

been deposed, there have been no findings of weapons of mass destruction, and, frankly, it is time now, as the President has said often, for Iraq to stand up and for us to stand down. It was a courageous vote, and I am delighted that we unified the Nation and were successful.

Mr. Speaker, we traveled through the week. We passed hurricane recovery legislation that was never passed in the last Congress. And now we have a budget that defends America. It lifts up firefighters and law enforcement officers. It provides middle-class tax credits, like the child tax credit and marriage penalty relief. It looks forward to fixing the alternative minimum tax. It protects the middle class. It engages working America by providing health care for all of America's children. \$50 billion is in this budget.

What concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is although I believe in democracy, what concerns me is when my friends on the other side of the aisle continue to play procedural games. You just saw a few minutes ago the objection to setting the time for us to come back after the work recess, the repeating and the re-voting of votes over and over again, dilatory tactics so that this body cannot move forward and pass legislation. Albeit over the last 10 or 12 years that I have been here under the Republican majority, they couldn't get after the tragedy of 9/11, a real 9/11 bill passed. We did it in the first 20 days. They couldn't pass a Medicare prescription drug bill that wouldn't hurt the senior citizens who are still trying to find out how can I pay and leap over the donut hole. They couldn't do it, and we are doing it.

Over and over again, moneys would come back into the Federal Government because of the poor structure of SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program. They weren't prepared to fully fund it, and we are. The collapse and debacle of Leave No Child Behind that disrespects teachers and takes learning away from children, they could not fix it; but we are going to fix it.

So my instructions to my friends as we go home for Passover and Easter and other religious holidays that we will commemorate, a season of peace, come back with the attitude of working for America and not for yourselves. Come back with the attitude of being respectful to the process of democracy. The majority represents the American people now, and the American people want change, not bickering. They want bipartisanship, not divisiveness.

When you have a budget that fully funds defense, but yet allows us to be able to be compassionate with the heart and support the American Dream, then this side of the aisle should stop with the dilatory tactics.

Mr. Speaker, I hope when we return, we will be a bipartisan Congress and move America forward. The Democrats have taken the leadership. We are doing the right thing, and I want to thank them for all their work.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SARBANES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THIRTY-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House. As you know, the working group, we come to the floor to share good information with the Members and make sure that we are all informed on what is happening in this new-direction Congress. Also, for us to understand our future, we have to go into our past. We try not to dwell on that too much, but when there are examples of leadership and courage, we want to identify and illuminate the leadership that many, that the majority of the Members of the House have already taken.

Today's vote with passing this budget resolution by the House is a perfect example of our priorities as we move through the process. As you know, there will come a time when the Senate and the House will get together in conference and we will send our budget to the President, and hopefully we can all come to common ground on behalf of not only domestic priorities, but also international priorities and how we are seen in the world.

This is a Friday for us here in Congress because this is now the close of legislative business, and we are going to be off for the next 2 weeks from Washington, DC. But we will be back in our districts working very hard, talking with our constituents.

Many Members will take this opportunity to share with the members of their community and their district the accomplishments that they have been able to make in the last 2 weeks, and they have been quite historical. I think with the emergency supplemental, even going back to that, since that is a week old and something we have already voted in the affirmative in a bipartisan way, I think that is a testimonial to what this 110th Congress is going to be about and what we continue to work very hard in making sure that the American people have a chance to see exactly how hard we have been working.

I think I am going to have to get my chart that talks about the days we have worked, the resolutions we have passed, the suspension bills we passed compared to previous Congresses. I think it is important when people look at their Members of Congress and they say, well, are you actually working on my behalf. I am hearing from the 109th Congress that there were times that you spent more time out of Washington than you spent in Washington. And many of our Members are hungry to see their constituents because we have been here the majority of the weeks working on a 5-day workweek.

□ 1530

Out of that 5-day work week, there has been a lot that has been accomplished.

So I am going to talk about not only the resolution, but I am going to also talk about the effort of bipartisan votes that have taken place here on the floor and on the accomplishments of being here in Washington, DC, and having hearings. I think that is important, and I think that the American people need to be fully aware.

We talk about Iraq in the same light that we talk about the work. On the 29th, which is today, the total deaths in Iraq, 3,243. That's as of 10 a.m. That's 10 a.m. numbers. Wounded, returned back to duty, 13,473. That number continues to change, Mr. Speaker. And wounded not returning back to duty is 10,841.

Why do I give those numbers out? I give those numbers out to make sure that all of the Members understand that this work is very, very serious.

This number is changing because just today in the Armed Services Committee we had a hearing on Guantanamo that has a connection to the efforts against terrorism throughout the world. But oversight accountability hearings on Iraq are at 104. That is the last documented number I know. When we get back from the break, this calendar will be updated.

Also, we had issues of cleaning up Washington, DC, and making sure that

America is safer; hearings that we've had making sure the American dream is possible for everyone. We have had a number, Mr. Speaker, of bipartisan votes here on this floor that really meant a lot to Americans.

When we started looking at the issue of minimum wage, when you have 82 Republicans voting under the "New Direction Congress", under a Democratic-controlled Congress voting for an increase in minimum wage, that means that there has been a will and a desire to do so over the years, but they haven't had the opportunity to do it, and it took leadership to move in that direction. Also, making college more affordable. When you look at votes that have taken place, 124 Republicans have joined Democrats in voting in the affirmative as a unit, and I think that is very, very important.

When we start looking at the Iraq resolution, we have to look at the courage and the insight and the vision of this "New Direction Congress" in allowing Members of this Congress to vote on something that will be beneficial to their constituents but also meets emergency needs of the country and Iraq and Afghanistan.

I think it is very, very important that we understand that when we go on break there is going to be a lot said because we won't be here in Washington, we won't have the opportunity to come to the floor. Of course, the administration will have 2 weeks of an opportunity to speak from a podium without a response, an official response, outside of Members sending press releases out. But when you look at this resolution, it makes sure that, in dealing with the veterans issues, we have in place making our commitment as it relates to defending the homeland.

I used to be on the Homeland Security Committee, and we started talking about making sure that the levees are in place and that we never see another Katrina in our lifetime, not under our watch; and holding our commitment to the men and women in the gulf coast. I think that is very, very important, and something that we have to continue to work on.

Another piece of legislation we passed within the last 2 weeks is the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, a response not only to the scandal at Walter Reed but also to make sure we can ensure the troops and veterans that they will receive quality care. This is a bipartisan piece of legislation, something that we should be very proud of and the American people should be proud of. We will continue to move in that direction of being aggressive on these issues.

When you deal with the issue of U.S. troop readiness, I met with the command sergeant major of the Army Reserves just today, Mr. Speaker, in my office. He talked about the number of issues that are still not being addressed on behalf of reservists. But I can tell you that the refreshing part of that conversation was that I could go to the

Wounded Warriors Assistance Act of 2007 to say that help is on the way. I was able to point to the concurrent resolution that we passed, our first action in January, that we put \$3.6 billion into veterans health care so that when he goes out in the field to speak to the soldiers, he can say a new day is coming.

I talked about the budget resolution prior to this budget resolution passing here on the floor, the largest increase and investment in veterans assistance, health care assistance in the history of the VA. I was able to talk to him under those terms and under that flag of accountability, oversight and making sure that we are accountable to the men and women that serve our country. I can tell you that it was received with great appreciation from him.

I think it is important that as we start looking at the action of growing the economy that is in this budget that it is going to be very, very helpful to us all, making sure that our economy is moving in the right direction and will be here for all levels of economic classes.

We start looking at children that are being assisted through this budget. As we continue to march through this process, as you know, there will be a House and Senate conference, there will be Members pulling in different directions to make sure that the priorities are met, but when it is all said and done, children are being protected. I know the Speaker will be having a summit on children that is coming up pretty soon that will allow us to even further look into the needs of children in the United States of America.

What does this mean to the economy, Mr. Speaker? It means an awful lot. It means if you have healthy children you have fewer days of parents having to take off work and take them to the doctor, or to stay home to try to, what I call, drugstore medication, going to see what they can buy over the counter to help their children rebound from whatever health ailment that they may have.

With this budget that we passed, we are making sure that every child in the United States of America has an opportunity at universal health care, something that is very, very important. I come from a State where over 12 percent of the kids are without health care. I think it is very, very important that we focus and stand behind our commitment to America's children in making sure that we provide the funding to make sure they all have universal health care. It is going to be good for our economy, it is going to be more days that children will be in school. We will have healthier children, we will have healthier families, and we will have a healthier economy in our society. I think it is important that we move in that direction.

When we look at the State Child Health Insurance Plan that we have here, we call SCHIP, you look at the investment of what we have just made

on this vote here on the floor. In 2008 to 2012, you will see in the billions of dollars that the President's budget is a \$2 billion increase up until 2012. But then, if you look over a little further, you look at the budget resolution we just passed, and that is with a \$50 billion increase as we move into 2012.

So we have already laid out that we have the will and the desire to do so and that we are ready to do it; and we will be finding the necessary resources to do it without going into deficit spending. That is something that we have passed in the pay-as-you-go. If you are going to propose it and you are going to pass it, you are going to definitely have to show how we are going to pay for it.

I think it is also important, as we look at the agenda, and we have a number of third-party validators that have endorsed this budget. We even have committees outside of the budget. But we have a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, a panel created to inform Congress and the public on energy independence, climate change as well as developing policies and initiatives to assure progress made to reduce dependency on foreign oil. This is so very, very important, Mr. Speaker. Not only do we have this select committee out there, in this budget it reflects our values in investing in the Midwest versus the Middle East. It is a lot cheaper, believe me.

And those numbers that I read out at the beginning of how many men and women will never come home to their loved ones, how many of our men and women that won't be able to return back to battle, I think it's important for us to understand that we not only have to conserve but at the same time make sure that we put our money where our mouths are when it comes down to protecting our Earth, because we only have one.

I think it is also important, Mr. Speaker, just for us to step back for a moment and just reflect on what not only happened just a few minutes ago but what happened last Friday. I continue to come back to that since the President is saying that he wants to veto the emergency supplemental. I think it's important that we just look at that just a moment.

I was on the floor last night, and Mr. RYAN was here. We had an opportunity to talk about what the President really meant when he said that he wanted to veto the emergency supplemental for our men and women in uniform. I couldn't help but reflect on the President's history on vetoes, and I started looking. I would ask my staff, and then I started just kind of doing a personal evaluation. Have I ever heard the President say he is going to veto something?

In 6 years of him being President, since I have been in Congress, now going on 5 years, I have never heard the President say I am going to veto something. I wonder why.

Well, we just left the 109th and the 108th Congress, which was better

known as the "rubber stamp Congress." The President sends it to the Hill, it will be followed to the T, and that it will be "so shall it be written, so shall it be done." Members will make other Members vote for the President's priorities. The majority was on the Republican side. And in November, the American people said, I no longer want that kind of democracy. I no longer want the President's original thoughts to be carried out by the Congress without review.

We have another chart, and I want to make sure that we get that chart, the one that talks about how many bills we've passed. I had it here last night. It may be in the back or something, if staff can grab it for me. It was from the Clerk's office. It talked about the days that we've worked to this point and the bills that we've passed until this point, because I think it will be very, very revealing.

The Congress last session did very little. And when I say very little, they had very few hearings on many of the issues that are before the Congress. We are taking a lot of time, not only Members of Congress but also the staff here in the House of Representatives on both sides of the aisle, because the days have been accelerated and the fact that we are actually having two or three committee meetings in a given day, leave alone subcommittees. And I think it is important, if we are going to have an active and functional and informed government, that we have to go through the steps and making sure that we are making sound decisions. That's okay when you are looking for others to tell you what you should be doing.

This is my new favorite chart, Mr. Speaker, because, as you know, in the Working Group, we love third-party validators; and we love to give accurate information out. I personally love to give accurate information out. I don't ever come to the floor and share with staff or a friend, "How can I go to the floor and give inaccurate information? Please help me do that."

Some of the debate that took place here on the budget, I was really shocked by the fact that some Members would come to the floor and say something that we all know is not true. But this is true. This comes from the Clerk of the House. This is the RECORD. Bipartisan office, it's the RECORD. I love everyone in the office, and I appreciate the work that they do.

But this is the 107th Congress, the 108th Congress, the 109th Congress, and this is the 110th Congress. This was known as the "do-nothing Congress." That was what the media called it. And the "New Direction Democratic Congress", that's what we call it. It has nothing to do with the third-party validator.

When you look at roll call votes to this date, March, 2005, during this month, as we close out this month, there were only 90 roll call votes that were taken. As we close out this

month, there will be 189 roll call votes that were taken under this Congress, under this working, very functional, very informed Congress. Because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have taken the time to go to a committee, to have staff research and to have witnesses come to us and share with us where we're going wrong and what we're doing right, and that is important.

□ 1545

We look at suspension bills, another form of bills that we vote on, 26 in the 109th Republican-controlled Congress, 72 that we voted on Democratic-controlled Congress. And then it goes on and on and on. And I think it is important even days in session, 26 compared to last year under the Republican-controlled Congress, 48 under the Democratic-controlled Congress.

Why is this important? We have two wars going on. We have children without health care. We have veterans that are waiting 6, 7 months to be able to see a specialist at a VA. We have VA clinics that are open only once or twice a month.

Why is this important? This is important because we have small businessmen and women in America trying to find a Congress that is going to stand on their behalf as it relates to free trade. And I believe that trade is good, but not when it is at the cost of U.S. jobs and the outcome measures of building our economy are based on hypotheticals.

It is important for us to be here, Members, to understand these issues. So as I speak on the importance of what we have done and what the President is talking about in vetoing the emergency supplemental bill and saying that, oh, well, it is those folks in Congress that are holding it up, no, we have done our work. You will have the bill on your desk, and I urge you not to veto it on behalf of the people that are counting on us to stand for them.

It is not us and them; it is all of us. We are all Americans. And if there are some things in the emergency supplemental that the President disagrees with, then that is fine. State those disagreements, but don't hold up the necessary resources from the men and women that are in the forward area, especially in Afghanistan.

If this was a political conversation, I would say, Mr. President, veto it. You have to lie in that bed; and those that voted against the emergency supplemental would have to lie in that bed, too. But I would be speaking as some sort of hard-core partisan, which I am not. I am a Member of the U.S. Congress, and I think it is important that we look at it, Americans look at it the same way. It is not an issue of if you are a Republican or an Independent saying, well, the Democrats. No, no. The people that will suffer the most by the President saying that he is going to veto are going to be the men and women in uniform, the veterans that

have been waiting on accountability out of this Congress and it is at an emergency level.

Those Americans that have been waiting because of natural disaster, they are an emergency state. They are ready for their economy to kick in so that they can start providing for their families. It is going to be those individuals that are going to suffer. So let's take the personalities out of it. You have to be for the emergencies that are facing this country.

Emergency supplemental is very, very important to this country and should not be allowed to be used as a political football. So I would ask for the President to reconsider his original thoughts vetoing the emergency supplemental.

I think soon that there is going to be a discussion, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the budget resolution we just passed. There will be threats and rumors of threats about what the President won't stand for. But there has to be a paradigm shift, because the American people have made a paradigm shift in November. You had Republicans and Independents voting for Democrats because they wanted accountability, they wanted oversight, they wanted to move in a new direction, and they wanted to make sure that they had a government that was going to balance with the present administration. But apparently that message has not gotten to the White House yet.

And I am so glad that the leader of the Senate and also the Speaker of the House sent the President a letter saying, you know, it is not personal, let's just calm down and let's work together in making sure that the men and women of our Armed Forces and the veterans, I have the letter right here. This letter is from Senator REID and also Speaker PELOSI. And it talks about both House and Senate bills contain important provisions rejecting the present policy that has been pursued for more than 4 years.

Now, let's just say this very quick. And this is the closing of this letter because we can go on from the beginning. But we entered this into the RECORD last night and there is no need to do it today, but I think it is important that everyone understand where we are headed and where we have been.

We know the past 4 years that there has been, not one, two escalation levels of U.S. troops in Iraq, and we know a third one just took place recently, an escalation in troops. And every last escalation has shown the same, very little as it relates to making sure that Iraq is a safer place to be. And it is still a very dangerous place. The President is asking for more time. But usually when you have three strikes, you are usually out.

But as we start looking at this, it is important that the Members pay very close attention to this and the American people. And it goes furthermore to say that the provisions are based on statements by General Petraeus and

other senior military leaders that there is no military solution in Iraq. No military solution in Iraq. So to say that 140-plus thousand troops, 200,000 troops, we are going to get to the bottom of this; the more, the more the better, that is not necessarily what the military commanders have said.

What did the Iraq Study Group say? They said that we have to find a diplomatic solution and that we have to find some sort of redeployment plan of U.S. troops. Great Britain has already said that they are pulling out. Others of the coalition of the willing, that I must add you would assume that Great Britain would be the second largest coalition in Iraq right now.

No, it is actually U.S. contractors that is almost being led by Halliburton who said that they are going to move their headquarters overseas to Dubai. The U.S. taxpayer dollars are all intertwined in the Halliburton Corporation, and there are several investigations on Halliburton as it relates to their accountability of making sure that they billed the American taxpayers appropriately.

This goes on to say that their collective judgment leads to the conclusion that U.S. forces should not try to contain a civil war, but rather a bipartisan majority in the House and Senate believe strongly that the U.S. mission should be transitioned to a counterterrorism force protection, and training and equipping the Iraqi security forces and phased redeployment of U.S. troops should commence.

That is what this letter is saying, and that is what we must do.

And I think it is very, very important that this message is loud and clear. And I don't think that the will or the desire of the majority of the Members of the House and the will and the desire of the majority in the Senate will change on this issue, because polls have indicated, not only the poll that was taken in January because that was all about Iraq and some other issues and accountability and ethics, but the poll that was just taken over the weekend of how the American people felt about the action of this Congress, they are with us. They are saying, what took you so long? Well, the thing that took us so long was not necessarily this Congress. It was the rubber-stamp Congress.

So someone, please, I implore you and beg you, call the White House and tell the President, just because you say it, doesn't necessarily mean the American people are going to follow you.

I was watching the President on the television just the other day, the press conference after the Senate took its action, and you would have assumed that something really bad happened. The President was saying, You know, I am going to veto it. He kept saying this, And they are holding money. Do you think the American people are going to believe for one minute when you have an emergency supplemental with accountability measures in it, of

following what? The Department of Defense deployment rules and regs of men and women when they circulate out of theater. You have bureaucrats right now in the Pentagon that as soon as enlisted Reservists and in some instances National Guard return back home, they are returned back home within 150 days and going back into theater for another 12 or 15 months if they are a soldier, 7 to 10 months if they are a marine. If they are in the Air Force, it may go from 3 to 4 to 5, or maybe up to a year, not because someone believes that that is the case. And here is the President on the front page trying to play the blame game and point fingers. That is not what this is about.

And the reason why I am speaking in a very firm voice on this issue is that this is not politics. This is saying, let's work together, let's make sure that this is not about a stare-down, who is going to flinch first. It is not about flinching, it is not about who tucked their tail under their legs and who won. Because we all win when we give the men and women what they have to do.

So this has accountability measures in it saying that troops will not be deployed outside of the Department of Defense's own rules and regulations. Obviously they have been bending those rules. How do you say to a soldier or a marine, an airman or a sailor that we are going to bend the rules when it works to the benefit of the Pentagon or the administration, but when it comes down to what you are supposed to do we are not bending anything? We are going to hold you to the nine of what you are supposed to do. That is not American. That is not fair.

So this Congress has stood up on behalf of those individuals and said that we are going to hold not only the Department of Defense's feet to the fire, but also the administration's feet to the fire on this issue in law in this emergency supplemental. If you are going to spend the money, these are the rules you are going to live by.

It also goes on and talks about the whole issue of readiness, making sure that our men and women have what they need when they go into theater. Well, some may say, well, Congressman, why are you talking about readiness? We are not sending anyone over there unprepared. The real issue is there is training that is involved that needs to happen.

Again, I told you that I met with the sergeant major, the highest enlisted man or woman in the Army Reserve just this morning, and he was sharing with me the level of training that his men and women in the Reserve units have not received because of the fast rotation and the lack of emphasis on training and readiness. This is fresh information. This is not fresh. We already knew this, but he just validated it even more by just coming and saying this is an issue.

We just passed this budget. So if the President doesn't want to move in a

new direction in making sure that our men and women have what they need and they are trained, that is something that we need to talk to him about. We need to talk to him about it. We don't need to say you are wrong or do it, we want to watch, we want to see you do it; because if you do it, it is going to cost you politically. We are far beyond politics right now.

It goes further into increasing the VA and assisting those men and women that are coming back. And it also looks at, states, that kids, the children, we reflect in our budget what we want to do. But with children, the money will run out for children's health care in certain States here in this country if this emergency supplemental doesn't go through. And I think it will happen prior to the next budget act when the bill is up.

I know Mr. RYAN came down and he was getting ready to join me, and I don't want to move into the segment that he shared with me that he wanted to share with you. But as we start continuing to look at the present and hopefully moving into the future, I want to make sure that the Members know exactly why this budget was very, very important. The budget that we passed doesn't raise any taxes whatsoever, and I know Mr. RYAN is going to talk about that and I am not going to take his thunder.

But as we start to look at the interest payments on the debt, of what has happened in the past and where we have to have the paradigm shift and where this budget resolution starts to move the numbers and the reality of what has happened in the past, what was the reality in the 109th and 108th Congress.

Here is the interest that is paid on the debt right here, in the billions. And this is what Congress invested in education. Interest, education.

□ 1600

Next to that investment in veterans in the billions, the very low billion, under a hundred billion versus the debt.

Homeland security. You have a lot of chest beating going on down here on the floor about homeland security, protecting the homeland. That is one of those things that comes in behind "I love the troops." Protect the homeland. Previous Congresses and previous budget chairmen and committees did not set their priorities there, but they made good speeches.

Look down here, homeland security, that is the investment that is made in homeland security versus paying down the debt. Why is this chart important? It is important because our priorities are now changing to no deficit spending, pay as we go. That is going to be painful.

Mr. Speaker, I already feel the pain. It is going to be painful. But if we are going to make sure that we do what we are supposed to do as Members of Congress and we hold to our word as Members of Congress, I am talking about all

Members of Congress, we will pay. Because the foreign debt that this administration and the Republican rubber-stamp Congress previous to this Congress put on the backs of this country will have other countries looking at us in a different light.

Mr. RYAN, I probably borrowed \$20 from you every now and then.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I wish it was just \$20, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let's say I was to say hypothetically, Mr. RYAN, can I borrow \$100?

Sure, Kendrick.

And I will pay you on Friday, payday, at the end of the month. And I see you 2 weeks after that payday and I come up to you. You are thinking, hold it, you owe me money when you see me next. You're not thinking about what I want to talk about.

Where is my chart on foreign debt held? We love charts here. I can tell you, on the foreign debt held, there are countries like Japan, China, OPEC countries, Mr. Speaker, that we borrow money from. Iran is in that number. So how are we going to be viewed on the world stage and how do we rebound from that?

Here is my chart. We keep the chart people in business.

China, Japan, leading the pack there. The U.K., the Caribbean, OPEC countries that include Iraq, Iran, Venezuela. You look at Korea, Hong Kong and Germany.

Again, Mr. RYAN, how do we look these countries in the eyes and say we want you to do this a certain way when we owe them money? How do we get out of that? We get out of it by passing this budget resolution that we passed today.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am trying to pay attention to you, but I'm thinking to myself, you do owe me money.

I'm kidding.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, that was a joke.

As we listened to the debate over the past couple of days, we heard a lot from our Republican side, this is about the kids and you have to do this for the kids. I am thinking to myself as I am listening to the debate that it was the Republican Congress since 1994, post-Bill Clinton, when it got out of control in the last 6 years with President Bush, Republican House, Republican Senate and Republican White House, that garnered almost \$3 trillion more of debt for our country, as you just pointed out.

Now, if you are concerned about the kids, the first thing you don't want to do is leave them in a worse position than even you were in. Quite frankly, if we keep going down the same road that the Republican-led Congress and President steered us down, that is a road of debt and deficits and borrowing money from China and Japan and OPEC countries and some of our best competitors.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You are making a point, and I just want to sling-shot that point in.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Slingshot it in.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Here's the issue. The President is now saying, I am going to veto the emergency supplemental bill for Iraq and Afghanistan and for our veterans. I'm going to veto it.

That is something he has never said before, Mr. Speaker. All the while all of this debt was being built up on the future generations of Americans and our children and grandchildren that are children of Republicans and Democrats and Independents and those who are thinking about voting, the President never once said I am going to veto it.

As a matter of fact, every bill that was passed in the rubber-stamp Congress, the President was saying, I'll sign it. I am going to sign that bill. Record spending, I am going to sign that one.

Mr. President, that bill will run the debt up. We will have to borrow money from foreign nations, some that we have issues with. I'm going to sign it.

As a matter of fact, he signed so many bills, can I have another pen? I ran out of ink.

Now to say I am going to veto something that has accountability measures in it, the problem is not additional dollars for the emergency needs of Americans, the problem is the fact that the Congress has said, after 4, now 5 years in Iraq, that we are no longer going to be the say-nothing, hear-nothing, do-nothing Congress, that we are going to have a say in it, and we are sitting here and federalized by the people of the United States of America to make sure that they have a voice and we have accountability.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. One of the other critiques we heard last night and today about the Democratic budget is: More government spending. They want the government to spend the money instead of the individual.

Well, I'm sorry, I don't know how you expect to fund veterans' health care if the government is not going to do it. Who do they want to do it? Wal-Mart? Home Depot?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Did you say the Congress or did you say The Tonight Show?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Congress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Okay. I thought you were joking.

I yield back.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate that. And \$3.6 billion from the resolution, continuation resolution from last year, for veterans' spending. That increase is government spending. Because we have to fund health care for veterans because it was the government that sent the veterans out.

Now, I am not saying that every dollar the government spends is good, but I remember last year under the Republican budget and the year before under the Republican budget passed by a Republican House and passed by a Republican Senate, signed by a Republican White House, that gave \$14-15 billion in

subsidies to the oil subsidies, that was government spending; and our friends on the other side of the aisle weren't very critical when public tax dollars were going to corporate welfare for the oil companies when they were making the greatest profits they have ever made. That is government spending.

What we are doing, not raising taxes, the same revenues as the President's budget had, we are going to reprioritize that money and we are going to take that money and spend it on our veterans and invest it in education and increase the Pell Grant almost \$4,600. We are going to take that money and cover thousands and thousands and thousands more kids under the SCHIP program, the State Children Health Insurance Program. That is the difference between these two budgets.

When the President says he is going to veto this supplemental bill that is going to get us out of Iraq, you know what else he is vetoing, \$1.7 billion increased over the President's recommendation for veterans' health care. That is in the supplemental bill that he says he is going to veto.

Also, \$1.7 billion above the President's request for defense health care for our soldiers. The President says he is going to veto that.

There is \$500 million for post-traumatic stress disorder for soldiers coming back. The President says he is going to veto that.

There is \$500 million in there for brain injuries; and we have both been to Walter Reed visiting the soldiers with the level of brain injuries that we have never seen in combat. So \$500 million, the President says he is going to veto that.

Almost a billion dollars in the supplemental for children's health insurance, and the President says he is going to veto that. That is what the President is saying he is going to veto.

We hear a lot about government spending, and we hear a lot about the kids. You can't send these kids off to war and, in many instances, adults off to war, and then when they come back your argument is we don't want government to spend money. That doesn't cut it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, I am glad you are here to make that point, because we talked about it earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for us to understand exactly, and I can see if it was a different President, Mr. RYAN. I can see if the administration has changed from the last Congress to this one. But it is the same President that celebrated a Congress that was willing to follow through his original thoughts.

During our watch on the 109th Congress and the 108th Congress, the President signed bills with billions of dollars in special interest tax breaks and subsidies to big oil, to a number of other high-level, connected, plugged-in, I-know-them kind of folks, and direct access to the Capitol and direct access to the White House, signed a bill and didn't even blink an eye.

And in this emergency supplemental which is a true emergency, our men and women need what they need now in the field, not in 2 or 3 weeks, now.

The real issue is we are helping and correcting the lack of oversight, the lack of will and the desire to correct the issues at Walter Reed Hospital which, when our troops are injured in the field, some of them, and Mr. RYAN and I have been through the whole track of what happens to our men and women that are injured in the field. They are dealt with in the field hospital, then shipped over to Germany. They spend some time over there, and then they are medevaced over here to Walter Reed Hospital. The last thing they need to see is a broken-down, lights-out, insect-infested Walter Reed Hospital. We responded.

As a matter of fact, it makes me feel so good with this new Democratic Congress that we have here now, prior to the Walter Reed story coming out, and I need to get my chart on Walter Reed, prior to the Walter Reed story coming out, this Congress, through the continuing resolution that we passed at the end of January, because the rubber stamp worked on some days, the 109th Congress did not finish the appropriations bills, we reprioritized their priorities and put \$3.6 billion in into VA health care.

Here is a specialist here. She lost her legs. She lost her legs because this country asked her to go and fight in a foreign land, in Iraq.

This whole story here, the Newsweek cover, and Newsweek comes out every week, but I actually saved this. I save a number of Newsweek, Time and other periodicals and dailies so we can archive what has happened in the past so we can have a better future.

Right now what we are doing in the emergency supplemental is a better future for the very people we are trying to help. For the President to say, well, I am concerned about other things that are in the bill.

Well, he wasn't concerned when it was okay for big oil. He wasn't concerned about that. I am so glad we live in a democracy, and I am able to say this. I am very concerned. You know why I am concerned? Because there are some American people who woke up early one Tuesday and stood in line and voted for some representation.

Mr. Speaker, as sure as my name is KENDRICK MEEK, they are going to get it from this Congress. They are going to get representation from this Congress. We are going to make sure that their values are turned into not only law but to action.

Mr. RYAN, when you talk about this issue of what is in the bill, what is actually in the emergency supplemental, when we talk about the accountability measures, you can't help but get passionate about it.

Mr. Speaker, if I was an intern working in a congressman's office and if he or she voted against the emergency supplemental, my American spirit

would have to come out. I would say I love the congressman or congresswoman, but it is the right thing to do.

So what is the problem? Maybe they need to send an e-mail. Maybe they need to send out an e-mail under the name John Doe or something saying, Mr. President, I love you and all of this, but please don't veto this bill. That is where we are now.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let's look not only at the supplemental but with the budget the President presented. We, the Democratic budget, increases the Pell Grant to at least \$4,600 from a little over \$4,000 now. As you said, we are constrained by the \$3 trillion of debt that was created over the past 6 years by our friends in the Republican party.

□ 1615

But this Democratic budget rejects all of the things that the President recommended. Here is what the President wanted to do for higher education. He wanted to eliminate the Perkins loan program. He wanted to eliminate the Federal supplemental opportunity grants, and he wanted to eliminate leveraging education assistance partnerships. He wanted to completely eliminate them.

Now, we are competing with 1.3 billion people in China and over 1 billion people in India. The key component to economic growth in America in the next decade or two or three or four or probably for the existence of this country is to invest in education, and when you look at what the Democrats have done in the first 100 hours, we cut student loan interest rates in half for both parent loans and student loans, and here we are in our budget and we raised the Pell Grant in the CR as well, and here we are raising again the limit for the Pell Grant to \$4,600. That is investing in education.

When you look at the billions of dollars we are going to put into children's health care to make sure that every kid in the United States of America has access to health care, those are investments that are going to pay off in the long term, and that is going to lead to a strong America, a strong economic growth.

Now, our friends on the other side, and I do not want to talk too much about this, but it has been levied against us that the Democratic budget is somehow going to raise taxes. We have the Brookings Institute, we have the Center for Economic Policy, and we have the Concorde Coalition, three independent folks who have said we are not raising taxes; and I am going to tell you why we are not raising taxes right now.

We are going to fix the alternative minimum tax. It has been creeping into the middle class, and we are going to provide 23 million Americans with a tax cut because we are not going to allow the AMT to go in and creep into their tax levels.

Not only does the budget not raise taxes; we include tax relief where the

child tax credit stays on, marriage penalty relief stays on, 10 percent bracket tax deduction stays on, and a deduction for State and local taxes all in this bill.

I want to say one further thing on the tax issue, that the same people claiming that the Democrats are raising taxes are the same people that said that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. They were the same people that said that it would only cost us \$50 billion in Iraq, and we are already to the \$500 billion mark. They were the same people that said we would be greeted as liberators. They were the same people that said they would be handing roses out to the Americans. Same people, same President that said mission accomplished, you know, same person that said we are in the last throes, the Vice President's comments on the war.

So they are the same people saying that we are raising taxes, and all I want to say to the Members is this, the American people can reserve judgment on whether or not this budget does it. We know it does it, but they can reserve judgment. Keep your 2006 tax returns, keep your 2007 tax returns, make a copy of them, and next January and February, March, April, when you get your taxes back, you compare your 2008 tax returns to your 2006 and your 2007, and you will see that there is absolutely no difference.

Then you can add those comments that we have been getting here over the past couple of days, you can add that to the column of weapons of mass destruction, and last throes and mission accomplished. Just take that comment on its axis and put it in the column with the list of all the other issues that have been in some ways misrepresented here on the House floor and across the country.

So I am proud of this budget. I am proud that the Democratic budget invests \$50 billion to cover children. I am glad we are investing in veterans health care, and those are things that need to be done. Those are not things that individual families can do. Those are the things we can only do collectively as a society, as a community.

I am so proud that you have had the opportunity to come down here and lead this debate, as we are beginning to wrap up. I think it is important to say that the Democrats have heard the call from the American people in the November election. The country wanted to go in another direction, and that is really what we have done.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. It is very interesting, my grandmother used to say sometimes, I am so glad that I lived long enough. She used to say sometimes, even as I go from day to day, you know they say thank God for life. That is what she used to say, I am glad God allowed me to live long.

I am so glad that God allowed me to live long enough to see the paradigm shift that is now taking place here in Washington, D.C.; see accountability;

see a new direction; see oversight and see us sharing in that accountability, us sharing and making sure that we are making cuts and having reform ourselves so that America can be better.

We used to say, Mr. Speaker, all the time in the 109th Congress, we have the will and the desire to lead; give us the opportunity to lead. And now that leadership is happening. So, Mr. RYAN, keep pointing it out. Let us keep sharing good and accurate information. Let us continue to go to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Let us continue with our third-party validators because we love third-party validators, and the credibility and the integrity of the 110th Congress will live on in a bipartisan way.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, I think the American people will be very glad when they see this budget. They are going to be very glad over the past couple of weeks and really over the past 100 days of all of the accomplishments led by Speaker PELOSI and STENY HOYER and JIM CLYBURN and RAHM EMANUEL and JOHN LARSON, and really the amazing leadership we are getting from our leadership in our caucus and the real teamwork on behalf of our freshmen Members and the different aspects of our caucus.

I have never been prouder to be a Democrat than in the last couple of weeks on this floor and to pass that resolution last week that is going to get us out of Iraq responsibly, invest in our veterans, make sure they get the kind of health care they need, the first 100 hours, where we began to bring some fiscal discipline to the House, cut student loan interest rates in half, repairing student loans, invested in alternative energies, invested in the stem cell research and some great advances, creating new sectors, raising the minimum wage, all of this was done in the first 100 hours.

When you add to that the supplemental and the \$1.7 billion and the billion dollars for vets and the additional \$1.7 billion above the President's request for health care for our soldiers, and you add this budget of \$50 billion that is going to go to poor kids to make sure that they get health care so they can go out and get up on their feet and go to school healthy, ready to learn and move forward and get a good job and pay taxes and advance their families forward, break the cycle of poverty, these are the kind of investments that we are making, increasing the Pell Grant to \$4,600. Key investments.

So I am proud of what has been going on here, and it has been a pleasure to rekindle this kind of debate that we have, and I really appreciate your friendship.

With that, do you have any closing comments? I am going to wrap it up here.

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. If anybody wants to e-mail or see any of the charts we have had, you can go to www.speaker.gov/30something.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it is always a pleasure coming to the floor.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am sorry to interrupt you, but we are leaving tomorrow, and I will not see you till after the Final Four where the Florida Gators and the Ohio State Buckeyes may have a rematch, and I just want you to know everybody in Ohio is looking for some revenge.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I just want to say that the past will speak to the future, and I want to leave you with this closing comment: remember the field mouse is fast, but the owl can see at night. It is a pleasure being on the floor with you.

Mr. Speaker, it is always an honor to address the House.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM AND PEAK OIL

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

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to address two very timely items. One is a just-released report by the General Accountability Office entitled: "Crude Oil: Uncertainty about future oil supply make it important to develop a strategy for addressing a peak and decline in oil production." This report was released at a news conference at two o'clock today, and so we want to spend some time discussing this report.

But there is also the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, and so I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about this Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act.

This is the fifth anniversary. In 2002 when we debated this law, there were those who looked upon our deliberations as inconsequential because they thought that either the President would veto the bill or the Supreme Court would overturn the law. Indeed, the President did not veto it because he said that the Supreme Court would probably overturn at least a very important part of that law. Except the President signed the bill and the Supreme Court upheld it.

As it turned out, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act has great consequences, the erosion of Americans' first amendment rights to freedom of speech. With regard to speech, the first amendment to the Constitution simply States Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or the press or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

I think it is worth just a moment, Mr. Speaker, to reflect on how we got here in this country and the milieu in which our Founding Fathers wrote this first amendment to the Constitution.

Our Founding Fathers came here primarily from the British Isles and the European continent, and they came

here to seek relief from two tyrannies. One was the tyranny of the church and the other was the tyranny of the Crown, and they address both of these two tyrannies in the first two amendments.

Indeed, in the first amendment, they address their concerns both for the tyranny of the church, shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, do not make a State religion, and furthermore, let people free to worship however they wish. And the tyranny of the Crown. They wanted to make sure that the people could say whatever they wished about governing. It was political speech that they most wanted to protect.

And to understand that, you have to go to the second amendment. The second amendment again was to assure that our people would never ever be persecuted, oppressed by a central government, because they said that every citizen had the right to be a member of the militia and to carry a gun. They said that was in order to secure freedom in our country, that every person should have the right to carry a gun.

So this was the milieu in which this amendment was written, and the speech that our Founding Fathers found most precious was political speech, and it is just this speech that this unfortunate legislation denies our people of all rights derived constitutionally. The Framers dedicated little formal debate to freedom of speech. It was not until the 20th century that Supreme Court actions began to address the definition of free speech. Until that time, the only limitation placed on the press involved slander or libel. They felt they did not have to talk about it because it was generally understood how important that right was to the people.

Freedom of speech did not generate great debate amongst the Founders, who believed that this freedom was so basic that no lengthy debate or independent editorials were needed.

□ 1630

One can only surmise that by its prominent location in the Bill of Rights that the Founders agreed that freedom of speech was an obvious right of any citizen. The Bill of Rights was designed to protect rights so important that it was necessary to explicitly restrict the government usurping these rights from the people. Our government serves the people, not the other way around. You might wonder about that from some of the laws we pass here.

The concept of freedom of speech depends on truth and opinions expressed openly and honestly by an individual or an association with others by groups. It is a right of our Founders reserved for us. Here in America we cherish being allowed to question our government, to criticize our government and advise our government, those individuals who are elected or appointed leaders of our government.