

They have passed only 17 bills into law. Ten of those bills named Federal post offices and Federal buildings. None of the legislative impact on fighting the war against Islamic extremists, balancing the Federal budget, creating jobs, cutting pork barrel spending, or saving Social Security have been addressed or passed.

They have passed a budget. And the budget that they passed assumes that the President's tax cuts, which we passed early in the Bush administration that led to our economic recovery and low interest rates and low unemployment and low inflation, they want to do away with those tax cuts. And that, in effect, will amount to a \$392.5 billion additional tax burden on the American people.

The Democrats' budget also includes an immediate \$24 billion increase in nondefense, nonsecurity spending above the President's request. This is on top of the \$23 billion of unrequested spending in the supplemental and \$6 billion in the omnibus spending bill.

In addition, the Democrat budget includes 12 reserve funds, promising more than \$115 billion in higher spending, which, if offset as required by the House rules, would almost surely mean another \$115 billion in higher taxes. This would be on top of the \$392.5 billion in tax increases they have already built into their revenue numbers.

The average taxpayer in Indiana, if this budget were to pass, would be saddled with \$2,729 in additional taxes and more than 2.3 million Hoosiers would be affected just this year under the Democrat budget.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about the Democrat Iraq supplemental. That was for the defense of this country and for supplementing our troops and giving them the equipment and the support that they need to fight the war in Iraq and to fight around the world in places like the Balkans and in Afghanistan. The Democrat supplemental legislates defeat and funds favors at the troops' expense.

Let me just tell you what is in this bill. It is supposed to be for our troops and for the defense of the Nation. But in that bill they have added \$120 million for the shrimp industry, which has nothing to do with defense; \$74 million to store peanuts, which has nothing to do with defense; \$25 million for growing spinach, which has nothing to do with defense; and \$5 million for "aquaculture," or to put it in a less fancy term, it is tropical fish. Five million dollars for research on tropical fish. These are things that shouldn't be in the defense supplemental, and yet my colleagues on the other side of the aisle put them in that bill.

I think the American people need to know that while they made these commitments during the campaign, they have not fulfilled those commitments. And this is a report card on the first 4 months of their reign in this House. I will try to, in every 3- or 4-month period, give another report on the

progress of the Democrats' agenda, and I hope it is a lot better than this one has been.

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

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

THE HORRIFIC TRAGEDY AT VIRGINIA TECH AND THE CALL FOR SENSIBLE GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, the horrific events at Virginia Tech just a few days ago cause all of us to reflect. My heart goes out to the victims, to the victims' families, to the people who were injured. This is something that is just a terrible tragedy, an unthinkable, terrible tragedy. And as the father of three, including two in college, it really makes one stop and pause.

I say very, very respectfully, at a time of violence we need to reflect on this violence. And it certainly seems to me that upon reflection, to say that this country needs to have sensible gun control legislation, not legislation that would take guns out of the hands of people legitimately who have the right by the second amendment to own guns; but how could a deranged young man like the killer be able to just walk into a store and purchase any kind of guns at will and then use them to mow down 32 or 33 people?

It is all a matter of commonsense. We get emotional about these issues, but I am really speaking from the heart. Commonsense says that we need to have sensible gun control legislation so that criminals, people with mental illness, cannot just purchase guns at will and as many as they want.

In my home city, New York City, our mayor, Michael Bloomberg, has been leading a crusade for sensible gun control legislation, and I agree with him. And, again, it takes a tragedy of this magnitude to kind of just sit and reflect and say, what are we doing or what are we not doing and why is it an infringement on anybody's second amendment rights to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, deranged people, and people who shouldn't own them?

I think that this country really, really needs to reflect on its policies regarding guns. And, again, I support the second amendment, and I think there are many, many legitimate reasons for people to own guns. But after the tragedy at Virginia Tech, I say it again: I believe more than ever that this country needs to adopt sensible gun control legislation. We need to use our commonsense, and we need to try to pre-

vent tragedies like the tragedy at Virginia Tech from happening again.

I know people say guns don't kill people, people kill people; that is true. But guns in the hands of the wrong people kill people. And I really think in all good conscience that we really need to reflect.

And, again, my heart goes out to the families, the victims, and all the students at Virginia Tech. But as a country, we need to come to grips with this problem.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY CONGRESS: THE 110TH CONGRESS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to welcome you, Mr. Speaker, and the American people to the Accountability Congress. Over the next 1 hour, my freshman colleagues and I will be claiming this hour to talk about the accomplishments of this 110th Congress.

We have seen not only an auspicious and bold, brave, new agenda for the first 100 hours, but also the first 100 days. And we are not just going to talk about and celebrate the accomplishments of the last 100 days. We are going to talk about a vision for our country and talk about what will happen in the days to come.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that the American people know that by getting a new majority in the Congress that they have signed up to get a vision that is inclusive, that brings Americans all together, that makes for a safer America, a fairer economy, that makes for an economy where working people, middle-class people can strive and do well in our society.

And joining me tonight with the members of the freshman class are a host of tremendously brave and tremendously intelligent, capable leaders who are aiding not only in charting a new course for our country, but who in this very 110th Congress, Mr. Speaker, are fully engaged from the very top. The leadership has engaged our talents, our skills, our ability, and we have been proud to be able to help this 110th Congress be a stronger, better place.

And tonight I am going to be anchoring the one hour, but I am not going to hang on to it long. I think the American people want to hear from the brilliance that this 110th Congress class has to offer. So in the very beginning, I am just going to pass it right off to Mr. HODES, who is the president of our class.

I yield to Congressman HODES.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished colleagues, I am glad to be with you tonight to talk about where we have been

in the 110th Congress, where we are, and where we are going, because this Congress really has changed the direction of America.

If you think back to where we were over the past 6 years, this country was frustrated. Frustrated because of the squeeze on the middle class with fiscal policies that weren't working. They weren't working for the middle class and those trying to get into the middle class. They may have been working for those at the very, very tippy top of the financial scale, but not for anybody else. A frustrated middle class and an America which has come together because of a foreign policy which has made us weaker, which has ruined our reputation in the world, which has mired our brave soldiers in a civil war.

They asked for change in November. And in the past 3 months we have delivered substantial change. So tonight we are going to talk about the Accountability Congress. We have changed the Congress of the United States from a Rubber Stamp Congress that didn't hold anybody accountable for anything, but simply rubber stamped what the administration wanted to do without question.

□ 2115

They held no hearings, held no accountability over agencies, and we have replaced it with an accountability Congress that holds the administration accountable, that holds agencies accountable, and is accountable to the American people for making real progress.

So I am very proud to be with you tonight. And I look forward to the next hour when we get to talk about what we've done, where we are and where we're going.

I yield back.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, thank you, Congressman HODES, from the great State of New Hampshire.

Why don't we kick it down south to Florida to Congressman RON KLEIN, who has been distinguished in this Congress for his leadership.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Thank you very much, Congressman ELLISON.

It is a pleasure to be here once again with my freshman colleagues as we try to do this every Thursday evening and get together and speak about what's going on in the last couple of weeks and tell the American people and share with them some of the good things that we've been working on.

We ran in elections this past November. And coming into the freshman class, we heard loud and clear from the American public that it was very, very important that we get this budget under control. One of the first things that we did, and I am very proud of it and Republicans joined with us on this so it was a bipartisan effort, is we passed the PAYGO principle. PAYGO is about as simple as you can imagine; it's pay-as-you-go. It's no different than the way I run my personal family budget with my kids and my wife; it's

no different than most people run their small businesses or large businesses. It is the simple point of money comes in, and you can't spend more than is coming in. It is expenses versus revenues, or cash flow.

I was very proud of that moment as one of the very first things that we did was to pass the PAYGO principle, and that was something that was, in the past, the Congress always followed that principle, but most recently, in the last number of years, it was thrown out. As a result of that, tax cuts, higher spending, and tax cuts are wonderful, we all want less taxes as long as there are corresponding spending cuts. Everything has to balance. I just want to reference that because to me that was a great start.

I am very proud of the fact that everything we have passed since then, every bill that we have taken up has a component in it which says we cannot add new expenses, we cannot build more programs unless the money is in the budget. I think that is a principle that needs to be there forever, for that matter; and I think that is the first step in beginning this process of getting our fiscal house in order.

So I am just going to highlight that for a minute and turn it back over to Congressman ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. Speaker, we are also distinguished by having a leader in our Congress who comes to us as a labor lawyer, as a community leader, and has brought her very considerable talents to this Congress. She has led this Congress in many ways, including on the issues of trade and economic justice. Of course she is not limited to that, she knows a lot of stuff, but she has distinguished herself in that way, and so I just want to recognize at this time Congresswoman BETTY SUTTON from Ohio.

Ms. SUTTON. Thank you very much, Mr. ELLISON. What a great leader you are, and we thank you for putting this hour together.

I am happy to join with these other distinguished colleagues to speak to the American people about the change that is upon us and the hope that is growing.

We did hear from the voters loud and clear on November 7. And one of the things that they wanted was a Congress that is responsive to the priorities and needs that exist out there in our communities. One of the things that had been getting in the way of getting that kind of legislation that was truly responsive was the corruption that unfortunately had flourished in this body for quite some time.

I also think it is important that we point out the fact that on the day that this Congress opened, we came right down on this floor and we changed the rules to put to an end some of the abusive avenues that existed that resulted in policies that benefited the few at the expense of the many. And, frankly,

that was part of the foundation that had to be laid in order to get these other things passed.

When you talk about economic justice, and I know we are going to talk about this more this evening, I am very pleased to be a member of the Budget Committee. And the good news is we did recently pass a budget out of this body. The bad news is, when I got to the Budget Committee and I started hearing things about what our fiscal condition was, it was as bad as we feared it was from afar. But, again, because we have a new Congress and because we have change in this Congress, we were able to realign the resources that were there so that at least they met the needs and the priorities of our constituents and the American people and the communities that they live in.

So I am very happy to be here with you to talk about all of these things this evening, and I direct it back to you, our leader, Mr. ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Tonight, we are very lucky and fortunate to have somebody who can offer a diagnosis and then give a prescription, somebody who can look at our great Nation and say, what does this great Nation need to be healthier, to be stronger, to grow better and in a new direction, and what is the prescription. What is the advice that the good doctor would give to make America reach its highest potential to become a more perfect union? And to do that, I can't think of anybody better qualified than our colleague, Congressman STEVE KAGEN, who comes to us as a physician and a doctor of medicine, but now he is sort of a doctor of politics and more or less a doctor of making America a prosperous and strong country.

Doctor, what do you have for us tonight?

Mr. KAGEN. Well, I thank you very much for the kind introduction. And I would say the diagnosis looks good. We've got a positive change and a new direction for the country. We are headed in the right direction.

What have we done? We have brought back fiscal responsibility, and we are socially progressive and responsible as well.

Now, listening this evening back in my hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin, is my mother. I won't tell you how old she is, but I will tell you she does need affordable prescription drug coverage.

In Wisconsin, we had this thing called SeniorCare. It was group purchasing, where we knocked down the cost of prescription drugs tremendously, saved the Federal tax dollars, millions and millions of dollars. We had affordable prescription drug coverage that has been terminated by this administration. Now, my mother's medications were about \$310 off of SeniorCare, and on it: \$89. Same pharmacy, same pills, same manufacturers. It proves this point: when you negotiate, you can get a better deal. When you have a larger purchasing pool or a

larger insurance pool, you can get that better deal.

So I think the diagnosis tonight is, it's looking good; the future is looking fine. I am glad that my colleague from Minnesota is here tonight to lead us in that new direction.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Dr. KAGEN, our colleague, it is an honor to have you here.

We are going to go from the great State of Wisconsin down south to Kentucky. Congressman YARMUTH has been here; he has been offering tremendous leadership. He looks ready with a graphic there, but of course he may touch upon many issues tonight, all focusing on the fact that this 110th Congress has been a great start for the American people, and we want the American people to know what they got for their vote.

Congressman YARMUTH.

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the distinguished gentleman.

I want to say that all of us came back this week from our first extended stay in our districts. And of course I had to laugh when the President 3 weeks ago said, Oh, the Congress ought to come back from vacation and get to work on the supplemental bill, which we had already passed, of course. And I said, wait a minute, this is vacation? All we're doing is working 12, 13 hours a day in our districts communicating with our constituents.

And I think that from what I have gotten from talking with all of us among our colleagues is that when we were home, we found out what the American people are saying about our track record so far. And just before we came to the floor this evening, one of the Members from the opposing party tried to minimize what we had done over our past 100 or so days in office. And I thought it was amusing because it was, oh, well, they haven't enacted anything. Of course this Congress acted. It acted very expeditiously to raise the minimum wage for our low-wage earners, to cut the interest rate for our students in college who have loans outstanding; and, as Dr. KAGEN said, to take action to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, and so forth and so on.

When I was home, I met with people from the health care industry, and I met inside the health care facilities and I met with people from our educational institutions. We had a forum of higher education, and everybody was so grateful not just that we had taken the action that we did, but we were finally dealing with problems that have faced these various segments of society and had been unaddressed for the last 6 years.

So what I sensed when I was home in my district, and I know many of you and our other colleagues have sensed it as well, is that there is a new sense of optimism, there is a new sense of hope, and there is a spirit that we can deal with the serious problems that we face in this country because we have people

who are not interested in dogma, we are not interested in ideology. We are interested in solving problems for the American people.

That is why I am so proud to be a part of this Congress and this great freshman class because I know that the American people are responding to what we have done already, and I know that they are responsive to the great agenda that we are going to be pursuing for the rest of this Congress.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congressman YARMUTH.

It is time to get specific, my friends. Let me just say specifically that in the first 100 hours alone, we made our very first vote the implementation of the independent bipartisan 9/11 Commission's national security recommendations. Second, we voted to increase the minimum wage for the first time in 10 years to give American workers an overdue pay raise. Third, we voted to cut student loan interest rates in half. Fourth, we voted to roll back multibillion dollar taxpayer subsidies for big oil and big coal companies, and we put that money toward renewable energy.

Next, we expanded research and help for stem cell research. And then we voted to require Medicare to leverage its substantial bargaining power to buy prescription drugs and pass the savings on to people. And then we put the interests of all Americans ahead of the special interests by passing a tough congressional ethics reform, restoring the pay-as-you-go budgeting and restricting spending on earmarks. Those are the specifics. Now we are going to elaborate.

Congressman HODES, I would just like to ask you a question: What did this Congress do to help students and to stand up for the right to an affordable education so that every American can reach their highest potential?

Mr. HODES. I am glad you asked. Because in the campaign, as we went around, we all heard about the squeeze that our families were in all over this country, complaining about the cost of higher education and the difficulty they were having in paying for the loans that folks have to take out in order to pay for an education. Of course in order to be competitive in a global economy, we need more kids going to college, we need more opportunities for more people in this country.

In my home State of New Hampshire, we actually carry the highest debt-per-student in terms of student loans of any State in the country. So it has been really important at home in New Hampshire and around the country for this Democratic Congress and the new majority to take action.

Now, Mr. ELLISON already talked about one of the things that was done in terms of making college more affordable by voting to cut student loan interest rates in half. We've talked about what we have done to restore pay-as-you-go rules, because once you've got fiscal responsibility, once

we've restored fiscal responsibility that was absent from the 6 years that the Republicans were borrowing and spending us into a black hole of a deficit, we can start acting with a social conscience and help our college kids.

So one of the things we have done, as this chart shows, is we passed a budget, a Democratic budget that restores fiscal balance, it cuts the deficit, balances the budget over 5 years. And what it does for our kids in college is, first, we propose an increase of the maximum Pell Grant to at least \$4,600, significant increase. Our budget, the Democratic budget, the responsible budget, the pay-as-you-go, balance-the-budget-in-5-years budget rejects all of the President's irresponsible proposed cuts to higher education, including that he wants to eliminate the Perkins loan program, Federal supplemental opportunities grants, and leveraging education assistance partnerships. The President's budget actually wants to take opportunities away from our kids going to college and families who are trying to send their kids to college. We have turned that around. We are going to make it easier and more affordable for kids to go to college.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, thank you, Congressman.

One of the things that we are trying to do in this Congress and we are going to do and we are on the track to do is to make middle-class people have a real opportunity for a real future for their children, for their parents, for everyone. There is no doubting that doing things to strengthen the American worker is part of that.

One of the things we did was we passed the Employee Free Choice Act, and we have made some firm strides on issues of trade to make sure that we don't export jobs.

I am wondering, Congresswoman SUTTON, if you wouldn't give the American people a word about these important issues.

Ms. SUTTON. Thank you, Congressman ELLISON; I certainly will.

The Employee Free Choice Act was a great accomplishment by this Congress, a bill that will make it easier for workers out there, the people who make this world turn.

I stand here in front of you as the daughter of a man who worked in a boilermaker factory his whole life.

□ 2130

The sister of a steelworker. The sister of a teacher. The aunt of a food and commercial worker. And these are the people that make the world turn.

Yet we hear often that people are not in unions, that union membership is down. Well, it is not because they don't want to be in unions, because we know that being a member of a union and having the right to bargain collectively for fair wages and family-sustaining benefits is something that people do desire and does result in exactly that, a fairer wage and benefits.

Frankly, it works for business as well, and there are many examples out

there where employers and employees work. But, unfortunately, part of the big reason why union membership is down is because it is very dangerous and sometimes results in the loss of a job if you engage in trying to organize workers into a union so that they can bargain collectively.

So this Congress, noting that, noting the need to end the potential for harassment for those who would just simply seek to organize and have their voice heard collectively, passed the Employee Free Choice Act which will enable workers to just simply, if there is a majority of them who want to join a union, then they can sign a card and join a union. So it is going to truly be an effective tool in lifting up America's workers and the middle class.

I turn it back over to you, Mr. ELLISON.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Now we are really honored to have one of our great leaders in our class, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY, who is a distinguished veteran of our Armed Forces, who I believe is the only combat veteran of the Iraq conflict, to tell some very, very heart-rending and very clear stories, which are true, about the meaning of our Nation's effort for a just, safe, but orderly withdrawal from this conflict.

I would like to switch it over to Congressman MURPHY for a moment from the great state of Pennsylvania.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thanks, Congressman. I appreciate it. Thank you to the gentleman from Minnesota, and to the gentleman from Connecticut, my colleague, the other Congressman MURPHY up there.

Today is an important day in our country's history. We are the new Congress, the 110th Congress, and we came together from all over the country to really change the direction of our country.

I am so proud that I wore the Army uniform for the first time in 1993, following in the footsteps of my father and my uncle and my grandfather and my brother, who serves in the Air Force, that we served with pride and gave it our best.

When I was asked to join the faculty at West Point, when I taught there, we took pride in ourselves in saying we are developing leaders of character for a lifetime of service. Yes, we were making military officers. Yes, they were tacticians on the law and the profession of arms, but they were leaders of character. They stood up for the truth. They stood up for justice.

When our Nation was attacked on 9/11 of 2001, many of us who were called to serve deployed for our country. And I am proud that I deployed twice, first to Bosnia and then to Baghdad, Iraq, as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division.

So, within the first 100 days of this Congress, as you mentioned, when we took the steps to say we are going to be coequal branches of government,

you see, when I was at West Point, I taught constitutional law and I taught about what this country was all about, and it was that we have three coequal branches of government.

See, we did not believe in the theory of King George, one person being infallible, running a country. That is why we had the American Revolution. Our democracy evolved over 200 years to now, today, where we have leaders from both parties willing to stand up and say, enough is enough. Mr. President, we will not continue to give you a blank check while the Iraqis still sit on the sidelines. We will not sit there and say everything is okay when we understand what the truth is on the ground in Iraq.

When I was there in 2003, I remember when it was August. I remember having the combat gear on. I remember riding up and down in what is called Ambush Alley in 138-degree heat and wondering when that next roadside bomb might go off, scouting it out, looking, always being vigilant to make sure the men I was leading down that path were safe.

Now, what this 110th Congress has stood up to do and why I am so proud of the freshman class for doing is, when we had the emergency supplemental, the Iraq supplemental, we said, we will give you, Mr. President, every single dime, every single penny that you ask for to support the troops, but there is a policy attached.

No longer is there an open-ended commitment. No longer is there unaccountability. This is a different Congress. This is the 110th Congress. This is a Congress that will stand strong, stand together, even though we know the political attacks are going to come, even though we know it takes personal courage, and even though they are going to try and distort what we are actually going to try to do. And what we are trying to do is to hold the Iraqi people accountable, now, over 4 years later.

At 6:12 a.m. this morning, I got an e-mail from Iraq. It was from a former cadet that I got to know who lost his brother on 9/11. He said to me, Sir, this is the first time I have ever written you, but he said, I want you to know there are legions, legions of junior officers, now company commanders, in Iraq and in Afghanistan and all over this country that are watching you, that are watching this 110th Congress, and that you are saying thank God someone is standing up and speaking truth to power. He said, I would never think that 5 years after my brother was murdered at the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001 that I would stand up against the foreign policy of the United States of America when it comes to Iraq. I want you to know that I am keeping you in my prayers, and if there is anything, anything I can do to help your cause, to put our country back on the right track, I am there.

That is what is happening with all these Congresspersons here in Washington.

When I get letters from people in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, or north-east Philadelphia, and they say, thank God we have a Congressman that is going to stand up for us, for our veterans, thank God that they are speaking truth to power, that is what is going on. There is a movement, and it is a movement again to believe in America, a movement again to say, listen, we understand there are coequal branches of the government. We understand what the Congress is trying to do. We understand they are trying to do what is right.

And it is not about partisan politics. It is not about Bush Republicans versus Democrats. It is not about that.

I joke. My wife Jenni is at home. I just talked to her on the phone. My 4-month-old Maggie just laughed for the first time today. It puts it all in perspective.

But my wife was a lifelong Republican. She still considers herself a Republican. She said to me when we first met, and she gave me a hard time for being a Democrat, she said, you know, Patrick, I will support you, and I will support you for one reason and one reason only, besides the fact that I am in love with you. She said, I was a YAFer. That is called a Young American for Freedom; it is a conservative wing of the Republican Party. She said, the Republican Party left me; I did not leave the Republican Party.

So when I talk about what we have done, what we have accomplished in the supplemental bill against all odds, because we remember, we were through this when we were voting for this, we understood when they said, why are you wasting your time trying to pass this emergency supplemental, putting a timeline on Iraq? Why would you do that? You know it is not going to pass.

I was there and talking to the press, and I said, I will give every cent, every fiber of my being, to talk to my colleagues together, all of us as one, and say how important it is to pass this.

Then when we passed it against all the odds, when they told us it wasn't going to happen, and we passed it, then they said, well, why did you do that? The Senate is never going to pass it. The Senate responded and the Senate took our bill, and now it is in conference and they passed it, also a supplemental bill with a timeline.

That is why it is so important that all of us do not lose hope, all of us continue to stand up and speak truth to power, all of us stand up and say, no longer are we just going to have an open-ended commitment in Iraq.

Because when you look at the full spectrum, some people say, bring all the troops home tomorrow; we don't care, just bring them all home tomorrow. Others say, it is the President, he is infallible; you can't ask any tough questions, you can't give him a timeline. You can't demand accountability from the Iraqis, who are still sitting on the sidelines 4 years later.

But this 110th Congress, made up of all races, of all sexes, of all parties,

came together and we said, this is a moderate approach, this is an approach that will change the direction in Iraq. When we look at how almost every day hundreds of people are dying there, and we said to the Iraqi people that we will support you, but we will not sit idly by. We will not stand idly by and watch you continue to sit on the sidelines, when our troops, our men and women who wear the military uniform of our country, continue to lead the efforts there when, now, it is 4 years later and it is imperative that they stand up for their country.

Because if we remember when it was the American Revolution, it was America's revolution; it was the Americans standing up. When it was the American Civil War, it was the Americans fighting each other.

So that is why all of us in good conscience cannot stand here while our brave young men and women serve in places like Iraq and referee a religious civil war. That is not what they were supposed to do. That is not in the national interests of the United States of America. That will not keep our families safe.

When we all vote, when we all take these so important and these crucial votes and these timely votes and these historic votes, when we vote for our families and for our constituents, we think about how is it going to affect our children and our children's children. How is it going to affect my daughter, Maggie Murphy, when she reads in the history books what we have done? How is it going to affect who we call Joe, that GI Joe, that soldier on the ground in the 138-degree heat in Baghdad, those members of the 82nd Airborne Division that I so proudly served with that are now back over there on their third deployment?

When I was there weeks ago, and I know some of my colleagues here were also just recently there, I talked to these guys. I talked to the guys I served with. I talked to the guys, Sergeant Juan Santiago, who left his wife and two kids at home, is now in his third deployment in Iraq. I broke bread with him over there.

I said to him when I was in Baghdad, he used to be Private Santiago, now he is Sergeant Santiago, and his nickname is Santi. I had lunch with him. I said, "Santi, what is going on?" And he said, "Sir, it is like Groundhog Day, but 4 years later. They are still sitting on the sidelines. We are still doing everything for them. I don't know what it is going to take to get them to come off the sidelines."

What it is going to take is the political pressure so we are clear and we act as one; that we tell the Iraqis that the 110th Congress is different; that the spirit of America is there and we love you, but we cannot hold your hand. You need to stand up finally for your country. You need to stand up and secure your neighborhoods, secure your street corners. You need to be the ones that are leading those convoys up and down Ambush Alley, not our troops.

That is exactly what our supplemental did and what we will do when we vote on it after it comes back from conference in just a few days.

With that, I would now take it back probably to the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. ELLISON. Thank you.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, we are not allowed to clap during these things, but I wish we were, because that was amazing, and I really thank you for that.

At this time, I do want to ask Mr. KLEIN to sort of pick up a little bit where Congressman MURPHY left off. What did this Congress do to make America safer? Could you share that with us?

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Sure. I listened to Congressman MURPHY, and I listened to veterans in my home district of Broward and Palm Beach Counties, and whether it was World War II, the Korean War or the most recent conflicts we are involved in, these are brave men and women that put their lives on the line, and they deserve to be supported, both on the ground and when they come home.

I thank you for your service, and I certainly thank your colleagues over in Iraq and the men and women that are fighting and protecting our freedoms all over the world.

□ 2145

You know, when I think about September 11, which was a dark day for our country, and what happened in our country with the failures that allowed these terrorists to attack us, and the deaths, the needless deaths that occurred in our major cities, it was an awakening for this country. But it was also a time when we had an opportunity to really take stock of where our shortcomings were. Where were the intelligence failures? Where were the communication failures? Where were the vulnerabilities in our airports and our seaports and all these other places where people came in from other countries to harm us and kill our people in this country?

And there was a man named Osama bin Laden who is still out there. Hard to believe today. When you think about what our number one strategy should have been was to find the perpetrator and the perpetrators of this terrible, terrible tragedy, and he is still out there today. That needs to be rectified.

But beyond that, I think we all recognize things that came together after that; and there was this 9/11 Commission report, which was probably one of the most prestigious, important, qualified incredible groups that came together, Democrats, Republicans, professionals which said, let's figure this out. This isn't a Democrat/Republican issue; it is an American issue, and protecting our territory, our homes, our streets. And they came up with this 9/11 report. Which, if you haven't had a chance to take a look at it, it is not just reading you read before you go to bed and it will put you to sleep. This is

gripping. This is really a very thorough analysis of what we need to do.

Unfortunately, it was a number of years that passed. Some things were adopted from that plan, but many were not. And I don't think it was anybody questioning the fact that this was a priority, but it wasn't passed. Many of the items weren't passed.

So one of the things that we said in our campaigns and we took up right away, and we are still obviously waiting for the process in Washington to be finished, but the House quickly took up the rest of the 9/11 Commission report and passed it. And I just want to highlight a few key elements.

We know that there were problems with aviation security. Those elements, those recommendations have been adopted. We know that there were port problems and port security issues. Most containers that come in, substantially most of the containers that come into our ports are not inspected. I come from southeast Florida. We have Port of Palm Beach and Port Everglades. Port Everglades is a main oil terminal among cargo and container in great bulk. Tremendous risk if you happen to be anywhere near those areas and something, God forbid, comes in in the form of nuclear materials or biohazardous materials or anything else that comes into those ports. And this is all over the United States. Ownership of the ports. We all know about the Dubai Port issue. That has been straightened out through our legislation.

Certainly the idea of preventing terrorists from even getting into this country, visa changes, rules changes, all these things are so important. And not to mention the people that are on the ground fighting for us every day, our firefighters, our emergency responders, our police officers. Every one of us feels very strongly about them. And as we grew up and you wanted to be a fireman or you wanted to be a policeman, not everybody chose that profession, but, boy, on September 11 did we as Americans have a newfound respect for what they did for us.

But what we needed to do that wasn't done was to give them the tools, the communications tools like they needed in New York and other places so they can make sure that they can communicate with each other, and that local and State and National Federal intelligence agencies can properly share that information. These things have now been passed by the House of Representatives, and it was one of the first things we did. And that is the right thing to do. And whatever it costs, that should be at the top of our budget. People say, well, it is expensive. You know something? You prioritize. You say, what is first? Homeland security, protecting our troops, making sure they are properly funded. And I know that Congressman YARMUTH is going to talk about the incredible great work we have done for our veterans.

These are the things that are our Nation's priorities. These are American

values and America's priorities. And I am very proud that we as the freshman class participated with the rest of the Congress, and mostly Democrats, and Republicans, came together that said, yes, we are going to take care of the American people first. So I just wanted to share those elements with you.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman KLEIN, I want to thank you for those excellent observations. The American people need to know that this 110th Congress takes their security and their safety very seriously. We are not going to mess around. We believe that the people have a right to be safe. In fact, one of the first obligations of government is to make the people safe and secure in their homes.

So you already correctly, Congressman KLEIN, talked about our veterans, and I think it is probably a good idea to talk about what we are doing for our veterans. It is one thing to say, support the troops; but we have got to talk about really supporting the troops. Congressman YARMUTH, can you give us a word on that?

Mr. YARMUTH. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota. And I would also like to echo my great respect and admiration for our colleague from Pennsylvania who has spoken so eloquently on various occasions about the costs being paid and the sacrifices being made by our great men and women overseas, and how much that means to them. And I think this Congress has responded to those sympathies and those emotions in what we have done to actually support our men and women, our veterans, our wounded warriors who have come back from these very troublesome spots in the world. And we have done it with more than words, and that is what is important.

In the continuing resolution, as we all know, the prior Congress did not pass many of the appropriations bills. They left it up to us to try and fund most of the government, and we responded in the best way possible: we passed a continuing resolution. But we didn't just pass a sustaining fund because we recognized that we needed to embellish those funds to take care of our veterans and the increased costs that are being incurred by this war we are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. So what did we do?

On January 31 when we passed the continuing resolution, we added \$3.6 billion to take care of veterans health care. \$3.6 billion. We recognized not only our moral obligation to our veterans but also the promise that we made to them. This government, the people of this country made a promise to those people who volunteered to fight for their country that we would take care of them after they left the service, we would take care of their health care. This Congress recognized and realized and responded to that commitment that we had made to them. Unlike prior Congresses, we increased funding by \$3.6 billion.

But we weren't finished yet. When we passed the supplemental, we didn't just give the President what he wanted to perpetuate this war, which many of us want to leave, but we said we have men and women who are coming back who are wounded, who are seriously wounded. As we have seen in Walter Reed, we weren't taking care of them adequately, we weren't responding to our commitment to them, our moral obligation to them; so we added \$1.7 billion more in this supplemental to take care of our veterans, to take care of our wounded warriors.

We understand what supporting our troops means, not just when they are under fire when they are in the battlefield, but also when they come home after they made that sacrifice. We have a commitment to them. We have realized that; we have responded. And I think that the American people can be confident that our veterans are being well taken care of by the 110th Congress and by subsequent Congresses, too.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congressman YARMUTH.

I want to keep the theme of national security going for a moment, because the health of our people is also a national security issue. And, again, as we talked about in the very beginning and when we were introducing our freshmen who are here tonight, Congressman KAGEN did speak eloquently about the importance of making sure that our seniors have safe and affordable medications.

Congressman KAGEN, can you give us a word about the importance of keeping the health and welfare of our people strong?

Mr. KAGEN. I don't have to remind anyone here that if you don't have your health, you don't have anything. If you do serve in harm's way, if you are brave and honorable and serve, as many thousands and thousands have done. From my district in northeast Wisconsin, 20,034 brave Americans, men and women, served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. And when we passed the supplemental bill we voted to support our troops before, during, and, very importantly, after being in harm's way. We stood up to our responsibility. They covered our back. Now it is time we should cover theirs.

It is not just the veterans that need help. Our senior citizens, they can't afford their prescription drugs. I came to Congress because one time in three when I would write a prescription in my practice, my patients could not afford the medication. It wouldn't be on the list, their insurance company wouldn't cover it, and they went without. And today in America, people listening here tonight are asking this Congress, the 110th, to stand up to the drug companies and to the health insurance companies and get the job done.

I think if I stand back a little bit and give a bigger picture to what is going on in the 110th Congress, take a look at

the class of 2006, our class, which I consider America's hope, what is the difference between what we are doing and the previous Congress? We are listening to the people and we are speaking out on their behalf. They can't be here tonight, but their voice is being heard.

The other difference is judgment. I believe it was poor judgment that took us into Iraq. It was poor judgment in the administration that prevents our people from having affordable prescription drugs and affordable insurance. One of the biggest comedies here in America is the 47 million people who do not have any health insurance at all. And what they haven't figured out is they are paying for everybody's health costs because they get to pay the real bill, the top-dollar bill. They don't get a discount at all. So we have to change things in America and move where we can afford the prescription drugs, where we can afford to have insurance coverage for everyone.

But this 110th Congress, when you talk, Congressman ELLISON, about security, we also passed a bill, H.R. 327, to help prevent suicide in veterans. Now, in my district that will help 64,000 veterans in northeast Wisconsin alone.

We also enacted the 9/11 Commission on Homeland Security recommendations, H.R. 1. That will help 245 police and fire departments throughout my district.

We also passed a bill, H.R. 4, that would require the Secretary of Health to negotiate for lower prices for our seniors for their prescription drugs. In my district alone, that helps 68,000 senior citizens, if only the Senate would put that language in and if only the HHS Secretary would be so kind as to use his buying group to negotiate for lower drugs.

I think you can look for positive movement from the 110th Congress. We are not afraid to back down from any interest that harms those that we serve.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Dr. KAGEN, our fellow Congressman who we are so proud of.

And I think it is now a good time, my colleagues, we have gone over what we have done. There is much, much more. We can't go over everything because we have just been that busy. But it is time to talk about a direction. We have got to write the vision and then pursue it.

And I want to ask you, Congressman HODES from the great State of New Hampshire, to talk about where we are going. We can't just rest on our laurels, though we have done pretty good so far. We need to talk about where we are heading.

Mr. HODES. I thank you, Mr. ELLISON. You know, I couldn't help when I was listening to PATRICK MURPHY, a brave veteran who served his country and came to Congress and is serving again, continuing his service, to think about how touched I was when he talked about his new baby. Because, really, what we are talking about here is a vision for this country and a vision

for the world that is going to take us into the 21st century, because we face challenging new times. Things have changed in this country, and the American people know it. And in many ways they are far ahead of the politicians, they are far ahead of many of us. They understand that things have changed in this country.

The conflicts we face are different kinds of conflicts. It is no longer nation against nation. We face threats from a shadowy network of people, terrorists who would do us harm. And we have to be strong to be able to fight terrorism.

But what does being strong mean in the 21st century? The American people have demanded a new direction. They have demanded a new way to defend our country. They want us to fight terrorism, and we intend to fight terrorism; but we intend to do it with a greater focus on those who attacked us on 9/11, with a greater focus on homeland security, on making sure that we are keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists. Perhaps the greatest threat we face, which went by the boards because of this administration's preoccupation with fighting the wrong war in Iraq which has diverted us from really focusing on the concentrated effort we need from law enforcement, from intelligence, from military, from diplomacy, from the soft power that America, has been extending our cultural ideals and principles out into the world to show people that we are not merely going to bully people with weapons, but we are also going to stand on our ideals and principles.

So defending our country and staying strong means making sure that we have a responsible strategy to disengage from Iraq so we can deal with Afghanistan, and Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden is still hiding out, still directing al Qaeda; so that we can do what we need to do to go back and finish the job that this administration left unfinished. That is what defending our country means, because this war in Iraq, as everybody in this country is seeing, has left us weaker. It has caused more terrorism, more death, more disdain for the United States.

□ 2200

I am sorry for that. We want to see us return to the place in the world where people care about us because of our values and our principles, and that is one of the most important things that we are going to do in this 110th Congress.

We are going to improve our military readiness by making sure that we are going to rebuild a 21st century force, capable of projecting power and our ideals to protect our country and our interests, and that means new thinking. It means new thinking about how we deal with the conflicts we are in, how we deal with the conflicts in the future.

It means part of the reason that we hope the President takes his cue from

the American people and faces the reality of the mess that he has made and changes direction is so that we can rebuild our military to make sure that we can face the conflicts of the future.

We are going to demand accountability, and we are going to end the rubber-stamp approach to congressional oversight of the war in Iraq and we have started to do that. We are going to continue to do that. We are going to fight the war on terrorism, and we are going to hold our own government accountable for failed policies. We are going to respond to the American people who want a new direction, and we are going to deliver on homeland security.

That is the first way. That is the first thing on our agenda. It is a new vision of what it means to be strong. It is a new vision of what it means to defend our country.

We can have all the military might in the world and we do. We spend more in our budget than all the rest of the world combined spends on defense, and I ask, you has it made us safer? Have the policies of this administration made us safer? The answer is no.

We see there has got to be a new direction. We see there has got to be a new vision, and that is what Democrats are bringing to this 110th Congress when it comes to defending our country and keeping us strong. There is a new definition of national security, and that is what we are all about.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank Congressman HODES. Let me now just ask Congressman KLEIN, what about our energy future? What are we going to do into the next decade? We have seen all kinds of challenges with global climate change. We do not want to be depending upon unstable regimes around the world. How can Americans trust that this 110th Congress, this Democratic-led Congress, actually makes sure that we ensure our energy future.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Well, that is an interesting question, and I think we should look back the last few years.

The President in his State of the Union address about a year ago correctly said we are addicted to oil. I think everybody understood what he meant by that, and yet Congress, a number of months later, passed an energy bill which gave billions of dollars to energy companies and subsidized more oil drilling.

Now, oil will always be a part of the energy policy of the United States, but this notion that oil is our way out, to me, is just ridiculous. This is interesting because when I have been speaking at schools back home, and I am sure you have been doing the same thing, and I want to talk to our young population, our students, as well as our adults.

The calling of this generation is to move toward making this country energy independent. It goes right directly to what Representative HODES was talking about, defend our country. The number one thing that we should do to

ensure that we are defending our country is making sure that we are not continually dependent on importing oil from countries that are not reliable partners, and whether that is Middle East countries or Venezuela or any other country if you have been following around the world where we are daily bringing in 60 percent of our oil in the form of imports, that is a dangerous prospect and a dangerous policy.

So what we can do about it? We can focus, just like in the past, the attention of the American people, our scientists, our public sector, our private entrepreneurs, our people that have great vision and say, what can we do to make ourselves energy independent? Is it solar, is it wind, is it wave, is it thermal, is it any combination of science that can go along with this?

We put a man on the moon when said John F. Kennedy said, we are going to fight against the Sputnik, that little can that went up into space. We created the Manhattan project, that we knew it was a matter of our national security to make sure that we developed a nuclear weapon, it was an atomic weapon at that time, to make sure that we would end World War II successfully. That was a commitment that Americans, with our ingenuity and our science, put that all together.

Well, I do not think there is anybody who is listening tonight does not believe that Americans, if they put their nose to the grindstone and we make our commitments as consumers, as scientists, as public and private people, that we cannot accomplish that same goal. It is a matter of national security. It is a matter of our environment. You already mentioned this, global warming, and the science, the carbon dioxide and all those things, and it is also a matter of a new economy.

We think about jobs for the next generation, the science, that we can lead the world and export our technology and be successful.

A new energy policy is the calling of our generation, and I hope and I believe, based on the freshman class, by the way, the freshman class of Democrats and Republicans coming in and listening very closely to the public, I think there is a great opportunity for us to all work together and change it from just an energy policy that is dependent on oil to one that will really improve our environment, create new jobs and really protect us in this next century.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the Congressman. Now in the last five minutes of our evening tonight, I want to just throw it over to Congressman KAGEN again who really is very versatile, can speak on any issue, but I want to ask you if you would to simply comment on care for our children and our families.

We have seen over these last several years children and families really face some difficult times. We need to project a greater vision for our children and families. Can you speak to

what the people can expect in this Congress for our children and our families.

Mr. KAGEN. Well, I would say, first of all, thanks to Congressman KLEIN for pointing the way forward about becoming an energy independent Nation. In a bipartisan statement, I will tell you Republicans can grow corn just as good as the Democrats, but we cannot grow our way out of this energy crisis. It will take technology and innovation to get off of dependence on foreign sources of oil.

But our families and our children are really at risk of this new economy that we have. We really have to get back to the basics in America.

It is really amazing that it is the Democrats that are the fiscally responsible party here when you think about it. Think about the old laborers. We are the fiscally responsible party. We do not believe in borrow and spend. So there are four deficits in America that I will point out tonight to you and have you respond to.

The first deficit is a savings deficit. Our families are not saving any money. For the first time since the Great Depression, 1933, we had a negative savings rate last year.

Second deficit we had is a budget deficit. Last year, our budget deficit was over \$250 billion, and if you throw in the \$175 billion that we credited from Social Security, it is over \$400 billion on every citizen's head. Every working man and woman has a Federal deficit of \$425,000.

The third deficit is our balance of trade deficit. China has an advantage on us or, shall I say, Communist China where their government will invest illegally in corporations, and that puts every manufacturer in this country at a competitive disadvantage by 30 percent right out of the box.

The fourth deficit we had until last November was a deficit of leadership, leadership that would stand up, put their foot down and say there is a better way of doing things.

I think you will find our Class of 2006 will work together with all parties to fashion a better future forward. By working together, we will build a better future and a better Nation for everyone and every man, woman and child in this country.

Mr. ELLISON. That is right. Let me say these last remaining moments, just go around quickly, say good night to the folks, and those deficits, we are going to be filling quite quickly. I just want to throw it to Congressman HODES as we begin to wrap up tonight.

Mr. HODES. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you all tonight and talk about where we have been, where we are and we are going to take this country.

We are going to defend our country and we are going to grow our economy, care for our children and families. We are going to protect our planet with a 21st century energy policy. We are going to deal with energy independence and global climate change. We have re-

stored accountability, and we are going to keep on restoring accountability because in this 21st century we are in a global economy.

The Democrats and the new majority here in Congress are committed to growing our economy in a way that really spreads opportunities to everybody. It means fair trade policies that incorporate fair environmental and labor standards so that every American worker can operate on the same playing field.

We are going to grow the economy. We are going to invest in research and development. We are going to make sure that we are moving this country forward.

So it has been a great time to be with you tonight.

Mr. ELLISON. I go to Congressman KLEIN for a few final words.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for being here tonight. It has been a pleasure to be with this freshman class, I look forward to continuing to work on all these items and more, and look forward to working with our people back home and making sure we are listening to their ideas, as we have been, and just continuing to move our country forward.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman KAGEN.

Mr. KAGEN. You can look forward to good judgment from the 110th Congress on both sides of the aisle. We have got a great leader, Madam Speaker NANCY PELOSI, who has a steel spine, and she will keep us on this path of fiscal responsibility and being socially responsible.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, we are going to wrap it up right now.

I want you to know that this class of 2006, this 110th Congress, is pointing the way forward for a better America today, tomorrow and in the future. Thank you all very much.

A QUARTERLY REPORT CARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY of California. Mr. Speaker, tonight we are going to open something new. If you are like in my house, every 3 months if you have kids in school, in my house it is Connor and Megan, they just got their report card, and that is what tonight is about, a quarterly report, what has gone on in this 110th Congress.

Well, tonight we are going to hear from the freshman class of Republicans, and our goal here is to put the people before politics.

Much like what we have seen, we want to find solutions. We want to move America in the right direction. We want to tell you first and foremost what has gone on here for the last 100 days, give us a report card, tell us where we are going, and the most im-

portant thing, we want to bring accountability back to America.

So tonight we are going to start off, and we have got an interesting freshman class. We have got people from all walks of life. This is a microcosm of society, just much like America is. So our first speaker is going to be the president of the Republican class. He comes from Idaho. He served in the legislature. From Boise, Idaho, we have Mr. BILL SALI.

Mr. SALI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MCCARTHY. I appreciate the opportunity to give this report on this first quarter. I think it is very apt for us to let the folks back home know exactly what is going on from a Republican perspective.

In the first quarter of the new Congress, the new Democrat majority has made its priorities clear by acting to impose higher taxes, more government spending and by attacking key aspects of the Idaho way of life.

In the last 3 months, the majority has acted to impose the largest tax increase in more than a decade. In fact, within the first month of Congress this new majority passed H.R. 6, a bill to increase by \$7.7 billion over a 10-year period, an increase that will effectively affect the price of gas at the pump and further our addiction on foreign oil.

Instead of higher taxes and continued increasing reliance on foreign oil, my constituents need lower fuel prices, but in the first three months in Congress, this new majority has done nothing to lower fuel prices but to the contrary has acted to actually increase the price of gas.

In the same 3 months, the new majority has passed a budget that includes almost \$400 billion in increased Federal spending, a budget that failed to address the explosive growth in entitlement spending, spending that will consume over 60 percent of the Federal budget in 15 years.

The Democratic majority has focused in the Natural Resources Committee on what they call the evolving West. Those of us who are actually from the West are calling it the war on the West. The majority has had countless hearings primarily to paint an inaccurate picture of the West and its issues.

The reform of Federal forest land management policies should be their focus in these hearings. We have forests that are overgrown and are fire hazards to our communities. We lack access to our lands, and we are under constant attack from radical environmentalists. We need better forest management, and the Federal Government needs to be a better landlord instead of an absentee one.

This should be the focus of their agenda in the Natural Resources Committee if they really want to help us in the West.

The priorities of this new majority were further illustrated when they mandated the Commander in Chief, withdraw troops on an unprecedented