

Now, that is a space age, Star Wars kind of a thing. But when you think about what we can do with that kind of science and how we can improve our herds, how we can improve productivity, how we can improve the meat quality and the feed conversion factors, how we can reduce and eradicate and in some cases eliminate disease, how we can work with all of that, at the same time opening up the field so that the ag producers across this country can continue to make a living and feed America is a very, very optimistic story. And I think we are in the best position right now in agriculture that we have ever been in the history of the United States and, in fact, the history of the world, and I am just sorry I am not going to be around long enough to see where it is going to take the next generation of humanity.

But I wanted to express those things. And I appreciate it. And I yield back to the gentleman from Nebraska and thank him.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. I thank the gentleman from Iowa. As I wrap this up, I certainly want to thank the gentleman for really focusing on the future, and I think the sky is the limit when we can focus on the benefits of agriculture and perhaps the things we take for granted.

But as we talk about the future and younger generations engaging in agriculture, I find it unconscionable that the so-called death tax, or, in a more technical sense, the estate tax, would go back up to 55 percent, and that a subsequent generation on a farm or ranch would have to come up with cash to inherit that farm or ranch. That is sad. That is un-American. I think it is insensitive to taxpayers, and I think it has an immense disregard for the future and economic impact that that would have.

I think too many people think that only certain departments of the grocery store really come from agriculture, as we would think of it. But the fact is it is involved in health care, whether it is pharmaceutical, surgical sutures, ointments, X-ray film, latex gloves, gelatin for capsules and heart valves, or with construction, lumber, paint, brushes, tar paper, other things. And I could go on a list that would take much more time than I can consume here today.

But the fact is, we have come a long way, and we can go a lot further as we focus on opportunities, as we look at the fact that we need each other. Farmers need consumers. Consumers need farmers. And in between those entities, there is opportunity, whether it is processing, whether it is research. I think we can go a lot further than we have already come as we look to the future.

□ 1430

Again I would like to thank the Agriculture Council of America for providing a lot of this information and the very hands-on approach that they take

and certainly look forward to working with them as I serve the people of the Third District of Nebraska and as farmers of the Third District of Nebraska and farmers and ranchers continue to feed the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LOEBSACK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, and our entire Democratic leadership for the opportunity for the 30-Something Working Group to once again come to the floor and talk about the priorities of the Democratic Caucus and the new direction for America that we are humbled to be able to lead this country in.

On November 7 of last year, the American people spoke loudly and clearly, Mr. Speaker, that it was imperative that we move this Nation in a new direction on a variety of issues, not the least of which is the direction that we are going in in this war in Iraq. And I am so proud today to be able to stand here knowing that the vote that I cast personally and that the 217 other Members that passed that legislation off this floor this afternoon cast so that we can now finally begin to ensure that our troops will have the armor that they need, the armor and equipment that they need, a plan to get them home most importantly, and to ensure that we can begin to transition in Iraq so that the Iraqi people will be able to stand on their own, run their democracy and make sure that they can focus on solving the civil war and the strife that is going on in the midst of their country, because that is essentially what we have been doing for them. What we have been doing for them that we can no longer continue to do is inserting ourselves in the middle of their chaos without plans to be able to withdraw, without a single brigade of their army completely trained to stand on their own. It is time and the American people have insisted that it is time to begin to move in the direction where we can shift the mission from combat to training, where we can focus our troops that will remain there by the end of next year on counterterrorism, on putting down the insurgency and on making sure that the Iraqi troops are well trained so that they can continue to move forward with their experiment in democracy. That is what the legislation that we passed today will do, and I am so proud of our caucus and of our colleagues and of our leadership for the work that we have done together, for the unity that we showed, for the courage that so many of our colleagues showed, Mr.

Speaker. We have a very diverse caucus, a very diverse group of Democratic Members who for a variety of reasons, for a variety of soul searching were able to come together from all of the different facets of the philosophical spectrum, to come together today and pass this extremely important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in public office for 14 years. I have only served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 2 years, but that was one of the most emotional experiences and the most difficult experiences that I know I have gone through. And I cast that vote knowing that I had the support of my constituents, knowing and confident that my constituents want to make sure that we can bring those American troops home.

I had an opportunity to travel and spend some time with our troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center a few weeks ago before we voted on the resolution opposing the President's escalation proposal. I have said this the last few times we have talked about this on the floor. I had a chance to speak to a number of different troops individually. One young man who has stayed with me, and I think I've thought about him and his family every single day since then. As a mom with little kids, I have 7-year-old twins and a 3-year-old little girl. Almost every major vote I cast, I cast with them in mind. There is another generation of Americans who we are going to protect from that vote that we cast today. And this young man who I had a chance to meet with, he had just gotten home from his third tour of duty. Each was a year. His third tour and his 6-year-old little boy was in the room along with his wife and his little boy was so excited and just full of vibrancy and life. He shook my hand. It was just so neat to be able to talk to him. He told me that his daddy was finally going to be coming home for good, forever, in August. He had come down with a really inexplicable illness and was convalescing at Walter Reed. And when the young man told me that he had been through his third tour of duty and that his boy was 6, it was not lost on me that he had missed half of his son's life, a 6-year-old little boy with his dad gone for 3 separate years. That is just unacceptable. That is not what the procedures are supposed to require of our men and women in uniform. There is supposed to be at least 365 days of noncombat duty in between tours. The legislation that we passed today will ensure that that will happen. The legislation that we passed today will ensure that our troops have the equipment that they need. It will ensure that \$1.7 billion in funding will provide the health care that our veterans need.

I listened to a lot of the speeches on the floor, almost all of them, today. What we continually heard from our friends on the other side of the aisle was almost as if maybe they didn't

read the bill, maybe they weren't paying attention, but more likely they were just being political. I heard comments about how our legislation didn't provide the equipment for the troops, when up until now it is this President, with the acknowledgment of the military leadership, that has sent our troops into harm's way without the proper training. We have the least trained, least prepared Army that we have ever had at this point, spread as thin as they possibly could be spread, and then they have the nerve on the other side of the aisle to suggest that it is us that is not providing the protection for our troops. That is ludicrous. I'm not sure whether they're not listening to their constituents when they're home or not having a chance like I did and like I know you have to sit down with troops who have been in the line of duty. Maybe they're listening with different ears or maybe more likely they're listening with a different heart, because the heart that I listened with knows that we can't allow the pointless loss of human life anymore, not for our men and women in uniform and not for the Iraqi people who are also losing their lives in the midst of chaos. If we are going to focus on the war on terror, we should be shifting our approach to the war in Afghanistan, where we provide a significant infusion of funding, badly needed funding so that we can turn Afghanistan back around.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, after the tragedy of 9/11 and we initially went in to respond to that tragedy, to stand up for America, we went into Afghanistan and we got rid of the Taliban and we made sure that we could restore human rights in that country and we could restore the rights of women to go to school and to walk in public without a burqa and to really shine the light of freedom on a country that lived in darkness for decades. Instead, this President and this Republican leadership shifted our focus, lost our purpose, lost their way, or gave up is really a better way to put it, and invaded Iraq under false pretenses, provided this Congress, many of our colleagues who voted "yes" relying on the information from this administration that it was out of necessity. This wasn't a war of necessity. This was a war of choice. We don't have the luxury of going into wars of choice. Mr. Speaker, when we have wars of necessity like Afghanistan, when we have a situation like we have in Iran, where we have a leader in that country who has threatened the very existence of the State of Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, where we have nations in the Middle East who truly want to see democracy fail. Instead, we have created an incubator for terrorism in Iraq.

I heard colleagues on the other side of the aisle speak today about how we were going to lose the war on terror if we passed this legislation today. Well, the administration has made the war on terror worse, has made the likeli-

hood of being attacked greater by creating the cesspool that exists in that nation. We must take the steps that the legislation that I proudly supported and that you proudly supported today, that that legislation will do so that we can put some benchmarks in place, so that we can make sure, just like the President said on January 10, so that we can establish some benchmarks, make sure that the Iraqi leadership meets those benchmarks, and if they don't, then the blank check and the open-ended commitment to this pointless war will end. That is the direction that we are now moving in.

I am pleased to be joined by my good friend and neighbor from the State of Florida, my colleague, Mr. KENDRICK MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I can tell you, Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, it was definitely a pleasure hearing you speak as we were talking before in the cloakroom, in the back here, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about what happened here on this floor less than 2 hours ago. A major vote that took place here in this House. And it didn't pass by one or two votes. It only takes one vote to win as it relates to a bill or what have you, a resolution moving through the floor here. I just want to say that I am proud of the Members that voted in the affirmative for this bill. The emergency supplemental funding bill has started a new era as it relates to how Americans think about the war in Iraq, how our troops are being treated in Iraq and Afghanistan and even here back at home on health care services. And also it gave voice to those individuals that went to the voting booth looking for representation, looking for a new direction, looking for the Congress to carry out the kind of oversight that we should carry out as Members of Congress on behalf of any action that will involve the American taxpayer and in many cases involve foreign nations loaning money to the United States of America. We have to pay all of that back. We have to be accountable to the U.S. taxpayer. And we have to make sure that we provide the oversight for the American people.

Now, I heard Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ speak to the point. As some members came to the floor to vote against the bill, some voted against the bill because that's just what they do. They vote against war. They vote against whatever their philosophy may be as it relates to war, but also you had people that voted for the bill that is against war, that want to see an end to war. No other emergency supplemental up until the one that came before this House today actually put forth benchmarks for the Iraqi government to meet, actually hold the feet to the fire of the executive branch saying that if you are going to send additional troops, then the parameters that you put on the Iraqi government will actually be enforced. Department of Defense regulations as it relates to how troops can be deployed and the readi-

ness of our troops before they go into theater. They wrote that in the Department of Defense, the administrator, bureaucrats, Secretary, what have you, in the Bush administration wrote those regulations. We put it inside this piece of legislation and enforced it. And also we made sure that Members had the opportunity to show their constituents where they stand.

Now, let's talk a little bit about that, because I heard the gentlewoman from Florida mention something, folks coming to the floor, saying things like, "never before in the history of the country that we've ever voted to micromanage." They would use words like "micromanage." "We've never come to the floor to limit anything as it relates to war."

And when will we have a victory?

And that has never, ever, ever happened.

□ 1445

You know, I am in my office, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and I am watching these Members on the floor, and I spoke to this point last night, because last night I was here after 10, 10:30, I actually closed the House last night, moved to adjourn the House last night, and I couldn't help but try to get the evidence to show that it has happened.

As a matter of fact, timelines have been set by some of the very Republican leaders that are now in the Republican leadership right now that came to this well here today and had issue with what the majority of the Members of the House wanted to do and ultimately did in the vote.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure, because this is what this whole 30-Something Working Group is about, making sure that we shed light where it needs to be. Let's look at this.

Bosnia, June 24, 1997, the House brought to the floor an amendment that would set a timeline and a date certain for withdrawal of U.S. peacekeepers from the mission in Bosnia. Pay attention to these dates.

On December 13, 1995, an attempt to prohibit funds from being used for the deployment of ground troops in Bosnia. It actually failed 210-218, which I have the names of those individuals that are in the Republican leadership now that voted in the affirmative to try to stop that from happening.

December 13, 1995, a resolution passed expressing serious concerns in opposition to the deployment of troops in Bosnia, where ethnic cleansing was taking place. Some of our same Members in the Republican leadership voted to pass that piece of legislation.

Again, June, there was also another vote that was taken on June 24, 1997, voted to set a timeline, date certain for withdrawal of troops from Bosnia, and that passed 278-148. The date certain that troops had to leave was June 30, 1998.

I am going to say it again. Some of the same individuals that voted today against, their reason for voting against

this emergency supplemental for the men and women in harm's way and the veterans to be able to receive the kind of healthcare they deserve, voted for a timeline in Bosnia.

Let's talk about the comparisons here. The Bosnia conflict was 18 months, Mr. Speaker. This conflict is 48-plus months, moving well into its fifth year. The cost of Bosnia to the United States of America, \$7 billion. The cost of the war in Iraq, \$379 billion and counting, well beyond \$379 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars and loan money.

Casualties in Bosnia, casualties in Bosnia, I repeat, zero of U.S. troops. Zero. Casualties as of 10 a.m. today in Iraq of U.S. personnel, troops, men and women in uniform, 3,229. I would even go further to say 13,415 wounded in action and have returned to duty. I would even go further by saying 10,772 wounded in action who cannot return back to duty.

I think it is important that we look at the facts. Again, I want to say we didn't come down here to play around, we came down here to share the facts, because we are both very busy people and we have things to do and this is the end of the workweek and Members are heading back to their districts. We want to go back to our districts too. But we want to make sure this moment of leadership, this moment of courage, is in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, to let it be known that we did have Members that stood up on behalf of our men and women in uniform and we had the men and women of this House that were in the majority that were willing to put their name and their vote on the line on behalf of the men and women that serve our country and their families.

I have the vote sheet here from the Bosnia vote. Every Republican voted yes for the timeline, with the exception of two. It is right here. Any Member that wants to run down to the floor and take a look at that, they can.

Also we have here the vote as it relates to passing the resolution that we had today, which is the emergency supplemental, roll call vote 186. I can say for the two Republicans who voted in opposite of the Republican leadership, when we took the vote on June 24, 1997, were consistent today of the only two Republicans that voted in the affirmative with the majority of the House to make sure that we place benchmarks and a timeline in Iraq. Consistency for those two Members, that anyone can find in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, and we commend them for their consistency.

So I think it is important, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, that we look at the hard facts here and the tough votes that need to be taken. Does everyone agree with what is in the emergency supplemental? I don't agree with everything that is in the emergency supplemental. But for the greater good of the men and women in harm's way, I voted for it.

There are Members in here who had a rough time and it was also very tough

vote for them. But they didn't want to continue to look in the eyes of their constituents as they go to high school programs and junior high school programs and they are asked a question, as I am asked a question, and I don't ask folks for their voter registration, I don't ask, well, are you a constituent of mine or not?

The prevailing question is, Congressman, how long are we going to be in Iraq? I can't answer the question, because the President says we are going to be there as long as we need to be there. And, guess what? Those very same individuals, Democrat, Republican, independent, some individuals never voted before in their lives, went last November and voted for a new direction, voted for leadership, voted for an opportunity to have this Congress stand in the position that it should be standing, and that is oversight and accountability on behalf of the men and women that are in harm's way.

So I feel that the Members that voted in the affirmative, voted for outstanding healthcare, moving in the direction of outstanding healthcare for our veterans, making sure that our men and women when they are deployed, some of them are deployed 120 days after they return back to their family because some bureaucrat in the Defense Department says, well, we got to make sure we keep our rotation and our troop numbers, levels, up to over 143,000 troops on the ground. I know this brigade has only been home for a couple of months, three months, we have to get them back in the fight, when the Department of Defense regulations rule against that.

But I must add, Mr. Speaker, to make sure since we are having a moment of clarity, in this bill it allows the President, if it is within the national security interests that these troops go back into theater, he has the ability to do that, but report to Congress on that action.

So anyone that says we are binding the President, we are endangering the troops, the general can't do what he wants to do, that has nothing to do with it. That is nothing but rhetoric. That is nothing but good talking points for a crowd that you may want to get a cheer out of based on where you are.

But the reality and the hard-core facts are we have been sent up here to legislate and to bring about oversight, and that the President of the United States is not the only person that can make decisions on accountability and oversight. It is the U.S. Congress constitutionally and also it is our duty.

We are not in the forward area. We don't wear a uniform. But we have been sent here to make sure things go the way they are supposed to go on behalf of the men and women in harm's way.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I wanted to take off on the point you just made about the ability we give for the President to make a decision that he thinks is in the national interest, of national security.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides benchmarks, the same benchmarks that this President came before the country and said were essential on January 10; that we have unit readiness; that we have a length of deployment.

We have two sets of benchmarks here. We have benchmarks that this Democratic Congress put in this legislation to make sure we can protect our troops, to make sure we weren't sending them into harm's way unprepared. Then we have benchmarks in this bill to ensure that the Iraqis meet their obligations. Those obligations, those benchmarks, are the same ones that the President indicated to the American people were essential when he spoke to the Nation on January 10.

When this Congress switched from Republican to Democrat after November 7, the main reason it happened is because the American people were sick and tired of being sick and tired. They had lost their confidence in their government. Their confidence in this Congress was badly shaken. We had scandals. We had a culture of corruption. We had a situation where the American people couldn't believe that their Congress was doing right on their behalf, and that the majority, Republican at the time, was here for the right reasons. That is why there was a wholesale shift and we won 33 seats on November 7.

We are exercising Congress's appropriate oversight role and reasserting the system of checks and balances that the Founding Fathers envisioned, particularly by putting language in this bill that ensures that units have to be ready. They have to be prepared. The chief of the military department concerned has to determine that a unit is fully mission capable before it is deployed to Iraq.

The reason that I wanted to interject during Mr. MEEK's remarks is because you, Mr. MEEK, mentioned that the President can certify to the Congress that sending a unit into harm's way in Iraq in spite of the fact that they are not fully mission capable would be in the national interest.

He is the commander-in-chief. There is no question that the President is the commander-in-chief. But it is our responsibility as Members of Congress that we look out for the American people, specifically and especially in this case our men and women in uniform who are going over to defend this country. We provide the funding to send them over. We provide the funding to ensure that they are fully equipped and prepared. And the President should have to come back to us and say in spite of the fact that this unit, these women and men are going over there unprepared and aren't fully mission capable, it still is in the national interest to send them. That is the least that he can do.

He can maintain his role as commander-in-chief in this legislation, but he has to make sure that he is doing right by our troops, and he has to own

up to what he is doing in this legislation, including in their length of deployment.

There is a Defense Department policy, Mr. Speaker, that requires the Department of Defense to abide by its current policy, which is that you shouldn't deploy a unit to Iraq or any region more than 365 days for the Army and more than 210 days for the Marines. The President in this legislation can waive that provision too, but he has to say that it is in the national interest to do so, to send troops on another tour with less than a year's rest, less than 210 days in the case of Marines.

Again, he has to actually say to that young man, whose 6-year-old boy I met, it is okay to miss half your son's life, because we need you, it is in the national interest, instead of being able to sort of duck and cover and do it in a clandestine way without the American people really knowing and without him owning up to it.

The same with time between deployments. It requires the Defense Department, besides length of deployment, the time between deployment is essential as well. The President can waive that provision, but he has to say to the Congress that it is in the national interests to do so.

We also have benchmarks related to the Iraqi people as well. By July 1, 2007, the President has to certify that Iraq is making meaningful and substantial progress in meeting political and military benchmarks, including a militia disarmament program and a plan that equitably shares oil revenues among all Iraqis. After all, they are in the midst of civil war. They are killing each other over things like that.

The President has to certify there is progress being made. Otherwise, we are going to be there forever, with no end in sight, with no pressure on the Iraqi leadership to get the job done. Why would they feel the need to move in the direction of progress if they know that there is a never-ending, open-ended commitment for us to be there and for the money to keep flowing.

□ 1500

They also have to achieve political and military benchmarks. By October 1, 2007, the President has to certify that Iraqis have achieved political and military benchmarks, and if he doesn't provide that certification, then U.S. forces will begin immediate deployment completed by March 2008. There are steps toward progress that the Iraqi leadership must take or we are not going to continue to put our men and women in harm's way, and we shouldn't.

And, finally, we need to eventually end our participation in this war. Our commitment there should be finite, not open-ended. The President should not have a blank check, and this legislation that we passed today ensures that.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, when you think about it, you can't help but think about the debate that took place, and the vote has now happened. And again, Mr. Speaker, I commend those that worked very hard day in and day out to make sure that Members felt comfortable in voting for this legislation.

I think it is also mindful for us to remember, because so many times here in Washington, D.C., and even when we return back to our districts, I return back to sunny south Florida; Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ does the same. Some of us go to the far West. Some of us go to the Northeast, where it is very cold and frigid. Some of us go down to the Southwest and Arizona and Texas and some of the other areas of the great part of our country. Some of us from the gulf coast, some of us from the great Blue Mountains.

I think it is very, very important for us to remember that over 56 of our men and women in uniform died this month alone, and we are not even out of this month yet. Over 55 men and women wearing the uniform, some citizens, some non-citizens, some are from the west coast, some are from the east coast, some are from urban areas, some of them are from rural America. They are not coming back home. Their memory will ever be in our minds and in our hearts. And we appreciate their paying the ultimate sacrifice. We pray for their families. And we stand on their behalf here today in making sure that we can bring the kind of accountability forward to this government and to the Iraqi Government, and to make sure that those that are in harm's way have what they need when they need it.

Also, what is in this bill, and I think it is very, very important because I want Members to not only go home and talk about that they voted for, the majority of this House, which was good, but for those who voted against it, I want not only them, but I want their constituents to know what they voted against. This is serious business. I have a lot of friends here in this Chamber. I don't know of a Member of the House that I have a negative relationship with that I don't talk to that person or that person doesn't talk to me. I get along. I am second generation here in this House of Representatives; my mother served here. But this is serious business when we start talking about the sacrificing that U.S. families are making to bring about some sort of harmony in the middle of a civil war in Iraq.

So the vote that took place today, Mr. Speaker, is a vote in the right direction and in a new direction, to let it be known that this House of Representatives is willing to play a role in the oversight of the U.S. taxpayer dollar, and also on behalf of those that are in harm's way right now.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I am glad that she is a member of the Appropriations Committee because they spent a lot of time with this legislation, this

emergency supplemental. It is probably going to be the last time that we have an emergency supplemental outside of the regular budget process. And speaking of the budget, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be debating the budget here on this floor next week. We are going to have a great discussion about where our priorities are as Americans and the things that are important to the financial standing of the country and where we are going to make the kind of investments that we need to make on behalf of this great country of ours.

It is also important to understand next week that is tied in with this bill that we are going to also consider the Wounded Warriors bill that is going to be coming up next week, which is 1538, for consideration before this House that I must add that passed Armed Services Committee this week with a unanimous vote, to make sure that we correct some of the issues that are dealing with our veterans. And we are going to deal with H.R. 1401, that is the Rail Security Act that will be coming up next week.

This is serious business, and we have to be very serious about what we do here. And I want to make sure that this vote will be seen as one of the many.

Now, we had a vote, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, about a month ago that folks criticized, the vote to say that we are against the escalation, against the President's escalation of troops in Iraq. Seventeen Republicans voted with the majority of the House Members on that. Obviously, 15 of those Republicans decided to vote against the binding resolution. Remember all those, oh, it's nonbinding, it really doesn't mean anything; why are you doing this? Why are you spending a whole week of debate? Even the President said, oh, it's nonbinding. And the President said at that time a binding resolution will be coming which will be the emergency supplemental. I want to know the House of Representatives' stand on the binding resolution.

Well, that message is clear today where we stand. And I think that in the Senate, with the passage of the legislation even has a shorter time line passed the Appropriations Committee last night than what the House is calling for, I think the issue of a time line and benchmarks are going to be in that legislation when it goes to the President. Now, the President is saying that he is going to veto it. Well, that is all a part of his right to do so. But I think the American people and Members of this Congress have to rise up. If the President is not willing to lead us in a new direction as it relates to Iraq, then we may need to lead the President. That is the reason why we have a democracy. That is the reason why we have an executive branch and a legislative branch. That is the reason why men and women who no longer can walk on two legs now paid the price for us to have this democracy that we celebrate here today, which I don't take

lightly. That is the reason why this specialist here, that covers the page of Newsweek, paid with her legs. She is a patriot.

So if Members or anyone has a problem with the way our democracy is working, then you have a problem with America. I am glad that I am free and able to stand here on this floor to say that what took place here today is a great testimonial to that democracy. And just because you said that you are going to do one thing doesn't necessarily mean that you have to follow through on it to show folks that you are tough.

You have folks coming to the floor saying, well, by passing this emergency supplemental, it will waive the white flag. What white flag? Okay. Continuing to do the same thing expecting different results? The Speaker of the House took the well here earlier, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and said there have been three other escalations of troops in Iraq and the same outcome is the fact that we lost more troops in the middle of the battle, in the middle of a civil war, and that did not turn the security situation around on the ground.

What did the Iraq Study Group say? They said that diplomacy is going to be the number one key in dealing with this. What did Mr. MURTHA say, a decorated marine and chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee? This is a diplomacy issue, and we need to make sure that the Iraqi Government stands up not only on behalf of their country, but for the region and provide the kind of leadership that they deserve.

For every day we are in Iraq, Mr. Speaker and Members, that is a day that a U.S. city will not receive the kind of appropriations that it needs to be able to provide the quality of life that the U.S. taxpayers deserve. It is another day that we won't be able to fully implement all the 9/11 recommendations and be able to provide the kind of funding to secure the homeland. It means that what we pay now on the debt that the Republican Congress and the Bush administration has given us, that we will not have enough money to pay down on that debt, just on the debt of the money that this country has borrowed, and which is more than what we invest in education, more than what we invest in homeland security, more than what we invest in veteran affairs.

So I think it is important that this paradigm shift that took place here today is recognized as one of the great days of the U.S. House of Representatives and moving in a new direction, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You know, there are students of history, our esteemed Speaker in the Chair is a former college professor, and he certainly knows that the origin of this country was one where our Founding Fathers and the people that came before them that colonized this nation were escaping from tyranny, essen-

tially, were escaping so that they could be free, so that they could be free from one individual telling them how their lives would be run, so they could be free from persecution about their religious choices that they made, so they could be free from taxation without representation, so that they could be free. And the reason that our democracy was set up as it is, with a Commander in Chief, with an executive as well as a legislative and judicial branch, was so that there would be a system of checks and balances.

I am baffled by our friends on the other side of the aisle when they seem to be saying that the Congress weighing in with binding legislation, with benchmarks, and with a time line so that we can ensure that there is not a never-ending commitment and a blank check being written to folks fighting a civil war in another country, our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to be saying that we should only care about the opinion of one person, the person in the White House, that the decisions that the executive of this Nation makes are the only ones that matter.

Well, if you go back to the origin of this Nation, Mr. MEEK, you go back to the origin of this Nation, that is why our power was diffused. That is why our Founding Fathers created three branches of government, because they experienced the tyranny of one individual. They had decisions forced on them by a king, by a monarch, who told them exactly what was going to happen. And there was no place to turn, there was nowhere to go. Well, the American people and our men and women in uniform can turn to us because they have a Congress, they have a representative body that can rescue them when the executive makes the wrong decision, and that is what has happened here.

That is also what has happened with our veterans, Mr. MEEK, because it is incredibly important that we emphasize that, while we have made some very important, significant and essential decisions about the direction that we are going to continue to go in this war in Iraq, we also made some significant decisions to help our veterans, the ones that have already fought and have come back and have been left behind, have been forgotten, the ones that this administration and the Republican leadership before us had callous disregard for.

And we are always about third-party validation in the 30-Something Working Group, so people just shouldn't take it from me or take it from you. Let's just walk through what happened before and what has happened leading up to today with the vote that we cast on this floor.

So, Mr. Speaker, before I got here, Mr. MEEK, you were here, but before I got here, this is right when you got here, in January 2003, the Bush administration cut off veterans health care for 164,000 veterans. That is right in the

Federal Register. It is documented on January 17, 2003.

In March of 2003, the Republican budget, crafted then by this Republican Congress at the time, cut \$14 billion from veterans health care that was passed by the Congress with 199 Democrats voting against it.

In March of 2004, the Republican budget shortchanged veterans health care by \$1.5 billion, and that was passed by a Congress with 201 Democrats voting against it.

Fast forward to March of 2005. President Bush shortchanged veterans health care by more than \$2 billion in 2005 and cut veterans health care by \$14 billion over 5 years, and that had 201 Democrats voting against it.

But that is not all. Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 2005, after Democratic pressure, the Bush administration finally acknowledged, when I got here, Mr. Speaker, the Republican administration was denying, Mr. MEEK, you remember this, they were denying there was a shortfall in the Veterans Administration budget, repeatedly denying it. There were articles about the dispute. The Veterans Administration insisted there wasn't a problem; but finally in the summer of 2005, after constant pressure from the Democrats in the minority, they finally had to acknowledge that the fiscal 2006 shortfall in veterans health care totaled \$2.7 billion. We had to fight all summer to fix that.

□ 1515

We had to do an emergency supplemental during that summer to make sure that we could fund that shortfall.

I remember when we were doing the 30-Something Working Group during that time, I remember Mr. MEEK put the picture of the Secretary of the Department of the Veterans Administration up on that table there because what seemed important to the Secretary of the VA at the time was that his picture be hanging in every building run by the VA, and he was all the while denying there was a shortfall in his budget, and he couldn't adequately provide for the veterans under his care; but he was going to make darn sure his picture was hanging in every building.

In March of 2006, President Bush's budget cut veterans' funding by \$6 billion over 5 years, and that was passed by a Republican-controlled Congress.

Finally, after November 7, 2006, and the American people voted for a new direction, the Democratic Congress increased the veterans' health care budget by \$3.6 billion in the joint funding resolution. And in the supplemental legislation we passed, we provide an additional \$1.7 billion to fund veterans' health care and to address the significant problems we have at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which were also denied and not acknowledged until the Washington Post exposed the travesty. We have since had heads roll, the Secretary of the Army, the general that headed up Walter Reed and numerous

others. The only reason we had accountability there, finally, is because we have a check and balance. We have oversight and hearings going on. Congress is asking questions. We are not allowing one person to make all of the decisions and impose them on the people that he represents. Finally.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we have all worked very hard this week to see the positive outcome of the legislation today.

As I started, I would like to close in my comments today by saying that I am glad that the Members voted in the affirmative for this legislation that passed. I think the American people will reflect on this day, and historians will reflect on this day that this has been the first day by the House of Representatives since the start of the war in Iraq that there were true accountability measures in there. There is reporting back to the Congress that the troops were protected by the language that the Department of Defense used as relates to its own policy of deploying troops, of sending troops back into theater on another rotation of what they have to have. I think men and women in uniform and their families will be forever appreciative of our action here today.

It is like when you are working at a work site, not at headquarters, you are working in a subsidiary, and you know there are certain policies management is supposed to meet, but because nobody is watching, they decide to waive the policy manual and have you work overtime without being paid overtime, or have you working in conditions that you should not be working in just to keep their numbers up so they don't get in trouble with their bosses.

Well, with the emergency supplemental that we passed here today, we have the backs of those workers. In this case, we have the backs of the men and women who wear the uniform.

Furthermore, I think it is important for those who have served in a battle zone that we have started down the track of making sure that we provide the kind of funding so when they get back, they will be able to get the counseling that they deserve. There is money in here to prevent abuse as it relates to children and families when they get back to military bases, and there is money to make sure that veterans don't have to wait months to be able to see a specialist. I think it is very, very important because there is a back end to this war, and there is a reality to this war, and it is our responsibility to ensure there is assistance to those who need it when they come back.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the American people for the role that they have played during this whole war. This week here at the Capitol we had people that were supporting the war, and against war but saying we have to support our troops. And I commend both of them for exercising their rights as Americans to be able to speak to

their government about their feelings. I am glad that we live in a country that you can do that.

I am glad that Members did come to the floor. Some of them voted their conscience, some voted partisanship, and some voted because it was the right thing to do on behalf of this legislation.

As we move on with this process of bringing accountability to the war in Iraq and bringing an end to the war in Iraq with troops on the ground, that Members continue to pay attention to what our democracy is all about. I commend the Speaker for standing in the wind, getting bugs in her teeth on this issue and being tough on this issue even when we were in the minority. Now we are in the majority, and I think the American people are going to be very appreciative.

I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for hosting this hour today. It is always an honor to come to the floor and talk about the actions of today and look forward to tomorrow.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We have locked elbows for 12 years, Mr. MEEK, worked together and fought together. As we close, I was thinking as you were closing that you and I, we were born 3 weeks apart. The Vietnam war, when the Vietnam war was ending, we were less than 10 years old. We were little kids. I don't remember much about how the Vietnam War closed out, but that was the beginning part of the history lessons that we had in public school.

I remember learning about, and I have read articles and read textbooks and studied for exams learning about what happened to our men and women in uniform when they came back from that war. As they came back, they were spat upon and disrespected and unappreciated. We see sadly the results of that with so many of the homeless and mentally disabled veterans that scatter on our Mall and who stand up for the rights of veterans.

I have to tell you, I am also proud of the American people because as we grew up, and as we spent the balance of our lives until this point without there being war, that is not how our troops are treated any longer. The American people grew, and they learned, and that is what I am incredibly proud of.

I am proud that our colleagues today did two things that are important: We used our heads, and we listened with our hearts, and we will be able to bring our men and women in uniform home from this war. Until then, we will make sure that they have the funding that they need, the equipment that they deserve, and the plan to get them home.

Mr. Speaker, the 30-Something Working Group is always proud to be able to come to the floor at the pleasure of the Speaker of the House and our leadership team. If anyone wants to contact us or see any of the charts or see any of the information that we have talked about on the floor this afternoon, they

can e-mail us at 30SomethingDems@mail.house.gov or visit us at our Web site, www.speaker.gov/30something.

OMISSION FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2007 AT PAGE H2954

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2007 AT PAGE H2760

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) for 2 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR. First let me tell the gentleman from Georgia I appreciate him trying to save some money. I think his efforts, though, are a year late. If you want to look for Katrina fraud, look for Katrina fraud that was perpetrated by the Bush administration.

In south Mississippi we had 40,000 people at one point living in FEMA trailers. We are grateful for every one of them, but those trailers were delivered by a friend of the President, Riley Bechtel, a major contributor to the Bush administration. He got \$16,000 to haul a trailer the last 70 miles from Purvis, Mississippi down to the gulf coast, hook it up to a garden hose, hook it up to a sewer tap and plug it in; \$16,000.

So the gentleman never came to the floor once last year to talk about that fraud. But now little towns like Waveland, Bay Saint Louis, Pas Christian, that have no tax base because their stores were destroyed in the storm, a county like Hancock County where 90 percent of the residents lost everything, or at least substantial damage to their home, he wants to punish Bay Saint Louis, he wants to punish Waveland, he wants to punish Pas Christian.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair would ask Members to address their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I would inquire as to whether or not those words are eligible to be taken down.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair cannot render an advisory opinion on that point.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I demand that his words be taken down.

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 Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)