similar with the supplemental authorization that we will vote on in the coming weeks.

But we are also doing that second part, which is holding this administration accountable, to make sure that it does not happen again, because I do not want to be here a year from now just trying to play catch-up and plugging all the holes that this administration creates. I actually want to solve the problems and make sure that competent people get into places that matter in this administration.

I want to make sure that the President starts putting budgets before us that make sense so that these oversight hearings, 81 hearings that have been held already in this Congress, are going to start to get us there.

That is maybe the moment to turn. We have got a few minutes left to talk a little bit about this budget.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is a chart that we are going to be seeing a lot more of, and I did want to make one point about that.

Those 81 oversight hearings on what is happening in Iraq, those are not make-work hearings. Those are not hearings just to hold hearings. Those are serious issues that this Congress is looking at.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I sit on the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, and in that committee, we found out that we sent \$9 billion in cash over to Iraq, on pallets, handed it out in duffel bags. We found out that when we were subcontracting to these subcontractors to do security, they subcontracted again, and they subcontracted again, and everybody takes a little money off the top every time. We did not know. We had not heard about any of that until we started doing hearings.

So you are exactly right. Hammer that point home. This is not doing hearings for hearings sake. This is doing hearings to uncover the waste, fraud and abuse that has been happening in this government. This is my taxpayer dollars. This is my neighbor's taxpayer dollars that are going down the drain with some of these programs. This is real stuff.

Mr. ALTMIRE. This is in the context of being told, the American people were told, that the oil proceeds in Iraq would pay for the cost of the war. You have a couple of issues. One is the oil proceeds. We do not have any accounting of where a lot of them are going. They are disappearing into the black market. They are certainly not paying for the cost of the war.

The second issue is, we have paid almost \$400 billion as a Nation on the Iraq War of our money, the American people's money, and as you have outlined, we have lost billions of dollars in Iraq that is completely unaccounted for. You certainly know about that from the Government Oversight Committee, and I am sure we will talk more about that.

In just the few minutes that we have remaining, about 4 minutes remaining, I did want to talk about budget season. Here we are in the spring, and as our

loyal constituents and people who follow the 30 Something Working Group will know, we do talk about the budget at some length and rightly so, because the budget has not been managed well over the past 6 years.

We have an administration that came into office. We had just had four consecutive years of budget surpluses that were forecast as far as the eye can see, and in the last 6 years, we have had six consecutive budget deficits that are now forecast as far as the eye can see. There has been a \$9 trillion swing in the 10-year forecast from a \$5.5 trillion surplus over 10 years to a \$3.5 trillion dollar because of the fiscal mismanagement that we have seen over the past 6 years. The President just submitted to us his 2007 out-of-balance budget.

So I will use this as a teaser for perhaps our next 30 Something Working Group because we will not be able to get into it as much as we would like, but for those watching, I would just say that we are going to talk at great length about some of these issues in the coming weeks.

We were going to talk about foreign-held debt today, and I have a chart that I would refer my colleagues to. This President has added more than \$1 trillion of foreign-held debt to America's balance in just 6 years. He did more than his 42 predecessors combined in just 6 years. The history of the country up to his administration had put less in foreign-held debt than he did in just 6 years.

So let us take a look at who is holding this debt. I get this question all the time because I talk about the deficit and the debt and who is holding it. Japan holds \$644 billion in American debt right now. China holds \$350 billion of American debt. That is after only 1 year earlier it was \$250 billion. So the Chinese have added \$100 billion in American-held debt. The U.K., \$240 billion, and you can see the other countries down here, Hong Kong is on there. Of course, they are now part of China. This was a historical chart.

So we have a lot of work to do to restore fiscal responsibility, but we are going to be talking in the weeks ahead in how we are going to do that with this Congress.

We have already taken the steps to move in that direction with the pay-as-you-go budget scoring, and you are going to see some things happening with the budget that have not been done in 6 or 7 years because we do have a responsibility to be fiscally responsible. The American people sent us here to do that.

So with that, I would ask Mr. MURPHY if he does not have any comments, he has got his e-mail chart there.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. First of all, let me say that there is nothing that acts as a tantalizing teaser to whet the appetites of the American people than telling them if they tune in next time, we will talk about foreign-held national debt. That really gets people's blood pumping.

I cannot give the chart without letting people know out there that the clock is ticking. 365 days you have left officially in the 30 Something Working Group. Congratulations. Happy birthday today. I do not know why the rest of the Members are not here to celebrate.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I think they are out celebrating.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. They might be having one of your behalf.

Mr. ALTMIRE. But thank you for saying that.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Anything we have talked about today, if people want to get more information about, they can e-mail us at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, and you can always visit www.speaker.gov/30something. One of these days when they go to that Web site, they will actually see our faces on there. Technology sometimes does not keep up with the changes in the House, but I am sure that our faces will be on that Web site, sooner rather than later.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman and today is my birthday. It is my 39th birthday, and I was happy to spend it here with you tonight talking about the budget.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It is how every young boy hopes to celebrate their 39th birthday.

Mr. ALTMORE. That is right.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 4:00 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. SARBANES) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. BERKLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SARBANES, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, March 14.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. BIGGERT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, March 12, 13, and 14.