

oversight that we should have. We should have been tougher on some of the testimonies that we received. And I think that their suggestions of what the Iraqi Government should do aren't far off. But I think giving them deadlines when we have trouble passing legislation ourselves, I think that is a little unreasonable.

But then the biggest part is the arbitrary pullout date of March 2008. And I think you are setting up failure when you are doing that. That decision has got to be made by our generals in Baghdad.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for letting us have this discussion tonight and allowing us to participate in this discussion. It has been a good one. I hope that the folks that are looking at this bill very hard and trying to decide how they will vote, I hope that they will vote to give our American soldiers all the resources they need, and give the trained professionals the opportunity to direct the fight, not certain Members of the United States Congress. And if that happens, I believe that we are on the road to success.

But we will have to have oversight, and we will have to watch it closely, and I for one am in favor of that, because what I care most about is the lives of those soldiers that I get to say good-bye to and welcome back home on the planes in Texas. And they matter to us in Texas, they matter to us in the United States. And we are proud of them, and we owe them everything we can to keep them alive, healthy, and successful. And I thank you for allowing me to participate.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. And I appreciate the gentleman's comments. And I also want to thank the gentleman from Georgia for allowing us this time tonight.

I think I would leave you and leave the American people not with my words and not with Members of Congress or even General Petraeus or some of the other military leaders, but I will leave you with the words I started off the evening with in my time here is the words of the young men and women that are boots on the ground, that have served not one tour, but two tours, and many of them three tours, when they looked me in my eye and they said, "Congressman, we want to go home. We want to spend time with our families. We want to go back to our communities. But, Congressman, we have a lot invested in this war, probably more than anyone else, and let us finish this job."

And so I urge my colleagues to listen to these young brave men and women that are doing phenomenal things for our country and for the people in Iraq. Listen to the soldiers: Let's finish this job.

Mr. KINGSTON. And, finally, let me say this: Let's defeat this bill. Let's come back on a bipartisan basis and come up with something better, something that gets Democrats and Republicans together in the name of the

troops, America, and international security.

It is in our interests to get the politics out of legislation like this and come back with something better, something more noble. And I believe we can do it, because we are Americans. Thank you.

their training ground, and as their breeding ground.

So what we are debating here today is, I think, exactly the question that is posed by the other side of the aisle: Let's start talking about finishing that job. That job is ridding this world of fundamentalism and terrorism and extremism that poses a threat to us no matter where it is. It is not confined by the borders of some country in the Middle East that we occupy today. It doesn't know the borders of nation states. It poses a threat to us in all forms and from all places.

And so this debate this week, the supplemental bill which this House will vote on shortly, is about refocusing our mission, starting to deal with the realization and the reality of a conflict against terrorism that goes far beyond the borders of Iraq.

Part of what this bill is going to do is not only redeploy our forces, but also bring our troops out of harm's way in that country. You can't ask them to be a referee in what has become a religious conflict in that country, one that military leader after military leader, our own commanding general on the field there, General Petraeus, has said himself just earlier this month that there is no military solution to what has become a civil and religious conflict on the ground.

Job number one is to recognize the limits of our brave men and women in Iraq. They do an unbelievably admirable job every day. We are so grateful, especially those of us in the 30-something Working Group who consider those men and women our contemporaries, that they have chosen to defend this Nation so that others of us are able to serve this country in a different way. In order to honor them, in order to support those troops, we need to bring them out of a fight that our military forces cannot win alone.

But this is also about refocusing that effort, and I think that is what we have to keep on coming back to here, is there are fights still worth fighting in other parts of the world, such as Afghanistan, where we are on the verge of losing control of that country back to the very forces that gave cover and umbrage to the people who attacked this Nation on September 11. Remember, it was not Saddam Hussein that flew planes into tall buildings in New York, it was Osama bin Laden's organization called al Qaeda that used Afghanistan and the Taliban as its place and center of operation. And that country, as we have shifted more forces away from Afghanistan into Iraq, is now falling back into chaos, and part of our mission here has to be a realization that there are places worth fighting, and there are places in which military forces cannot quell ongoing violence. Afghanistan is still a fight worth fighting.

But it is also about focusing our efforts back here at home. And one of the secrets starting to come out, and thanks in part to the work of Representative WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLEIN of Florida). All Members of the House are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to the television audience.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here again to spend a small amount of time on behalf of the Speaker's 30-something Working Group. I thank the Speaker of the House for allowing us this opportunity to come and share with our colleagues and share with the American people some, I think, very important thoughts on what is happening today.

It was interesting, I got to hear the end of our colleagues' remarks from across this side of the aisle; and one of the things they have asked of this Congress, and you hear it over and over again as we talk about this war in Iraq, is that we have to finish the job. And I think there is a question that has to come before that subject. We have got to start asking a little bit more in this place what that job is. I think that is what this debate is about, in part, this week, and the debate that we have renewed here since we have brought the House under new leadership. What is the job that we need to be doing in order to keep this country safe?

The answers to that have come in piecemeal fashion, in dribs and drabs over the past year. But maybe the most substantial piece of information, new information that helped us decide what that job is, was when we got last summer evidence through the National Intelligence Estimate that started to tell us that if our job is what we think it is, which is to do everything we can to keep this country safe, then our own Intelligence Community, the dozens of intelligence officers and organizations that contributed to that report came up with one unfortunately startling conclusion, and that was that our efforts in Iraq are on more days making us less safe as a Nation than making us more safe.

Why? Because we have not only destabilized the region, but we have created what that report called a cause celebre in that country, where extremists and terrorists around the world now see Iraq as their proving ground, as

Representative MEEK and Representative RYAN, the work they did here on the late nights on the floor of the House, we were able to hear a little bit about this in the past year, was that this Congress over the last several years wasn't doing justice to the issues of homeland security, wasn't doing everything that we should be doing in order to protect our own people and our own borders here at home.

So this supplemental bill that everybody hears about that the Congress is going to vote on is not only going to finally do exactly what the will of the people have asked for in the election of last November, which is set a new course in Iraq, but it is also to start refocusing and redoubling our efforts back here at home.

The \$2.6 billion in this bill will be rededicated to the efforts to make sure that terrorism does not find harbor on the shores of this Nation. Over \$1 billion for aviation security, \$90 million for advanced checkpoint explosive detection equipment, \$160 million to increase air cargo screening, \$1.25 billion for new port transit and border security, \$150 million for nuclear security. We can go on and on and on. We are going to finally step up to the plate as a Congress and make sure that we are spending money to win the fight that matters to finish the job.

That job, Mr. Speaker, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, has to be done with the recognition that Iraq has become now a place that, on more days than not, presents a greater danger to this country by creating a hotbed, a training ground, a proving ground for terrorists. We need to start refocusing our efforts on fights that matter.

This is going to be one of the more important pieces of legislation that will come before this Congress, and I think it will honor that job that we are entrusted with, which is to protect this Nation from those that would do harm to it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much to my friend from Connecticut. It is a pleasure to join you in the 30-something Working Group once again.

And we need to remind our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, that, on November 7, the American people sent us a very loud message. They sent us a loud message that they wanted us to move this country in a new direction. We began to do that. We heard them, and we began to do that in implementing our 100 hours agenda, our Six in '06 agenda, by adopting a bill that would establish an increase in the minimum wage, by having the student loan interest rate, by making sure that we hold pharmaceutical companies' feet to the fire and ensure that, for Medicare part D prescription drug beneficiaries, that we negotiate for lower drug prices. We wanted to make sure that we expand the research into uses of alternative energy.

So what do we do? We repealed the subsidies that were given away by the

Republicans to the oil industry so that we can use that money more appropriately to fund alternative energy research. We passed legislation that would implement fully the 9/11 Commission recommendations.

And, on top of that, the other piece of the new direction pie was clearly the message sent by the American people, Mr. MURPHY, that they want a new direction in terms of the war in Iraq. They are sick and tired of the rubber-stamp Republican Congress that we used to have giving the President a blank check, allowing the administration to go unchecked in terms of its utter lack of accountability, allowing contracts to be let with no questions asked; no hearings during the course of the years. We have now completed 4 years of this war, and up until the time when Democrats took over this Congress no questions, no hearings about the direction that the administration was taking this country and this war. A total shift from the war of necessity, which was the war in Afghanistan, which really was in direct response and had the widespread support of the American people, that really and truly was a response to the 9/11 attack; instead, a shift to a war of choice in the war in Iraq. And that was utterly unacceptable when Congress was misled and was given a set of facts on intelligence 4 years ago, when they misled Congress into voting for this war.

Now, we are still mired in chaos there. The administration has allowed Afghanistan to descend back into chaos when we had brought them democracy, and we had beaten the Taliban, and women had been given an opportunity to have freedom. Girls could go to school again. It was a new day in Afghanistan. And that has essentially been squandered. In favor of what? In favor of civil war in Iraq? In favor of us intervening and trying to resolve a civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites that has gone on for hundreds if not 1,000 years?

When is this administration going to recognize that when we say the word, when we refer to the troops, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to think, let's examine the term "troops." I think it is very easy to look at that word and not see it in a personal way. I think that we throw the word "troops" around so much that we forget that troops, a troop is a person.

□ 2100

We are talking about individuals who are fighting for this country and who are doing their duty. And most of them that are over there are on their third tour of duty, Mr. MURPHY.

I know I have told this the last few times that I have been here with my 30-something colleagues, but I went to Walter Reed. I cannot get it out of my mind, because I have two 7-year-old kids and a 3-year-old, and I can't imagine what this family has gone through.

But one of the soldiers that I visited when I went to Walter Reed before we

voted on the escalation resolution and rejected the President's policy, when we voted to adopt that resolution, rejecting the President's policy on escalating this war, I went to Walter Reed before we voted on that. And one of the soldiers I met was with his wife and with his young child, who was 6 years old, this beautiful 6-year-old little boy. And that 6-year-old little boy was so excited that his dad's tour was going to be done in August, and he said, my daddy is coming home forever in August.

His dad was sick in Walter Reed. He had contracted a mysterious illness. But he had been through three tours of duty. Each were a year. And his only son, his only child was 6 years old. And that meant that he missed half of his son's life already.

So when we refer, you know, without thinking to the troops, the troops, if it is a brigade or any one of a number of military terms that we use for individual troops or a collection of troops, we are talking about people.

And if we do not make sure that this supplemental passes, the choice is a plan to get our troops home and provide them with the equipment that they need and an exit strategy and benchmarks to ensure that the we and the administration hold the Iraqi government accountable to meet those benchmarks. The alternative is a continued blank check and a directionless war that has no end in sight.

It is a pretty stark contrast. We can eventually see our way clear and had there been a light at the end of the tunnel and adopt the supplemental and, in addition to that, provide the support that our troops need, the equipment that they need, the plan to get them home, and support for our veterans, which is incredibly important; \$1.7 billion in this bill for health care for our veterans.

We have this glaring, horrific problem at Walter Reed that went ignored by this administration. And thank God we had those, the heads that have rolled. But would they have rolled if Democrats weren't in charge of Congress? No. We know they wouldn't have, because, yet again another scandal would have been swept under the rug. The administration would have tried to ride it out, keep their fingers crossed, squeeze their eyes shut tight and hoped that they could endure until the next media news cycle went through.

No more, not now that we have balanced government, that we have the ability of this Congress to assert our oversight role and to reassert what the founding fathers envisioned, which was our system of checks and balances.

And I think we are all about third party validators here in the 30-Something Working Group. And I noted what this Washington Post article from Wednesday of last week, it was appropriately titled "White House Finds Trouble Harder to Shrug Off." And it goes on to talk about how, in

the past, questions about its, meaning the White House's, actions might have died down without the internal administration e-mails being made public, referring to the U.S. attorney scandal.

There are many issues that would have just been swept aside by this administration in the past, allowed to occur and ignored by the then Republican leadership here. But not now that we have a democratic Congress that is going to make sure that we hold this administration's feet to the fire, and make sure that they are responsible for civil liberties for all Americans, and fiscal responsibility.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, you are exactly right. There is a new day here. And I don't have the comparative experience that you do. I watched this place as an observer for the last several years. One of the reasons that I ran was you sit around in coffee shops and local community halls, and people generally don't pay much attention to the division of labor down here. I mean, people aren't necessarily talking about in their daily lives the co-equal branches of government. They are not thinking too much about the separation of powers. But you know what? They were forced to talk about it in the past several years, because people didn't understand how, in record numbers they were turning out, not only in elections, but in community meetings, to tell their Members of Congress that they needed a change in Iraq, because, not only did they have moral and intellectual objections to what we were doing over there, but they were talking to the families of those troops who were being sent over there without body armor. 18 months it took until our forces over in Iraq had the body armor that they needed. They were looking at statistics like the one we just found out earlier this month which said that 88 percent of the National Guard and Reserve troops are so poorly equipped that they are rated not ready by the military; that we have not one active duty reserve brigade in the United States that is considered combat ready. And so people out there were hearing over and over again from the families of the troops, the troops themselves, which was backing up their own instincts about the backwards nature of our policy in Iraq. And they wondered where Congress was. And they watched this place sort of shut down for a number of years. And they couldn't understand why their elected Members of Congress weren't standing up and asking some questions. I mean, at the very least, asking some questions about what this president was doing over there.

Mr. Speaker, there were six opportunities since this war began for this Congress, on supplemental appropriations bills, to stand up and try to perform some perfunctory oversight over this war; four emergency supplemental

bills, two emergency spending funds in the Department of Defense authorization bills, six times this Congress, under Republican leadership, had an opportunity to stand up and say, you know what? We are going to give you some more money to conduct this war, but we are going to put some strings on it. We are going to try to check your authority in some even elementary way. Not once. All six times this Congress stood down. Despite a lot of yelling and screaming from one-half of this chamber, this Congress stood down and gave President Bush virtually every single thing he wanted.

Now, listen. I understand you might have been lulled into a sense of complacency here. This Congress heard from this president over and over again that things were going well, things were going fine, everything was going to be better. We find out now that all along this administration knew that things weren't going well. In fact, they knew things were pretty terrible on the ground and they were plotting this new strategy, a very different one than I think the American people intended on Election Day. They wanted a new course of direction in Iraq. They didn't necessarily think that that policy was going to be escalation. I think they were counting on de-escalation. It was a slightly new direction, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

But here is the thing, is that people in this country became constitutional scholars over the last couple of years because they started scratching their heads when they picked up the paper every morning as this war was going nowhere but downhill, and there was deafening silence coming from Congress. And so there is a lot of commotion in here about this emergency supplemental bill because it has got some policy in it. We are actually, instead of rubber stamping the President's requests, we are actually saying, if we are going to give you another dime for this war, then we are going to make sure that you honor the will of the American people, that you step up to the plate and listen to the foreign policy community that this Nation has expressed through the Iraq Study Group; that you listen to your own generals, many of which who will tell you over and over again, that though there might be a political or diplomatic solution to what happens on the ground in Iraq, that it cannot be a purely military solution; that you start listening to the families of those troops who have cried out for years to equip them when they go over, to make sure that they are protected when they serve overseas, and to make sure that their health care is taken care of when they come back; that we actually conduct this war, redeploy our forces in a responsible manner. For the first time, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, this Congress is stepping up to the plate and actually conducting that type of oversight.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You know, you are absolutely right. And in

addition to the oversight and accountability and new direction that the supplemental on Iraq seeks to provide for the direction that the actual conduct of the war is taking, it is really imperative that we focus on the portion of the bill that relates to what it does for our veterans because, clearly, this administration, and the former Republican leadership of this Congress, did a disservice to them. They spent, in the 2 years that I was here prior to your arrival, the careless disregard that I noticed for veterans coming from the former Republican leadership was just really unbelievable because so often, Mr. Speaker, I heard our colleagues and friends on the other side of the aisle stand on the floor and profess undying devotion to our Nation's veterans and how it was imperative that we support them.

Well, words are nice. But that is all they were because every opportunity that our colleagues had, in the time that I was here, when I first got here as a freshman, to help our Nation's veterans, the Republicans said no. No.

In January of 2003, which is actually prior to my getting here, the Bush administration actually cut off veterans health care for 164,000 veterans. Don't believe me? You have only to look at the Federal Register to see the documentation of that.

March 2003, the Republican budget cut \$14 billion from veterans health care that was passed by Congress, with 199 Democrats voting no. That was H. Con. Res. 95, vote Number 82 on March 21, 2003.

Then we moved to a year later, March 2004. One would think that the Republicans had a year to think about it and would have finally realized that it was time to stand up for our Nation's veterans. They certainly said it a lot. When it came to doing it, they fell short.

The Republican budget shortchanged veterans health care then by \$1.5 billion. That was passed by Congress with 201 Democrats voting against it.

In March of 2005, another year later, President Bush's budget shortchanged veterans health care by more than \$2 billion for 2005, and cut veterans health care by \$14 billion over 5 years, and passed with 201 Democrats again voting against it.

Now, let's go to the summer of 2005. And I was here by then. I could not believe that this happened, because for months and months the Bush administration denied that there was a shortfall, said that there was no problem, stalled and pushed back. And finally, in summer of 2005, Mr. MURPHY, after democratic pressure, the Bush administration finally had to acknowledge in Fiscal Year 2006 that there was a short fall in veterans health care that was their error of \$2.7 billion. And we had to fight all summer to get it fixed and have an emergency supplemental bill just to address the shortfall. It took pressure and cajoling and shame to finally bring them to the table and get them to do that.

And then in March of 2006, President Bush's budget cut veterans funding by \$6 billion, Mr. Speaker, over 5 years. That was passed by the then Republican controlled Congress.

Fast forward to January 31st of 2007. The new direction Democrats increased the VA health care budget by \$3.6 billion in the joint funding resolution.

And now, I can tell you that in our supplemental that passed out of the House Appropriations Committee last Thursday, on which I sit, with none of the Republicans, zero voting for it, \$1.7 billion to the request for veterans health care, including \$550 million, Mr. Speaker, to address the backlog at the VA health care facilities so we can prevent similar situations like what happened at Walter Reed because certainly, if we didn't know what was going on in Walter Reed, we have to make sure we address the needs of our veterans in health care facilities across this country that are run by this administration's VA agency.

\$250 million for medical administration so that we can insure we have sufficient personnel to address the rising number of veterans that are coming back from Iraq, and that we have to make sure we maintain a high level of services.

\$229 million for treating the growing number of veterans. \$100 million to allow the VA to contract with private mental health care providers to provide veterans, including Guard and Reserve members who so often are neglected. Mr. MURPHY, with quality and timely care; and \$62 million so that we can speed claims processing for returning veterans.

When I went to Walter Reed, and when I have gone home and talked to my veterans, and I know that you have experienced this too, the bureaucracy and the red tape that our veterans have to go through to get care. It is like they put roadblocks, it is like the VA and this administration puts roadblocks in front of our veterans on purpose.

□ 2115

It is like they delight in stalling them. I mean, it is not their money. I don't get it.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Reclaiming my time for a moment, in Connecticut we have the same problem that you talk about. It takes hundreds of days for veterans simply to get qualified for the benefits once they return. I mean, of all the benefit programs that this government runs, it would seem that the veterans program would be the easiest to qualify people for, right? Because what is the qualification? You served in the military. You fought for this country. There is a record of it. It is not hard to find. And yet we have constructed so much bureaucracy and so much red tape.

And I understand that a lot of the folks in the Department are trying to do a lot with not enough funding to do the job, but it is time that we cut

through it because we shouldn't be talking about a system that is of inferior care or equal care to that of what you or I get or people in this community get. Our veterans' health care system should be the gold standard of care in this country. We should accept nothing less than the best that our health care system can offer. And we know not only through the recent revelations at Walter Reed, but also simply in the conversations that we have door to door.

It was amazing to me in this last election, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, as I went door to door over the summer and fall. I did it almost every night, and almost without exception if you knocked on the door of a veteran, someone that had served in World War II through the more recent conflicts, almost without exception health care came up, whether it was a personal problem they had had with the system or a problem that a family member or one of their brothers and sisters in arms had encountered when they came back. Almost every single veteran brought that up because they have a notion, and it is exactly right, that when they come back here, their community should be able to stand up for them and make sure that they continue to be healthy, certainly make sure that the injuries they received in defending this country are treated expeditiously, efficiently, and with the best care possible.

And so it was remarkable to me how often this issue came up, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, just as you talked to people door to door. It was so real and so palpable because to the people who have served this country, there is no greater dishonor, and I am speaking as someone who has not served, but who has had the honor to know many that have, no greater dishonor to them than to come back to a country that doesn't express a deep and daily sense of gratitude for that service.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for all the bad news that I heard on the campaign trail, the good news is this bill that we will vote on will honor that service, one of the biggest infusions of funding support for the veterans' health care system that this country has ever seen. And I can just hope that when I go back out there this summer, when I am going out just to knock on doors to check on people in a noncampaign environment, that you will hear a very different story, that they will feel finally their stories are being heard.

I yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you. Because now they finally have responsive government, Mr. MURPHY. They finally know that the Members who represent them collectively in this Chamber, the Members that are leading this Chamber are hearing them, that it is not falling on deaf ears; that this institution is not of the special interests, for the special interests, and by the special interests any longer. Now we have restored this to actually be the people's House, and our leadership and

our agenda is a reflection of the interests of the people.

And as much as they might like to say that that wasn't the case, privately in their heart of hearts when they went to sleep at night, our Republican colleagues had to lay down in the dark by themselves when they went to bed and know that they weren't addressing the needs of the American people.

I mean, I am not someone who lives and dies by polling, but look at the polling. Look at the numbers towards the end of last year and how the American people generally felt about the job that this Congress was doing. That is a reflection on all of us. It is just appalling that the American people would have confidence in the twenties in the likelihood that Congress was going to be responsive to them. They would express support for their individual Member of Congress, but collectively as an institution they have lost confidence in us.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Reclaiming my time just for one point. Before coming over here, I was reading a really interesting front-page article, and I think it was a recent Newsweek or Time, and it was entitled, sort of, *The Downfall of the Right*, and it was talking about how the sort of conservative ideology has really fallen by the wayside in the past several years. And one of the things it had talked about was that when the class of 1994 was ushered into office, there was a sort of purity to their ideology. You disagreed with a lot of the things they stood for, but they did come in here as reformers. I mean, they did come in here and set a whole new bunch of rules for this House, how this place was governed. They changed the franking rules. They put in term limits. And you could have disagreements with some of the results of that ideology, but they did come in here with some real ideas rooted in some intellectual discussion about how you change Congress.

And what this article was sort of pointing out was that over time, over the last 12 years, the ruling party of this Congress became one that was guided by a set of ideas to one that was guided by a collection of special interests; that it was simply kind of an amalgamation of different lobbyists and different industries that would sort of pull and push for control over this place, and it stopped being one that was guided by any real ideas about how to move this country forward.

And it was an incredibly interesting survey on how the Republican Party has changed over the years. And if you want to know why their reign ended after 12 years, in part I think it is a recognition from the American people that this place stopped being about ideas and in the end started being about those special interests.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I want to segue to the U.S. attorney matter because what you just said brought something to mind. But before I do that, I do want to throw out yet another example of the neglect, of the

just stark neglect, that this administration has and has had for our veterans. I mean, take Walter Reed. I have a timeline in front of me, a neglect timeline for the treatment of the soldiers that are housed at Walter Reed and that seek services at Walter Reed, going back to July of 2004.

First I want to just put up this Newsweek Magazine cover, Mr. Speaker. This is a young woman who clearly has lost her legs, and I think the picture speaks all that it needs to without words. But the caption on the picture on the cover of Newsweek, which was the week of March 5 of this year, says: "Shattered in body and mind. Too many veterans are facing poor care and red tape. Why we're failing our wounded." And Walter Reed, there is no better example of what this article spoke to, Mr. Speaker, than the neglect timeline at Walter Reed.

If you go back to July of 2004, again, Mr. MURPHY, in the summer before I was elected, you had Major General Kevin Kiley appointed Walter Reed Army Medical Center's Commander.

In mid to late 2004, you actually had our colleague from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) and his wife stop visiting the wounded at Walter Reed out of frustration; Mr. YOUNG, who has been a champion for veterans. Believe me when I tell you that our colleague from Florida Mr. YOUNG is a legend, an absolute legend, that is revered in a bipartisan way in this institution. But Mr. YOUNG said he voiced concerns to commanders, including Major General Kiley, over troubling incidents he witnessed, but was rebuffed or ignored. He said, "When Bev or I would bring problems to the attention of authorities at Walter Reed, we were made to feel very uncomfortable." And the source of that was the Washington Post.

November of 2005, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman STEVE BUYER announced that for the first time in at least 55 years, "Veterans service organizations will no longer have the opportunity to present testimony before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees."

Now, talking about closing off access to the people that we are here to serve, can you imagine that they wouldn't let veterans service organizations testify in front of the Veterans' Affairs Committee? I mean, it is just mind-boggling.

August of 2006, Army Major General George Weightman assumes command of Walter Reed, replacing Major General Kiley.

September 2006, 13 Senators, 11 Democrats and 2 Republicans, sent a letter to urge then-Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman THAD COCHRAN, Republican from Mississippi, and Ranking Member ROBERT BYRD, Democrat from West Virginia, to preserve language in the House defense appropriations bill that prohibits the U.S. Army from outsourcing 350 Federal jobs at Walter Reed. A similar provi-

sion, introduced by Senators MIKULSKI and SARBANES, was defeated by a close 50-48 vote during the bill's consideration in the previous week.

Then in September 2006, Walter Reed awards a 5-year, \$120 million contract to IAP Worldwide Services, which is run by Al Neffgen, a former senior Halliburton official, to replace a staff of 300 Federal employees. Halliburton again. Who headed up Halliburton, Mr. MURPHY? Do you recall who headed up Halliburton?

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. For a period of time, it might have been the gentleman that currently serves as our Vice President.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Yes, I believe you are right. The gentleman that is currently our Vice President.

In February of 2007, just about a month ago, the number of Federal employees providing facilities management services at Walter Reed, Mr. Speaker, had dropped from 300. There were 300 Federal employees that were replaced with a \$120 million private contract run by a former senior Halliburton official, and the 300 dropped to fewer than 60. The remaining 60 employees went to only 50 private workers; 300 to 50 private workers.

February 19, we know it was revealed by the Washington Post that there was an expose detailing mistreatment of veterans at housing on the grounds of Walter Reed Medical Center. And what has unfolded since then is resignations of top generals, resignations of the Secretary of the Army. Heads are rolling, Mr. MURPHY, as they should be, because of the profound neglect of our wounded veterans and our veterans that need assistance from that very fine institution.

Not only did the heads roll, but it led the Appropriations Committee last week to adopt an amendment offered by my colleague who sits on my subcommittee, Mr. LAHOOD, to ensure that Walter Reed Army Medical Center is not closed down because not only do we need to get to the bottom of what is going on there, but we need to make sure that that institution not only continues to serve our Nation's veterans, but serves them well.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, you talk to Members on the other side of the aisle, and I think they share that same concern for veterans. I mean, they do. We are not suggesting that anybody in this Chamber was sitting here intentionally deciding that they were going to create the situations that happened on the ground at Walter Reed. It is just a matter of choices. It is a matter of the choices that were made here. And whether they were made consciously or unconsciously, it resulted in an abysmal situation for veterans.

The choices that ended up getting made here when it came to the fiscal situation in this country was to hand out massive, unprecedented tax breaks to the top 1 percent of income earners in this Nation while we were fighting a

war. While we were fighting a war. It never happened in this country. We have never asked this country to go into war without asking the entire country to sacrifice in order to pay for it, because here is the thing: The cost of the war isn't just the guns and the troops and the tanks and the armor. It is the health care for the people that come back here afterwards. The cost of the war is the whole thing.

And so we ended up short-changing our troops and short-changing the people that came back here because we decided that what was more important was to hand out another round of tax breaks, this last one to the persons in our districts, the rare folks who are lucky enough to make \$1 million a year. They got \$40,000 back from that tax cut.

I know if I showed up at their door and asked them, if you had to choose, if you had to choose as someone who is taking in income of \$1 million or more a year, would you take the full value of that tax cut if you knew that that was going to leave the decrepit conditions that we have found at Walter Reed, that that was going to result in waiting times of up to a year for services for the men and women that fight to protect us overseas? I know what their answer would be, and it should have been the answer of this Congress.

It now does get to be the answer. The answer now gets to be that our priority is going to be making sure that those folks are taken care of when they come home.

And do you know what? We have already voted for tax cuts in this Congress. You can do both. You can still find a way to provide targeted tax relief to people who need it, as the small business tax cut bill here in the House a couple of weeks ago, and honor those commitments.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we honor those commitments. And I was strucken by what our colleague from Georgia said at the end of the last hour when he referenced the need to be bipartisan, to come together and work on bipartisan solutions and move forward together. I was really glad to hear him say that.

But the room was shockingly silent for the last 2 years that I served here, that there really weren't calls for bipartisanship or locking elbows together and finding the way to the best public policy on issues of mutual concern.

But be that as it may, we agree that we should move forward in a bipartisan way. And, in fact, the open government and ethics package that we adopted as part of our New Direction agenda on the first day that we were here was a commitment on the part of our leadership and on the part of our Speaker NANCY PELOSI that we would have the most inclusive, open, and honest Congress in American history. And we have steadily been doing that every single day.

□ 2130

Unfortunately, the administration doesn't seem to be buying into that same concept of bipartisanship. Again, very nice words are said. I have seen the President stand in the Rose Garden and stand on the South Lawn and stand in lots of different really attractive camera shots talking about the need for bipartisanship. And yet, again, when it has come to light that there was a proposal out of the White House to fire 93 U.S. attorneys and subsequently we have gone back and forth with the White House about what the actual truth behind those suggested and then eventual firing of eight of them was, we have not been able to get a straight answer.

In fact, we have had a concern that administration officials, including the Attorney General, have come before Congress and been less than forthcoming. I want to be careful about the words I choose, but it has gotten to the point where we have been told so many different things about what was behind those firings that we are at the-boy-who-cried-wolf point now.

Again, speaking as a mom, I know I have talked to my kids, and sometimes children will be less than truthful when they are concerned that they might get in trouble. I know that my kids sometimes are worried they are going to get in trouble and that the potential punishment is worse if they tell me the truth than if they kind of soft-pedal the actual facts, and maybe what happens to them will be not the worst thing. But I always find out. I always eventually know what really happened. And that is exactly what is going on here.

Any parent will tell you that they have sat their children down and counseled them, "You know, it is always better to just tell me the truth, because I am going to find out anyway, and the consequences are going to be far worse for you when I do find out than if you were just up front with me in the beginning."

Maybe we have to talk to the President and the White House and the administration like moms talk to their kids.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I feel like I should admit something to you now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Not to be your mother or anything now, but, seriously, maybe an elementary back-to-basics conversation is what is necessary, because clearly the process that they have been taking us through has been less than honest. We have had a lot of misleading excuses.

We have reached a point, and I sit on the House Judiciary Committee, Mr. MURPHY, where now our subcommittee has taken the step of feeling like in order to get to the bottom of it, we had to authorize the committee to issue subpoenas to bring the Attorney General and to bring Karl Rove and the administration officials associated with this scandal, with potentially being

less than truthful to this Congress, with covering up what actually happened, maybe a subpoena may be necessary.

I think that is sad and unfortunate, but we cannot have less than truth when we ask administration officials questions when they come before this institution.

I am glad about the potential for bipartisanship. During the hearing we had in Judiciary yesterday, a number of our Republican colleagues indicated they were also unhappy with what was going on with this administration. In fact, specifically on the issue of the attorney firings, one of their top leaders, another good friend from Florida, Congressman PUTNAM, actually said that he questioned the Attorney General's ability to continue to serve. I will quote what he said in the Washington Post.

He said, "His ability to effectively serve the President and lead the Justice Department is greatly compromised." During a lunchtime interview with reporters, he said, "I think he himself should evaluate his ability to serve as an effective Attorney General."

We are talking about the number four ranking Republican in their leadership on that side. Believe me, I know ADAM PUTNAM. He has served with integrity in our legislature in Florida, and does so here. If he is at that point, then you know there is something seriously wrong. There is seriously something wrong.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I think it serves us well to sort of try to outline for people why this is such a big deal. Why do you have a senior member of the Republican leadership coming as close as you can come to calling for the resignation of the Republican sitting U.S. Attorney General? Why do you have the papers filled with this day after day? Why do you have the Judiciary Committee going to the unfortunate but necessary step of actually having to subpoena members of the administration to come before us?

It is pretty simple. If you are an average Joe out there, you want to know that if the guy next door to you commits a really bad crime, that he is going to go to jail, no matter who his political friends are, no matter what political connections he has; that justice should be blind. Justice should certainly be blind to politics.

Now, we can freely admit that when Bill Clinton came into office, he sent out notices that he was intending to get rid of all of the prosecutors and everybody was going to have to reapply.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield for a second, when then-President Clinton did that, correct me if I am wrong, he was asking for the resignations of the Bush appointees, of the Republican appointees of his predecessor.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Correct.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Now, my understanding when this scandal occurred, we are talking about a situation where the President, I believe, was considering asking for the resignation of 93 of his own U.S. attorneys. Subsequently, they decided maybe that was going a little too far, so I think the number is eight, they only fired eight.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. That is correct.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. My recollection also is that there was some interference and some questions about specific cases for each individual U.S. attorney that were raised by some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle during this process before those firings.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. And there is the rub, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, is that it is one thing to decide to clean house and say okay, everybody goes. I am not going to examine all of your pasts and your political connections and whether you have done what you have asked, because I haven't served one day. I am just going to come in as a new president, which is their prerogative, and just clean house.

That not what happened here. In fact, there is a reason why somebody within the White House actually recommended that they fire everybody, because they knew that if you are going to start firing prosecutors, people that are given by the public and by this government the very grave responsibilities of carrying out our system of justice, then you better not inject any politics into it, because the worst thing that can happen to the American justice system, and for all of the inefficiencies of government, one thing we can stand very proudly by, is our system of blind justice.

We do have a system of justice that by and large makes decisions without political influence. If you are my neighbor and you did something wrong, no matter who you know, now matter how powerful you are, now matter how much money you have, you are going to pay for it. You are going to be held accountable for it.

But if prosecutors throughout this country start having to look over their shoulder every time that they decide to try that rich guy or that influential guy or politically powerful guy, and they have to wonder whether the consequence of that decision is going to be the political boss somewhere decides their job shouldn't be their's anymore, then that has immense, immense consequences for our system of government and our system of justice.

I know it is just eight. I know it is just eight. But if that message that those eight guys, men and women, those eight men and women, who for some reason displayed some act of political disloyalty to the President, don't get to hold their job anymore, then that has an unbelievable chilling effect on the rest of our prosecutors, and I think it has dire consequences for our system of justice.

So it is a big deal, and it should be a big deal. I hope that the President sees the light of day and decides to put the people that were responsible for this decision before Congress so that everything can be aired out.

His offer now is obviously certainly not acceptable. As the chairman of the Judiciary Committee today said, Representative CONYERS, said we might as well go down to the bar down the street and have this conversation, because that is about as much meaningful information as you are going to get out of that conversation.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. If the gentleman will yield, we should point out the President believes he magnanimously offered was to offer that the officials associated with this scandal to speak with, essentially, the Judiciary Committee, not under oath, that there be no transcript, and that Congress would not subsequently subpoena them.

That is when Mr. CONYERS said, yes, we could just go have a drink and have that kind of private conversation which reveals nothing, which has no accountability whatsoever.

Mr. MURPHY, the other thing that I think is important to note is that the first answer that we were given about why, and these people do serve at the pleasure of President. Again, that is why I drew my kid analogy. Because I never understand when I ask my kids, and, fortunately, I have very honest children, so this doesn't happen often, but little kids, when they are learning as they are growing up, they do dumb things.

What brought this to mind was the first answer that the administration gave was that, well, you know, we were concerned. We lost confidence in their ability. They weren't up to snuff, they weren't very good attorneys and they weren't doing a very good job.

As you might imagine, these are eight pretty capable people who thought they were doing a good job. When they had their ability questioned, a bunch of them got mad. We are talking about very loyal Republicans here, some who had been long-standing supporters and contributors to the Republican Party. They went out there and defended themselves and said, wait a second. I am pretty darn qualified individual. How dare you.

Then we dug a little deeper. It turns out, well, it is not that they were not qualified. It is more that they weren't aggressively pursuing Democrats who were being investigated in their jurisdiction.

The bottom line is we really don't know. And then they started pointing fingers at each other inside the administration. First, it was really Karl Rove. No, it wasn't Karl Rove, it was Harriet Miers that called for the firings.

The bottom line is to restore the confidence of the American people in their government, which is what we absolutely need to do, and that is our

goal. Because it was badly shaken by the Republican leadership, we need to get to the bottom of scandals like this.

I know we are getting closer to our end time and we want to make sure we have an opportunity to encourage people, if they have any questions or want to see the charts more closely we have seen tonight, we will give out the Web site.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I think, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, it is part of a pattern. Political influence in the judiciary, we are finding that prosecutors are being fired for not being loyal to the President. We find it in some of our scientific agencies, where basic scientific accepted data is being suppressed by the administration because it doesn't meet their political goals within some of our medical approval agencies and boards. Decisions are being made based on ideology, rather than on science.

We have had hearings on a lot of these subjects in the committee that I sit on, the Government Reform Committee, and you actually get some indignation expressed, as you said, from both sides of the aisle, from Republicans and Democrats on this issue. I think there is a bipartisan frustration at the administration's willingness to inject politics into a lot of places where politics have no business.

But at the same time that I accept there is criticism coming from both sides, I also note that there were a lot of things we probably would never have found out about unless we were asking the questions, and the questions weren't getting asked for a very long time. They are getting asked now. Maybe the answers are terribly palatable.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Or forthcoming.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Or forthcoming. When we get them, they are not the ones we want necessarily, but at least we are starting to get them, because we are asking them. And if you want to talk about restoring people's faith in government, we have to open it back up again. I hope that is something we can engage in on both sides.

I yield before we give the contact information.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It has been a pleasure to join you, Mr. MURPHY. I have to tell you how thrilled I was that we expanded the 30-Something Working Group and we have now given ourselves a new chapter to talk about the issues that are important to the American people, and we have now the ability to hold the administration's feet to the fire and exercise Congress' oversight role which the Founding Fathers envisioned.

I would be happy to yield back to the gentleman to close us out.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I am happy my application was accepted, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

The 30-Something Working Group, we were given this opportunity by the

Speaker of the House, who has been so generous to allow us time on the floor to talk about issues that affect folks not only in their thirties, but issues that affect people throughout this country.

You can e-mail the group at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, and you can always visit us on the web at www.speaker.gov/30something.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, it was a pleasure to share this hour with you.

□ 2145

IMMIGRATION

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening on behalf of the Immigration Reform Caucus of this House of Representatives. Hopefully, as we go forward with the Immigration Reform Caucus in a bipartisan fashion, and our new chairman hopefully will be joining me during this hour, and that is Congressman Brian Bilbray from the great State of California who is determined to make the Immigration Reform Caucus of this House a bipartisan organization, and I really look forward to that change.

As we reach out to our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, both Republicans and Democrats, I think we can solve this problem of immigration, and in particular, illegal immigration. We have to do that, Mr. Speaker.

This is a hugely important issue. It is an issue to our security, it is an issue to our economy, and it is an issue to this great country, this sovereign Nation, the United States.

Tonight I come to my colleagues to talk about a problem not regarding illegal immigration, we may have an opportunity tonight to discuss some of those issues which are so important and which we have worked so hard on in the 109th Congress and hopefully we will continue to do so in the 110th Congress; but my concerns tonight will be addressed toward a legal immigration problem, Mr. Speaker. Let me repeat that, legal. That is a situation that we refer to as chain migration. Let me try to explain that to my colleagues.

I have here to my left a first slide, if you will, in this presentation. As we look at it, Mr. Speaker, at first glance those in the audience tonight might think, gee, GINGREY is up here with a chart of his high school or college chemistry periodic table; or somebody else may say, no, that is his grandchildren's Pac-Man game. It is a confusing chart to look at, but I am going to hopefully be able to, in a short period of time, to simplify this rather arcane, complex looking first slide. But this really is what this whole problem, this legal immigration problem is about, this chain migration issue, Mr. Speaker.