

and Republicans when it comes to spending and he is right. For 6 long years, President Bush and the Republican rubber-stamp Congress slashed budgets in critical areas such as health care, college aid and support for our veterans.

For years, Republicans have cut veterans health care funding and budgeted billions less than they need. Last year, Republicans failed to even pass a bill to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs. Imagine that, did not even pass a bill.

After 6 years of Republican damage, Democrats will do things differently. This week, we begin to invest in America's priorities, and we're fiscally responsible.

While President Bush and the Republican Congress ignored the needs of America's veterans, the Democratic House will bring a bill to the floor that includes the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the 77-year history of the VA.

Today, I would hope that this entire House would support our veterans by supporting this bill. It is long overdue, but the Democrats intend to deliver like our troops deserve.

WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SHOW TAXPAYERS HOW THEIR MONEY IS BEING SPENT

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the very first reform passed by the new majority in the 110th Congress was a rule to create transparency publicizing projects earmarked for Federal money. Now the majority party is suggesting to the American people that it's okay to bury these earmarks in conference bills, which we know cannot be amended or challenged in any way.

Republicans last year brought more sunshine and transparency into this process, and instead of building on that, as promised by this new majority, Congress is taking a giant step backwards.

As a member of the House Budget Committee, I'm highly concerned that waiting until the very end of the law-making process to hide pork barrel spending is the simplest way to create a slush fund in the budget. This way of spending will lose America's trust.

Mr. Speaker, Americans have trusted us to spend their taxpayer money wisely and honestly. We have a responsibility to show them exactly how their money is being spent and defend it on the House floor.

DEMOCRATS SET TO APPROVE FOUR APPROPRIATIONS BILLS THIS WEEK THAT SET RIGHT PRIORITIES

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, this week the House should approve four appropriations bills that set the right priorities for our Nation and do it in a fiscally responsible manner.

Yesterday, we debated the homeland security bill, and we'll continue today, but we should make the public aware that beyond the issues that we seem to be distracted by, the main point about the homeland security bill is that it strengthens our borders by providing funds for 3,000 additional border patrol agents. It also prioritizes the need of our first responders while doubling the amount of cargo that will be screened at our airports.

Democrats are going to bring a veterans and a military construction bill to the floor that includes the largest increase in veterans health care funding in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration.

We will also be bringing to the floor the Energy and Water and Interior appropriations bills. Now the Democrats will address the important issue of global warming in those bills. These bills also show that, as Democrats, we recognize what a serious problem that is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize, these bills were approved in committee with strong bipartisan support. They should receive that same kind of support here on the House floor.

OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE HOUSE

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as we come today, it marks the one-quarter mark into the 110th Congress under now the new leadership of the Democrat leadership.

And what has this leadership wrought for the American public? During this time, firstly, the largest tax increase on the American family in U.S. history; secondly, a breaking of the rules, a breaking of the rules and the promises of transparency and openness that they made to the American public and that the GOP, the Republicans, began to initiate in the last Congress; and finally, we learned last night from this new majority, they bring to us slush funds, slush funds under the direction of one man on the other side done at the late end of night to control billions of dollars.

The Homeland Security bill that we were debating last night and will be debating today is too important to trivialize in this manner. It is too important to the American public, and it is too important to my constituents in the 5th Congressional District of New Jersey who live in the shadows of the World Trade Center.

Mr. Speaker, this past November election, the American public has spoken. They say they want openness, they want transparency. We demand it of this House.

HOW MUCH WORSE DO THINGS HAVE TO GET AT JUSTICE BEFORE REPUBLICANS HOLD HIM ACCOUNTABLE?

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, just how bad do things have to get at the Justice Department before congressional Republicans say enough is enough?

On Monday, Senate Democrats tried to bring up a vote of no confidence in Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. While seven Republicans supported an effort to allow for an up-or-down vote, the rest of the Senate Republican Caucus blocked it procedurally.

Are my Republican colleagues serious? Do they actually believe, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that this Attorney General can continue to serve as the Nation's leading law enforcement officer?

Let's not forget that Gonzales still does not remember why he fired eight U.S. attorneys last year. Nor should we forget that Gonzales tried to pressure then-Attorney General Ashcroft into signing off on the secret telephone surveillance program while Ashcroft sat in a hospital bed preparing for surgery.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats are restoring real accountability to Washington, but it would be nice if we could get a little help from our Republican friends.

CONGRESSIONAL PRAYER CAUCUS

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the Congressional Prayer Caucus to formally acknowledge the importance of prayer in American life and history.

Today, I remind my colleagues, constituents and country of our need for prayer by reading a portion of the words offered on the floor of the United States Senate on June 13, 1947, by Peter Marshall. Mr. Marshall prayed:

"God of our fathers, in whose name this Republic was born, we pray that by Thy help we may be worthy to receive Thy blessings upon our labors.

"In this world where men have made deceit a habit, lying an art, and cruelty a science, help us to show the moral superiority of the way of life we cherish. Here may men see truth upheld, honesty loved and kindness practiced.

"We do not pray that other Nations may love us, but that they may know that we stand for what is right, unafraid, with the courage of our convictions.

"May our private lives and our public actions be consistent with our prayers.

"Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

PROSECUTOR GONE WILD

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, North Carolina District Attorney Michael Nifong finds himself the accused and not the accuser this week. It seems his overzealous desire to make headlines by appealing to political pandering and making false allegations against three innocent Duke University lacrosse players has landed him in trouble.

The State Bar Association charged Nifong with making outlandish prejudicial public comments against the players and hiding evidence, and they want him disbarred.

Independent special prosecutors have found the sexual assault charges against the players to be unfounded, but Prosecutor Nifong tried to put them in jail anyway.

The mere accusation of sexual assault, even when false, can ruin an individual.

The role of the prosecutor is to seek, not convictions.

Rouge D.A. Nifong is yet another example of a prosecutor gone wild and an abuser of power. If the allegations against him are true, he joins the wall of shame and should never be allowed near the courthouse again, except maybe as a defendant.

Because justice is the one thing we should always find.

And that's just the way it is.

SECRECY AND NEGLECT REPLACE EARMARK TRANSPARENCY

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a pledge to the American people. I pledge to fight secrecy in the Federal spending process. It seems that some Democratic lawmakers would like to keep earmarks in spending bills secret until August, months after the House votes on the bills that will contain the requests.

By air-dropping these earmarks in at the last minute, my Democratic colleagues are effectively cutting off debate on potentially wasteful or controversial items.

Instead of the transparency and accountability they promised, the Democrats' spending bills will essentially include a slush fund for billions of dollars in earmarks hidden from public scrutiny. I honestly can't believe it. These taxpayer-backed slush funds will fund earmarks without actually putting them into the bills before the House votes.

This is dangerous turf. Americans don't want more secrecy; they want less. As the Baltimore Sun wrote yesterday, the Democrats' new rules have "made the process exponentially worse."

Mr. Speaker, we must restore accountability to the process lest the path to corruption is paved smooth by secrecy and neglect.

WHILE THE SPEAKER SLEEPS

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, people around the Nation may be wondering why the Speaker slept as we debated Democrat overspending and earmarks until 2 in the morning. But the Speaker slept.

If last night were about pure partisan politics, we probably would have turned in early, but for House Republicans it was a matter of principle. That's why we stayed here and debated and fought the Democrat overspending plan and their secret earmarks and secret slush funds.

And moreover, the American people expect a couple of basic things from their government. They expect to be protected, they expect politicians to be wise with their tax dollars, and they expect government to stay out of their way. And they expect us to accomplish this in an open and fair way. But maybe that was asking too much for the new majority, Mr. Speaker.

So when people ask where were you last night, I will proudly say I was standing with my Republican brethren and the House Republicans fighting the Democrats overspending, all while the Speaker slept.

CONGRESS' APPROVAL RATING

(Mrs. DRAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, Americans are growing frustrated. A recent Los Angeles Times poll placed Congress' approval ratings at the lowest point they have been in a decade, 27 percent down from 36 percent in January. And based on the many calls that my office receives every day, that frustration is largely embodied in the immigration issue.

Specifically, for the last 2 weeks, I have received numerous calls from my constituents asking where is the border fence. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good question. Where is the border fence? Last night and early this morning, while this Chamber was debating a Homeland Security funding bill, that contains no funding specifically for fencing, hundreds of people were able to make their way across the border or were trafficked into America.

And while we would like to believe that every single person made their way in order to seek out a better life for themselves or their family, we know that is not always the case. Some, as evidenced by the plot to attack Fort Dix, are here to harm us.

I would impress upon the majority to do the right thing.

WE MUST SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENACT REAL REFORM

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, let me read you a line from today's Wall Street Journal: "The latest Los Angeles Times-Bloomberg survey finds that Congress' approval rating is down to 27 percent, with 63 percent of the public saying Democrats are practicing 'business as usual.'"

The frustration of the American people is real and growing. Every weekend I hear it in the voices of my constituents, regardless of their affiliation.

Almost all south central Michiganders have the same message: control runaway government spending, maintain the highest of ethical standards, and put an end to wasteful pork barrel spending.

The actions of Congress this week not only continue the culture of corruption currently plaguing the capital city, but also are an insult to an American public that longs for transparency and accountability.

Together, Democrats and Republicans must seize this opportunity and use it to enact real reform that values how taxpayer dollars are being spent.

I believe that by limiting the size and scope of government and making certain taxpayer dollars go to meaningful programs, Congress can restore public trust and build a better, brighter future for our country.

□ 1030

THE OBEY RULE

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, last night, we were informed over and over again by the other side of the aisle that we were supposed to follow what's become known as the Obey rule, O-b-e-y. Now, out west where I come from, that's pronounced "obey."

So I looked up in the dictionary to see what o-b-e-y means, and it's from middle English and old French, and it means to carry out or fulfill the command, order and instruction of, to carry out or comply with the command, or to behave obediently. That's the problem.

We have been told that we are supposed to obey, that is, behave obediently at the whim of the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations and their staff.

I was not elected to obey anybody here. I was elected here to represent the people of the Third Congressional District of California. That's what the debate was about last night. That's what the debate will be about today, and that's what the debate will be about for the rest of the appropriations cycle.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARDOZA). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule