

the things necessary to put our fiscal house back in order.

Mr. Speaker, I know you cannot speak, but I know you are a Blue Dog, and I am proud that you are up there; and, Mr. Ross, I am proud you are one of our leaders of the Blue Dog Coalition. I am also proud of the freshmen Blue Dogs that I serve with, because we will demand answers and we will demand accountability of this administration and the next administration, hopefully a Democratic one, to make sure that we continue the progress that we are making in this 110th Congress.

Mr. ROSS. I thank Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania for joining us this evening and for helping write House Resolution 97, providing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Cost Accountability. We are not just talking about this. We are trying to do something about it.

In fact, some of these key provisions were included in the defense authorization bill, and we want to thank Chairman SKELTON and members of Armed Services for doing that.

It does four things. It calls for transparency on how Iraq war funds are spent. It calls for the creation of a Truman-like commission to investigate the awarding of contracts. It provides a need to fund the Iraq war through the normal appropriations process and not through the so-called emergency "let's hide the real cost of the war" supplementals. And, finally, it encourages the use of American resources to improve Iraqi assumption of internal policing operations. In other words, put Iraqis on the front line and get our soldiers off the front line and provide our soldiers to train their soldiers so they can fight their own civil war.

I yield to Mr. DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. I know we are starting to run short on time, so I just want to sum up what I have been thinking and saying here tonight with this: How far have we gone askew? How confused have we become with this administration when a 3.5 percent pay raise is unnecessary, but we lose \$12 billion in Iraq that there is no trace of, that was loaded onto skids into an airplane and can't even be found. But we can't give a 3.5 percent pay raise to the best, the bravest, the finest who have ever served this country.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ross, that's part of the reason we need this Iraq War Accountability Act, just one of the many glaring things, but I leave that with the American people and let them know these Blue Dogs are on the hunt to get that fixed.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for his insight and the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his.

Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions or concerns, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. That is BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

I am talking about House Resolution 97, providing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Cost Accountability. We are not just talking about a problem. We are trying to fix the problem. There are

only 43 of us in the Blue Dogs, a group of conservative Democrats, and yet we already have 63 cosponsors on this bill.

House Resolution 97 also calls for the Iraqi government and its people to progress towards full responsibility for internally policing their own country.

Recently, members of the Blue Dog Coalition worked together with House Armed Services Committee Chairman, IKE SKELTON, to include key provisions of House Resolution 97 in the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization bill. With the passage of this bill, we took the first step towards ensuring complete fiscal transparency in the funding of the war in Iraq.

The American people deserve to know that their tax dollars are being spent wisely and that our troops have the resources they need to succeed. The Blue Dogs are committed to passing legislation that accomplishes this goal.

Members of the Blue Dog Coalition also believe strongly that funding requests for the Iraq war should come through the normal appropriations process, as I mentioned earlier. Since 2003, the Republican-held Congress has been funding the war through emergency supplemental requests, two of them in 2003, another one in 2004 and 2005 and 2006 and 2007. It is time we stop hiding the cost of this war. We demand fiscal accountability in Iraq.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my leadership for the opportunity once again to come to the floor and to shed a little light. Tonight, we are going to shed a little truth on some of the messages that we have heard just now and maybe previously here in Washington.

This is another edition of The Official Truth Squad. The Official Truth Squad is a group of Republicans who desire to make certain that some sense of factual information is provided, Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the issues that are dealt with on the floor of this House.

We have a favorite, a number of favorite quotes. One of them is from Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Senator Moynihan said, everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts.

Mr. Speaker, it is curious to hear my friends on the other side of the aisle and their righteous indignation, the righteous indignation that they have about so many various things, particularly tonight when they talked about spending and funding the troops.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is curious because the bill that this House passed under the leadership on the other side, the majority party leadership, just 2 weeks ago, I know you will find this

amazing, but that is a bill that could have been passed the first or second week of January of this year to appropriately fund the troops who are standing in harm's way, who are defending our liberty and our freedom and attempting to carry out what they believe, we believe, to be a role that will result in a more safe and secure Middle East and a more safe and secure United States of America.

That bill was held up literally for 5 months because of political posturing and gamesmanship and all sorts of things that, frankly, Mr. Speaker, Americans are tired of. They are tired of it.

We all got back in Washington from a week at home. Most of us went home to our districts. It is good to go home and hear what people are really thinking. The folks in my district on the northern side of Atlanta, they are mad as can be about the partisan games that are played here in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to bring a little truth and light and fact to many different areas. But I think it is important for everybody to appreciate, especially in this body, that the bill that was passed to appropriately fund the troops, 2 weeks ago we passed that bill, that is a bill that could have been passed by virtually every single positive vote in this House the first or second week of January had our good friends, the Blue Dogs and others, not participated in the kind of gamesmanship that the American people are, frankly, tired of.

I want to talk a little bit about the fiscal house being put back in order. Our good friends on the other side of the aisle talked about putting the, quote, "fiscal house back in order" which is why the Blue Dogs felt that they increased their numbers and assisted the election of the majority.

I think it is curious when they talk about putting the fiscal house of this Nation back in order. Because if you look at the truth, if you look at facts, if you listen to facts and not just opinion, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate I know that what has happened over the first, a little over 5 months of this new Congress under new leadership is that we have seen an increased authorization for over \$50 billion in new spending. So are they putting the fiscal house back in order by decreasing spending? No. Over \$50 billion in new spending authorized by this new majority with the Blue Dogs supporting virtually every one of those bills.

So they must be then decreasing taxes, right, Mr. Speaker, in order to put the fiscal house back in order. Well, no, they are not doing that either. Because the budget that they adopted, this Democrat majority with I think the unanimous support of the Blue Dogs on the other side of the aisle, the budget that they adopted, over \$400 billion in new taxes for the American people. It is the largest tax increase in the history of the Nation. I guess that they would argue that is putting this fiscal house back in order.

Well, I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, it has many folks at home asking me if the Blue Dogs are not just lap dogs and if they are not just kowtowing to the Democratic leadership and doing what they are told to do, as opposed to being fiscally responsible. Which is what so many of us on our side of the aisle are working so hard to do.

So things are a little curious, which is why I think it is important to bring some truth and facts to the debate and the discussion.

We had some curious things happen on the floor of the House today, Mr. Speaker. I know that you were as puzzled as I at some of the events that occurred yesterday. There was an indictment that was passed down in a court that indicted a Member of Congress, a Member of the House of Representatives. They indicted him I think on 16 counts. So the new majority party came to the floor of the House today, having known about the problem that this individual has had for years, literally. They came to the floor of the House today and they were stumbling over themselves to get to the microphone and to the floor as fast as they could to address this issue that could have been addressed long ago, and passed a resolution that said that anybody who had any criminal charge against them as a Member of Congress, a Member of the House, or any indictment would be referred to the Ethics Committee.

□ 2245

That may be appropriate. It passed by a wide margin. I was pleased to support it. I think the process was flawed. It didn't go through the regular committee process and, consequently, was a pretty poorly written bill, but it moves us in a little bit of the right direction.

In that whole process of talking about it on the floor of the House this afternoon and evening, the majority leader said something to the effect of anyone accused of wrongdoing needs to be investigated. Any Member of the House who is accused of wrongdoing needs to be investigated, which brings up, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of earmarks, of special projects.

That's what I'd like to spend a little time talking about this evening, the whole issue of pork projects, special projects, earmarks, things that have inflated our budget to a huge degree and things that, frankly, ought not be included in the vast majority of bills, and if they are, they ought to have the greatest amount of scrutiny by both sides of the aisle, Members from both sides, and certainly greatest amount of scrutiny from our constituents, from people all across this Nation, and a great amount of scrutiny from the press.

That's what we call sunshine. That's what I call sunshine for earmarks, and it's an important thing. And the majority party made a huge deal as they ran for office last fall about the impor-

tance of spending restraint and getting the fiscal house in order, as it were, although we haven't seen a whole lot of that since they took over, but they made a huge point about controlling earmarks and putting a lid on earmarks and special projects.

And this past week, we've heard a lot about it, but what has happened is that things have actually gotten worse. Mr. Speaker, I know it's hard to believe, but they have actually gotten worse. And there are a number of people who believe that and a number of objective individuals. Again, facts will back up this case.

There was a letter written by the minority leader to the Speaker recently in which he said, We now have reached the point at which the congressional earmark process has become less transparent and less accountable than it was during the 109th Congress, directly violating pledges made last year by Democratic leaders.

That goes a long way. I tell you that's a major statement, less transparent, meaning not the kind of sunshine, and less accountable so that who knows where these projects are coming from. How are the people, how are the American citizens, supposed to hold their Member accountable if, in fact, they're doing what they don't believe they ought to do?

It has gotten so bad that a Member of even the Democrat majority has said, A lot of Democrats believe it's our turn at the trough. Quite a statement. Mr. Speaker. A lot of Democrats believe it's our turn at the trough. That's a fact that that was indeed said, and in fact, it's distressing because it appears to be that that's the fact of action on the part of this new majority.

Now, what did they do in fact? I have coined it Orwellian democracy because so often what has happened with this new majority is that they have said the right thing, they said they were going to do something, and then in fact either done exactly the opposite or ignored what they said they were going to do.

Well, what do I mean by that, Mr. Speaker? I have in my hand here the book of rules of the House of Representatives. It's a pretty dry read, but it's got some important points in it, and these are the rules by which the House operates and by which we supposedly make certain that individual Members of this House are held accountable for their actions.

One part of the rules talks about congressional earmarks. What's an earmark? How do you determine what an earmark is? How do you determine what a special project is? It's important to know that so you can say, yeah, that ought to be subject to a certain amount of scrutiny, hopefully more scrutiny, a certain amount of sunshine, that the individual Member of Congress ought to have to stand up and say that's my project. I support that project, I'm interested in having us spend Federal taxpayer money on that project.

So what's the definition of a congressional earmark? Well, in House rule XXI, subclause 9(d) it says, congressional earmark means a provision or report language included primarily at the request of a Member providing, authorizing or recommending a specific amount of discretionary budget authority, credit authority, or other spending authority or other expenditure targeted to a specific State, locality, or congressional district other than through a statutory or administrative formula-driven or competitive award process.

Now, what does that mean? That means that if an individual Member of Congress says I believe that certain Federal tax dollars, hard-earned taxpayer dollars ought to go for a specific project in my district for a specific purpose, and it's not part of any other authorization that the Federal Government has for another role or another aspect of its responsibility, it's something that a specific Member requests, that's a congressional earmark.

Now, how do you make certain that there's appropriate accountability for that? Well, Mr. Speaker, another portion of the rules it says that a list of those earmarks have to be in any bill that has an earmark, and the list has to include the Member's name who requested it. That's an important point because that allows for the sunshine. That makes it so that all Members of this body know who's requested that. It makes it so that the press know who's requested it and they can follow up on it and do investigations if they deem it to be appropriate. It's necessary so that constituents, people out across America, can know who's requesting these things.

And it goes on to say that if a list isn't included, the way that you can follow the rules as well is that a statement that the proposition contains no congressional earmarks may suffice. So, if the bill actually contained no earmarks, then all that it took was the chairman of the committee to write a statement to the Speaker and to the Rules Committee that, in fact, the bill contained no earmarks, no special projects.

Now, one of the reasons that I've dubbed this the new Orwellian majority and Orwellian democracy is that what we've seen is that multiple bills, Mr. Speaker, multiple bills have come to the floor of the House with special project after special project after special project, millions and sometimes billions of dollars, and yet what is included in the report language from the committee is the sentence from the chairman that no congressional earmarks are in the bill, in spite of the fact that they're in the bill. That's why I call it Orwellian democracy because it just simply takes the chairman, an individual, to say, well, there aren't any earmarks in there, and so it satisfies the rule.

Now, I went to the parliamentarian on this because I couldn't believe it. I

said, Do you mean to tell me that if the chairman of the committee just says, regardless of its truth, just says there are no earmarks in this bill that that satisfies, that means there are no earmarks, even if there are? And the parliamentarian said absolutely correct, absolutely.

And so the only option that we have is to come to the floor and say, look, what they've said just isn't the truth. Remember, it's an opinion. It's not a fact. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that time after time this new majority has brought bill after bill to the floor with earmarks and special project after special project after special project and simply gotten around the rules because they say, oh, no, there's no earmarks here.

Let me give you a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker, because I know people would be interested in looking at that. Members of the House, if they're interested, H.R. 1100 was a bill that we voted on just a couple of weeks ago. The whole legislation really was one big earmark with a \$7 million estimate cost by CBO over a number of years, and it specifically dealt with one congressional district, one specific project, and it did not have any other statutory or administrative formula-driven or competitive award process. The whole thing was an earmark, but it had in the language of the report from the committee, no earmarks here, no earmarks here. Mr. Speaker, that emperor has no clothes I promise you.

H.J. Res. 20 was the continuing resolution to make certain that there was the money in place to continue the Federal Government's responsible activities. What did that have? Multiple earmarks, multiple. Millions and millions of dollars of earmarks, and in fact, got around the rule by just saying, oh, there are no earmarks here, there are no earmarks here. Orwellian democracy, Mr. Speaker.

And then most recently, the emergency supplemental appropriations bill had billions, billions of dollars in special projects, and in fact, all that was done in order to comply with the rules of the House was to have one of the chairmen of the committee say, oh, no, there are no earmarks here.

It reminds one of the Wizard of Oz, you know, where the wizard says, oh, don't pay any attention to that man behind that curtain. Well, that's kind of what the majority party is asking; don't pay attention to these earmarks even though we say there are none.

So what's the solution now? They have taken a lot of heat, this majority party has taken a lot of heat for trying to put these special projects, pork projects into bills. And so what's their solution? Well, they have come up with a solution.

Before we talk about that solution, it's important to remember what they promised. What did this new majority promise? And what they said was, We're going to adopt rules that make the system of legislation transparent

so that we don't legislate in the dark of night and the public and other Members can see what's being done. We need to have earmarks subject to more debate. That's what debate and public awareness is all about. Democracy works if people know what's going on. That was Majority Leader HOYER last fall after the election. That's what he said about the earmark process.

And the now-Speaker said about a year ago, It's the special interest earmarks that are ones that go in there in the dark of night. They don't want anybody to see, and that nobody does see and then they're voted upon. So transparency, yes, by all means, let's subject them all to the scrutiny that they deserve and let them compete for the dollar. That's now-Speaker PELOSI. That's the statement that she made just a little over a year ago.

What's happened? What's the reality, Mr. Speaker? What's the facts, not the opinion, not the Orwellian democracy of, oh, there aren't any earmarks in that bill, don't bother looking because there aren't any earmarks in that bill? But what's the facts?

The fact is that after promising this unprecedented openness regarding Congress' pork barrel practices, what the majority party, the House Democrats, have done, they've moved in exactly the opposite direction. As they draw up spending bills, the new appropriations bills are coming on line for this new budget year, they're side-stepping the rules approved on the very first day that they took power in January where they said we need to identify earmarks. Remember those rules, Mr. Speaker, where you had to have a list of earmarks? You had to have the individual that requested them? Had to make certain that there was sunshine?

Rather than including specific pet projects or grants or contracts in the legislation as it's written, this is what's new, Mr. Speaker. Democrats are following an order by House Appropriations Committee Chairman to keep the bills free of such earmarks until it's too late in the process to challenge them. Too late in the process to challenge them. Phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal.

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor said just 2 days ago, After promising unprecedented openness regarding Congress' pork barrel practices, House Democrats are moving in the opposite direction.

From an article by Andrew Taylor, the Associated Press of January 3, Representative DAVID OBEY, who is the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, says that those requests for dams, community grants and research contracts for favored universities or hospitals will be added spending measures in the fall. That's when the House and the Senate negotiators assemble their final bill. So, as a result, most lawmakers will not get the chance to oppose or even identify specific projects as wasteful or questionable when the spending bills for various

agencies get their first vote in the full House this month.

So what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that instead of this wonderful transparency, instead of the sunshine, all the accountability that this new majority talked about, in fact what they're doing is going way back, way back to an old time long, long ago when these special projects were put in late at night with nobody watching, no ability to gain accountability for it, no ability to see what's happening, no opportunity for average Members of this House of Representatives to see and appreciate what's happening in terms of spending in the appropriations bills as they go forward.

The House-Senate compromise bills due for final action in September cannot be amended, and it's extremely pivotal because you can't say, well, this is a project that we ought to have more discussion on, more debate on. So it can't be amended and they're only subject to 1 hour of debate.

□ 2300

It's not just those of us who believe in sunshine for earmarks, something that I have fought for a number of years. It's not just those of us in the House of Representatives who are concerned. Tom Shatz, the President of Citizens Against Government Waste says, "Who appointed him judge and jury of earmarks? What that does is leave out the public's input."

The article from Mr. TAYLOR goes on to say what Mr. OBEY is doing runs counter to new rules. The Democrats promised they would make such spending decisions more open. Those rules made it clear that projects earmarked for Federal dollars and their sponsors were to be made available to public scrutiny when appropriations bills are debated. The rules also require lawmakers requesting such projects to provide a written explanation describing their request in a letter certifying that they or their spouse wouldn't make any financial gain from them.

So it's important to appreciate what is happening with this new Orwellian democracy, Orwellian majority, is that what we are seeing is them saying one thing and then doing something exactly the opposite.

Again, it's not just those of us on this side of the aisle who believe that and have documented that. This is an article from the St. Petersburg Times that explains in an editorial, "The new game that House Appropriations Chairman DAVID OBEY intends to play with budget earmarks this year is worse than the usual hide-and-seek. He's taken the whole thing underground, as though he is to be trusted as a one-man auditor for congressional pork. If this is to be the new ethic the Democrats promised, voters might want to get their ballots back."

Something that I have talked about, the American people are paying attention, they are watching, and they are disappointed with what they see. This

new majority talked about taking the Nation in a new direction. They have taken it in a new direction, and it has been exactly backwards, backwards to a time, as documented or given the opinion by the St. Petersburg Times. It's worse than what has happened in the past.

The Las Vegas Review Journal notes that it didn't take long for Democrats to break their promise on earmark reform. "When Democrats took control of Congress 4 months back, incoming House Speaker NANCY PELOSI bragged that it would take her party less than 100 hours to curb wasteful pork spending by requiring Members to attach their names to their earmarks, exposing such waste to the harsh light of public scrutiny. She failed to mention this reform would remain in effect for little more than the 100 days."

Didn't even last that long, because, as we have documented already, what has taken place is this process of bypassing or skirting the rules by saying, oh, no, there is no earmarks there, when, in fact, there is a laundry list as long as your arm in there. That's the fact. That's the fact of the matter.

So while Democrats plot to hide their wasteful spending from the American people, our side, House Republicans, will continue to work to make the earmark process much more transparent and more accountable; and we will work to root out that wasteful spending and balance the budget without raising taxes, without raising taxes, which is so remarkably important.

I mentioned that I was home last week, many of us were home in our districts last week. That's what I heard, that individuals all across my district that I talked to have been concerned about spending. Over and over and over they said, we know that you can balance that budget without increasing spending and without increasing taxes.

So when our friends on the other side of the aisle talk about getting the fiscal House in order, yet they authorize more spending and they increase in their budget taxes by over \$400 billion, the largest tax increase in the history of our Nation, my folks, the folks in my district at home say, well, that just doesn't wash. That's not the kind of leadership we want.

So that new direction, those ballots that that editorial talked about, folks getting back, may, in fact, need to occur. And it's a wonderful thing to be able to have accountability for Members of Congress every 2 years. I believe firmly that the American people are, indeed, watching; and they are already tired of what they see on the part of this new majority, especially in the area of earmark reform.

I have been joined by a very good friend from Arizona, who truly is the champion of earmark reform, a fellow who has worked tirelessly in his time in Congress to bring light and shed light on the egregious activity that occurs here in the special project. I am so pleased to have my good friend join me,

Mr. FLAKE from Arizona. I look forward to your comments.

Mr. FLAKE. I appreciate you taking the time to bring this important issue to light.

I am the first to admit that our party didn't handle this issue very well. We went over about a decade or 12 years, depending on how you count them, from about 1,400 earmarks in all appropriation bills to more than 15,000. So the process exploded with Republicans in charge. That doesn't speak well for us as a party. We should not have let that happen.

I think right here near the end we woke up, and we passed some legislation in October of last year. Unfortunately, I think it was near the end of the appropriation process, when it was really too late to do any good.

The Democrats, to their credit, when they came into power in January of this year, passed a little stronger legislation than I think we did, and I think I and many of my colleagues gave them credit for that. It was a good thing to add more transparency to the earmark process.

The problem, as the gentleman from Georgia has so aptly pointed out, is that the rules that we set are only as good as our willingness to enforce them. So you can have pretty good rules with regard to earmark reform, with regard to transparency, but unless you are willing to enforce them, they are of little worth.

As the gentleman pointed out, when you have rules that allow the chairman of the committee to simply make a declaration that there are no earmarks in this bill, when there clearly are, we have no recourse. We have to accept that statement as if it were fact, when it clearly isn't.

The gentleman mentioned the war supplemental that came up. We actually had an example where there was a press release of one Member actually claiming credit for an earmark that had been received for that Members' district, put out a press release touting it. Yet, for that same bill, there was a statement in the RECORD saying there are no earmarks in this bill.

So, the gentleman mentioned, it was like a fairy tale. I think it's a lot like Alice in Wonderland, where you say a word has whatever meaning I give to it; and, in this case, you know, an earmark is whatever I pretend to call it. Unfortunately, that doesn't lend itself to transparency.

We have the situation now, which is far worse than anything we have heard before, that we won't have any earmarks in the House bills, but, rather, we will wait until the House bill is done, the Senate bill is done. Then the earmarks will be airdropped into the conference report.

Now, if that is the case, there is no way for any Member of this body to challenge any of those earmarks that come up. There is no way you can amend, because you can't do that to a conference report. You have to ask

yourself, is that more transparency? Is that a better process?

The Chairman of the Appropriations Committee stated that more time was needed to actually scrub these earmarks, to make sure that they are proper, and that the committee was undertaking to do that.

I think, and I think those who have been watching this process will agree, that the best way to scrub the process is to let sunlight in to allow these earmarks to be made known, to allow the media, the blogging community out there, organizations that follow this and other Members of this body, to actually see these earmarks and to judge them and to determine who is it going to, who is going to benefit from this earmark?

If we are really concerned about scrubbing these earmarks, to make sure that they are proper, then let people know about them. Nobody is served well if they are kept secret.

So I commend the gentleman again for bringing this important issue to light. I would encourage him to keep up this battle and to make sure that earmarks get the sunlight that they deserve. If we want to really curb this practice that has gotten out of control, we need to ensure that we have more sunlight, not less.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much for your comments and for your good work on this matter. It's an issue that really strikes a chord, because it gets to the heart of irresponsible activity and irresponsible spending here in Washington.

So many of our friends back at home just are tired of it. They are tired of it. I think that's the message this they sent in November. I think that's the message that they sent. It wasn't some of the things that our good friends on the other side of the aisle, the message that they were sending. The message that they were sending is be responsible about your spending.

I will bet that if you had a referendum last November and you asked every single voter who went to the polls, would you think it would be a better idea to hide from the American people the special project spending that goes on in Congress to a greater degree than currently exists, yes or no, I bet you couldn't find a soul in this Nation that would support that.

Mr. FLAKE. Most certainly, I think across the country the taxpayers want to know what is going on. I think that they look at the process that we have now where Members will submit requests, earmark requests, but those requests are only made public if their earmark is actually part of a bill that comes to the House.

Now, under this new procedure that has been announced by the majority, those earmark letters, which indicate who the earmark is to go to, won't be made public at all until it's too late in the process to actually challenge that earmark.

So it means little to go through the process that we have set up if, by the

time it has any effect, it's too late in the process to change.

So the gentleman is correct, I think. Across the country, that's what I hear when I am out there. People want to know. They want open government.

When you think about it, every second that this Chamber is in session is captured on C-SPAN, this conversation and every other conversation, whenever this body is in session. When we are in committee, every word that is said is transcribed and is captured. So we have an open process.

Yet when it comes to spending money, we have a very secretive process in terms of earmarks, where, according to the majority this year, we won't know it all until it's too late to actually change it, until we have to just do one up and down, up or down vote on a bill.

There are several bills in the past, in fact, one bill, the highway bill a couple of years ago, that had 6,300 earmarks in the bill. You could conceivably have that again. At least, you know, virtually every appropriation bill is up somewhere approaching 1,000 or maybe 2,500. So, think of that, 2,500 earmarks in a single bill. The Members here won't even have the ability to challenge one of those, won't even know that they are there until you have to have to take one up or down vote on that legislation. I think every American knows that that simply is wrong.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. That really brings to light the issue of accountability, what your constituents want. I know what my constituents want me to do is to make certain that I am paying attention to all of these items and that I raise questions about items that I believe they would not support.

Sometimes just a question of clarification, I have been so pleased to be able to support you in many of your efforts to shed light on so many earmarks that have been brought to the floor, and maybe you wouldn't mind sharing with our colleagues the process that that takes and how to get just one vote on a specific earmark and how this process would foil all of that and make it so that there would be no transparency at all.

Mr. FLAKE. Over the appropriation process last summer, I believe we brought 39 earmarks in several appropriation bills to the floor; and my effort was, in many cases, simply to see whose earmark this was and to have that Member actually justify the need for that earmark.

We simply didn't know who requested it. We saw it in the committee report. When the bill came to the floor, it would generally be a vague description of an earmark to a certain entity or a company. But you wouldn't know who actually sponsored the earmark until you challenged it on the floor. Then, typically, the author of that earmark would come to defend it, but not always.

I should mention that many of the earmarks that were challenged on the

floor in the last appropriation cycle, the author of the earmark never even came to the floor to defend it. He or she simply knew that, through the process of log rolling, that other Members would know I won't challenge that earmark and the author of that earmark won't challenge mine.

So it was a very disheartening process to go through. But at least we could go through that process. At least we knew something about what was in the bill, because we had the reports come to the floor. Under the process that has been announced, we wouldn't even have that ability.

□ 2315

These bills would come to the floor, there would be no earmark, there would be no letters attached saying there are this many earmarks. There would be no lists listing the Members who had requested earmarks. Nothing. We would simply have to wait until it was too late in the process to actually challenge until the earmarks were air dropped into the conference report. So it's an important distinction.

I think the process has been far too secretive in the past. We would typically only get these lists in the committee reports hours before the bill actually came to the floor. But that's miles better than what is being discussed now because these earmarks would not be made known at all until it's too late. They would be kept secret from the body as a whole, and from the taxpayers across the country.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank you again for your comments.

And I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, for our colleagues to appreciate that this is a proposed process that is being put in place by the majority party to correct what they have perceived as a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability. But their solution will result in less accountability and less transparency. And as I mentioned before, I don't think that's what the American people want. It certainly isn't what my constituents want, and it's not what you fought for for years and years to have greater transparency and greater accountability to the whole special project earmarking process.

Does the gentleman have any more comments?

Mr. FLAKE. Well, I just again thank the gentleman. And just to reiterate again, we have had a bad process. We recognize that. That was the reason for the reforms that we did in the fall of last year. And as I mentioned, I applauded the Democrats for the reforms that they put in place in January. The problem is we're running away from those reforms rather fast. And if we are really serious about bringing in sunlight and transparency, then we have to stop this proposed new rule, or this proposed process I should say, it's not a formal rule, to make sure that these earmarks get the sunlight that they

deserve, that every member of this body and every taxpayer across the country has a chance to see what this body is doing. That's what open government is all about. And I, again, thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so very much. I appreciate you coming and joining us this evening.

So folks say well, what is it that you're asking for? Well I've talked about American values and American vision. And what we believe, what I believe Americans are asking for in this instance is open and honest leadership. It's what we oftentimes here in Washington give lip service to. But the fact of the matter is that the American people desire and I believe are demanding open and honest leadership. I believe, we believe that they have a right to transparent and fair legislative process. And the process that has been described for dealing with these earmarks, these special projects, these pork projects is neither transparent nor is it fair because it puts, it's not transparent because there's no light on it. There's no sunlight. There's no ability for, as my good friend from Arizona said, there's no ability for anybody to know who's asking for these earmarks during the process. And then there's no way for the House to work its will on an individual special project as to vote them up or down. Maybe thousands, literally thousands of them included in a particular bill. So that's not a transparent process. It's not a fair process because it concentrates power into the hands of too few individuals, the chairman of Appropriations or the sub-committee chairmen on Appropriations.

We believe that Americans have a right to sunshine on how taxpayer money is spent. That again gets to the transparency. You ought to shed light on it. How does this process work? Who's asking for the money? And so that they have to stand up and defend it in front of their constituents, in front of their colleagues and in front of the media, in front of the press.

And finally, that Americans have a right to merit based spending that's open to the public debate and open to public scrutiny.

Those are principles that I believe, we believe incorporate American values and an American vision that individuals all across this Nation have as the kind of vision for their government, how they believe their government ought to act.

Again, in November, if one had asked on everybody's ballot across this Nation, do you think that there ought to be less transparency, that there ought to be less accountability for special projects in Congress, Mr. Speaker, I'll bet you wouldn't have got 1 percent of the people across this Nation to vote in favor of that. Not one. So what we're asking for is accountability, is transparency.

I think it's also important, again, to appreciate that there are others across

this Nation who are concerned and dismayed by this process proposal that's been put forward by the new majority party. And I'd just like to highlight some of them, because I think it's important for folks to appreciate that this isn't just your usual political backbiting. This is serious business. This is how we're spending hard earned American taxpayer money. And the proposal is such that I believe, we believe, that it would be much less responsible, certainly much less transparent and much less accountable, and there are folks who believe that all across this Nation.

As I mentioned, the editorial in the St. Petersburg Times, one of the lines there said, "The result then is that the earmark projects will receive almost no public scrutiny and no Congressional debate." Significant, major paper in an editorial today.

The Review Journal in Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Review Journal said, "Democrat earmark reforms lasted 100 days. When Democrats took control of Congress just 4 months back, incoming House Speaker NANCY PELOSI of California bragged that it would take her party less than 100 hours to curb wasteful pork spending by requiring Members to attach their names to their earmarks exposing such waste to the harsh light of public scrutiny. She failed to mention that this reform would remain in effect for little more than 100 days. The anti-earmark reforms are just for show, mere window dressing." That's the Las Vegas Review and Journal from an editorial today.

There is a gentleman on CNN, Mr. Cafferty, Jack Cafferty, who has had a lot to say about Washington spending. Yesterday he said, "Remember when the Democrats took control of the Congress back in January? On their very first day in power they approved rules to clearly identify so-called pet projects or earmarks in spending bills. You know, part of their promise to bring openness and transparency to government. Well, guess what? The Associated Press reports Democrats are not including the spending requests in legislation as it's being written. Instead they're following an order from the House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey to keep the bills free of these earmarks until the fall. Now, by doing this, nobody will know what the earmarks are when the bills are first voted on in June. And when they're finally announced in the fall, well, then it will be virtually too late to do anything about them. Clever, don't you think?" That comes from CNN's Jack Cafferty, June 4, yesterday.

And so it's people all across this Nation who are concerned about the process that's been defined. The Toledo Blade, newspaper in Toledo, Ohio, in an editorial a little over a week ago, said, "Backtracking on earmarks. Here's the outrage of the week from Washington. Democrats who took control of Congress by pledging reform and whacking

Republicans over the issue of special interest earmarks already are perpetuating this odious waste of taxpayer money. Democrats promised to end such abuses. Now that they are in charge, they should live up to their rhetoric." That's an editorial in the Toledo Blade a little over a week ago.

From Montana, the Missoulian in Montana said, "Congressional pork too tasty to leave alone. Congress is ignoring election promises and feasting on pork projects. What's on the menu on Capital Hill these days? Pork of course. Not that we're surprised, but we're scratching our heads given the promises and pronouncements of the last election season. In their first half year in office, the newly powerful House Democrats have seemingly lost their reformist zeal." Editorial from the Missoulian Montana this May 31 of this year.

How about Pennsylvania? Reading, Pennsylvania, the Reading Eagle in Pennsylvania said, "Democratic vows remain unfulfilled. They can talk the talk but they seem to have difficulty walking the walk. As the approval ratings of Republicans plummeted prior to last November's general election, Democrats saw their chance to regain Congressional control. Representative NANCY PELOSI, who was soon to become Speaker of the House, said, 'We pledge to make this the most honest, ethical and open Congress in history.' That pledge," this is now from the Reading Eagle, from Reading, Pennsylvania. "That pledge was broken in March when democratic leaders pushed through a \$124 billion emergency supplemental bill to fund the military in Iraq and Afghanistan that was laden with \$21 billion in pork barrel spending known as earmarks. A House rule instituted by Democrats that prohibits swapping earmarks for votes also seems to have fallen by the wayside."

In fact, that brings up a specific point that is of grave concern to many of us. We highlighted on our side of the aisle a member of the Appropriations Committee who challenged and literally threatened a Member of the minority party, Republican Member, with saying that if he didn't support a certain bill, a certain provision, that his earmarks would be pulled from the appropriations bill. And it happened on the floor of the House. Many people witnessed it. And what did the new majority, when that was brought to light, what did they do with that complaint, with that concern, with that issue?

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, and you remember, they moved to table the motion, the resolution that would have simply required an investigation of that process. And tabling, as you know, Mr. Speaker, means that it kills the issue. It's dead. So the majority party wielded their muscle and made certain that an individual who is in the majority, who is muscling another Member of the House of Representatives and threatening to withhold certain funds from a bill because he wouldn't support

another provision, that will go uninvestigated. That will just be tossed under the rug, swept under the rug. That, Mr. Speaker, is not the kind of United States House of Representatives that Americans desire or that they deserve.

Further, a couple of others, Mr. Speaker, of objective individuals citing their concern about this new process for spending on the part of our new majority. CNN investigative reporter Drew Griffin said on May 25, "The new open Democratic Party-controlled Congress promised the earmark process would no longer be secret. All earmark requests are made public with plenty of time for debate. But DAVID OBEY, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and one of those Democrats bragging about those changes, has decided that earmarks, those generous gifts of your money, will be inserted into bills only after the bill has cleared the House floor. In other words, earmarks will still be done in secret with no public debate. There was supposed to be some kind of change. In the next few months, in what Congressman OBEY says is the most open earmark process ever, the bills will be drafted, the earmarks added. But only then, just before those bills are passed, will the public learn where the treasure is buried."

Mr. Speaker, that's not the kind of process that my constituents desire. That's not the kind of process that they voted for. It's not the kind of process that we've proposed. It's not the kind of process that is becoming of a House, especially when the majority party says that they are desirous of getting this fiscal house in order. It's more of that Orwellian democracy. Just because you say it doesn't make it so.

Associated Press on June 3 said, "After promising unprecedented openness regarding Congress's pork barrel practices House Democrats are moving in the opposite direction as they draw up spending bills for the upcoming budget's year. Democrats are sidestepping rules approved their first day in power to clearly identify earmarks, lawmakers' requests for special projects, and contracts for their states in the documents that accompany spending bills."

And finally, CNN's Drew Griffin said on May 31, "Thousands of pages of earmarks in a bill time after time, and the Democrats promised reform and it's not happening."

Mr. Speaker, what a shame. Truly what a shame. What a great opportunity we have to work together and fashion a system and a process that provides greater transparency, that provides greater openness, that answers the concerns of our constituents who say we want to make certain that there's sunshine on this process. We want to make certain that folks are held accountable. We want to make certain that our hard earned tax money that's going to Washington is

being spent in the most responsible fashion.

And so what is it that we desire? Open and honest leadership, Mr. Speaker. Americans have a right to transparent and fair legislative process. They have a right to sunshine on how taxpayer money is spent. They have a right to merit based spending that's open to public debate and to public scrutiny.

So I would ask my colleagues, I would challenge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to talk to their leadership, to implore them to urge them to move in the direction that they said they would move and that is greater transparency and greater openness and greater scrutiny of how these public monies are being spent.

□ 2330

So all is not lost. This is recoverable. I know that the chairman of the Appropriations Committee said that it would be so, but this is a 435-Member body, and it ought to act in a majority fashion, and I am hopeful that at least some members of the majority party will see that that is not the kind of leadership and not the kind of process that their constituents desire.

Mr. Speaker, before I close this evening, I do want to touch on one other item very briefly, because I know that time is getting late, and that is the whole issue of taxes and spending.

As I mentioned, I was home this past week in the district over the Memorial Day break. And person after person, constituent after constituent kept coming up to me and talking about issue after issue, and one of the major issues was spending, spending in Washington, and taxes, making certain that tax money was being spent responsibly and that taxes didn't go up, which was why it was so concerning to them that this new majority has increased the authorization for spending already, in just 5 months, by over \$50 billion; also why it was concerning to them that this new majority has passed a budget that incorporates \$400 billion in new taxes. The largest tax increase in the history of the Nation, \$400 billion. Phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal.

So when you think about how our economy has been relatively rolling along over the past number of months, over 16, 17, 18 quarters of growth in a row; more homeownership than ever before in the history of the Nation; the unemployment rate at its lowest continual rate in decades, lower than the average of the 1960s and the 1970s and the 1980s and the 1990s; remarkable success in terms of an economy that is performing extremely well, one would think that it would behoove the majority party to say, well, I wonder how that happened. I wonder how that economy got to be so strong.

There are issues and points in time that you can recognize and point to and say there were changes made then that resulted in a very strong economy, and one of them occurred in 2003.

This graph highlights it. These are tax revenues coming into the Federal Government.

And, Mr. Speaker, as you know, between 2000 and 2003, Federal tax revenue was declining. We had been hit by some significant challenges, 9/11, a recession, the tech dot com boom burst, and so tax revenue was decreasing. So what happened in 2003, whatever this was, whatever happened on this vertical line here at that point in time, it resulted in significant increases to the Federal Government tax revenue because of a significant increase in the economy, a significant increase in productivity.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, what happened at that time was that appropriate tax reductions were put in place. Fair tax cuts for the American people were put in place so that the marginal rates were decreased for everybody, so that there was a decrease in capital gains and dividends tax, a decrease over a period of time in the marriage penalty and the death penalty. All of those appropriate tax reductions were decreased.

Tax cuts result in more economic activity and more economic growth. It sounds counterintuitive, but, in fact, it happens every single time that you cut taxes. If you cut taxes, if you give the American people more of their hard-earned money, what they do is they determine when they save or they spend or they invest that money, and that results in a flourishing, increasing economic development and an increasing economic activity in our Nation, and it is undeniable what happened.

There is another graph that demonstrates it, that talks about jobs growth. Here you have a number of jobs created on the horizontal line from 2001 through 2007, and you see again, Mr. Speaker, before the appropriate tax reductions in 2003, what happened was a relative decrease in job growth, month after month after month after month. And what happened with the tax cuts on the American people, allowing people to keep more of their hard-earned tax money, what happens is an incredible increase in job growth, and that is why we have seen over 7 million new jobs created since August of 2003. Incredible economic activity.

So it astounds me that the majority party believes somehow that if they increase taxes, again by passing a budget that has the largest tax increase in the history of the Nation, nearly \$400 billion in increased taxes to Americans, almost \$2,700 for every single Georgian, a phenomenal increase in taxes, it is incomprehensible to try to understand why the majority party believes that that is the appropriate kind of policy to put in place if they want to continue this kind of activity.

If they wanted to continue this kind of activity, one would think that they would conclude appropriately, objectively, looking at the facts, that the appropriate tax reductions ought to

continue. But what they have said is, no, they ought not continue, that those marginal rates ought to go up, that we ought to increase taxes on every single American who pays taxes, that we ought to increase the marriage penalty, that we ought to do away with the decreases in death tax, that we ought to have increases in taxes on capital gains and dividends and we ought to decrease the incentive for investment. It just doesn't make sense.

I know that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are responsible. I know that they desire to do the right thing. I know that they have heard from their constituents back home, and I suspect what they have heard is please make certain that we continue an economy that allows our Nation to grow, that allows our Nation to defend itself, that allows our Nation to create jobs, that allows our communities to thrive. And one way to do that, one of the most effective ways to do that, is the way that it has happened every single time that it has been tried in our Nation's history, and that is to decrease taxes on the American people. Allow Americans to keep more of their hard-earned money. Allow them to be the ones who determine when they spend or they save or they invest their money.

So I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a good look at what has happened. Take a good look at history. Take a good look at the remarkable economic growth and development that we have had across this Nation over the past 3 to 4 years. And I think what you will conclude, Mr. Speaker, is that those tax reductions ought to remain in place.

We live in an incredible Nation, a Nation that allows those of us who represent districts all across this Nation to come to the House of Representatives and to try our best as honestly and openly as we can to represent our constituents. It is a wonderful Nation. It is a beacon of hope and liberty for folks all around the world, and it is so because we are responsible when we act responsibly and we listen to our constituents and we decide issues based upon what their desires are and what is in the best interest of them and our Nation.

So I call on my colleagues to think seriously about the issues as they relate to taxes and economic development of our Nation. And I know that they will conclude what I have concluded; and that is decreasing taxes results in increasing economic development, increasing economic activity, and, amazingly enough, increasing revenue to the Federal Treasury.

GAS PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLSWORTH). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 11 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, schools will be letting out