

If we had taken steps to correct this deficit at the beginning of the downward turn rather than turning our backs on it and allowing more red ink with China, our country would be stronger today. It would not have the kind of annual budget deficits that we're having. And we would be more economically secure here at home and, frankly, politically secure in the world. Instead, we continue to sacrifice our jobs to the lowest bidders in closed markets that do not follow rules of free trade. Free trade can be productive and it can be profitable, but only if it is free trade among free people.

Trading with closed economies that manipulate currency, that choose not to enforce what scant labor standards they might have, and otherwise levy very restrictive non-tariff barriers against our products harm our economy. America, wake up. We can no longer ignore the games that our competition is playing with us. We must trade for America; not for secret, non-transparent governments to prosper off our unwillingness to hold them to democratic standards or, at the very least, the rules of truly free trade among free people.

I urge my colleagues to join me in requiring the President to address this issue by cosponsoring our bill, H.R. 169. We must take action to reduce the trade deficit and restore our economic independence, competitiveness and begin creating jobs across our country again.

DEMOCRATS' BROKEN PROMISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I would like to say to my colleagues who may be in their offices that were going to join me in a special order tonight that we're not going to be able to do it because of the late hour. So I'm going to take a 5-minute special order to talk about some of the issues we were going to discuss.

Today, we discussed at length the war in Iraq. And that's probably the most important issue facing America today, and I'm glad we had that very thorough debate.

But one of the things that's very, very important that we're not focusing enough attention on is transparency in government and the amount of money that we're spending and the taxes that are going to be raised.

When this new Speaker and the majority came into power, they said this was going to be the most transparent House in the history of the country, in all respects. And just 2 weeks ago, the majority wanted to start talking about a Slush fund rather than debating each one of the earmarks that should have been debated on this floor. And they were going to take that Slush fund money and go to the conference committee and behind closed doors decide

how that money was going to be spent. The American people don't want that. The American people want to hear these issues debated, the amount of money being debated for special projects, so they know where their tax dollars are going and what the purpose is.

Not all earmarks are bad. Some of them are very, very good and very necessary, but they ought to be debated one by one on this floor so the American people know where their money is going.

I would like to also say that the budget that was passed by the opposition is going to necessitate at least a \$217 billion tax increase, and in all probability it will be more like \$392 billion, which would be the largest tax increase in the history of this country. And that, at a time when we need to address some of the more pressing issues, like how we deal with the Social Security trust fund.

The Social Security trust fund will go into deficit in 10 years. And at that point, we're going to see the American people starting to look at Social Security as a program that's going to be in the past, no longer something that we can rely on in the future.

The young people in this country are going to have a terrible time planning for their retirement because there won't be any money in the Social Security trust fund in the future for these young people unless we start addressing the problem right now, and we're not doing it.

As I said, the projected tax collections for Social Security and the spending for Social Security are going to be exceeded in 10 years. And after that, adjusting for inflation, the annual deficits for Social Security will reach \$68 billion in the year 2020, \$267 billion in 2030, and \$331 billion in 2035. Many of us won't be around to see that, but our kids and our grandkids will, and they will be saying, why didn't we address the issue of the deficits and Social Security when we had a chance?

We can do that still today, but we're not focusing attention on that. And the people who are relying on Social Security and the Social Security trust fund ought to know that we're not addressing the problem. And the solvency of that fund, not for us, but for the future generations, is not going to be there, which means that we will have to either raise taxes or cut benefits. This is going to happen unless we address that issue.

So I would just like to say to my colleagues tonight, we are concentrating on the major issues, the war in Iraq, and a lot of other issues that are very important, but we must not neglect the budget. We must not neglect transparency and bringing these issues to the floor for debate, and we must not neglect addressing the issue of Social Security reform, because if we don't do it, our kids and our grandkids aren't going to have a retirement program to rely on.

SPENDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order for the government to be held accountable to the taxpayers that fund it, the American people deserve truth in budgeting and have a right to know how federal dollars are spent.

Two weeks ago, House conservatives—on behalf of taxpayers—led the charge to demand transparency in the Federal spending process.

In stark contrast to the views they espoused during the 2006 campaign cycle Appropriations Committee Chairman OBEY and the Democrat leadership proposed to leave lump sums of money without a specified purpose in the appropriations bills considered by the House, and later authorizing those funds for earmarks in closed door Conference Committee. In other words, the very people who promised America: "We will bring transparency and openness to the budget process and to the use of earmarks, and we will give the American people the leadership they deserve." (PELOSI Press Release 12/11/2006)

Instead they proposed to create a secret slush fund for earmarks—to be funded by the largest tax increase in American history. Make no mistake about it; the budget passed by House Democrats includes what will likely become the largest tax increase in history. Though they try to claim otherwise, the truth is in black and white in the language of their own bill; and the truth is that it will raise taxes by at least \$217 billion and in all likelihood \$392 billion.

Conservatives were successful in stopping the slush fund and bringing transparency to earmarks; bringing them into the light of day where they can be debated and voted on by Members of this House.

Not all earmarks are bad things, but not all earmarks are a Federal priority. But we should respect the American people enough to stand up and debate this issue. The simple argument that, "it's a good project" should never be enough to justify spending taxpayer dollars on it in lieu of a more pressing national priority, or returning the money to American families.

Achieving transparency is only half the battle, as conservatives we now need to push accountability; because without enforcing accountability, transparency doesn't mean much. Accountability in Federal spending can be achieved through an open and honest debate about America's priorities.

Tonight, I want to talk about a priority—a crisis that my Democrat colleagues are ignoring in their rush to raise your taxes and spend more money on entitlement programs; namely the impending bankruptcy of Social Security.

SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS SPENDING

A safe, secure, and stable retirement is part of the American dream. Yet time and again, Washington has proven itself incapable of managing Americans' hard earned Social Security dollars. There is no longer a debate about whether Social Security faces a problem or whether it needs to be fixed.

There is something fundamentally wrong when more young Americans believe in the existence of UFOs than believe that their Social Security benefits will be there for them when they retire. Why do young Americans feel this way? Because they can see the obvious—that Washington has been spending taxpayer dollars that have already been promised to help make their retirement more sustainable.

Taxpayers have the right to receive back each and every dollar—and more—that they entrust to the government for their retirement. Social Security money collected from Americans for Social Security should not be used for anything other than Social Security. Ensuring a stable retirement is not a Republican or Democrat obligation, it is an American obligation.

Despite passing the largest tax increase in American history, the Democrat majority failed to stop raiding the Social Security surplus. In fact, they fail to address entitlements at all. In contrast budget offered by Congressman PAUL RYAN protected the surplus.

Since 1984, the Federal Government has collected more money in Social Security taxes than it pays out in benefits. Instead of using this money to shore up the program's solvency, the government squandered these tax payer dollars on other programs, and earmarks.

Each year that Congress fails to protect the Social Security cash flow surplus, and squanders its money on other programs, it jeopardizes the stability of this vital government program and hastens its date of insolvency.

By controlling and prioritizing government spending, the FY 2008 Republican budget creates surplus of \$99 billion in 2012, stopping the raid on Social Security in 2012—and did it without raising taxes. This gives the taxpayers the accountability that they deserve.

Social Security owes \$6.8 trillion more in benefits than it will receive in taxes. That number includes \$2.0 trillion, in net present value terms, to repay the bonds in Social Security's trust fund.

Today's Social Security is not sustainable and will implode. Social Security spending will exceed projected tax collections in 2017. These deficits will quickly balloon to alarming proportions. After adjusting for inflation, annual deficits will reach \$67.8 billion in 2020, \$266.5 billion in 2030, and \$330.9 billion in 2035.

The year when Social Security begins to spend more than it takes in, 2017, is extremely important. From that point on, Social Security will require large and growing amounts of general revenue money in order to pay all of its promised benefits. Even though this money will technically come from cashing in the special issue bonds in the trust fund, the money to repay them will come from other tax collections or borrowing. The billions that go to Social Security each year will make it harder to find money for other government programs or require large and growing tax increases.

A second important year is 2009. Starting in just 2 years, the annual Social Security surpluses that Congress has been borrowing and spending on other programs will begin to shrink. From that point on, Congress will have to find other sources to replace the money that it borrows from Social Security or shrink spending. By 2017, Congress will have about \$100 billion less to spend annually.

Compared to these two dates, 2041—the year that the Social Security trust fund runs out of its special issue bonds—has little importance. Even though the end of those bonds will require a 25 percent benefit reduction, Congress would have been paying over \$300 billion a year, in 2007 dollars, to repay those bonds for about 7 years by the time the trust fund runs out. Congress will have to do this through some combination of other spending

cuts, new taxes, or additional borrowing. These are the same choices Congress would face without the trust fund.

Bad news for younger workers. Unfortunately, younger workers have a great deal to worry about. Even though their parents' and grandparents' benefits are safe, theirs are not. Any worker born after 1974 will reach full retirement age after the trust fund is exhausted. Unless Congress acts, younger workers can look forward to paying full Social Security taxes throughout their careers but only receiving 75 percent or less of the benefits that have been promised to them. In addition, they will have to repay the Social Security trust fund, an expense that will total almost \$6 trillion by the time the trust fund is exhausted in 2041.

Democrat's delay is deadly for Social Security. Each year, there is one less year of surplus and one more year of deficit. Once those deficits begin in 2017, the Trustees Report shows that they will never end. Each year, with the disappearance of another year of surplus, reforming Social Security gets more expensive.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCAUL of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING RISING CITY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, on the Fourth of July, during a celebration to mark the opening of a new volunteer fire station in Rising City, Nebraska, I was introduced to two extraordinary volunteer firefighters, Mr. Rich Topil and Mr. Don Fish.

Rising City, like so many rural communities in Nebraska, relies on the good efforts of volunteer firefighters to meet their needs for fire protection as well as life-saving services. These volunteers act out of a sense of dedication and duty to the communities that they serve.

On Independence Day, the citizens of Rising City recognized Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish for having served as volunteer firefighters for an unbelievable total of 117 combined years. It was only fitting

that these two men were honored by the people to whom they have given so much.

Mr. Speaker, Independence Day is when we traditionally celebrate the best of America; family, community and country. And Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish and the citizens of Rising City, Nebraska, remind us all that these values remain very strong and very vibrant.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NEW ORLEANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, since Hurricane Katrina, the great New Orleans area has been in disarray. While there have been innumerable promises to ensure the region's recovery, a comprehensive response here in Washington to the tragedy back home has not been forthcoming. The citizens of my great city are appreciative of the efforts that have been made. However, much more needs to be done at a vastly more urgent pace.

It has now been 23 months since Hurricane Katrina hit and the faulty levees built by the Army Corps of Engineers collapsed and flooded our homes and businesses. The levees have still not been built back to acceptable standards.

It has been 23 months since nearly half of our residents have had no place in which to return. It has been 23 months, and investors cannot properly use tax credits to bring back rental properties.

It has been 23 months, and most small businesses are still at a standstill, still not back in place.

It has been 23 months, and less than half of our doctors, health care providers and hospitals are back home. Katrina evacuees and survivors have been studied, reported upon and promised to. They now want and deserve real solutions. One way where we could make a significant impact on the growth, repair and the redevelopment of our region is through some tax reforms in areas related to our recovery.

Even before Katrina, the greater New Orleans area was considered one of a high health care service shortage.