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THE 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here on the floor tonight. It is like old times, Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And we have the gas pump there, and it is just, you, know a wonderful feeling.

Mr. Speaker, just to see you in the Chair there inspired me as an American to continue to be a part of this great democracy of ours. Our good friends from the Clerk's office and the Capitol Police and all the folks that make it possible for us to be here tonight, we are just forever appreciative.

As you know, in the 109th and 108th Congress, this was the trio here. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ brought quite a bit of class to our operation. She came in the 109th Congress, and, Mr. RYAN, we started to wear better ties and study more so that we could keep up with an educated policymaker.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I started wearing pink ties, because we had the whole goddess thing going on.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN started wearing his pink ties, which my daughter always says, real men wear pink. That is actually salmon, but we won't talk about it.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, we have an awful lot of business that will be taking place in the next 24 hours. We are approaching Memorial Day, and there have been a lot of reports about the Iraq emergency supplemental. There has been a lot of discussion about lobbying reform. There has been a lot of discussion about the reauthorization of the agriculture bill. But I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker: Unlike previous Congresses, the work is being done here by those of us that are under the dome, doing what the people of America sent us up here to do.

As we talk about the war, I think it is important to know that the issues in Iraq and Afghanistan are very, very serious to all of us here, to all of us in Washington, D.C., and Americans throughout the country, and especially the family members of those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. We always give this report. As of 10 a.m. this morning, the death toll in Iraq as it relates to the men and women in uniform is 3,424; wounded in action and returning to duty is 14,073; and wounded in action and not returning to duty is 11,476. I think it is very important that we pay very close attention to those numbers.

The days of six supplementals passing off of this floor, half a trillion dollars spent and no strings attached to any of those appropriation dollars, those days are over. I am very proud of the leadership in the House and the

Senate in fighting with the White House and bringing about the kind of accountability that the American people have called for.

You heard me say here on this floor in the past, Mr. Speaker, that there have been bills that in the spirit of the bill, I voted for those bills, but as it relates to the substance of those bills, I have had a few problems with the lack of accountability. That is paramount now in this bill that hopefully will pass the House floor tomorrow. There are benchmarks. There are reporting periods that the President has to report back to the Congress. In September, we will be coming in for a landing and making some real decisions.

The Iraqi Parliament, as you know, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, they have been holding quite a few conversations, as a matter of fact, talking about going on vacation for 60 days. The Defense Minister called his Ministers together to plan for an immediate U.S. withdrawal of troops, because I believe they know with this new Congress in place, the days of the Iraqi Government drawing down on the taxpayer dollars, the U.S. taxpayer dollars, without accountability, are over; and if they are not willing to reform themselves, then we should not be willing to have our men and women on the streets of Iraq fighting on behalf of safety and patrolling the streets, when the Iraqis are not doing what they are supposed to be doing.

With that, I will yield to one of my good friends. I will yield to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, who is a very good friend, and then Mr. RYAN comes in after her in my friendship.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You have just known me longer.

Thank you, Mr. MEEK. It is a pleasure to be here. We have been trying to get the three of us back together again. It is a good problem to have. We have a lot more on our plate now that the Democrats are in the majority. The other good part of our problem is that we have expanded the active members of the 30-Something Working Group, with the Speaker that is in the chair this evening and a number of other Members, Mr. ALTMIRE, and we are really happy about that.

But I am glad the three of us were able to come back together this evening to continue our effort to speak to both our generation and to the American people, the rest of the American people, about our concerns and the Democratic new direction that we have been successful in moving in since November 7th when we were victorious in the election and when the American people indicated to this Congress that they wanted to move in a new direction.

We struggled through the last number of years. Gradually, and unfortunately a cloud hung over this institution and this Capitol, a culture of corruption had developed, Mr. RYAN, and we just could not allow it to continue any longer. The American people were

fed up with it, and that is why tomorrow we are going to be considering lobbying reform and ethics reform, so that we can inspire the confidence of the American people once again in their leaders, both as individuals, because traditionally they have said to pollsters that they support their Member of Congress, they like their Member of Congress, but they can't stand the institution.

That is a sad state of affairs. We need to make sure that our institution, the one we are proud to serve in, is one that the American people can be proud of as well. There has been too much corruption here, unfortunately led by individuals formerly in the leadership in this institution on the other side of the aisle for far too long, and we need to take some significant steps to clean it up, which is why we are going to be considering this legislation on the floor tomorrow.

We also talked about during the campaign and leading up to, and now since NANCY PELOSI, our Speaker, took office, that we are going to implement the priorities that were important to the American people, including the minimum wage. We passed our "Six in 06" agenda in the first 100 hours that we were in the majority. The minimum wage was part of that. The implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations was a part of that. Making sure that we could repeal the \$14 billion in subsidies that we gave away to the oil industry under the Republican leadership, that was a part of that package, and a number of other provisions.

Our priorities since taking control of the House of Representatives have been a reflection of the priorities of the American people.

We have been interacting with this President, which in my experience the only thing I can analogize it to, Mr. RYAN, is like trying to move an iceberg. This is a person who occupies the White House now that seems to have no respect for the system of checks and balances, no respect for the fact that the Founding Fathers created three branches of government that were considered coequal, and that he was not elected king of this country. The Founding Fathers very definitely intended for us not to have a monarchy, not to establish a monarchy, and he doesn't get to just decide what is going to happen, particularly when it comes to war and executing the powers of the Presidency. He does have to have input from us.

I can tell you from my perspective, I think from your perspective, Mr. MEEK, and Mr. RYAN as well, that this is the beginning of the end. The actions we have taken, insisting upon him not having a blank check and ending the blank check and the open-ended commitments that have been there, it is the beginning of the end.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. While we are hitting on the war, I think it is important for us to maybe go back and reevaluate

why the Democrats have the position of redeploy out, wind this thing down, and I think it is important for us to go through some of the numbers.

Mr. MEEK had already mentioned the number of troops killed. We have had another nine that were killed in the last couple of days, and our hearts and prayers go out to all the families that have been affected by this and who have lost soldiers over there. The most heartbreaking thing we have to do is go to these funerals and see a 20-year old kid who has been married for a year with a 7-month-old son or daughter.

It is heartbreaking when we don't even know what winning is. Ask the President. What is winning this war? What does that mean now? We can't really get an answer from the President.

But a couple of things, why we think the President and his policies have made this situation worse. The number of insurgents in Iraq in 2003 was 5,000. The number of insurgents in Iraq in March of 2007 is 70,000, all Sunni, mostly Sunni. What I love now is the President is starting to say, Mr. Speaker, "bin Laden is now saying we need to attack Americans in Iraq. See why we got to stay there?"

No kidding. Right? No kidding. Bin Laden? Of course. We have 150,000 soldiers in a war zone. Of course, bin Laden is going to say go hit them over there.

But the problem is that we are creating more terrorists. And if you are trying to win the hearts and minds of people, okay, the number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the invasion, estimates range from 54,000 to 76,000. Those are innocent civilians in Iraq. Do you think we are going to be able to go over there and win their hearts and minds if we are killing innocent civilians with the bombs we are dropping? This needs to be won diplomatically. When it needs to be won diplomatically, it becomes very difficult when you have 50,000 to 75,000 civilian casualties.

One more thing, and then I will wrap my portion up here. The average daily number of daily attacks by insurgents in July of 2003 was 16 daily attacks in 2003. The number of daily attacks by insurgents between November of 2006 and February of 2007, 149. From 16 to 149. We are aggravating the situation. We are making it worse, and the surge is making it worse.

I yield back to my friend.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you. What we are doing, you are absolutely right, Mr. RYAN, is creating an incubator for al Qaeda. That is exactly what has occurred. In fact, if you recall, we heard a few years ago a lot of back and forth from the President about whether he did or didn't say that the reason that we actually went into Iraq was because of the connection, supposed connection, between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. Then I know Tony Snow, the White House Communications Director, has said no, we

never did say there was any connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. Now, yesterday and this morning at the Coast Guard Academy graduation, now, finally, how many years into it, he can hang his hat on there being a connection between al Qaeda and our involvement in Iraq.

Why? Because he created that situation there. Because we created an incubator and a hotbed that is an environment for that. Of course, if you have a culture like that, and I mean the culture in which bacteria will grow, just like a petri dish, if you create a petri dish like that and culture it, of course you are going to see the bacteria grow. If you create an environment in which bacteria can grow, it is going to explode like wildfire.

No wonder. It boggles my mind why he believes that what he is saying is not transparent to the American people. It certainly is transparent and evident in the polling numbers, because he has literally an approval rating in terms of the way he has handled this war that is below 30 percent now.

You would think that politically we would delight in that as Democrats. But it actually makes me sad, because how can a President be effective on any other issues when he clearly won't even be able to get the American people to listen to what he is saying because they are so soured on the direction that he has taken this country? That makes it very difficult for us to even reach out in a bipartisan way and attempt to work with him, because he has no credibility at all. He has his own party Members who are finding it very difficult to do anything in terms of their agenda domestically, and we don't see any outreach. He has created an impossible situation, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If I could just say, as we have increased the number, the incubation that a lot of our friends on the other side have supported, where more and more not only insurgents, but as Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ has said, more and more al Qaeda, more and more terrorists; so if you have a situation where you only have, for the sake of the example, 100 al Qaeda, and then we have the war, and now we have 1,000 al Qaeda, and then the President says well, we need to fight them over there or they are going to come over here, we have 900 more coming gunning for the United States because of the inability to actually execute this war.

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To say we are making progress, and we have some amazing ability to find some of this information out, the number of hours per day of electricity in Baghdad prior to the war was between 16 and 24 hours a day. Now in May of 2007, the number of hours per day average 5.6 hours per day. That is feeding the problem that we are having over there.

Production of barrels per day prior to the war, 2.5 million. Production of barrels per day in May 2007, 2.16 million,

so almost 400,000 less than prewar production.

Unemployment rate in Iraq went from 20 up to 40 percent in December of 2006. This problem has increased. I know our friends on the other side of the aisle continue to try to tell us there are improvements, but the statistics tell us otherwise.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you, Mr. RYAN. Mr. RYAN, you gave one great floor speech when you came down and said these are the same people who told us we will be greeted as liberators. These are the same people who told us oil revenues will be used to pay for the war. These are the same people who told us this will be a sweeping mission. These are the same people that told us there were weapons of mass destruction. These are the same people that told us there was a connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. These are the same people that went on and on and on. You can go on YouTube and watch it. I remembered and watched it, and I thought it was one of your better speeches on the floor. I will reserve comment on how many you have made, but that is one of the better ones.

Mr. RYAN, it is very unfortunate that right now we are breeding terrorists, people that will dislike the United States of America for the rest of their lives. That wasn't our mission in Iraq, and that is the reason why, before the election, a majority of Democrats were saying, and some Republicans were saying, that we should redeploy our troops to the peripheral and not do the street patrols in Iraq.

How are we losing our troops? Going door to door, kicking in doors, riding down the streets. IEDs are blowing up and killing many of our men and women. They are not being killed in the training missions. I haven't heard one casualty, maybe there has been one, but I haven't heard of one casualty of any of our men and women training Iraqi troops in how to protect their country and how to protect their own streets.

Case in point, let me paint this picture because I think it is important as we debate this emergency supplemental. When you look at the fact that the U.S. troops with the flag on their shoulder kicking the door searching for the three that were missing, going door to door, those children, that son, that grandfather, that mother will say that the United States kicked my door in. How do we get to this point, I am innocent and we are laying on the floor at 2 a.m. with semiautomatic weapons pointed at my family? Those individuals end up listening to the rhetoric of radical terrorist groups that are saying, they are not here for you, they are here to terrorize your family.

That is why we have to get out of the position of this door-to-door and street-to-street combat in Iraq when the Iraqis themselves should be carrying out that mission. It is so very, very important.

Like I said, six emergency supplementals, half a trillion dollars of

blank checks to this administration; no more. That is the reason why we are having benchmarks. That is why the White House has to come here and report to Congress.

I heard one of the Republican Members say we are supposed to receive reports. Well, that is a revelation. Here we are in charge of the Federal purse. We are responsible. We are the board members, if you want to put it that way, over the U.S. Treasury, and all of a sudden now many of our Republican Members are saying, yes, we are supposed to receive reports.

That should have been happening from the beginning. Maybe then the death toll wouldn't be what it is, and maybe we may have more coalition partners in this effort if it was run right from the beginning versus send us a blank check and don't ask any questions.

So the President can say what he wants to say. Memorial Day is coming up. We have men and women who have laid down and sacrificed. Many of them have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Many of the men and women that fought with them remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, and still we are here playing games with the democracy that they allow us to celebrate today, under what we may call kingdom politics of the President feeling that you shouldn't ask any questions; I trust my advisors, and I trust the generals in the field.

Well, I trust the generals in the field, too. And I have a level of trust for the administration, but the track record doesn't support don't ask any questions; we don't need any strings attached; you are trying to take my power away. We are not trying to take power away, we are just trying to make sure that the Federal tax dollar is spent in an appropriate way and we save as many American lives as possible.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, no one, Democrat or Republican, should apologize for what is going on right now in Washington, DC. I think many of our friends who believe we should be out of Iraq tomorrow, we should send every plane we can possibly send, take our troops out, redeploy our troops and just leave it as is, there is a process in doing that. We are going through that process right now. A lot of it is very painful.

Some say, why are you giving the President another opportunity to continue this war and continue to fight this war? Haven't you learned over the last 5 years that the strategy they are using is a combat strategy, not a diplomatic strategy, not making sure there are benchmarks on the Iraqi Government, and they had that opportunity.

I encourage, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, when we do get a bill on the floor, we do have a number of Republicans voting on behalf of this next supplemental, and a number of Democrats voting on behalf of the supplemental. And those that feel the war should end

tomorrow should understand that this is a major accomplishment in the effort in taking away what the President has had for the last 5 years: a blank check, do as you want to do, Donald Rumsfeld and all of them.

As Mr. RYAN says, as I close on this point, the real issue here is the truth will surface. Some of it has already surfaced, and a lot of it will continue to surface as we learn more about what the Congress was not told and as we learn more about what we were told incorrectly. And as Americans reflect back on this time, they will see some of the worst misinformation and secrecy at a time of war and a time of economic strain on this country.

We have borrowed more from foreign nations than we have ever borrowed in the history of the Republic; and still, we have Members standing here asking what is wrong. Well, the reason we are in the majority on this side of the aisle, we are very busy leading on behalf of the American people, is a perfect example of what is wrong.

The American people know what is going on. I am not talking about a bunch of proud Democrats. I am talking about Independents and Republicans and those who have never voted before in their life, they decided to get involved and vote. If this was just about politics, we would just go home or be in our offices doing the things we need to do for tomorrow, and let the Democratic majority get bigger and bigger because we would lead the Republicans to doing and saying what they have been doing all along.

But this is bigger than politics. This is about our democracy. This is about our finances here in the country, and this is about saving U.S. lives that are in harm's way right now when we can work out a better plan and force the Iraqi Government to take the responsibility of their streets, take the responsibility of their patrols, and make sure that they meet benchmarks just like every U.S. mayor has to meet with Federal dollars, just like every U.S. Governor has to meet when they are spending Federal dollars. Just like every U.S. agency should be accountable to the taxpayer dollars, the Iraqi Government and those in the Iraqi Government should be just as accountable and greater with the U.S. taxpayer dollars.

I don't want to get all emotional, like Mr. RYAN said, but I can't help but do it when I think about Memorial Day coming up and when I think about the veterans' benefits that we have in the emergency supplemental.

We have some folks saying we shouldn't have any domestic spending in here, and we have troops coming back and still waiting a long time to get their service. It was the Democrats that put forth the dollars to make sure that Walter Reed was repaired. That is also in this emergency supplemental. We will talk a little more about that as we move along.

I know we are going to talk about gas prices in the time left. Ms.

WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I think we should commend every American for being focused on this issue of Iraq and encourage a discourse.

I was out behind the Chamber today on the balcony, and I noticed a person out there on a bullhorn saying, "Stop the war." I wasn't bothered by that because the men and women that we are going to celebrate on Monday fought for that lady to be out there saying what she was saying.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. That is what it is all about.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That is right. That is what it is all about. And this is not a kingdom, this is a democracy, we have to tolerate one another now and then, but we have to make sure that we make sound decisions on behalf of the Republic.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I yield to you.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. MEEK.

I have to tell you, I have thought recently when people come up to me, you would think that there are people that would say, DEBBIE, KENDRICK, TIM, what does it really matter? We have been spending billions of dollars for the last 5 years. We are over there in Iraq. Yeah, the American people are opposed to this, and we are in a pretty bad situation over there, and there doesn't appear to be any end in sight, but how does this affect my life? At the end of the day I am eating, my children are eating, they are going to school. Iraq is far away, and it is not impacting me whether we continue the war in Iraq or don't continue the war in Iraq.

Gradually day by day, the percentage of people that don't feel that way, that get it, that understand what the impact is, not just on the perception of America in the world, but what the domestic day-to-day impact is, is growing.

Besides the President's popularity ratings, which are in the toilet, we have a situation here where people are realizing, for example, that our National Guard is unable to be 100 percent ready to take care of us and do the job that we actually created the National Guard to do.

Mr. MEEK, next Friday is June 1, the official start of hurricane season, even though we have had activity a few weeks in advance of the beginning of hurricane season. And yesterday NOAA came out with their prediction on how busy this storm season is likely to be, and their prediction is 10 to 14 named storms, and a good chunk to be in the category 3, 4 or 5 category.

We have a National Guard that has equipment that is still over in Iraq, and when it does come back, it comes back in such terrible shape, it isn't going to be ready to take care of Americans who are in need after the aftermath of a natural disaster. That is a direct result of our inability to extricate ourselves from Iraq, our inability to hold the Iraqi Government accountable, to establish benchmarks, to make

sure that there is some progress made, and that they don't have an open-ended commitment and a blank check even after the Iraqi Parliament, Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK, have indicated that they don't want us there anymore.

There was a resolution that came out of the Iraq Parliament that indicated they didn't want us there. There is an incredible frustration among the Iraqi people about our being there. There is a worldwide concern about our presence there; and, most importantly, the American people want us to bring the troops home so that we can refocus the attention that we are paying in Iraq on training those troops to stand up on their own and for the Iraqi Government to function on their own.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I have a question for Mr. RYAN.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And, Mr. MEEK, I would have segued into the issue of our skyrocketing gas prices.

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Mr. MEEK of Florida. We will.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Chief cardinal, too, so if she wants to talk about gas, I want to talk about gas.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know what they say. They have Democrats and Republicans and members of the Appropriations Committee, and I happen to be on the floor with two of them. One is a cardinal and one thinks that he's actually running the country, but I would say that as we continue to talk about this, especially in Armed Services, and Chairman Ike Skelton has done an excellent job in the defense authorization bill, getting us to a readiness stage where we can deal with the issues, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, that you outlined.

These are very important issues, especially the Gulf Coast States or any State that has a, Kansas for instance, it has a natural disaster or have a disaster where they need the National Guard to have the equipment that they need, it's in that authorization bill, and I want to thank not only my colleagues on the committee but also Mr. SKELTON for all of his hard work on the authorization end.

But I think it's also important for us to note that our mission, we talk about redeployment. We're talking about redeployment and deploying a diplomatic corps to work with the Iraqi Government and have a surge in diplomacy or an escalation in diplomacy. Why can't we get other countries to join us? Well, why would they want to join something that is going to create more terrorism or terrorists in their country? That's what we're doing, and so I think it's important for everyone to understand that.

And I share that with my constituents when I go out to speak to them. We're in here having this meeting here, we're sitting in this living room, and someone kicks in the door and come in and do a security search; how would you feel? Who would be responsible for that? You would be outraged.

Iraq is not the United States, by far, but I want to share with you that many of our men and women are following the duty that we've asked them to carry out, and they trust us that we will ask the questions that we should ask here in Washington, DC and carry it out.

I just want you to respond to that because I know that you have some words of wisdom, especially on that end, in all seriousness, because it's just simple common sense to do the things we should be doing. It does not take a rocket scientist, and you don't have to be a four-star general to understand that what we're doing is not working. And to say let's keep doing it and declassifying information and saying this is the reason why I did this, this is the reason why I did that, it still does not equate to why we're still doing the same thing and expecting different results.

I will use this analogy before I yield to you. It's almost like going to the refrigerator and taking out a carton of milk, taking a smell of the milk and saying, wow, it's sour, I will put it back in and maybe it'll be fresh tomorrow. It works against logic.

And what's happening now is that the strategy that the White House has works against logic, but unfortunately, it would be okay if it was just an individual, but it's dealing with U.S. lives. I know all of us want to save lives, but we have to make sure that we do everything we can to send a message to the White House, and also man up and woman up here in Congress, and be leaders in that direction towards safety and accountability and moving the Iraqi issue in a new direction.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. All we really have to do is talk to some of the soldiers who are over there and who have come back, which I'm sure most of us have. And when they explain what's going on on the ground, it's mind-boggling to think in cities of 140, 150, 160, 170,000 we've got American troops, for example, on the west side of the city, with 1,000 Iraqi troops on the west side of the city, and 1,000 on the east side and 1,000 Iraqis; 2,000, 4,000 total for the whole city, 2,000 of the 4,000 being American. How are you going to control a city of 170,000 people? And a surge of an extra 1,000 or 2,000 is not going to make a difference. It's going to make it worse.

This surge is not the first time we've tried this. This is like the fourth time, and every time that we've tried a surge in certain areas there has been an increase in the number of daily attacks, not a decrease, because it incites the area, and you still don't have enough.

And we've all said from the beginning, if we went in there with 3- or 400,000 troops, where we were able, after the statue fell, to secure the State, to secure the country of Iraq, that would have been a different story, and all the looting was going on and the museums and everything, and then Secretary Rumsfeld said, well, they're

just blowing off steam. At that point, you lost control and it went all downhill from there.

But my point is that you talk to these soldiers who are on the ground, and they see that they can't handle this situation the way it is and that the only way to do it is through diplomacy, is to try to patch up some of these political problems, which gets worsened because of the innocent civilians that are dying in Iraq, which makes them not like us.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Like happens to you sometimes, my blood is starting to boil because all that it takes, I'm sitting here listening to this back and forth that we're going through here and example after example about the reasons for the American people's outrage, for our outrage, for our persistence in trying to move this iceberg and get some progress and end the blank check and establish some accountability.

You know, it's very simple. All the President has to do is be a diplomat himself and agree to come to the table and compromise and negotiate and end the my-way-or-the-highway politics. He is not king. Yes, he was elected President, but he was elected to one branch of the government, which, the way our government is set up, is designed to work coequally with this branch of government.

He has disdained the legislative branch, and this is the representative body of the United States of America. The people who elect us elect us to be their voice. They elect one person, an executive, and they elect 435 of us so we can have a collective diversity of opinion and that the result in terms of the outcome of policy is a combination of that diversity. And he has no respect for it, and that's why his numbers are where they are. That's why the support for this President, the bottom has dropped out of it.

And that's why over the next several months we will push this iceberg with all our might, and I can feel it, that their ability to continue unabated with the disdain and disregard that this administration has shown for the American people and our opinion, it will come to an end and it's going to come to an end in a fashion that we will help bring about the change that the American people ask for. And that is the only way that this is going to happen, if we continue to fight, we continue to push hard, we make sure that we go out to our communities like we will all do next week.

I know I'm having a town hall meeting next Wednesday in my district to talk specifically about the war in Iraq and how people feel about it, get their feedback, talk about the other issues that are important to them, because people are tired. They're tired of the war. They're sick of the deaths. They're sick of the death toll, and they want us to be able to talk about how we're going to expand health care.

We have the SCHIP program that we need to reauthorize later this year. We

have 9 million kids that we need to find the money to cover. We have to make sure we can reduce the cost of health care for small businesses. We have a deficit that has ballooned out of control, that we're trying to get a handle on, no thanks to our friends on the other side of the aisle.

We have a lot to do, a long to-do list, and it would be great if the President would just recognize that we all need to work together and end his disrespect for the American people and for the democratic process because it's gone on for far too long. And we have a lot at stake here.

And I just have reached my level of frustration. I know my constituents have, and that's why I'm proud of our caucus because we have hung together. We have stuck together and pushed and pushed and pushed each other so that we can get behind a policy that not all of us are 100 percent behind. Everybody didn't get their way with the legislation that we put forward with benchmarks and timelines. But you know what? That's what this representative body that we were elected to is all about. It's about compromise and it's about standing up for the people who don't have a voice. They elected us to be their voice and I have been very proud to be a Member of this institution, really proud of our Democratic leadership.

And I'm just hopeful that we can get beyond this war and start talking about things like the \$3.22 a gallon that our constituents are paying, on average, for their gas as we approach the summer season as well.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. In a very practical way, we're pushing. I mean, I think this Congress has done everything that it can do, but if we're not getting any help from our Republican friends, a couple have shown great courage to try to end this thing, but not getting the support where we can override the President's veto.

Now, this is the stark reality that is frustrating for all of us, the Speaker I know for sure, and all of us, is that we're trying to end this war. The first bill we passed had a hard deadline. The second bill we passed had a goal to get out. The President still vetoed that, Mr. Speaker, and we're trying the best we can within this institution to move this iceberg, as you say.

But the President consistently vetoes these bills that we're trying to pass. And so now we're to the point where we've got to figure out what's the best we can do, and it looks like the best we can do is try to get him to at least have these benchmarks that are in there, report back in September, July and September, with some of this, and get our veterans the support and the funding they need.

Nobody likes that. I don't like it. I don't even know if I'm going to vote for it, to be quite honest. I'm so frustrated with the President at this point, but we've got decisions to make as to can we take a step in the right direc-

tion even though it's not as far as we want to go.

But I think this is a call, Mr. Speaker, for the citizens of this country to step out and step up, not the ones that we see wearing the pink, not the ones that we see with the bull horn, but if we're going to end this war, it's going to be average people who support our philosophy but have yet to say anything, and not in your district or my district but in districts where their representatives come down here and support the President.

You can't sit on the sidelines on this one, not as a politician, but as a citizen you've got to come out here and help us do this, and I think there needs to be a direct call to a action.

Just to let you know, Mr. Speaker, we are sending a letter to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops from me and several other Members, asking them to reengage the war issue; that this is the issue of our day and that they need to be more active and they need to get involved in their local parishes and demand that their citizens get off the pews and start participating and getting legislators to move off the dime. We've got to do this by September, or in the fall while we're beginning the process for 2008. Or we're going to continue to be here and legislators are going to continue to get away with voting to support the President when 71 percent of the American people don't think he's handling this job properly.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I think you are right. I think also, as the summer begins and then wears on and we have an opportunity in the summertime to go home and spend some time in our districts and interact with our constituents, that the issues that pile up, at we're going to have a difficult time dealing with, because we are still mired in this hopeless war in Iraq, are going to continue to fray the patience of the American people, and I think our friends on the other side of the aisle will hear from their constituents.

I keep wanting to move a little bit and talk about gas prices, and I'm chomping at the bit to do that because you've heard me talk about this before. I'm one of those minivan moms. I drive my kids around in my minivan to soccer games and to school. And last summer when we were frustrated with the rise in gas prices, I remember exploding on the floor here talking about how it cost over \$55 to fill up my gas tank. And then, of course, conveniently, right before the election, the prices came down again. I'm sure it had nothing to do with the fact that an election was imminent, and I'm sure the oil industry didn't do anything deliberate to ensure that that would happen.

But amazingly it is now May and those gas prices have not just crept but leapt back up, and I want to just share with you the timeline that has existed since this administration took over in the executive branch.

We are now paying more than double for gas than when President Bush first

took office. This chart will illustrate that the average price per gallon on January 22, 2001, at the beginning of the Bush administration, was \$1.47, and then as of May 21, 2007, just a couple days ago, the average price per gallon today is \$3.22.

Now, what that means is that amounts to real money. When you're talking about it costing 20 or so dollars to fill up your tank or \$25 to fill up your tank, that's a manageable amount of money.

□ 2100

But when you get to \$50, \$50, Mr. MURPHY, is an amount that I think about. I mean, when I am faced with paying a bill that's \$50, that's real money to me. To me, that gives me pause. I have to make a decision, normally, about other things unrelated to things that I absolutely have to have like gas, about whether or not I am going to actually spend \$50. Do I have the money? What else will I not be able to buy if I spend \$50 on this item?

Gas is not like that. Gas is something that's not optional. You have to drive your kids to school. You have to make sure you can get your car to the grocery store. If you don't go to the grocery store because you don't have gas, your family doesn't eat. If your kid is sick and you can't fill the gas tank, then you can't take them to the doctor, and they get sicker. How are you going to get them to the emergency room if they get so sick that you need that kind of health care? Those are real problems that Americans face when gas prices reach that point.

What we are doing in the Democratic Caucus and as we continue to fight to move this country in a new direction is we are working on an energy package that we will bring to the floor by July 4, an energy independence package that will ensure that we can crack down on price gouging, like the legislation that we passed off this floor yesterday, that we can really start to respond to the oil cartel and make sure that they are pursued for the antitrust violations that they engage in, and that we really invest in alternative energy.

The President's remarks during the State of the Union last year were just words. When he referenced his desire to see America end our addiction to foreign oil, nice words, but no action to speak of. Nothing that I can see in any policy is reflective of the words that we heard in this Chamber during that State of the Union. We, on the other hand, are going to make a difference.

Mr. MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you for letting me come down here for just a couple of seconds and add my voice to the chorus here.

You are absolutely right. When you are talking about something as essential as gas for people driving to and from work bringing their kids back and forth to school, it's not an optional expenditure. Now, in Connecticut we love to say there is another choice, people

could get on some train or get on some bus, but they don't exist. They don't exist because unfortunately in some parts of this country we have neglected our mass transit infrastructure, and we have forced people to rely on their vehicles to get themselves around.

I just saw a statistic today that said in Waterbury, Connecticut, in the heart of my district, that one in six people in public housing are spending 66 percent of their income on rent, 66 percent of their income on rent. There is not much left for food. There is not much left for medicine. We know they have to pay more for medicine because less of them have health care. There is certainly not a lot left for transportation costs. This is hitting at the heart of the American middle class, at the heart of the American working class.

In just a second we will show a chart that would suggest that the reason for these increased prices at the pump is certainly not that the oil companies are crying poverty, certainly not because the bottom lines of American oil companies and national oil companies are hurting. It is hard to understand with the record profits, year after year. The last 3 or 4 years, every year, comes new record profits for these oil companies. How on Earth can we continue to see these prices go up?

I just want to say one more thing that was touched on. We have to talk about what national independence means, dependence on oil means for national security as well, over 170,000 barrels of oil from Saudi Arabia in 2006 and other OPEC countries. If you want to talk about why we can't bring a country like Saudi Arabia to the table, have a conversation about why they are creating a society in which their most marginalized members feel that their only resort is to extremism and violence; if you want to find out why we can't hold some of these Middle Eastern countries accountable for the societies that they are creating and the terrorism they are helping fuel, it's because we rely on their oil. It's because in the end we can't make them angry, because if we do, they are going to cut off the food that our cars eat.

Now, energy independence is about lowering gas prices. Antitrust legislation, price-gouging legislation, is about getting to the heart of the problem for middle-class consumers and drivers, the prices at the pump. But ultimately we have to figure out how to walk away from some of these quagmires we are in with countries that provide oil to us. We have got to understand that energy independence is about doing the right thing for middle-class families, to minivan moms.

It is also about doing the right thing for national security. It's also making sure that my future kids and grandkids are going to grow up in a society that's safe. That's why it's a triple whammy. Energy independence is about lowering energy prices, it's about cleaning up our environment, and it's also about

national security. That's why I had to drag Mr. RYAN up to the rostrum to allow me get down here and say my 2 cents on this.

This is what the Democratic majority is going to deliver. It's going to go from a time when we could complain about gas prices and not see much action at all from Congress to a time now where we are still going to complain about it, but we are actually going to have a group of people here in the House and Senate and step up to the plate and do something about it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We are wrapping up in a few minutes, but I have got this gas tank replica here, which is pretty ancient-looking. It's actually decrepit itself. I bring it with me to the floor because it is the only explanation that I can find as to why our good friends on the other side of the aisle and this President seem totally unresponsive in trying to address this problem and work with us.

My only explanation is that perhaps they don't pump their own gas, or perhaps the last time they actually filled their own tank, and saw that ticker, and realized how much it cost to fill up a tank is when gas pumps look like this. That's my only explanation, given this is the 30-something Working Group. Maybe it has been since the 1950s that they filled their own tank, unlike the people that we represent, who are trying, struggling to fill their tank every day.

We are going to continue to back up our words with action. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the 30-something Working Group under the leadership of our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Very good. As we close, I know that we have our Web site that we need to give out. Well, we don't have time, but let me just do this. Mr. MURPHY talked about this.

These are another record year for oil company profits, in 2007, record profits, \$30.2 billion they have been able to achieve, and \$6.5 billion in 2002; and 2007, \$30.2 billion. I think those are pretty good years for oil companies. It seems to happen, and I am not a Member of Congress with a conspiracy theory, but, with the Bush administration and the White House, looked like oil companies have done better than many Americans have done.

As I talk to my friends and those that have F-10 pickup trucks, what have you, it's costing upwards of \$80 just for a small business to run that truck, which is going to end up costing the U.S. taxpayers even more when they go for goods and services. We do have our Web site, and we will give that real quick, and we will close.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We encourage you, any of the Members, anyone listening, to sign onto our Web site. The charts that we have been describing tonight are up on that Web site. You can reach us, e-mail us, at 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov, and you can also reach our Web site by

signing on to www.speaker.gov and look for the 30-something link, and you can find all the things that we are working on in the 30-something Working Group.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you very much. I want to thank you and Mr. RYAN.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your time here on floor. It's always an honor for us to address the House of Representatives.

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut) laid before the House the following communication from the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; which was read and, without objection, referred to the Committee on Appropriations:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,

Washington, DC, May 18, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI: I am writing to inform you that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure approved thirteen survey resolutions for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at a Full Committee Markup on May 2, 2007.

Pursuant to the provisions of 33 U.S.C. § 542, I have enclosed the resolutions for your review.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. OBERSTAR,
Chairman.

RESOLUTION—DOCKET 2768—MOSS LANDING HARBOR-ELKHORN SLOUGH, MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Resolved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the United States House of Representatives, That the Secretary of the Army review the report of the Chief of Engineers on Moss Landing Harbor, California, published as Senate Document 50, 79th Congress, 1st Session, and other pertinent reports, to determine whether modifications to the recommendations contained therein are advisable at the present time in the interest of navigation and environmental restoration, with emphasis on the health of Elkhorn Slough, and other related purposes.

RESOLUTION—DOCKET 2769—NEW HAVEN HARBOR, CONNECTICUT

Resolved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the United States House of Representatives, That the Secretary of the Army review the report of the Chief of Engineers on the New Haven Harbor, Connecticut, published as House Document 517, 79th Congress, 2nd Session, and other pertinent reports, to determine whether modifications of the recommendations contained therein are advisable at the present time in the interest of navigation, sediment control, environmental preservation and restoration, and other related purposes at New Haven Harbor, Connecticut.

RESOLUTION—DOCKET 2770—MERAMEC RIVER, BRUSH CREEK, PACIFIC, MISSOURI

Resolved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the United