

must avail ourselves during this time of testing in the war on terror, and they are the words of Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, and a man considered by many to be the greatest leader of the free world in the 20th century. He gives us words that I believe speak to our time. And I quote, "Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on a strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to the war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy, but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events."

Winston Churchill would also say, "You ask, 'What is our policy?' I will say it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of human crime. That is our policy."

"You ask, 'What is our aim?' I can answer with one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory, there is no survival."

And of our time, where many of our countrymen would wish away this war-torn part of the world, I can't help but think that this quote is appropriate. Sir Winston Churchill said, "One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger or try to run away from it. If you do, that will double the danger; but if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce it by half."

These are difficult days in Iraq. Sacrifices that American forces and their families are making are deeply humbling to me and to every Member of Congress and, I believe, of the American people. But I believe that, despite the recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge and the bold leadership of General David Petraeus in Baghdad and General Odierno in Ramadi, our U.S. forces on the ground, in combination with Iraqi forces, we are beginning to see modest progress in Iraq.

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In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence overall is down, and the same is true in Ramadi. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the deployment of 26 joint operating centers throughout the city. A city where there once were simply an International Green Zone, the Baghdad Victory Base, and four forward-operating bases in Baghdad, now throughout the city, in form when I visited them on April 1 in Baghdad for all the world looked like neighborhood police stations. They call them joint operating centers, where U.S. and Iraqi forces live together, work together, eat together and deploy together, in 2-week rotations. And it is making a difference on the ground.

In the al Anbar province in Ramadi, it is extraordinary to say 22 of the 24 Sunni tribal leaders, led in part by Sheikh Sattar, with whom I spent one of the most memorable hours of my life on April 2 earlier this month, Sunni leadership is standing with the al Maliki government, standing with the American soldier, rejecting the insurgency, rejecting al Qaeda, and reclaiming their city and their country for peace and security.

We have a long way to go, but not that long before we know whether this new surge strategy will work. I believe it is imperative that Congress give General Petraeus not only a willing ear tomorrow when he comes to Capitol Hill, but I think it is high time that we sent the President a clean bill, take out all the micromanagement of the war, all the unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal, for that matter, take out all the pork-barrel spending that has nothing to do with our military, and send General Petraeus and our soldiers on the ground the resources they need to get the job done and come home.

You know, I was asked by a soldier in Ramadi, a soldier from Indiana, he looked at me and he said, Congressman, I just want to ask you an honest question. He said, When is it going to be enough? When are we going to have been here long enough? And I said to him with great humility, I said, Son, I will answer this as straight with you as I can: I think we have to stick around here until these people can defend themselves, and not a minute longer.

That is what we need to accomplish, Mr. Speaker. We need to stick around long enough to help Iraqi security forces provide the basic stability in their capital and in the critical al Anbar province, and particularly in Ramadi, in order that the political process and the diplomatic process regionally can go forward. And then, like Americans of past generations, we can pick up and go home, and only ask for a debt of friendship in return.

It is a time of testing for our country. It is not a time for shrinking back. But based on the evidence, the facts that General Petraeus shared with me in Baghdad and will share with us on Capitol Hill, it is time to give the surge a chance to succeed.

The Congress will likely pass a supplemental bill that will have unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal. The President of the United States will keep his word. He will promptly veto that legislation. But my hope, and, candidly, Mr. Speaker, my prayer, is that after we have gone through this exercise and Congress has made its importance felt, we will get our soldiers the resources they need and we will give them the time and the freedom to succeed in this surge.

But there are no guarantees. We are up against a ruthless and brutal enemy, who even this very day claimed American lives in another ruthless suicide car bomb attack.

I believe it would be a stain on our national character that we would not wipe off for generations if we were to walk away now; if we were simply to say to the good people of Iraq, hundreds of which I have had the chance to meet and to speak with over my five journeys there over the last 4 years of this war, it would be a stain on our national character to that generation of Iraqis to leave them unable to defend themselves, to harvest a whirlwind of sectarian violence, revenge killings, and to leave them to become a part of a country that would become subjugated by the blood-sworn enemies of the United States of America. And it would be a stain on our national character to leave Iraq, in effect, worse off than how we found it.

As bad as it was under Saddam Hussein, I can't help but believe that if those who fight us in the form of the insurgency and al Qaeda today gain the reins of control in that Nation, that we will, as Winston Churchill said, we will double the danger, and our children and our children's children will pay a price we dare not imagine.

So we are faced with choices today, and my challenge to my colleagues and to any looking on is to listen to the facts, not the adjectives, not the "spin," as it is referred to in the popular debate, but listen to the facts. And the facts are that it is a tough time in Iraq. We are facing a determined enemy. But that despite a recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost.

In fact, because of the President's surge and the extraordinary courage of U.S. and Iraqi forces, we are making modest progress in Iraq. In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence is down. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers. And now 22 of 24 Sunni sheikhs and tribal leaders have come together in Ramadi and the al Anbar province to support the al Maliki government and U.S. forces.

Let's give General Petraeus a willing ear. Let's listen to the facts. And then let us reject timetables for withdrawal, pork-barrel-laden spending bills, and simply provide our soldiers the resources they need to get the job done and come home safe.

I believe that we can secure victory for freedom in Iraq, and in so doing we will deliver a victory for freedom, not only for the Iraqi people, but for ourselves and our posterity. We will unleash, as the President has spoken so eloquently, the forces of freedom and stability in a part of the world that has known little of either. That is my hope, and that is my prayer.

**ECONOMIC OBSERVATIONS BY THE
43 MEMBER STRONG, FISCALLY
CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRATIC
BLUE DOG COALITION**

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Under the

Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this evening, as most Tuesday evenings, I rise on behalf of the 43 member strong, fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are a group of Democrats that believe in restoring common sense, fiscal discipline and accountability to our Nation's government.

As you walk the Halls of Congress, Mr. Speaker, it is easy to know when you are walking by the office of a member of the fiscally conservative, Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, because you will see this poster in the hallway as not only a welcome mat to that Blue Dog member's office, but to remind Members of Congress and the American people on a daily basis that our country is in a fiscal mess.

In fact, today, the U.S. national debt is \$8,827,851,749,695, and I ran out of room, Mr. Speaker, but you could add a quarter on to that, 25 cents. You divide that enormous number by every man, woman and child in America, and every one of us, our share of the national debt is \$29,262. It is what I commonly refer to as the debt tax, D-E-B-T tax, which is one tax that cannot go away until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

The Federal deficit is something we don't have to have, Mr. Speaker. In fact, from 1998 through 2001 our Nation enjoyed a surplus. We had a balanced budget. We lived within our means. That was under President Clinton. He was the first Democrat or Republican to give us a balanced budget in some 30 or 40 years. And the economy was doing pretty good when there was no deficit and when we had a balanced budget.

We all remember those days, how the stock market performed. People had good-paying jobs with good benefits. Many of those jobs today have been shifted to places like China and Mexico and India. It is true that most of the folks have gone on and found other work, but if you really research it and look at it, they have found lesser-paying jobs with lesser benefits or, in many cases, no benefits at all.

In fact, this is Cover the Uninsured Week, Mr. Speaker. Forty-eight million people in America are without health insurance tonight. Who are they? It is not the people that can't work or don't want to work. They qualify for Medicaid, which is health insurance for the poor, disabled, and elderly. It is not our seniors. They are provided coverage through Medicare, which is the only health insurance plan most seniors have to stay healthy and get well.

So who are these 48 million people? It is the folks in this country, working families, Mr. Speaker, that are trying to do the right thing and stay off welfare, but they are working the jobs with no benefits. Ten million of them are children. One in five children will

go to bed tonight in America hungry. Ten million will go to bed tonight without health insurance. This is America, and I believe that we have a duty and an obligation to find a way to ensure that health care is affordable, available and accessible for all of God's children and for all of us here in America.

As long as we have got this type of debt and this type of deficit, it is going to be difficult to meet that challenge, as well as others.

The total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion; but by 2010, under this administration, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. Mr. Speaker, that is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years. In just one decade.

Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we will spend more of your tax money this year paying interest on the national debt than we will spend on educating our children, providing health care and other benefits to our veterans, and, yes, we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt this year than we will spend protecting our homeland through the Department of Homeland Security.

So many of America's priorities are going unmet. Why? Because this town and this Congress and this administration for the past 6 years have given us record deficit after record deficit, record debt after record debt, to the extent that today, today our Nation is borrowing about \$1 billion a day. But what is even more alarming than that is before we borrow \$1 billion today, we will spend half a billion dollars paying interest on the debt we already have.

□ 2130

I represent a very rural district in south Arkansas, in the western half of Arkansas. Half of the 29 counties I represent, nearly half of them, are located in what is referred to as the Delta region of this country, one of the poorest regions of America.

We have hope in that area by investing in alternative renewable fuels like ethanol by biodiesel, creating new jobs for our working families and new markets for our farm families and our landowners through cellulosic ethanol, taking the slash, the treetops and the limbs, what is left down in the woods and giving it a value and finding a use for that.

Another way for us to accomplish those things, our government must invest in research and development for cellulosic ethanol. Our government must invest more in research and development for alternative and renewable fuels. The real tragedy is that we will send the Iraqis more money in the next 8 hours than we will spend on research and development for alternative renewable fuels in the next 365 days. That is one example of why the deficit and the debt do matter.

A half a billion dollars a day going to pay interest on the national debt. We

could build 200 brand-new elementary schools every single day in America just on the interest that we are paying on the national debt. In southeast Arkansas, we have great hope in Interstate 69, an interstate under construction, sort of. It was announced in Indianapolis 5 years before I was born, that was 50 years ago, and with the exception of 40 miles in Kentucky and a stretch just south of Memphis, none of it has been built south of Indianapolis in 50 years, and yet we have great hope that this road can create jobs and economic opportunities for the people in the Delta region. We need \$1.5 billion to finish it.

For a country boy from Prescott and Emmet and Hope, Arkansas, I can tell you that is a staggering amount. But when you look at it this way, we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt in the next 3 days than what it would take to build Interstate 69.

On the western side of my district, there is great hope for Interstate 49. We need about \$2 billion to finish it, again a staggering number until you look at it this way: We will spend more money in the next 4 days paying interest on the national debt than what it would take to complete Interstate 49, which would provide the first and only interstate quarter through the middle of the United States of America.

So until this Congress starts standing up to this administration and saying "no" to these irresponsible budgets, America's priorities will continue to go unmet.

I am proud to tell you that under this new Democratic majority, they are listening to the 43 of us in the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dogs. For the last 6 years, we reached out to the Republicans on the other side of the aisle and asked to work with them on a budget that made sense for the American people. We were told that they didn't need us.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the American people are sick and tired of all of the partisan bickering that goes on in our Nation's Capital. For members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we don't care if it is a Republican or Democrat idea, we want to know if it is a commonsense idea, and does it make sense for the people back home who sent us here to be their voice.

So the Republican leadership turned a deaf ear to us for the past 6 years while they were in power. The American people decided to give the Democrats a chance at being in the majority this past November. I am proud to tell you that we didn't have to offer up a Blue Dog budget this year. Why? Because the new Democratic majority listened to the Blue Dogs and included our key provisions that can restore commonsense fiscal discipline and accountability to our government.

So we are beginning through the budget that passed on the floor of this House just a few weeks ago, we are beginning to develop a path that over

time, in fact by 2012, Mr. Speaker, can get us back to the days we had under President Clinton of a balanced budget in this country.

Why do deficits matter? They matter because they reduce economic growth, they burden our children and grandchildren with liabilities. Again, the debt tax, D-E-B-T, is \$29,262 for every man, woman and child in America, and they increase our reliance on foreign lenders who now own 40 percent of our debt.

This President, this administration and, for the past 6 years, this Republican-led Congress up until January borrowed more money from foreign central banks and foreign investors than the previous 42 Presidents combined. You want to talk about a risk to a national security, there is one for you.

We have got a lot of active Members within the Blue Dogs who come to Washington and stand up and proudly proclaim that they are conservative Democrats with a commonsense vision for the United States. I am absolutely delighted to be joined this evening by several of them. At this time I would yield to an active Member within the Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR).

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to be joined by my colleagues of the Blue Dog Coalition to speak about our Nation's problems.

Mr. ROSS brought up the U.S. national debt now being \$8.8 trillion, knocking on the door of \$9 trillion. I remember the very first day I came to Congress where the actual figure was \$7.54 trillion. Not even 2½ years ago, each American's share of the national debt was \$26,000 at that time. What a shame. Over \$3,000 more in 2 years.

Well, I am proud to join my fellow Blue Dogs today to talk about accountability in government and the gross negligence for taxpayer dollars in Washington. The Blue Dogs have been fighting for greater accountability in Washington for over 10 years. We have argued for a return to a PAYGO system or a balanced budget. We offered a 12-step reform plan to cure our Nation's addiction to deficit spending. We have argued that all earmarks should require written justification from a Member of Congress before being considered.

I am proud that our current leadership has taken into account what the Blue Dogs are saying. The Blue Dogs advocate accountability. Let's consider the facts. In 2004, the Federal Government spent \$25 billion that it cannot account for. In that same year, only 6 of 63 Pentagon departments were able to produce a clean audit. For 2005, the GAO reports that 19 of the 24 Federal agencies can't produce a clean audit or fully explain how they spend taxpayer dollars.

In March of 2005, the Veterans Affairs inspector general issued a report calling for the agency's information systems and securities to be upgraded. No

action was taken. And since that time, the personal information of millions of our Nation's veterans has been stolen.

Several of our Federal agencies received serious red-flag disclaimers on their 2005 financial statements, including the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Defense who wrote, "We are unable to give an opinion on the fiscal year 2005 DOD financial statements because of the limitations on the scope of our work. Thus, the financial statements may be unreliable. Therefore, we are unable to express and we do not express an opinion on the DOD's financial statements."

Mr. Speaker, the American public deserves the honest truth. The Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security wrote, "Unfortunately, the department made little or no progress to improve its financial reporting during fiscal year 2005. KPMG was unable to provide an opinion on the department's balance sheet."

The inspector general for NASA in its 2005 financial report in the enclosed report from independent auditors, Ernest & Young, disclaimed an opinion on NASA's financial statement for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005. The disclaimer resulted from NASA's inability to provide an auditable financial statement and sufficient evidence to support financial statements throughout the fiscal year and at year end.

Federal agencies are treating the taxpayer dollars that fund them like a joke, and the administration is incapable of lifting a finger to manage them effectively.

I believe we need strong enforcement measures in Congress and the Federal Government to make it more accountable for taxpayer dollars. We must ensure that Congress has the tools to hold Federal agencies responsible for their use of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, American taxpayers deserve to know how Congress and this administration are spending their money.

I am proud once again to join my Blue Dog colleagues to demand more fiscal accountability in Iraq. The Blue Dogs have a plan for fiscal accountability in Iraq. Our plan calls for transparency on how war funds are being utilized. It creates a commission to investigate how contracts are awarded, and it stops the use of emergency supplementals to fund this war. This is the first administration, Mr. Speaker, that has used emergency supplementals to fund a war year after year after year.

The Blue Dogs also call for American resources to improve Iraq's ability to police themselves. The Blue Dog legislation addresses the glaring lack of oversight and accountability in Iraq. We make sure that taxpayer dollars are accounted for. Government reports have documented waste, fraud and abuse in Iraq. I think it is time to stop that waste. Congressional oversight is desperately needed. The administra-

tion must be held accountable for how reconstruction funds are being utilized.

The Blue Dog proposals are commonsense proposals. They ensure transparency and accountability. We have already spent \$437 billion in Iraq, according to the Congressional Research Service, and we will spend another \$100 billion in Iraq in 2007 alone. That is over \$500 billion with virtually no oversight from Congress. We must start showing improvement in Iraq. Accountability leads directly to success, in my opinion. Iraq must begin making progress towards full responsibility by policing their own country. Without progress, it is a waste to continue U.S. investment in troops and financial resources.

We all support our troops. We must support our troops. We will do everything in our power to make sure that they have the equipment that they need. However, we cannot continue to write a blank check to this administration. Until our last troop has returned home, the American people deserve to know how their money is being spent. Accountability is not only patriotic, it often determines success from failure.

The Blue Dog proposal gives us an opportunity to regain that oversight and responsibility. This is the responsibility that we have to all of our men and women in uniform, to their parents, and to the American taxpayer who is footing the bill.

The Congressional Research Service and the Congressional Budget Office have clearly stated that if this continues, our fiscal irresponsibility in Congress, if it continues by the year 2040, every single penny of revenue that the Federal Government receives will go just to fund the interest on our national debt.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to let this happen. We cannot saddle our children with the irresponsibilities of this administration.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman, Mr. SALAZAR, a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition for joining us this evening.

The gentleman is absolutely correct. Every one of us, Democrat and Republican, we support our troops. All of the troops in harm's way tonight are in our prayers.

Just this week I visited Walter Reed Army Hospital and visited a 19-year-old corporal, John Slatton, from Delight, Arkansas. Most folks have never heard of Delight, Arkansas. It is a town of about 400 people. If you are my age or older, you might remember it as the hometown of Glen Campbell, who was a country singer and had a comedy show on Saturday nights back in the 1960s.

But this young man got to Iraq in October, had to have staples put in his head from a bullet that grazed his head in December. And on Easter, his family received a call that he had been shot by enemy fire and the bullet had entered near his left ear and exited the right side. The good Lord was working overtime that day. It missed his brain and

he is going to survive. He is going to have some challenges, and I ask that everybody join me in keeping him and his family in our hearts and our prayers.

We have all been touched by this. My brother-in-law is in the Air Force. He is serving in the Middle East tonight, and I am so very proud of his service and all of those who serve us in uniform. They do everything that we as a government ask them to do. But it is very important that we not only support them but that we provide them a direction that can ensure victory in Iraq and allow them to return home in the not-too-distant future to their families and loved ones.

□ 2145

I thank the gentleman for standing here with me tonight to demand accountability because we owe it to these brave men and women in uniform who serve our country and who we are so very proud of.

This is not a Democrat or a Republican thing. This is an American thing, and as Americans, we all stand in support of our men and women in uniform, not only while they are serving us overseas, but we have a commitment to them to provide them a new generation of veterans coming home with the very best in medicine and health care and opportunities so that they can be re-integrated into our society as productive citizens, as important citizens who have done so much for this country and for whom we owe so much.

I am very pleased to be also joined this evening by a fellow Blue Dog from the State of Tennessee, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS. At this time, I would yield to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. I thank my friend from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS).

I have had an opportunity to get to meet a lot of folks that I have served with here in the U.S. House. All of those obviously within the Blue Dog Coalition have become pretty endeared to me because of the commitments we focus on as being deficit hawks and defense hawks. We talk about those issues conservatively. I am going to talk a little bit about each of those issues tonight.

I had a privilege recently to spend considerable time with my good friend JOHN SALAZAR from Colorado. I have become convinced he knows how to hook up a piece of equipment.

I am also convinced in the conversations with him that he and his family have shared in the good Lord's Earth in being farmers with his brothers; and in talking with him, I had a much deeper understanding and certainly a much deeper abiding friendship knowing that as my brother and I both farm, brother doing most of it back home, that all of us come from different parts of the country maybe, but we all have that same spirit and that same heartfelt belief that America is the greatest place in the world to live and raise your fam-

ily. For those of us who live in rural areas, obviously we believe that is probably the best place for America to raise their families.

I traveled today with a group of young students from both Clark Grange and York Institute, being named after Alvin C. York, Sergeant York, from the hometown of Pall Mall where I live, and as we traveled through the Capitol I could see their eyes light up as we talked about the history of this great building that we serve in, the great Chamber that we are in here this afternoon.

But as you look on the wall in the rotunda, you realize that America in the 1770s, in 1775, at the Boston siege, we convinced with our ragtag Army, the Continental Army, convinced the British soldiers and sailors that we could defeat them, and they set sail late in the winter, early spring and went to New York. We followed them there, and by 1776 we suffered a pretty strong defeat.

The first victory that we received for our independence, for our democracy that we have was in Saratoga in the fall of 1777, which convinced another nation called France to come and join us in our fight for independence, but I can assure you, no one won our independence for us. In this country, we fought until basically the battle at Yorktown where Cornwallis, general of the British forces, decided that he had to surrender, and surrendered.

That basically ended the hostilities until Washington in 1783 resigned his commission to the Continental Congress that existed at that time. So from 1775 basically until hostilities pretty much ceased in 1781, we fought for our independence in this country. We fought so we could establish a democracy that would be a shining example, as Mr. Reagan used to say, on that hill to the rest of the nations of the world that this is what can be accomplished.

That took us 6 years, and 2 years into being sure to sort of protect that fragile peace that we had until Washington gave up his commission and surrendered it in 1783.

I want to remind the people of America and the people of Iraq, we fought for our independence. We fought for this democracy that we have. No one came to this country and forced upon us a democracy. No one came to this country and said this is the gift we want to give you.

The blood and the tears and the hard work and the sweat of our young men and women from this country have been in Iraq now for over 4 years, toiling, and in fact, in many cases going to war with the Iraqis, first of all, to depose a ruthless dictator, we all agree with that, and then we fought with the Iraqis and in many cases against the Iraqis, whether they be Sunni or Shia, to say we want to give you this gift that we fought for over 200 years ago, we want to give you this gift called democracy.

In 2005, in December, we literally sent a surge of our troops over in the midsummer of 2005 to be sure that those brave individuals from Iraq, men and women, over 12 million of them, went to vote to establish the leaders of their country so they could establish their own Constitution. The surge then allowed them to vote. They finalized their commitment, in my opinion, for the democracy.

No one gave us ours. We are trying to give them theirs. And we have tried and we have tried and we have tried and we have spent billions of dollars making it happen.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I often tell this story of my father. I served during the tail end of Vietnam and my father was a World War II veteran. My son served now during Iraqi Freedom. He just finished his tour last December, but I like to tell this story of my father who was a proud veteran.

At the age of 82, my father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease; and as was usual on Sunday mornings, I would go over to Mom and Dad's ranch house, and we would have breakfast with my mom and dad. We had been told by the doctors that my dad had Alzheimer's, and it was one day right around, he must have been around 84 when one Sunday morning we heard him fumbling around in his back bedroom. Shortly thereafter, he came out and in his hand he bore his World War II staff sergeant uniform, and he told us, this is the uniform that I want to be buried in. We thought at the time, well, it sounded a little bit self-serving but doctors tell you not to argue with Alzheimer's patients. So we said, sure, Dad, no problem. We will do that.

Well, the disease continued to progress over the next couple of years, but often, often he would bring up the issue of wanting to be buried in his uniform, and it was at the age of 86 that my father suffered a severe heart attack. My mother called me over. We live about a quarter mile away. When I got there, the ambulance was there, and I remember lifting my father off the floor to put him on the gurney to take him to the hospital. And with the last ounce of strength he had in his body, he lifted his arms up around my neck and he said, I love you, and the last word he ever whispered to me was the word "uniform."

My father had forgotten almost everything in life, even how to use his bodily functions; but there are two things he had not forgotten, the love that he had for his family and the love that he had for his country and how proud he was to have served his country.

For many veterans, that is the greatest legacy that they have, and so when we propose an Iraqi war supplemental, we are also proposing funding to make sure that the veterans that have served this country are protected.

I tell this story because it is important that we protect those that have

protected us, and I know that we as members of the Blue Dog Coalition are very proud to stand beside our veterans and make sure that they have the things that they need.

The gentleman from Arkansas talks about visiting Walter Reed. I do that on a regular basis, and it is the most disheartening feeling in the world to see our troops without arms and legs. They do not ask for anything. All they ask for is help me get through life. We owe that to our veterans.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. You have to invite me to come out to your home sometime. I invite you to my home in Pall Mall, but I have got to visit more with your family. As I learn more and more, I realize the quality of people that we have here serving. It was such a wonderful yield, the comments you made during that period of time. It is certainly good to be on the floor with you.

But as I talk about that democracy that we fought for, that we fought for, I realize that there has never been a time that a democracy in any country has ever been imposed from without. It has always been from within, the French Revolution, the startings of the Magna Carta where we said we are no longer going to give taxes if you are basically going to squander it on your parties, Mr. KING.

When Israel established a nation in the Middle East, what type was it? It was a democracy.

My fear is that we can keep our soldiers, our young men and women in the battlefields in Iraq for a long, long time, and we can never force a democracy on the people of Iraq or anywhere else. We went into Iraq, and Iraq especially, without realizing the national customs, the traditions, the faith, their family values that are totally different in many cases than ours.

I think everyone loves liberty and freedom. I just believe as we engage that we ought to realize that we cannot impose our will on anyone unless we do it with a much larger force than what we have today.

Let me stay on Iraq for a moment.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman from Tennessee makes a very important point, and that is, look, I was here on 9/11 and shortly after the plane hit the Pentagon we were evacuated. A few hours later, I would learn a young Navy petty officer named Nehamin Lyons from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, would be among those killed on that tragic day that we now all refer to as 9/11.

And all of us, Democrats and Republicans, for the most part voted to go to Afghanistan to put an end to terrorism.

I will never forget later being invited to the White House September 26, 2002, sitting in a cabinet room: Andy Card, Condoleezza Rice, about 18 Members of Congress and the President. I have still got the notes I took that day, and the President told us that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, trains terrorists on weapons of mass destruction, and if military force is

used, it will be, in the President's words, swift. September 26, 2002.

And then a few months later, we saw the banner "Mission Accomplished," and we thought, wow, it was swift. But now we know, and I am not one of these conspiracy theorists that believes the President misled us. I think he received bad intelligence and shared it with us; and until proven otherwise, that is what I will believe because anything other than that would be a very unfair and strong attempt at trying to say something that we do not know whether it is true or not. I have to assume he just received bad intelligence.

But I will tell you this: there is not a more difficult decision that Members of Congress have to make than whether or not to send our men and women in uniform into harm's way; and when we are asked and called upon to make those kind of decisions, we have got to know, we must know that our intelligence is correct.

So for the most part, we all voted to go there. We are now there. What do we do about it? You want to talk about supporting the troops, one of the ways that you support the troops is to stop moving the goal post, to stop moving the victory line.

We say we went there because of weapons of mass destruction. They no longer have them. We won.

Then they said, well, we have got to stay until we overthrow Saddam.

□ 2200

We won. They said we have to stay till we capture him. We pulled him out of that spider hole. We won. Then the administration said we have to stay till we assassinate him. We assassinate him until he is executed, put to death, and he was.

So, based on that, we won. Then they said, well, we have got to stay until the Iraqi people can have elections. They did. We won.

Yet, now they are saying that, you know, we have got to stay there, and it's, you know, the line they use now is it's better to fight the terrorists there than here. There weren't terrorists in Iraq. Saddam wouldn't put up with them. He chopped their heads off.

Obviously, there are terrorists there now, and there are those from other neighboring countries wanting to create havoc. But for the most part what we have today, as the gentleman from Tennessee indicated, is civil war. Nobody fought our civil war for us, and it's pretty apparent the Iraqis don't want us fighting their civil war for them.

Now, understand, we had 3,200 U.S. soldiers die there, 25,000 injured, over 10,000 in ways that will forever change their lives. We are sending the Iraqis \$12 million an hour. What do they think about us? Seventy-one percent don't want us there and 60 percent of them think it's okay to kill a U.S. soldier.

Contrast that with Afghanistan, where the Taliban is back on the rise.

They are back training. We will spend more money in Iraq this month than we will spend in Afghanistan in the next 2½ years. We have 225,000 troops in the Iraqi region today, and the President wants to add 21,000 more. Yet we only have 25,000 in Afghanistan.

The Taliban is back, organizing and getting trained, and the mountains of Afghanistan are nothing more than a breeding ground for terrorists. This administration is so focused on Iraq that they are losing sight of what is going on in Afghanistan, where 84 percent of the people in Afghanistan do want us there.

I just wanted to throw that out there for any comment you might have, because I thought you made an excellent point about how we fought our Civil War, and it's time they accept responsibility and fight their own. We cannot continue to put our men and women in uniform on their front lines and have them standing behind us. It is time for them to step up, accept responsibilities, train their men and women, and put them in uniform. They need to fight this war, if they really want a taste of freedom. No one can give you that. You have got to get it country by country.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. I hear the other side, the minority party in this Chamber, talk about the defeatist Democrats, the retreatist Democrats, whatever terminology they want to use. I find that somewhat repulsive that there are those who would assume that Democrats want to lose a war.

Let me tell you something. I come from Tennessee. Andrew Jackson in the war of 1812 and 1814, when he had that battle, the war was over with. There had already been a surrender of the British. He still fought that war, and I believe he was a good Democrat. In World War I, a fellow named Woodrow Wilson, I happen to believe he was a Democrat, he fought the war until it was over with. We won that war.

In World War II, we went to war and took 16 million people. We call them the Greatest Generation. They came back home, and they started having children like rabbits in the spring. That is 77 million folks we call baby boomers. They give us a huge workforce in this country.

Then we went to Korea, and let me finish, in World War II, we lost Roosevelt during that time. Harry Truman had the forces. We had invaded Normandy and had conquered the Germans and had conquered Europe. We had already put in place the invasion Army that was going into Japan. Harry Truman changed course. You need to replay that message to the White House. Harry Truman changed course. He didn't put the invasion force in the ships. He dropped a couple of bombs, a horrible occurrence that happened, but it saved millions of lives and stopped the war. Then we occupied Germany and Japan, and they now have two thriving democracies in the world because they chose that type of government.

Then in Korea we had a fellow named Truman who got us engaged there as well, happened to be a Democrat. But the person who quit fighting was Eisenhower, a Republican.

In the 1970s, in Vietnam, the President at that time was a Republican named Richard Nixon, when we left Vietnam. We can talk about Democrats not following through. We have never lost a war when we have had Democrats in the White House. Andrew Jackson, when he was in New Orleans, a general, we couldn't keep him from fighting and conquering General Packingham.

I am tired about this talk of the Democratic Party not being strong on national defense. Baloney. That is not the case. Let's stop it. Let's start talking about how we win, and how we stay in Iraq, and that becomes winning for us.

This resolution that we vote on tomorrow still allows several thousand people to stay in Iraq after we have taken our soldiers out of the kill zone and the battle zones in Iraq.

We still will be there with several tens of thousands of troops that will be training, providing security, and protection, quite frankly, for many of the folks in Iraq. We will also keep tens of thousands of troops there that will seek out and search the al Qaeda cells if they exist in Iraq, or any terrorist groups that exist in Iraq.

So I get kind of unhappy when I hear the other side start talking about what great success we are having. It is my hope that this search would work, because then we in America can claim a huge successful victory in Iraq.

Mr. SALAZAR. I was in the Soviet Union during the fall of communism when Gorbachev was still in power in 1989, when we were out there studying international government with the Colorado Agriculture Leadership Program.

It's true, I couldn't agree with you more, that the spirit of democracy has to come from within, from within a country. They want to have it. They want to want it. A perfect example of how you win a war, it's with the spirit of sheer military force, but you also have to have a diplomatic surge as well. That is what Blue Dogs are asking for. They are asking to adopt the Iraqi Study Group recommendations. Sure, we can support a group surge, but coupled with a diplomatic surge. That is how you win wars. But they have to want it.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. As we move now, I want to move briefly to the accusing tone we often hear that Democrats are big government. When Bill Clinton became President in 1992, and was sworn in 1993, the government had grown to 22.4 percent of gross domestic income.

When he became the President, working with the Republican Congress in 1995, we saw a government decrease of 18.1 percent of gross domestic income. We saw over a 4 percent decrease in spending during the 8 years that a

Democratic President was in office. It had grown to a little more than 22 percent under Reagan and Bush and had receded to 18.1 percent under Bill Clinton.

It has now grown over the last 5 years, 6 years, to over 21 percent. How can anyone in this Chamber talk about being conservatives or blaming anyone for growth? The growth periods actually have occurred under Reagan, Bush, decreased under Clinton, and increased under this Bush administration.

How do you call that being conservative? I just think that it is time that the American people realized that they are being told a lot of things on this floor that aren't true.

I used to see a truth squad. I really wish they were telling the truth on a lot of issues that they were talking about.

I thank you for allowing me to come visit with you tonight.

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. SALAZAR, it was good to be with you and hear the commitment that your family has made, your father and others, to defend the Nation.

Mr. SALAZAR. May I ask a question? You have some figures on this chart that show that basically through the Iraqi war supplementals we have actually budgeted \$378.5 billion. Could I ask the gentleman, is this really the true cost of the war, or is this just what we budgeted through the supplementals?

Mr. ROSS. As you can see from the chart here, let me just work through it with you. With the enactment of fiscal year 2007 appropriations, Congress has approved a total of about \$378.5 billion for military operations initiated since the 9/11 attacks. According to the Congressional Research Service, this number will continue to escalate over the next several years.

The cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom alone cost American taxpayers \$2.5 billion in 2001 and 2002, \$51 billion in 2003, \$77.3 billion in 2004, \$87.3 billion in 2005, and \$104.2 billion in 2006. You see a trend here. The cost of the war continues to go up.

Mr. SALAZAR. But is this the actual, is this an actual true reflection of what the war in Iraq has cost? For example, we see that our troop levels, our military armor, and the equipment that our troops have is not adequate in many cases. So are we actually spending from other sources as well to supplement this?

Mr. ROSS. It's my understanding the cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom is \$378.5 billion. That is to date. Now, you have to understand what that means is, at this time we are spending about \$2 billion a week, about \$9.5 billion to \$10 billion a month, or, again, put it another way, if you do the math, that is about \$12 million an hour.

The Congress has appropriated \$29.9 billion in aid to the Iraqi people. Of this amount, only \$16.9 billion of that has been disbursed to the Iraqis, and yet the President is now asking for more.

On February 5, 2007, the Defense Department submitted a \$94.4 billion fiscal 2007 supplemental request. If enacted, the DOD's total emergency funding for fiscal year 2007, and, again, for 2006, was \$104 billion, this is to date, today, this is \$60 billion. But if they get what they asked for, then the spending for 2007 will be \$163.4 billion. I will repeat that. In 2006 it was \$104 billion. In 2007 it will be \$163.4 billion; or, put it another way, 40 percent more from the previous year and 50 percent more than the Office of Management and Budget estimated last summer.

Now, the administration also requested about \$3 billion for Iraq, and \$1 billion for Afghanistan in emergency foreign and diplomatic operations funds, if that is where you are going with that. If the fiscal year 2007 supplemental request is approved, total war-related funding would reach about \$607 billion, including about \$448 billion for Iraq, \$126 billion for Afghanistan, \$28 billion for enhanced security, and \$5 billion that is unallocated.

For fiscal year 2008, the Department of Defense has already requested \$481.4 billion for its regular budget, and \$141.7 billion for war costs. If Congress approves both, the fiscal year 2007 emergency supplemental request and the fiscal year 2008 war request for the fiscal year beginning in October, then total funding for Iraq and the global war on terror would reach about \$752 billion, including \$564 billion for Iraq, \$155 billion for Afghanistan, and \$28 billion for enhanced security. Put another way, it almost doubles the number that was prepared January 24 of this year.

In fiscal year 2007 alone, spending on the thousands of government contractors involved in reconstruction has risen to \$10 billion per month, including \$8.6 billion for Iraq and \$1.4 billion for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Since the war is essentially financed through deficit spending, interest payments over time could amount to another \$100 billion or more.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that additional war costs for the next 10 years could total \$919 billion by 2013. If these estimates are added to already appropriated amounts, total funding for Iraq and the war on terror could reach about \$980 billion to \$1.4 trillion by 2017.

□ 2215

Adding another 21,500 troops alone will cost the American taxpayers another \$5.6 billion per year.

Believe me, we have got 225,000 troops in the Iraqi region today. If adding another 21,500, which the President is already doing, would win this thing, we would all be for it. But, again, we have had numerous victories over there. Again, the President and this administration continues to move the goal post, the victory line. And that is not fair to our men and women in uniform who have performed bravely and admirably for our Nation.

We don't need a troop surge in Iraq. We need a diplomatic surge, and we need to demand responsibility from the Iraqi people.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. I want to thank the gentleman for his comments. I think it is clear, with the figures that you have given us, that the \$378 billion is not really a true reflection of what the Iraqi war has cost us.

And you are absolutely right, we as Blue Dogs, we as Democrats will stand strong with our troops making sure that they have the equipment that they need, and that is one of the things I wanted to talk about tonight was the Iraq war supplemental that our leadership has proposed includes making sure that we take care of our veterans; it includes money for devastated farmers and ranchers across this country due to weather problems and other issues.

So I believe that this is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do. But I would ask the administration to please look into trying some diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, and hopefully we can move this forward and bring our troops home as quickly and safely as possible. In the meantime, let us not forget the men and women in uniform who serve this country bravely. And I want to thank the gentleman for inviting me today to visit with the American public and tell them the truth about what is going on with America's budget.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Colorado for joining me this evening here on the floor to talk about restoring accountability to our government and demanding responsibility from the Iraqi people.

The American people spoke loud and clear on election day: they are ready for a new direction in Iraq. They don't want more of the same; they want a new direction. And that is what will be voted on on the floor of the House tomorrow. There will be a lot of mischaracterizations of what we are voting on.

Here is the bottom line: we are giving the President every penny he asked for for Iraq. Above and beyond that, we are going to provide funding for Walter Reed Army Hospital and for other VA hospital facilities to ensure that this new generation of veterans coming home, not only from Iraq, but also from Afghanistan, receive the very best in health care available to them, because we owe it to them. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our brave men and women in uniform who have done everything that has been asked of them.

What this bill also does, I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that people understand this, the other thing this bill says is that we will have troops in Iraq for another year. And even after the year is up, we will continue to have troops there; but instead of having our men and women in uniform from America on the front lines getting shot at

and wounded and killed, we will be there in an advisory role to train Iraqis and demand, a year from now, demand that they step up, that they step up and provide the police and military force for their country.

I think it is very important that the American people understand we are going to send our brave men and women in uniform every dime the President has asked for them, but we are also going to demand accountability and responsibility by the Iraqi people and tell them a year from now it is their turn.

Mr. SALAZAR. I just wanted to thank the gentleman. We see him on the floor every Tuesday trying to get the message out to the American public and trying to make sure that the figures that are being stated here in Congress are the true figures. I think that the American people deserve to know the truth, and I commend the gentleman for his dedication not only to the Blue Dog Coalition but also to the American people. And it is super-important, I believe, that the American people know the truth. Thank you very much. I appreciate your inviting me to speak with you tonight.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Colorado, a fellow Blue Dog member, a member of the 43-member strong fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, for joining me here on the floor this evening.

Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, I would invite you to e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. Again, Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, I would encourage you to e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

In the final 3 minutes that we have in the Special Order this evening, I want to point out that one of the things that has been endorsed by the Blue Dog Coalition that we are 100 percent united on is what is called House Resolution 97, Providing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Cost Accountability. The Blue Dogs have endorsed and introduced House Resolution 97. It was offered by JANE HARMAN, former ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee and Congressman PATRICK MURPHY who was a captain in our Army and served in Iraq. And it provides for Operation Iraqi Freedom cost accountability to address the lack of oversight and accountability with regard to the Federal Government's funding of the war in Iraq.

House Resolution 97, which currently has 61 cosponsors, puts forward tangible commonsense proposals that ensure future transparency and accountability in the funding of Operation Iraqi Freedom. If we are going to send \$12 million an hour of your tax money to Iraq, we expect accountability and responsibility for how that money is being spent. We want to know without a shadow of a doubt that it is being spent to protect and equip our brave men and women in uniform. It is an

important first step toward making sure that more resources get to our troops in the field.

There is a big debate right now of whether the body armor provided them in 2003, is that the best body armor in 2007. If we are going to send our troops over there, we must provide them with the very best, most advanced equipment that is available.

House Resolution 97 focuses on four crucial points for demanding fiscal responsibility in Iraq:

Number one, a call for transparency on how Iraq war funds are spent;

Number two, the creation of a Truman Commission to investigate the awarding of contracts;

Number three, a need to fund the Iraq war through the normal appropriations process, and not through the so-called emergency supplementals;

And, number four, using American resources to improve Iraqi assumption of internal policing operations, demand more from this new Iraqi Government.

In addition, House Resolution 97 calls for the Iraqi Government and its people to progress toward full responsibility for internally policing their country. Members of the Blue Dog Coalition also believe strongly that funding requests for the Iraq war should come through the normal appropriations process rather than through multiple emergency supplemental requests. Since 2003, the Republican-held Congress has been funding the war through emergency supplemental requests, \$166 billion in 2003, \$25 billion in 2004, \$76 billion in 2005, \$50 billion in 2006, and another \$70 billion after that and \$99 billion for 2007 and \$142 for 2008. And the list goes on and on.

If we are going to be there and if we know we are going to be there, let's put it in the budget and quit hiding it in the so-called emergency supplementals. The American people deserve to know that some \$12 million an hour of their tax money is going to Iraq. And what the Blue Dogs are asking for in House Resolution 97, we are demanding from this administration and from the Pentagon accountability to ensure that every dime that goes over there is spent protecting and equipping and serving our honorable men and women in uniform who do everything that this country asks of them.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in keeping our brave men and women in uniform serving us tonight in Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of the world in our hearts and in our prayers.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) is recognized for 60 minutes.