

veto legislation that contains his own benchmarks for success in Iraq, ensures our troops have the training they need, and fully supports both our veterans and our soldiers wounded in combat.

Our legislation also commits additional funding to fighting the forgotten war in Afghanistan. Over the last 4 years, the Bush administration has redirected funds and troops away from Afghanistan, forgetting that al Qaeda and the Taliban were the ones that attacked our Nation in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats will not allow President Bush to continue to pursue these failed policies. We will insist on a new direction.

BURMA

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. has been calling for prompt action at the U.N. Security Council to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Burma. Unfortunately, other member nations have been slow to take up the call. One European nation even suggested recently that the world should wait for the situation in Burma to become urgent and acute before we take action.

Mr. Speaker, Burma reportedly has close to a million IDPs, internally displaced people. Isn't that urgent? Over 3,000 villages have been brutally destroyed by the military dictatorship. Isn't that an acute situation? The latest story out of Burma tells of four teenage girls brutally raped and then thrown into prison by the military rulers, more evidence of their systematic sexual violence there. Isn't that an urgent problem?

Mr. Speaker, there has been enough talk and enough delay. It is time for the world to take action and end the humanitarian crisis in Burma.

CONGRATULATING MANCHESTER WEST HIGH SCHOOL

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

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to congratulate Manchester West High School in Manchester, New Hampshire, and Region 14 Applied Technology Center team from Peterborough, New Hampshire, on their victory at the regional FIRST Robotics Competition this past week in Manchester. FIRST is an acronym for For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.

This remarkable program was developed in New Hampshire and has now spread to 1,500 high schools nationwide. It encourages young people to become actively involved with engineering and technology. FIRST brings innovative companies together with kids, teaching and inspiring them to pursue careers in advanced science. The brilliant stu-

dents who participate actually build robots and then enter the robots in a series of competitions against the creations of other teams.

I salute the creativity and technological savvy of the winning teams. Congratulations to Manchester West and the Region 14 team and to FIRST on its aspirational mission. FIRST is helping inspire the next generation of technology innovators which our country depends on to remain competitive in our global economy.

□ 1015

IN MEMORY OF THE SEVEN OHIOANS WHO PERISHED IN GEORGIA BUS ACCIDENT

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

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise in solemn remembrance of seven Ohioans whose lives were cut short by a tragic bus accident on the morning of Friday, March 2, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. Though words cannot express the depth of their loss, we honor their memory and offer our condolences to their families, friends, teammates, and classmates of these seven individuals:

David Betts of Bryan, Ohio

Scott Harmon of Elida, Ohio

Cody Holp of Arcanum, Ohio

Jerry and Jean Niemeyer of Columbus Grove, Ohio

Tyler Williams of Lima, Ohio, and

Zack Arend of Oakwood, Ohio.

In the midst of this tragedy, I was heartened to see the selfless way these families and communities pulled together to support each other in a time of need. It reminds me of what is special about America.

I was also humbled by the outpouring of kindness from concerned families in Georgia and around the country. Just minutes after the accident, complete strangers were opening their homes to our families and offering their condolences and prayers.

While we grieve their passing, we know that they will live forever in the hearts of their loved ones and will eternally be remembered by the Bluffton University family and the people of Bluffton, Allen County and west central Ohio.

MEDICARE

(Ms. CASTOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, access to the highest quality health care for our seniors under Medicare is one of the most important issues facing this Congress. Unfortunately, the Bush White House has sought to undermine the great Medicare safety net by privatizing a great deal of health care under the Medicare system, turning it over to HMOs.

Just last week the former director of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Services from 2001 to 2003 spoke at a conference in Tampa and a reporter caught him on record saying that this privatization effort "was done to prime the pump and to get people to go back to HMOs. But it's a much bigger subsidy than we intended."

You see, these private plans receive about 11 percent more per beneficiary than the government spends in original Medicare. And this director said that he had meant for the subsidy to be about half that.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do to stand up for our seniors and ensure the Medicare safety net works for everyone.

WAR SUPPLEMENTAL CONTAINS GOODIES

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

Mr. CARTER. There is talk that the \$100 billion war supplemental will include an extra \$20 billion in goodies. Such projects are seemingly irrelevant to the mission our soldiers are expected to carry out. For example:

\$60 million for the California and Oregon salmon fishery disaster of '06;

\$400 million for timber revenue program in Oregon;

\$400 million in low-income home energy assistance for State grants;

\$448 million unrequested funds for State children's health insurance programs, and;

a half a billion dollars for wildfire management and suppression.

Now, these are valuable projects, but they don't belong in an emergency war supplemental. They appear to be nothing more than an attempt to buy votes at the expense of our soldiers in the war on terror. The supplemental is meant to be an emergency troop funding vehicle and there is no excuse for \$20 billion worth of pork in that supplemental.

Let this Congress respect our soldiers and deny this pork.

KOSOVO

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

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to express my deep concern over the recent Department of Defense proposal to remove combat status from American soldiers serving in Kosovo. This summer, roughly 400 Minnesota National Guard soldiers who serve in my district will once again answer the call to duty in Kosovo. Almost every one of these 400 soldiers from my district will be going for the second or third time since September 11. In addition to the financial hardship these soldiers and their families will endure, the Department of Defense is asking them to suffer further by reclassifying this mission. Reclassification will cost American soldiers more than

just the \$225 a month in hazardous duty pay, the payroll tax exemption and the flights home to see their families. We will all pay for this with the loss of morale.

Kosovo suffers from ethnic unrest. The country has unexploded ordnance and American soldiers work to defuse these daily. Mr. Speaker, Kosovo is still a dangerous place. It's revealing that the State Department's assessment is different than the Department of Defense. Foreign service officers receive hazardous duty pay.

Ensuring that this mission remains classified as a combat mission is more than about \$225 a month to soldiers. It's about doing right for those who risk their lives in defense of this Nation.

“WHO GETS THE WORKER?”

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, while the flow of illegals continues to storm across our southern border, much to the joy of those who want cheap plantation labor, Mexico now wants to keep some of its workers home. President Calderon wants the United States to invest in Mexico and use Mexican workers.

Well, what does that really mean? Does that mean more U.S. foreign aid? Or have U.S. companies expand to Mexico and use those Mexican workers? Either way, Calderon expects the United States to solve his problem. Mexico alone cannot or will not take care of its economic problems, thus making their problem our problem.

Currently, Mexico exports its people to the United States to work and then have them send money back to Mexico. Mr. Speaker, if the United States invests in Mexico and more Mexican workers stay home, is there going to be a cross-border conflict over who gets the worker?

It would be ironic indeed to see the pro-amnesty cheap labor crowd in the United States encouraging illegal entry while the Mexican Government tells workers to stay home and take new jobs provided by U.S. investment.

And that's just the way it is.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS PLAYING POLITICS WITH U.S. ATTORNEYS OFFICE

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, every day the Bush White House is losing more credibility with the American people and with the Congress. Late last year the Justice Department fired eight U.S. Attorneys for purely political reasons. Last week, Attorney General Gonzales came to Capitol Hill and swore that the terminations had nothing to do with politics. But then 2 days ago we learned that these decisions were not made exclusively by the Jus-

tice Department. The political purge reached the highest levels at the White House and was actually prompted by President Bush. So much for no political involvement from the White House.

Mr. Speaker, this information would have never come out if the new Democratic Congress did not take its oversight responsibility seriously. U.S. Attorneys should be free of political pressure and that is simply not the case with the Bush White House.

We will continue to demand answers from an administration that is not too interested in working with Congress. It would be nice if they would finally learn their lesson and realize that it is time to level with both the Congress and the American people.

□ 1030

GOVERNMENT'S OBLIGATION TO AMERICA'S HEROES

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Walter Reed and this government's obligation to America's heroes.

On Monday, I toured Walter Reed. My first impression is that one visit is not enough. I will make several more trips to the facility to speak with patients and staff about what they need and how we can best address this unacceptable situation.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation's finest deserve the finest medical care, plain and simple. This Friday, I will continue my tour of local VA facilities when I visit the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa. This is one of the largest VA facilities in the country, and serves many veterans in my district.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a Democrat or Republican problem, this is America's problem and it requires a bipartisan solution. I urge my colleagues to work together to quickly address and resolve this situation.

God bless our troops and veterans. They truly are America's heroes.

WHITE HOUSE PLAYING POLITICS

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, after weeks of denial from both the White House and the Department of Justice that politics played no part in the firing of eight U.S. Attorneys, the Attorney General finally admitted yesterday that there is more to the story.

It was an embarrassing and disturbing set of e-mails between the White House's political operatives and Gonzales's chief of staff that clearly revealed that there were political concerns involved in the political purge, or firing. The chief of staff resigned after

e-mails were released to the New York Times and the Washington Post, but questions still remain unanswered.

What about those at the top? Is it plausible that the Attorney General was unaware of the actions of his own chief of staff? When is the President going to hold members of his Cabinet accountable for misdeeds and mistakes?

The Attorney General's office is supposed to be above politics. An independent judiciary is one of the hallmarks of this great democracy which we, as Americans, promote around the world. There is simply no place for politics at the Justice Department. But sadly, it appears that the Justice Department has become a pawn of the Republican Party.

CONGRATULATING CHANDLER AND HIGHLAND CHOIRS

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two outstanding high school choirs from my district, the Chandler High School Chorale and the Highland High School Concert Choir. These groups were selected by competitive audition out of dozens of high schools across the country to perform on March 19, 2007, at New York's famed Carnegie Hall.

The Chandler High School Chorale from Chandler, Arizona, has already distinguished itself as one of the top high school choirs in the Nation. Led by Dean Anderson, the chorale has performed across the country and around the world over the past two decades. This is the choir's second performance in the Carnegie Hall National High School Choral Festival, a singular achievement in the festival's history.

The Highland High School Concert Choir of Gilbert, Arizona, has also secured a spot in the festival. Led by Rita Scholz, the concert choir has performed in the Arizona ACDA conference, the Arizona Music Educators Association Conference, and the 1998 MENC National Convention. The Highland High School choral music program consists of 170 students in five performing ensembles, presenting four concerts on campus per year, as well as other performances around the country.

I am honored to have two of the four schools in the Nation chosen from my district.

HALLIBURTON SLAPS TAXPAYERS IN FACE

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, Halliburton has decided to move its headquarters to Dubai. This is a company that has received over \$25 billion worth