

television pastors, watching Rev. Falwell was like you were right there in the church service because it was a church service. And I remember the growth of the church as you could watch it on that late Sunday night broadcast that I happened to watch on Sunday evening. I remember when they started moving the church, they had a song that was something like "I Want That Mountain," the site on which Rev. Falwell and the church had decided they wanted to grow the church and eventually the school. And watching his incredible faith and what he was doing, his unflagging determination to spread the Gospel, his ability to use the communication tools available to him in ways that others hadn't, but in ways that his growing congregation were totally comfortable with, in ways, in fact, that didn't compete with what he was doing every Sunday morning and every Sunday night at the Thomas Road Baptist Church.

□ 1800

He left Missouri in the mid-1950s with a renewed commitment to the power of ideas, ideas about the importance of spirituality and public life, ideas that promoted the family, ideas about the protection of human life at all stages of development. And for 50 years, for half a century, his mission was a mission of defending those ideas.

It would give rise to a movement of citizen activists in evangelical Christianity that, frankly, for the previous 50 years in many ways had been intentionally removing itself from the civic and political process, with a focus on what was going to happen after we were here, rather than also being focused on the world we live in. He never lost sight of his mission.

He was a man of purpose, not a man of things, it appeared to me. Whenever he applied that purpose to improve the conditions of the world around him, it made a difference. The time and energy he devoted to his once small college, in fact, once just his idea of a college, became one of our larger universities. It's a great example.

The church he started, the Thomas Road Baptist Church, which he started in 1956 in a bottling plant with a congregation of 35 people, now is a church of nearly 25,000 members. But his achievements weren't only building a church and building a school, he was deeply concerned about the moral direction of this country, and worked hard to ensure that people of faith were part of the national dialogue, part of a way of changing who we were for the better.

His lifelong pursuit of truth was not a casual affair nor was his commitment to a way of life and learning that acknowledged the lessons of the past and applied those experiences to building a better future.

Earlier this afternoon, parishioners of the Thomas Road Baptist Church and people from all over the country and all over the world gathered in

Lynchburg to pay a final tribute to their pastor, their friend, a leader that they respected.

Tonight, I would like to join my good friend, Mr. GOODLATTE, and others and use this opportunity to pay my final respects to a person who clearly was a leader. He was a teacher, he was a father and a husband, and above all other things, he was an untiring messenger of the good news and the eternal hope of our Lord.

I want to thank my friend for organizing this time tonight and for giving me the time to join you.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Well, I thank the whip for joining us in this special tribute to Reverend Jerry Falwell.

I must tell you that the mountain you refer to, which is Chandler Mountain in Lynchburg, was acquired by Liberty University. You can see the university growing up the sides of that mountain now. In fact, they now have a big "LU" planted in trees near the top of the mountain.

Jerry Falwell climbed many mountains, and he leaves behind a legacy not only of building an outstanding educational organization and an outstanding church, but more importantly, he leaves behind the people who make that church and that university strong and growing, led by his children, who will carry on his legacy and reach out to many, many more throughout our country and throughout the world.

I close this special order with a moment of silence, acknowledging the life and work of my constituent and my friend, the late Rev. Jerry Falwell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEMOCRATIC BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COURTNEY). 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, I rise this evening on behalf of the 43 Members that make up the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are conservative Democrats, we are commonsense Democrats that want to restore fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

Mr. Speaker, as you walk the halls of Congress, as you walk the halls of this Capitol and the Cannon House Office Building and the Longworth House Office Building and the Rayburn House Office Building, it's not difficult to know when you're walking by the door of a fellow Blue Dog member because you will see this poster that reads, "The Blue Dog Coalition". And it will tell you, it serves as a reminder to Members of Congress and to the general public that walk the halls of Congress that today the U.S. national debt is \$3,807,559,710,099. And I ran out of room, but if I had a poster that was just a little bit more wide, Mr. Speaker, I would have added 85 cents.

Your share, every man, woman and child, including the children born today in America, if you take that number, the U.S. national debt, and divide it by the number of people living in America today, our share, everyone's share of the national debt is \$29,174.38. It is what those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition refer to as "the debt tax," d-e-b-t tax, which is one tax that can't go away, that can't be cut until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first bills I filed as a Member of Congress back in 2001 was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund. The Republican leadership at the time refused to give me a hearing or a vote on that bill, and now we know why; because the projected deficit for 2007, based on the budget bill written when the Republicans controlled Congress, they will tell you is only \$172 billion.

Not so. It's \$357 billion. The difference is the money they are borrowing from the Social Security trust fund, with absolutely no provision on how that money will be paid back or when it will be paid back or where it's coming from to pay it back.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I go down to the local bank in Prescott, Arkansas, and sit across from a loan officer and get a loan, they want to know how I am going to pay it back, when I am going to pay it back and where the money is going to come from to pay it back. It is time the politicians in Washington keep their hands off the Social Security trust fund.

The national debt, the total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion. But by 2010, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. That is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just a decade, in just 10 years. Interest payments on the debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget. And the debt tax is one that cannot be repealed.

People ask me, why should I care about the fact that our Nation is in debt? Why should I care that we continue to borrow billions of dollars? After all, it's future generations that are going to be stuck with the bill.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it should matter for a lot of reasons. But here is a good one right here: interest payments. Our Nation is borrowing about a billion dollars a day. We are spending about a half a billion a day paying interest on a debt we've already got before we borrow another billion dollars today.

I-49 is important to the people in Arkansas in my congressional district. I need nearly \$2 billion to finish I-49, an interstate that was started when I was in kindergarten. That's a lot of money, at least for a country boy from Prescott and Hope, Arkansas. But I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt in the next 4 days than

what it would cost to complete Interstate 49 in Arkansas, creating with it all kinds of economic opportunities and jobs.

That's on the western side of my district. I represent about half the State.

On the eastern side of my district, I-69 is very important. I need about \$2 billion to finish I-69. I-69 was announced in the State of Indiana, in Indianapolis, 5 years before I was born. That was 50 years ago. And with the exception of about 40 miles in Kentucky in a section they are now building from Memphis to the casinos, none of it has ever been built south of Indianapolis. \$2 billion is a lot of money, but we will spend more than that in the next 4 days paying interest on the national debt.

As you can see from the chart here, in red, that is the amount of money, of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, that we will spend paying interest on the national debt this year. Compare that to how much we are spending on our children and their education.

You know, folks in this country come up to me all the time saying that English should be the official language. And I personally don't necessarily disagree with that. But let me tell you what people should be equally concerned about; they should be equally concerned about the fact that we have got more young people today in India learning English than in America. We've got more young people today in China learning English than in America. And it is not because they love America, it is because they want our jobs.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely critical that we provide our young people with a world-class education, and yet you can see we are spending a fraction on educating our children of what we will spend this year paying interest on the national debt.

You hear a lot of talk about homeland security. We all take off our shoes when we go through the airports. And I guess we feel a little bit safer, but look at what our real commitment as a Nation is to homeland security compared to what we are spending paying interest on the national debt. Homeland security is in the green, the red is the interest we are paying on the national debt.

And finally, veterans. We can talk about patriotism all we want, but I will tell you what, the rest of the world can look at America and determine how much we value our soldiers by how we treat our veterans.

And a whole new generation of veterans are coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. How do we value them? The dark blue shows how much we are spending of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, on our veterans compared to the red, which is the amount we've been simply paying interest on on the national debt.

Where is this money coming from that we are borrowing a billion dollars a day? I have already told you, Mr.

Speaker, a lot of it is coming from raiding the Social Security trust fund. Where is the rest of it coming from? Foreign central banks and foreign lenders.

That's right, Mr. Speaker. In fact, to put it another way, this administration has borrowed more money from foreigners in the past 6 years than the previous 42 Presidents combined. Let me repeat that. This administration has borrowed more money from foreign central banks and foreign investors in the past 6 years than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

Foreign lenders currently hold a total of about \$2.199 trillion of our public debt. Compare that to only \$623.3 billion in foreign holdings in 1993. Who are they? The top 10 list.

Japan. The United States of America has borrowed \$637.4 billion from Japan to fund tax cuts in this country for people earning over \$400,000 a year, leaving our children with the bill.

China, \$346.5 billion.

The United States of America has borrowed \$223.5 billion from the United Kingdom.

\$97.1 billion from OPEC. And we wonder why gasoline is \$3.25 a gallon today in south Arkansas.

Korea, \$67.7 billion; Taiwan, \$63.2 billion; the Caribbean banking centers, \$63.6 billion; Hong Kong, \$51 billion; Germany, \$52.1 billion.

And get a load of this. Rounding out the top 10 countries that the United States of America has borrowed money from to fund tax cuts in this country for folks earning over 400,000 a year and to fund the war in Iraq: Mexico.

□ 1815

Our country has borrowed \$38.2 billion from Mexico to fund our government.

So debts do matter. Deficits do matter. And in this case, I submit to you, it is a national security issue.

So what do we do about it? As members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, we have got a plan. We have got a plan for budget reform. We have a plan to demand accountability in Iraq. We support our soldiers, and as long as we have soldiers in harm's way, we are going to make sure they are funded.

But this administration has acted like if you challenge them on how they are spending your tax money in Iraq, then you are unpatriotic. We are not going to stand for that anymore, because, Mr. Speaker, we believe that this administration and the Iraqi Government should be accountable for how \$12 million of taxpayer money is being spent every hour in Iraq.

That is right, our Nation is spending \$12 million of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, every hour in Iraq, and it is time that the Iraqis be held accountable for how that money is being spent. It is time we demand that they step up and accept more responsibility for training the Iraqis to be able to take control of their police and military

force. And, yes, it is time that we demand more accountability from this administration on how this money is being spent on Iraq and ensure that it is being spent on our brave men and women in uniform.

John Grant of Percy, Arkansas, brought to my attention the fact that our soldiers may very well not be equipped with the most advanced and the best body armor that is made. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that we must ensure that the very best in body armor is being provided to our men and women in uniform. We have learned a lot about that in the last few days through an NBC investigative report. I am proud to tell you that over 40 Members of Congress, including a lot of my Blue Dog friends, have signed on to a letter to the administration, to the Pentagon, demanding that further tests be done, and that our men and women in uniform be provided with the very best in body armor.

I am joined by a number of fellow Blue Dogs this evening, and it is with great honor that I introduce at this time my friend, an active member of the Blue Dog Coalition from the State of Colorado, Mr. JOHN SALAZAR.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the gentleman from Arkansas and his work with my Blue Dog colleagues in demanding more fiscal responsibility in Iraq. I believe that Congress has now approved nearly \$510 billion for military operations since 2001, with nearly no oversight on spending. Operation Iraqi Freedom alone has cost American taxpayers \$51 billion in 2003, \$77.3 billion in 2004, \$87.3 billion in 2005, \$104 billion in 2006, and in 2007 we are in the process of funding Operation Iraqi Freedom once again with a supplemental. Now we are spending over \$10 billion a month in Iraq and Afghanistan just on government contractors working on reconstruction. All of this is unchecked, and that is why I am so proud to join my Blue Dog colleagues as a supporter of H. Res. 97.

H. Res. 97 was introduced by the Blue Dog Coalition to call for transparency on how Iraq funds are spent. We have a plan for accountability in Iraq. Our plan calls for, first, transparency on how war funds are spent. Second of all, it creates a commission to investigate awarded contracts. Third of all, it stops the use of emergency supplementals to fund the war.

Everything that I have read over the past several years indicates that this is the first administration that has used supplementals to fund a war after the first year, after initiation. In January we passed what was called the PAYGO rule. It is my understanding that with supplementals, you don't have to follow PAYGO rules. I think it is critical that we as Blue Dogs continue to move forward and push for an honest budget.

Number four, it uses American resources to improve Iraq's ability to police itself. I believe that this is of critical importance.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot push democracy on someone who does not want it. Over 65 percent of the Iraqi population now says it is okay to shoot at American soldiers. The Iraqi Parliament a couple of weeks ago voted 144 out of 275 members to tell Americans that it is time for us to come home. We cannot force democracy on someone who does not want it.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that today what is important is that we turn this over to the Iraqi Government. Our soldiers can become the advisors. They should not be on the front lines.

The gentleman talks about the Social Security Trust Fund. Two years ago I introduced the Social Security Protection Act, which would not allow any politician in Washington to touch that trust fund. I think the gentleman raises a critical point there.

He also talks about the veterans. I am the only veteran in the Colorado delegation. I am proud to be a Blue Dog, and I am proud that this legislation addresses the lack of oversight and accountability in Iraq. But I am also very proud that this resolution stands for veterans' issues.

Government reports have documented waste, fraud and abuse in Iraq. Contractors are being paid billions of dollars by the United States for their services in Iraq. Most of these, Mr. Speaker, are no-bid contracts. Where is the accountability in that? I believe that if their work is resulting in unsanitary conditions, potential health hazards, poor construction methods or significant cost overruns, then Congress has the right to know about it. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is time to stop this waste.

Congressional oversight is desperately needed. This administration should be held accountable for how reconstruction funds are being used. This Blue Dog bill is a commonsense proposal that ensures transparency and accountability. We bring oversight back to Congress. We start showing improvement in Iraq, and accountability leads directly to success. Iraqis must begin progress towards full responsibility for policing their own country. Without progress, it is a waste to continue U.S. investment in troops and financial services.

Mr. Speaker, I visited Iraq twice. While I have seen some improvements in some areas, I have also seen the increase in insurgent attacks not only on American troops, but on other Iraqis.

We all support our troops, and we will do everything within our power to make sure that they have the equipment and the funding that they need. However, Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to write blank checks to the administration. I firmly believe that until our last troop is 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 bill gives an opportunity to regain oversight responsi-

bility. 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 gentleman brings up another valid point. He talks about how the budget is a moral document. I, frankly, sir, could not run my household and put my farm into debt and pass the debt on to my children. That is exactly what has happened over the last 5 years. We had a surplus in the budget. The economy was doing great.

Democrats have a plan that by 2011 we will balance this budget. It is with the help of the Blue Dog Coalition, with the help of gentlemen like the gentleman from Arkansas, who is so committed to make sure there is accountability, that we will figure out a way to truly be honest with the American people in our budgets.

We want to put the Iraqi war supplemental back into the regular budget process so that we have a true, accurate picture of what our national debt is, what our deficit is. The gentleman was showing that we have \$8.8 trillion in debt right now. Well, I can assure the gentleman from Arkansas when I came into Congress in the last Congress, our national debt was \$78.045 trillion. Your share of that debt, your children's share of that debt, was back then \$26,000. I believe the figure you show now, Mr. ROSS, is some \$29,000, I believe \$29,174 and some cents.

I believe, Mr. ROSS, that this is morally wrong, and I believe that it is time for Congress to start being honest and report to the American people what troubles the last 5 years Congress has moved the American people toward. I have heard that by the year 2040, every single penny that comes in in Federal revenues will go to pay just the interest on the national debt. That is without running government. I believe that is morally wrong.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask this Congress, I would ask this Democratic Congress and the Blue Dog Coalition, to continue fighting for balanced budgets, to continue fighting for accountability, because that is what the American people want.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for his active involvement in the Blue Dog Coalition and for his words this evening.

Some people may be saying, what is the Blue Dog Coalition? The Blue Dog Coalition was founded back in 1994 shortly after the Republicans took control of Congress by a group of conservative Democrats, Democrats that used to be Yellow Dog Democrats. The saying in the South is that a Democrat is so Democratic that they would vote for a yellow dog if a yellow dog was running for office. That is where the saying comes from.

There was a group of conservative Democrats back in 1994 that felt like they were being choked blue by the extremes of both parties. That is what the Blue Dog Coalition is all about. We

are a group of fiscally conservative Democrats that want to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. We don't care if it is a Democrat or Republican idea. We ask ourselves, is it a commonsense idea, and does it make sense for the people who send us here to be their voice in our Nation's Capital?

An active and leading member of the Blue Dog Coalition, an independent voice within the Congress from the State of Georgia, is Mr. David Scott. At this time I yield to him.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. ROSS. It is a pleasure, as always, to be on the floor with you and my fellow Blue Dogs.

I want to talk about two issues here that relate. One, of course, is the debt, the deficit that we have; the lack of accountability, financial accountability. But I would like to talk about it from the standpoint of what is really on the minds of the American people today, and that is the situation that faces us in Iraq and what we desperately need to do.

We need to do two things: One is be honest with the American people; and, two, be honest with the money that the American people send up here for us to apportion. Nowhere is that more significant than with military affairs.

As I stand here, Mr. ROSS, I am trying to think of the best illustration I can come up with that would kind of paint a picture for where we are. I think if we look back in history, a certain event took place around 1952 when we were in a similar position of debating this issue of who has control of military affairs or how do we deal with the issues in time of war. Is it the executive branch, or is it the Congress, and what is the role therein?

This debate is heated on those two things today. The President says Congress has no role in this. Congress says we definitely do. And we are right that we do.

□ 1830

It was borne out in a case in 1952 when there was a decision made by the Supreme Court when this issue came up on who had the right to determine whether the steel mills would be seized during a time of war, during the Korean War.

And it got so hot and heavy in that debate it went to the courts. Is it the Congress or is it the President? Well, the Supreme Court ruled on that which brings us to a point here today. But in the concurrence that was written by Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, he said some very important, significant and prophetic words.

He said that this is a case that clearly fits within the realm of Congress's responsibility in a time of war. And in his concurrence he said that when the executive branch operates in tandem with the congressional branch, with congressional authority, he said that is a time of maximum power for the President. He said, but when the President acts counter to the express constitutional authority of the Congress,

he said, we enter into what he referred to then as a zone of twilight, or in essence a twilight zone which, quite ironically, is where Rod Sterling got the name for his television program "The Twilight Zone."

That is where we find ourselves here, in the twilight zone.

He went on to say, when we enter this twilight zone, the Presidency in at its lowest ebb when it does not recognize the authority of the Congress.

Our authority rests with the purse. Our authority rests with making sure that we raise and support the military. Our authority rests with legislation. And when you wrap those two things together, that is what is the embodiment of what we have captured in our resolution for financial responsibility and accountability in a time of war to make sure that the money is accounted for; to make sure when our troops are going into war, that they have the money for the armor.

That is exactly why when they were sent into war by this President and this administration without the body armor, we had to amend the appropriations bill with over \$200 million to get it in there, led by Democrats, led by Blue Dog Democrats, if you recall, to get the money in the budget for that.

The reason that happened is, up until January, this President has had the luxury of a rollover Congress that did exactly what he wanted them to do without even a whimper or a bang. They just rolled over, gave the President everything that he wanted, and we did not do the constitutional function of oversight, of making sure that there is financial accountability and responsibility in the actions that we are giving.

That is why it is important what we do today. Now this is incorporated into our presentation, into each of the bills that we have put forward. The status is now that these efforts are being worked between the House and the Senate. But I think it is very important for the public to also know that in this bill we have the accountability features in. But we also have the responsibility where we are not going to cut off any funds as long as our troops are in danger on the battlefield.

It is our hope, however, that we will be responsive to the American people and bring this matter to a close in terms of the loss of life of our soldiers that are caught in the cross hairs of a civil war.

Now, the Middle East is a region of vital interest, and there is absolutely no way we will ever be able to completely disappear from the Middle East, nor is that our intent. Nor is it the intent of the American people.

The point is our nose has been poked into a civil war, a civil war that has been festering for thousands of years between the Sunnis and the Shiites. That is their civil war. It is not right to have our soldiers in the middle of that. That needs to be brought back and we need to enter into a more rea-

sonable support of containment and redeployment of our troops, and in a manner that pays attention to the wear and tear on our military.

Mr. ROSS, it is shameful when we have to say that so many of our troops are over there for the third or fourth time. That is not right. The American people are against that. It is my hope that we will bring financial accountability and responsibility to this matter. The American people, who are very much engaged with us on this Iraq situation, are looking to Democrats; and quite honestly, they are looking to Blue Dog Democrats. They are looking to people who have fiscal responsibility and also understand that we know we are in a dangerous world.

The most important thing we need for our advancement right now is to make sure we have a strong defense and we have got that, but we also want our policies to be responsive to the American people. That is what the Democrats are putting forward as we move forward on our way out of this terrible civil war that our Nation finds itself in. We are going to do exactly that.

Mr. ROSS, it is a pleasure to be here, and I am sure the American people fully support our efforts and understand exactly what we are talking about when we say it is time to bring financial accountability and transparency to our efforts here on Capitol Hill, and nowhere is that more important than dealing with our military affairs and the men and women serving in harm's way overseas.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) for joining us, as he does most Tuesday evenings.

At this time we are honored to be joined by a veteran of the Iraq war, a new Member of Congress, and I yield to Congressman MURPHY of Pennsylvania.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman ROSS for yielding me this time.

Just a few days ago we stood here, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, my chairman, Congressman IKE SKELTON, who has two sons who are currently serving in the military, who is a great leader in this Congress. In the Defense bill, we did several things. We wanted to make sure that the troops knew that we supported them.

When we stood there, Congressman ROSS, we said thank you, Chairman SKELTON, because you believe what all Blue Dogs believe, accountability and responsibility. It established those benchmarks, that oversight which is so needed right now.

So in the Defense bill that gave the troops a 3.5 percent pay increase, a pay increase because there is such a gap, such a disparity between the private sector and our servicemen and women and their salaries. When they join the military, they are not trying to make a lot of money. But the fact is that those privates who are making \$17,000 a

year, those privates that are leaving their wives and kids at home, many of whom have to survive on food stamps, those privates who saw what we did in the Defense bill, who said that is great, 3.5 percent pay increase, a couple hundred dollars a year. The President of the United States said, Private, thank you for your service to your country, but that is too much of a pay increase.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the people at home are watching. The President of the United States said a couple hundred dollars more a year to a private making \$17,000 a year is too much.

Now the Blue Dog Coalition believes in two things: one, fiscal responsibility; two, strong national defense.

How do the soldiers feel that are running convoys up and down Ambush Alley, scouting on the streets for roadside bombs and looking for snipers on rooftops, when they hear their President back at home, the President of the United States thinks a couple hundred dollars more a year is too much. The President says, hey, it would add up over the next 5 years, \$7.3 billion; that is a lot of money.

But the same standard that the President uses where he says it is too much for the troops, it is not too much for the contractors who have proven that they mismanage over \$9 billion of our hard-earned money, the contractors who don't want any accountability and don't want to see the light of day.

The President has threatened to veto the pay raise of our soldiers. I believe that is morally wrong during a time of war, especially when you are saying we are not asking for a 10 percent or 20 percent or 30 percent increase in their pay when they make \$17,000, just a couple hundred dollars more a year, not even reaching \$1,000 more. The President says no.

In the Defense bill that we passed that the President has said he will veto, and this was not some sly comment he said as an aside, the President pointed to a document and said, a 3.5 percent increase is too much.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that everyone in America write the President of the United States and say 3.5 percent increase in pay for our troops is not too much to ask for; a 3.5 percent increase during the Memorial Day weekend when we honor their servicemembers is not too much to ask for.

This is a pattern, Mr. Speaker, that upsets me greatly, a pattern of neglect that this White House has for our troops. See, when I was in Baghdad in 138-degree heat and this White House and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld floated out the idea and said, Let's take away their imminent danger pay, their combat pay, a couple hundred dollars a month, because mission is accomplished. Let's take away their combat pay. It's over.

Now, fast forward 4 years later, the President says, hey, 3.5 percent is too much. This is a pattern of neglect of our troops. It is okay when the President wants to use our troops as props

for a fancy speech in the Rose Garden. But when it comes to budget time when budgets are moral documents, the President says, too much. I respectfully beg to differ.

When we look at the debt of our country, just under \$9 trillion, with \$29,000 that every single man, woman and child in the United States owes towards our national debt. In March, 2007, we paid \$21 billion in interest alone. Does it get any better? No. Why? Because there is no accountability. There is no tightening of the belt. It is wrong to pass this debt, this \$9 trillion of debt, on to our children. That is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, when I know my wife, Jenny, and daughter, Maggie, are home in Bristol, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, when I know that they are watching on C-SPAN, I know that they know that their daddy and husband is fighting a good fight. They know that I cannot stand here in good conscience, Mr. Speaker, and allow this President to use our troops as props and yet can't give them a couple hundred dollars of pay increase to try to alleviate some of the pay disparity with the private sector.

I can't stand here in good conscience and pay our good tax dollars, \$21 billion a month, just to pay the interest, without cutting off the spending spigot.

We need to rein in the spending of this country. The Blue Dogs are absolutely committed to doing that. We need partners from the other side of the aisle. We might be Democrats, and there might be Republicans on the other side of the aisle, but we are all Americans and we all owe \$9 trillion in debt in America to foreign countries like Communist China and Mexico and Japan.

Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker. Enough is enough, and the Blue Dog Coalition, my brothers and sisters in this coalition, are taking the floor of the House of Representatives and all across America. We need the help of the American people to make sure people understand what is at stake. What is at stake is the future of America. What is at stake is the security, the financial security, of our country and the country that our children will inherit.

I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time tonight.

Mr. ROSS. I thank Congressman MURPHY from Pennsylvania for his insight and life experiences as a veteran of the Iraq War, and for sharing his thoughts with us this evening as we demand accountability and common sense on how your tax money, some \$12 million an hour of your tax money, is being spent in Iraq. It is important, we believe, that we make sure that it is being spent on our troops, to protect and support them, and that it be accounted for.

□ 1845

That's what H. Res. 97 is all about, and we're very pleased, and we want to

thank the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON, for including key provisions of our legislation, written in part by Mr. MURPHY, in the Defense authorization bill this year.

I yield to an active member of the Blue Dog Coalition, gentleman from the State of Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS).

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for the recognition. I'll be very brief, which is difficult for me to do, being from the mountains of Tennessee. Sometimes I get a little wordy. I had one of my folks back home tell me that after I'd been here for about a year, he said, LINCOLN, you've gotten so windy as those folks in Washington, I believe you could blow up an onion sack. I'm not sure exactly what he meant by that, but I had to tone down my rhetoric somewhat after that.

But it's good to be here to talk about accountability and, quite frankly, how the lack of accountability has gotten us in the situation we're in in Iraq, as well as in our budget management. When we take a look at how the growth of government grew through the 1980s up to the early 1990s, in 1992, we were spending roughly 22 percent of gross domestic product on national expenditures, on our budgetary process, Mr. Speaker.

And through the 1990s, we saw a downsizing of government through the Clinton-Gore years, where we were spending roughly 18.5 percent of gross domestic product. We now have seen that jump to the point to where it's somewhat over 20 percent in gross domestic product. We've seen government grow the last 6 years. We saw it downsized during the Clinton-Gore administration, and the 12 years prior to that we saw it grow to where it was well over 22 percent.

So, when we talk about accountability, let's be sure that America understands, Mr. Speaker, that it has certainly not been the Democratic Party that has made that happen. Under our management, under our watch, we saw a downsizing of government expenditures.

I want to move now to Iraq. I recently had an opportunity to visit the White House, Mr. Speaker, with our President, along with 12 or 13 other Members. We had a very frank conversation. In one of the conversations, the comment was made that we have a strong commitment in the Middle East, and we do have a strong commitment there.

We denied Hitler during World War II being able to obtain the oil in the Middle East. The tanks of Rommel ran out of fuel, and we were able, quite frankly, through the mass force we had, 16 million Americans, as well as help from Europe during World War II, the Allied Forces were able to eventually conquer Germany.

We then continued to be there and have a presence all through the Cold

War, which also denied the Russians from being able to obtain the oil that was there.

There's no doubt in my mind that we're going to be in the Middle East for a long time when we leave the war zone and the hostile war zones of Iraq.

And as we made that conversation, Mr. Speaker, our President certainly agreed with that, that we have a long-term commitment and an interest in the Middle East for many years to come, and we will have. It's kind of like 1953, in South Korea, when Eisenhower decided a cease-fire would be in order, and we signed a cease-fire and have been maintaining troops in South Korea since 1953. We'll be in the Middle East for a long, long time. After the first Persian Gulf War, we maintained a presence there in the Middle East, and we'll still do that. It's how we stay that determines whether or not we'll win.

What my real concern is about this situation in Iraq is I don't think, Mr. Speaker, this administration, I don't think, Mr. Speaker, this President understands the gravity of what's going on in the Middle East.

Every country in the Middle East, some our friends supposedly and some might continue to be our friends, during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the Shah of Iran was also our friend. When the ayatollahs took over, we lost that friendship, and Iran no longer maintained our friendship. But in places like Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait, in the Emirates, when you look at Jordan, King Abdullah, a decree made him King, not an election. He is our friend, and I personally like King Abdullah, but he had an uncle named Prince Hassan that most folks thought would eventually go on to be King of Jordan. That didn't happen.

So, when we talk about having a free-standing democracy in the Middle East, in Iraq, I'm puzzled somewhat that that becomes one of the major objectives to determine whether or not we win. We need to have stability in Iraq, stability, Mr. Speaker. My hope is that eventually a democracy will occur.

For us to assume that the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds, in one of the most volatile mixed populations in any country in the Middle East, that we, you notice I say we, we're going to use that country as a model of how we democratize the Middle East, I think, is a flawed failure, will continue to be, and will be something that will be unsuccessful.

If, in fact, this administration, led by our President, had decided that we ought to have democracy in the Middle East, maybe he should have started with this gentleman he's holding hands with, the monarchy, the royal family of Saudi Arabia. I wonder how many times this administration, Mr. Speaker, how many times this President, Mr. Speaker, has talked to the royal family of Saudi Arabia and say, wouldn't it be nice to have in Saudi Arabia a thriving democracy, a freestanding democracy.

I wonder how many times, Mr. Speaker, this President, Mr. Rumsfeld and others, Mr. Speaker, asked the people of Kuwait after being liberated in 1991 that you should establish a democracy and not revert back to the royal families, to be dictatorial in the decisions that you made.

Every nation in the Middle East has a strongman-type government, except for Israel and except for Lebanon. Whether it's Syria, whether it's Iran, Iraq had theirs, the Emirates, Qatar, every country over there has a strongman-type government, and we believe that for us to consider having one, that we've got to democratize Iraq. I think that's a flawed policy, and, Mr. Speaker, I hope our President engages with this Congress to try to find some solutions to how we establish stability in the Middle East and certainly in Iraq.

I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his insight, and, Mr. Speaker, if you've got any comments, questions or concerns of us, you can e-mail us at bluedog@mail.house.gov. Again, Mr. Speaker, if you've got any comments, questions or concerns for us, you can e-mail us at bluedog@mail.house.gov.

This is the Special Order with members of the 43-Member-strong, fiscally conservative, Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are committed to trying to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government, and a former cochair of the group and active member of the group from the State of California (Mr. CARDOZA), I yield to him.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas, and I appreciate him yielding.

Today I rise because on Monday I reintroduced a bill the Blue Dogs had endorsed last year, H.R. 2402, the Public Official Accountability Act.

The Blue Dogs just aren't fiscally responsible, Mr. Speaker, but we're responsible in a number of other ways, and one is accountability of the Members of this institution to make sure that we uphold the public trust.

H.R. 2402 gives judges the discretion to increase the sentence for public officials convicted of certain enumerated crimes that violate the public trust. If a public official has been convicted of bribery, fraud, extortion or theft of public funds greater than \$10,000, a sentencing judge should have the discretion to double the length of a sentence up to 2 years for those public officials convicted of such ethical violations.

Unfortunately, recent scandals have somewhat tarnished the reputation of this great institution and have stretched the bonds of trust between the public and their government. This bill signals that breaches of the public trust will not be condoned and, therefore, will help to restore the bonds of trust that have been frayed.

The 110th Congress has already taken steps to ensure that public officials ad-

here to the highest ethical standards and are more accountable for their actions. Banning meals, constricting congressional travel, and tightening the lobbying rules are all important first steps that have already been taken; however, much more needs to be done. It will take a concerted effort and some time to overcome the spate of negative examples of public officials abusing the trust conferred upon them.

For government to function effectively, the public must be able to trust the people making decisions in this institution. My bill will help restore that bond of trust between public officials and the people they represent. By holding ourselves to the highest ethical standards, we are making clear that we have heard the message of the people who are demanding honesty and accountability of their leaders.

I urge my colleagues to support me in this effort and to become cosponsors of my bill. A number of Members have already signed on, and I hope the rest of my colleagues will join them. Let's pass this bill and restore the faith that our constituents have in their public institutions.

As we're talking about accountability, you've raised the Blue Dog Coalition debt poster that we have in front of our offices. I'm disturbed, as we always are, that every single day that poster goes up. We've done a lot of work as Blue Dogs to restore accountability in the fiscal side. We have put into the House rules PAYGO rules that say you have to pay as you go. We need to work on statutory PAYGO yet some more. There's some more things that we need to do. We're not finished with this, but clearly we have been heard in this House, and we are changing the culture.

This bill that I've brought forward today during our Blue Dog hour will also change the culture. It will send an important message that don't commit the crime if you can't do the time. We say that to common burglars and drug offenders all throughout our society. We also should say it to those same common criminals that perpetrate their crimes in the halls of Congress.

So, today, I stand with my Blue Dog colleagues, as we always do during this Blue Dog hour, to ask for accountability in this Congress, accountability in our country, accountability with our finances. I'm just so proud to be a member of this organization.

Thank you for yielding to me, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill inserted into the ethics bill that's going through the House this week or as a stand-alone measure later in the Congress.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California and could not agree with him more. There's a lot of folks that believe Members of Congress are held to a different standard, and they should be. They should be held to a much greater standard, a much harsher sentence than the average citizen on the street, because if

Members of Congress can come here and make laws, they ought to abide by those laws they make. And if they can't, they should have additional time put onto their sentence.

And I want to thank the gentleman from California for trying to work with those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition to clean up the mess here in Washington.

I'm very pleased at this time to yield the time that is left if he would like it to the cochair for administration for the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD).

Mr. BOYD of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend Mr. Ross for yielding, and I'm very proud of him. He's obviously one of our elected leaders of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and does a great job. I'm very proud of him, and I'm very proud of the other 42 members of the Blue Dogs who deliver this message to the American public that accountability and good stewardship of our tax dollars does matter.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS) was here earlier talking about the 1990s and how we extracted ourselves from a fiscal mess where we were experiencing huge and systemic annual deficits, and how this government worked hard during the 1990s under a Democratic President and Republican-led Congress in a bipartisan way, worked real hard to pare down what government was doing and make the revenues come into balance with the expenditures.

We did that during the course of the 1990s under a divided government, but, Mr. Speaker, none of us like taxes. We live in America, the greatest country on the face of the Earth. I talk about this regularly with my constituents back home in north Florida, that America is the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We're the most successful democracy. We're the most successful, greatest economy in the history of mankind. We have the greatest military machine in the history of mankind.

I tell my constituents that 25 percent of the world's wealth is controlled by 5 percent of the world's population. That's what America is. One out of every 20 people live in America, and we control 25 percent of the world's wealth. We have a gross domestic product that exceeds, I don't know, \$13-, \$14 trillion a year.

And we have the greatest military machine on the face of the Earth ever assembled. You can amass the military of all the other 193 countries. It will not equal, Mr. Speaker, the firepower that the United States of America can bring to bear.

I tell my constituents that that great wealth and that great military power, with it comes a great responsibility in this world to use that wealth and that power in a responsible and careful manner.

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Now, none of us like to pay taxes. None of us like to pay taxes. Our job, as Members of the United States Congress, House of Representatives, is to make sure that we are good stewards of the taxpayers' money that our good citizens send up here for us to run the country.

Now, a great deal of that money is spent on our national defense, the number one priority of this Nation. None of us on this House floor ever like to vote against defense dollars that are being spent around the world where we ask our men and women to go put on the uniform and defend our values and our freedom and our causes around the world.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 6 years, I think the greatest act of omission that has been perpetrated by this Congress is the lack of oversight that has been exercised by this Congress over the executive branch when it comes to how we spend those tax dollars.

Six years ago, our national defense budget was in the neighborhood of \$400 billion; today it is in excess of \$650 billion. That's about 5 percent of our gross domestic product. There are not many countries, if any, around the world, that spend that much on their military.

Our American citizens, our people back home, don't mind us doing that. They like for us to do it. But they want to know that when they send that money to Washington, somebody is making sure that it's spent wisely, and we are good stewards of that.

What has happened over the last 6 years, when we had one party come in control of the White House, and the House and the Senate, the oversight role by Congress has been abdicated. It's not the first time it happened. It happened before when the Democrats controlled everything.

But in this case it was the Republican Party that was in the majority. As a result, we have seen systemic deficits built in. We have seen a situation where there has been no oversight exercised by the House of Representatives and the Senate over the administration, and the Congress just got in the mode of rubber-stamping everything that the administration wanted, and ultimately, we had some problems. Some arrogance developed, some corruption developed.

That's basically when the American people stood up in November and said, no more, we don't want that any more. We think a divided government works best.

As Blue Dogs, we want to work with the Members on the other side of the aisle in making sure that the American people's money, when it comes to Washington, is spent wisely and is accounted for.

I wanted to remind our citizens back home that this chart in front of us that shows the \$8.8 trillion national debt is for real, and that money has got to be paid back by somebody, or at least in-

terest on it has to be paid back; and we ought to stop increasing that number on a daily basis. That's what the Blue Dogs are all about. Let's make sure that the tax money that we collect from American citizens is spent wisely, and that we exercise good stewardship as we see about the people's business of the United States of America.

I am proud to be a Member of the U.S. House with my good friends on both sides of the aisle. I'm proud to be an American. I want to thank my friend from Arkansas for the time.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee.

In the hour we have been on the floor this evening talking about the need to restore common sense and fiscal accountability to our Nation's government, we have seen the national debt increase by at least \$40 million.

Today, the U.S. national debt is \$8,807,559,710,099. And for every man, woman and child in America, their share of the national debt is \$29,174. Every Tuesday night, those of us in the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition take to the floor of the House to demand that we pass commonsense solutions to this problem, because it affects all of us. It's time that we restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, May 21, 2007, I was not present for two votes in order to attend a ceremony awarding the BJ Stupak Memorial Fund scholarships.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 698, the Industrial Bank Holding Company Act (House rollcall vote 384).

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 1425, the Staff Sergeant Marvin "Rex" Young Post Office Building (House rollcall vote 385).

HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the floor tonight, like I have so often in recent weeks, to talk a little bit about health care in our country. The delivery of health care services is one of the things that may not be the first thing that registers in any poll that's taken in this country, but it's sure third or fourth, and it appears in every poll that is taken in this country.

We are, indeed, on the threshold of what might be called a transformational time as far as how health care services are delivered in this country. Certainly, over the remaining 18 months of the 110th Congress, we are going to have several different issues before us, several different times, where we will be able to talk about and

debate various aspects of our health care system.

Of course, just of necessity, as a big part of the Presidential election that will occur in the 18 months time, we will deal with the issues surrounding health care and the delivery of health care services in this country. We will be deciding, what road do we want to go if we have a system in our country now where about half is delivered, half of every health care dollar that is spent originates here in the U.S. Congress, and the other half comes from the private sector, uncompensated care and so-called charity care.

What do we want to see grow? What do we want to see encouraged? What do we want to see improved? Do we want to grow the public sector or do we want to grow the private sector?

Certainly expanding the government sector and its involvement in delivery of services, terms you will hear talked about on the floor of this House, things like universal health care, health care for all—in the early 1990s, we called it "Hillary care"—or do we want to encourage the private sector?

Do we want to encourage the private sector to stay involved in the delivery of health care services in this country, to be sure, to be certain, whether it's public or private, that the dollars that are spent are spent wisely to expand the coverage that's generally available for our citizens of this country. But these two options, and all of the questions and concerns that surround them, this is what we are going to have to decide in this House, certainly within the 18 months that remain in the 110th Congress, or very quickly after we enter into the 111th Congress.

I am hopeful that by visiting with you on some of these things tonight, providing some explanations and some insights into the directions that we might go, or we could consider going, and at its heart, at its core, I think we need to bear in mind that for all of the criticisms that are out there, and we have heard several of them here in the last hour, but for all the criticisms out there about this country and, in particular, its health care system, we do have a health care system that is indeed the envy of the world.

We have people from all over the world who come to the various medical centers over the United States to receive their care there. I believe, my position is, that we want to be certain that we maintain the excellence in the health care system that we have today, improve those parts that need improving, but don't sacrifice the excellence that exists in many areas of our country.

Some people are going to say, well, that's an overstatement that the United States health care system is a good one. They will look at, cite the numbers of the uninsured, they will start to cite the high cost of prescription drugs. There is no question that these are tough issues that this House is going to have to tackle.