

more importantly, say a prayer for our country, which all of us love; a prayer for understanding and the compassion of which I spoke."

□ 1400

After he spoke those words, rioting would break out in more than 100 cities across the United States. But Indianapolis was peaceful. Robert Kennedy would go on to a tragic end of his own.

But I rise today as an American shaped by the courage in the life of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and I will remember tomorrow with gratitude his example. I will also say very humbly that the words of Robert Kennedy are as true today as ever, and that Muncie, Indiana, and the State of Indiana, will always be proud of the small role we played as a backdrop to those historic and tragic events.

May the words of Robert Kennedy, may the example of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., continue to inspire our Nation to aspire to a more perfect union.

UNITY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YARMUTH). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I discuss the topic upon which I arise to speak, I do want to join my colleagues in celebrating the reauthorization of the United States Fire Administration Act. As a member of the Homeland Security Committee since its origin after 2001, I am a direct witness of the work of our first responders around the Nation. It is important that we recognize the elements of this bill and the funding that is necessary to ensure a system of first responders that works.

Yesterday, I met with the chiefs of the fire departments of departments in my State of Texas. I salute them. Through their efforts, we were able to pass this bill. I congratulate the sponsor, and I believe that the National Fire Incident Reporting System improvements that will come about are important; the fire technology assistance and dissemination will be important that is reauthorized; the encouraging of the adoption of standards for firefighter health and safety, one of the ills that we are still dealing with after 9/11, people who have gotten sick after 9/11 and still not addressed; and the coordination on fire service-based emergency medical services is important; and as well, the funding that will come about, upwards of \$100 million.

Certainly, I encourage them to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the work that we can do together. Congratulations on the reauthorization of this bill. I stand as a strong supporter.

I rise today, as my colleagues have done, to acknowledge the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.

That will be tomorrow. I head to Memphis to commemorate that. I just got through speaking to a number of constituents from Texas Southern University and from Prairie View A&M. I asked them about presidential politics. They were thoughtful and discussed with me the balance that they saw in the candidates that happened to be running in the Democratic primary.

What I have seen as we watched this debate is really a call on the sensitivities of America, race and gender, and we have seen the tensions and the divisiveness; rather than focus on the message and mission of an American hero like Dr. King, who talked about unity and talked about, as was said by his son today, the horrible evil of racism and poverty and militarism. But even in that voice, he spoke of unity.

Today, I rise to call upon the candidates themselves, that whoever will run to the mike first and call upon unity in America may find a surprising response from all the voters, wherever they might be. For Americans are good people. They extend themselves to the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq so that others might have freedom and democracy.

I might imagine that our soldiers would look back on this divisiveness and the name calling and someone castigating one person because they are for one candidate over another, and ask whether or not we truly understand freedom and democracy. It is choice, it is the ability to make your choice. Yet, it is the ability to come together and unify around the goodness of America.

I was glad to hear Majority Whip CLYBURN say today that, "time is neutral." As Martin Luther King said, "It is neutral because it says nothing. It is what you do with it." What he reminded us is that people of ill will seem to use time more effectively than people of good will.

I truly believe that we have outstanding Americans running for this office. I will be pushing for the one that happens to be in my party, strongly and enthusiastically. But what I will come to this floor and this Congress for is to join me in putting together a reconciliation commission in America. Not just because of the candidacy and the campaigns that we have seen, but because Americans are still sensitive about race and about gender, two groups of people that have been disenfranchised in our history. Yet, we are blessed to be in America, recognizing that many of us have made strides. I am proud to stand here as an African American woman. Some might say I have double issues. But I have double benefits, double celebration.

Yet, there are those who I believe would benefit from having this broad discussion, this reconciliation in America about women who were disenfranchised until 1920, woman who suffer from the lack of pay equity, and those who live under a minority umbrella, who themselves still remain discriminated against in schools and jobs and in corporate America.

Mr. Speaker, we can benefit from this wonderful debate and discourse between someone who's an African American male with the potential of being the President of the United States and a woman who has the potential of being President of the United States. Why don't we celebrate in that difference and diversity? Why don't we call for unity, because America is greater than our individual differences. As Martin Luther King said, "It can be the promised land. Why don't we attempt to go there together."

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

(Mr. DREIER 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 Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas 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 California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

BE A PART OF THE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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. Thank you so very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honor to come before the House once again. I can share with you, as Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE just finished speaking about, the wonderful ceremony that we had today, but sad ceremony, reflecting on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King some 40 years later. To see Democrats and Republicans standing side by side, to have reflection from those that worked beside Dr. King, like our very own JOHN LEWIS and Majority Whip CLYBURN, who talked about his experience and first meeting that he met with him in 1960 in Morehouse University, to Majority Leader REID reflecting on, the Senate reflecting on how he worked here in the Capitol at that time as a part of the crowd outside; and others that shared stories of their time when Dr. King walked the Earth; his son, Martin Luther King, III, who reflected on his father's death and his memory and charged the House and the Senate to carry out efforts against poverty, also to deal with the issue of war and conflict, and also looking at the very issue of making sure that we

stand up for the least of these, as many of us are very, very familiar with. Mr. Speaker, I also believe that it's important in that light to have Americans, and as leaders of this great country of ours, have Americans remember the past, but look forward in a forward leaning way to the future.

I had the opportunity to talk to the National Association of Black Realtors or African American Realtors over at Union Station just about 30 minutes ago. It reminded me of a story, and I shared it with them, of when my mother served here in the House of Representatives and I had the opportunity as a State legislator to come up to see her sworn in once again. While I was up here, I had a chance to run into one of my good friends, Reverend Jesse Jackson.

He spoke to a group of folks that were here that day when his son was sworn into Congress for the first time. He said that he could not help but to get emotional. He got emotional when he was sharing with us how that experience was a moving experience for him because he reflected on the story of his father, who fought in World War II, and after World War II was over, came back to the United States. But he was taking the train going south and riding behind the prisoner of wars when they went through Union Station. And his father couldn't help reflect that he saw the United States Capitol, but even though he fought on behalf of his country, felt that he did not move forward because he was behind prisoners of war in his own country. And that God would have him live long enough for his grandson to become a Member of Congress is an example of how this country can correct itself over time. We still have a long way to go and a short time to get there. I shared that with them because many of us are professionals and have an opportunity to take part in this democracy and be a part of the change in America.

I can say that tomorrow will be a day for the country to pause and to recognize the contributions of one of the greatest Americans that ever walked the Earth, and that's Dr. King. I look forward to participating in that reflection like I did today.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share just a few thoughts with the House, as we have now broken for the week and will be back next week and the business of the people of the United States of America will continue. The New Direction Democratic Congress are about working with some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle about solutions, Mr. Speaker, and not just conversation.

I think it's important for us to look at what has taken place under the Capitol Dome. I was on the floor yesterday evening and I spoke to the Members on how we are going to have to work together to be able to help everyday Americans work through their real life issues that they are facing now. Long ago, we knew of not only predatory

lending practices, but we also knew of the fact that there are a number of Americans that are going to hit hard times, and many pieces of legislation passed off of this floor riding on the backs of everyday Americans, individuals that punch in and punch out every day, those that try to carry out the American dream by purchasing a home and getting their piece of the American pie.

For many Americans, that is the only savings they have. A home is a way to be able to allow their blood line, wherever they may be in rural America, urban America, wherever their background may be, if they are a citizen or resident of this country, to be able to educate their children, to be able to borrow money to be able to educate their children, or to be able to allow their children to have something that they can call a piece of the rock or a piece of the American pie.

I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that a number of those families, and I mean they are in the millions, are in jeopardy right now of losing the very thing that they can hold on to. They may not own their car, they may not necessarily have a lot of money. But what they do have are homes. Many of these individuals are up in age. They have fewer tomorrows than they have yesterdays. They are finding themselves in a situation of not having the financial means to be able to protect their home.

□ 1415

One of the cornerstones of public service is to make sure that we come up and we protect those individuals and that we make sure those Americans are not left behind. I do know that this Congress in the past, not this Democratic Congress, but Congresses before, have attempted to stimulate the economy through tax breaks for the very super-wealthy and the super-rich, saying it will trickle down to the everyday American. That hasn't happened. This is a perfect example that it hasn't happened.

This week the Senate worked very hard, Leader REID and others, with Senate bill 2636, the Keep Families From Facing Foreclosures in Their Homes. This "new direction" Congress came here saying that we are here to represent the American people; not just Democrats, not just independents, not just Republicans, but the American people, and we have done that. We have been able to enact measures into law expanding affordable mortgage loan opportunities through the Federal Housing Administration for families that are in danger of losing their home by increasing the FHA loan limits up to \$729,750 within the economic stimulus bill which passed recently.

Also we have passed a measure to prevent homeowners from facing a tax bill at the same time they are losing their homes through H.R. 3638, the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Act. We also expanded Federal counseling for

families in danger of losing their homes through foreclosure through the FY 2008 omnibus appropriations bill.

I think it is important for us to talk about what we have done in this Congress versus what we haven't done. But I can tell you that since I started out with what has already happened, and more has to happen, because we still have individuals that are out there that are hurting. It is not enough in my district, the 17th Congressional District, that we are going to have a foreclosure prevention workshop, where we are going to have lenders and counselors there to be able to talk to them. My constituents need more than that. The American people need more than that. By the fact they voted for me on a given Tuesday, early one Tuesday, by federalizing me, allowing me to come to Congress and other Members of Congress to come here, we are here to represent their best interests. So we have to continue to move forward.

These are measures that have passed the House but have not become law. Strengthening consumer protection against risky housing loans in the future; H.R. 3915, the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act; expanding affordable housing mortgage opportunities for families in danger of losing their homes through the Federal Housing Administration reform, which is H.R. 1852. This bill passed both House and Senate and is supported by the White House, I must add, but has been held up by one Senator due to his opposition to the temporary FHA loan limit increase.

I think it is important that everyone understands that this has to be a group effort. Back home in my district, folks don't understand one individual having a problem with it, but that is going back to the rules in one of our chambers here in Congress. Also it strengthens regulations of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, and raised the loan limits and increased the amount of the loan through H.R. 1427. It goes on and on and on of efforts that we have tried to pass here in the Congress and become law, but for some reason, have not.

So next week the House, under Chairman FRANK's leadership and the Financial Services Committee, will work very hard to address these issues through legislation. The act we are bringing forth will be comprehensive legislation to address the housing crisis that we face here in America, and the legislation will help stabilize the housing market, which is the first step to rebounding our economy. The measure will do many of the things that I just talked about that are held up either in the legislative process or procedural maneuvers that have taken place or objections by the White House.

It would also prevent the value, as it relates to homes, the value of homes going down. It will work towards that. Chairman FRANK's legislation will loan \$10 billion to States and localities to purchase and rehab foreclosed properties.

This is very, very important, Mr. Speaker and Members. As we talk about 1 million Americans losing their homes in the last year, with a prediction that 2 million will lose their homes this year, imagine how back home America is going to look, need it be small or large. Homes that are vacant, Americans not able to receive loans to be able to buy those homes. In rural America, homes vacant without having individuals able to move into those homes. You know they will fall into disrepair. This \$10 billion will stimulate the economy, and that will increase American jobs. They are not jobs overseas, but are jobs right here.

I think it is very important that we pay very close attention to this. I want to commend the Democratic leadership for continuing to push this measure forward in light of so many accomplishments that have taken place since the Democratic Congress has been put into place.

I want to mention just a few of them so that my time on the floor today just won't be about describing what our problem is in America, but to talk about how we are making real change here in Washington, DC. I have been here 6 years. I have seen more happen in the last year than I saw in the 4 years prior to this time, the 4 years prior to this Congress.

There was the minimum wage increase that was signed into law that passed in 2007. There was stem cell research enhancement, which was sent to the President's desk in June of 2007. Also we implemented all of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, which were recommendations that came out of a bipartisan commission. They were all implemented by this House and by the Senate and sent to the President and he signed it. Also repealing subsidies to big oil and reinvesting in renewable energy.

I want to stop right there. That is a major accomplishment. Just yesterday I noticed that a number of the independent truck drivers went on strike. They went on strike because of the high cost of diesel fuel. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if we were doing the kind of things that this Congress has done 4 years ago, this country would not be as dependent on Middle Eastern oil as we are now. The President's response to what needed to happen 2 years ago or 3 years ago was "America is addicted to oil."

Well, to talk about something and blame the American people saying we are addicted to oil is not an answer and not a solution. I can tell you, this legislation that passed this house by 264-163 is the kind of Congress that the American people voted for to be able to lead this country in a new direction and to move this country in a new direction, or, as a matter of fact, let me put this way, move this Congress in a new direction, which has happened and will continue to happen.

We also are making college more affordable. I think that is very, very im-

portant. It was one of the first pieces of legislation that we passed in this new Congress, to cut student loan rates in half.

I think it is very, very important that we look at these measures as accomplishments and not as wedges that will cut Democrats from Republicans, because the American people ultimately are counting on us to move in the right direction.

Since we know what is going to happen next week, and it will be one of the major actions that will take place, when Chairman FRANK will have a chance to start considering the markup for his piece of legislation out of this committee, we also have to reflect on the reports that we will be receiving on the status of what is happening in Iraq.

As many of the Members know, recently we had an uptick in violence. That should not be shocking, because one of the leaders of one of the insurgent groups over in Iraq said they were going to take 6 months off to regroup.

The American people have put a lot of money, or this Congress has put a lot of money on the ground in Iraq, and I am talking about outside of the money that we have supplied to protect our troops and the men and women that are over there that are civilians, but I am saying cash money on the streets in Iraq.

Now, here is where the rub comes in and here is where the leadership has to begin. We have to start not only having the discussion, we have to take action and make sure that we bring our men and women home and that we bring them home faster than what the President is looking to bring them home, the timeline he is looking to bring them home. As a matter of fact, he is not looking to bring them home any time soon. There are members of the Senate that are talking about 100 years or what have you.

But I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker and Members, when we broke for Easter to go and spend 2 days at Camp Pendleton, which is one of the largest Marine bases we have in the country, over on the West Coast in California. I stayed on base purposely so that we would have an opportunity to interface with those that are in uniform and their families.

Of course, the word gets around that there is a Member of Congress on base. That is not an everyday event, because there are only 500 and some Members of Congress. I think that it is important that we have a chance to interface, because I think that this Congress needs to understand and the Bush White House needs to understand that this is not just about buying smart bombs. It is not just about buying MWRAP vehicles. It is not just about making sure that they have the ammunition that they need and the kevlar that they need to protect themselves. All of those things that I mentioned are very worthy, and they are the reason why we have the number one military on the face of the Earth.

But I think there is also a human side to this and that we should be just as excited about trying to assist those individuals, and that is on the family side and the human side of what is happening to our men and women in Iraq.

When I first got on the base, Mr. Speaker, I noticed a billboard that was an electronic billboard that had on there, if you are in need of counseling or if you are in need of group therapy, please call this number. I was pleased to see that, because so many times we feel that the only injury that could possibly happen when we see one of our patriots come back is one of losing an arm or a leg, or those that have Purple Heart tags that are traveling throughout America.

But many of those injuries from this conflict are between the ears of the stress and also some of the concussion bombs that are going on over in Iraq. And these Americans have fought more than any other American soldier, marine, sailor, airman, Coast Guard, than any other time in the history of the republic; longer than World War II, longer than world World War I, longer than Vietnam, longer than Korea and the other conflicts, and on and on. These Americans are special because they are unique, and we have to make sure that we do what we have to do.

Now, let me just say this: The Democratic Congress has made sure that the VA received the most money that it has ever received in the history of the Republic, in the history of the VA, making sure that our men and women get what they need when they come back. And as they continue to come back, that is there for them. We have to make sure that we take action as we look at this budget and as we have the debate about this war in Iraq, that we bring our men and women home more sooner than later.

Now, I have heard some Members on the floor talk about things that Iraqi children and women and men and boys and what have you, that they don't have the opportunity to do or they didn't have the opportunity to do until we got there.

□ 1430

Let me just share something with you. It is good to have goodwill and all of those things throughout the world, but right here in America, Mr. Speaker, and as a Member of Congress I think it is important that we also understand, that there are Americans right now, women, children, boys, men, girls, our seniors that don't have; because \$70 billion, \$100 billion, \$200 billion are on the ground in Iraq and on and on and on, and we are sitting here thinking, we have Members running around here talking about we need earmark reform. Well, guess what. Reform has happened. There are fewer earmarks than there were in the previous Republican Congress and the Congress before that. And, that we have disclosure. Americans can go on Members'

Web sites and can go and can see exactly what the request that they are making.

You want to talk about reform. More has happened in the last 14 months in the Democratic new direction Congress than at any other time since I have been in Congress. So when we look at these issues and they stand here and talk about a \$250 project, as Mr. RYAN talked about yesterday, an EPA mandated project on the local government, complaining about that; meanwhile, looking and not even paying attention to the mountain of debt that we have in this country that was built up by the Bush administration and his friends here in Congress on the Republican side, but not even looking at the \$70 billion that individuals voted for to continue this effort in Iraq saying that we have to help the poor people of Iraq.

Now, let me tell you something. I may feel a little warm and fuzzy about the \$70 billion, saying maybe that is right, if the Iraqi government was working under the same light that we are working under here. I think it is important that we reflect on what is happening right here in America, what is happening two blocks away from this Capitol; that we have individuals that are in poverty, we have individuals that don't have health care. Not individuals, but Americans that don't have health care. We have veterans that are sitting right out as I speak now in front of the Lincoln memorial at the last outpost that are in need.

I was out there, and sometimes, Mr. Speaker and Members, I take my children and we ride our bikes down the mall here, and we pass by the Washington monument, and then we move on and we go by the World War II memorial, and then we go by, we go down to the reflection pool and go down to the Lincoln memorial. And every time we are there, we stop to talk to those veterans. And there is one, they are there, veterans from Korea and veterans from Vietnam, and sometimes every now and then you will get a Gulf War I veteran that is out there. And I start talking to them about health care and many of them don't even know I am a Member of Congress or what have you. What is happening at the VA? What is happening with you in your everyday life? And you would be shocked how many times I have been there, in that very short time talking to them taking a break, and they pull pills out of their pocket into their hands because it is time for them to take one of the cocktails they have to take to be able to deal with those demons they have been having to deal with all of those years.

Now, I am going to say, those individuals allow us to salute one flag, those individuals allow me to sit here as an American congressman and speak my mind in this democracy, and I salute them. Beyond mentioning their commitment to this country and the fact that their comrades, some of them did not make it back, which are also

there in the various memorials that are on the mall.

I say all of this because Members are taking this time lightly. And I have shared many times that I have come to the floor, as I move towards a close here, Mr. Speaker and Members, that this time in our country is like no other time in the history of the Republic. We owe foreign countries more money than we have ever owed them in the history of the Republic, some of the countries that we have concerns about, security concerns about. They have a part of the piece of the American pile because we have had an administration and a White House that has said we have got to give these tax cuts, even we can't even afford them, to individuals that are not even asking for them. And that strategy failed, because now we are in an economic downturn. And it ain't just about housing. It is the fact that jobs have not been created here. Jobs have been shipped overseas. And that seems to be the kind of global piece of saying, oh, we need to do that, because there is this importance that we have a strong global economy. I agree with that. But, at the same time, we have to have a strong America.

So as we look at what our veterans are going through and the more and more veterans that are going to be passed on because of some of the bad decisions that have been made in the past doesn't mean that we have to continue to make those bad decisions. It means that we should learn from those bad decisions, and then have the kind of paradigm shift that Democrats, Republicans, and Independents are looking for.

So, I feel that as we continue to look at our time here in Congress, as we continue to look at our responsibility, we have to take every living moment to make sure that we bring about that change.

When I first got here, we used to talk about not leaving the responsibility on our children and grandchildren. Now, we can say not leaving the responsibility on ourselves. There was a time we thought that the debt, folks would, our children will have to bear the responsibility of our bad decisions or inaction or lack of action. And now, it is about those of us today bearing the brunt of the bad decisions that were made in the past and decisions that are being made today by some Members of Congress. Luckily, we have this new direction Congress that are here to stand up on behalf of the American people and not the special interests.

So I say that, Mr. Speaker. In the light of saying that, I hope, and I want to commend some of my friends on the Republican side that have saw the light, that have gone to the wizard, that have asked for courage and they have stepped out and they voted with Members on the majority side to bring about the kind of paradigm shift. But there are some that are here that are not willing to do that. And that is fine.

Because, as far as I am concerned, the American people spoke in the last election, and that is the reason why I can say I am a member of the majority now.

And, guess what. Some of them were Republicans that were very frustrated with the fact that fiscal responsibility was not carried out, that decisions that should have been made as relates to the war in Iraq were not made, that the economy was going south, that they didn't have what they used to have in their bank accounts and investment in their family and their bloodline and no longer had it, so they had to bring about the kind of change. The American spirit will rise beyond partisan politics every time when this country is in jeopardy.

So when we come around to the next election, Mr. Speaker and Members, I want you to reflect on that individual that is going to go on a given Tuesday to vote for the kind of representation that he or she expects to have. And if they don't see when they look at the report card, because we have four 24-hour channels that are dedicated to news or close to the news, we have public television that is dedicated, gavel-to-gavel coverage of county commission and city commission and State legislators and also here in Congress, dedicated for the American people to take an opportunity to take a look at it. We have our cyber space that is available.

We used to have, Mr. Speaker, a digital divide in this country, so that when I was in the State legislature, it was thought, where would the DSL lines go? Where will the phone company allow those lines to be put on by the cable company? And now we have moved to the technology of Blackberries and I-phones and all of these things where individuals get news like that.

When the report card is mailed to the home or when they look at those, they go on-line or they look at television, they listen to the radio or they read the paper to find out, where were you standing on these very issues that are before Congress that are dealing with them, the foreclosure of their home, the economy, health care for children as we look at the SCHIP legislation which we call CHAMP here that provides for children with health care; as we look at what happened with oil subsidies, of bringing about alternative fuel to allow us to be able to invest in the Midwest versus the Middle East. When we start looking at biofuel that is, for instance, in my State, sugarcane that has already been extracted of its sugar, but the leftovers of that turn into fuel to run those sugar mills and to be able to go into tanks of Americans that are trying to make a living. We start looking at that. We start looking at why we are paying per gallon for fuel as we pay for a gallon of milk.

When we start looking at those issues, I think they are going to look

at and they are going to say, listen, I am an Independent, I am going to have to vote for the folks that are about the solution; I am a Republican, I am going to have to vote for the folks that are about the solution. In my house, I am a Democrat, I am going to have to vote for the folks that are willing to move this country in a new direction. And the evidence has spoken over the last 14 to 15 months that the new direction Congress has moved in that direction; and, that through the fact that we have been empowered by the American people to lead this country in a new direction, the President on bills that he said he would not sign had to sign because we kept that pressure on.

So I say all of this, Mr. Speaker, in closing that what we are facing right now are real issues. Our responsibility is great. Historians will write about this time in Congress. And I share with the Members, as a matter of fact I beg the Members to be on the right side of history and making the right decisions right now.

I will close with the information that I received as of April 3 as it reflects in Iraq: 4,011 Americans that have died in the line of duty; total number wounded in action and returned to duty 16,364; total number of wounded in action and have not returned to duty is 13,264.

As we break for the next couple of days and over the weekend, come back hopefully with the heart and the mind to be about the solution.

I yield back the balance of my time.

HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, it has been a long week. We have had a pretty tough legislative day today. It is springtime in Washington. Springtime brings lots of different groups to town; we saw farmers this week, we saw the firefighters, first responders this week, FEMA personnel this week. We also saw some of my friends at the American Medical Association this week, many of my friends from the Texas Medical Association. They came to Capitol Hill to discuss things that are important to them in health care. And, as I frequently do at the end of the day, I thought I would come down here and talk a little bit about health care. I like to call these little visits house calls.

Now, prior to coming to Congress I was a practicing physician. I am still licensed; I am not insured. But in honor of my fellow physicians who are here in town this week, I brought a picture of a famous doctor. No, he is not a medical doctor; he is a physicist. This is Dr. Albert Einstein. But I thought we would have Dr. Einstein accompany me on this house call this afternoon. It is going to be a little talk

about the role of healers, the role of physicians, the roles that perhaps they should play in health care reform in America.

Now, Dr. Einstein did a lot of famous things. He did some things that were infamous as well. He is well known for a number of quotes, and one of my favorite quotes from Dr. Albert Einstein is, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result this time." Of course, Dr. Einstein was right. And I wanted him to be with us today because that quote is a terrific theme for a little talk about how doctors and policymakers can together work on the things that should dictate health care reform in this country. So if you would, let's have a candid conversation about health care, health care at the Federal level, health care at the provider level.

Now, this is an election year in this country, a Presidential election year. It happens every 4 years. There is a lot of big discussions, there is a lot of big debates, and health care will be one of those big debates. There is a broad national recognition that reform is needed in health care. There is not a lot of consensus on how to achieve that.

Now, every one of the Presidential candidates, those who are still active in the race, those who were active in the race and have since dropped out, everyone has or had their own ideas. It won't surprise anyone here to know that Members of Congress also have their own ideas.

□ 1445

Policymakers are focused on change. That is good. That is appropriate. And as we learned this week from visits from doctors of the American Medical Association, physicians are focused on change as well. And they must be because, after all, in this country health care begins and ends with doctors.

Without our doctors, there is no health care. That means our doctor friends, the ones who are in town this week, have to be ones who take an active role in the process of transforming health care in this country. We need them to take a leading role in creating the road map on reasonable reform, to go from where we are now to where we ought to be.

We depend upon our physician leaders because they are leaders and are proactive. They are not reactive. Think about it for a minute. When you are only in a reactive mode, what you end up with are basically band-aid solutions. You think about the term death by a thousand cuts, we can call this death by a thousand scalpels because we were talking to doctors all week.

You know, refusing to do something about liability laws in this country, putting the interest of trial lawyers ahead of patients, that is a cut. Let me give you an example.

My home State of Texas, September 2003, we enacted sweeping liability reform as it affected the health care in-

dustry. We got fair medical justice legislation out of our State legislature. It required a constitutional amendment to go into effect, but it did pass under a vote of the people. As a consequence, now some 4 or 5 years later, Texas is seeing the benefits from passing commonsense legislation that limited the amount of payouts for noneconomic damages in medical liability cases.

Because this Texas law has made such a difference in Texas, and let me give you an example, in 2002, the year I first ran for Congress in Texas, the number of medical liability insurers in Texas had dwindled from 17 down to two. You don't get much in the way of competitive bidding when you only have two insurance companies that are willing to write your business. But all the rest had left. The climate in Texas was so hostile that no one wanted to write insurance in Texas.

As a consequence, you had good doctors who were simply unable to get insurance and stopped practicing. I met a young woman during one of the stops I made during my campaign in 2002 who was a radiologist, an interventional radiologist, highly trained, highly specialized, trained by the State of Texas, State-supported schools, so the taxpayers of Texas had paid for a portion of her education. And now 4, 5 years out in practice, she lost her liability insurance and was not able to get another carrier to pick her up. It was too risky. She couldn't practice without it, and she became a full-time mom, no longer practicing interventional radiology at a time I would argue when our health care needs are doing nothing but increasing.

That was wrong, and the State legislature in Texas recognized that was wrong and got busy and changed it. They didn't come up with a new idea, they copied an old idea.

In 1974, the State of California passed a sweeping set of medical liability changes called the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act of 1974. And with those caps on noneconomic damages, they were able to tamp down the premium increases that doctors had seen over time. And, indeed, when we passed that legislation in Texas, we have seen the same result. It does work and it should be tried in more areas.

In fact, I have introduced legislation similar to the Texas legislation in the House of Representatives, H.R. 3509. This bill actually scores as a saving by the Congressional Budget Office. We are in our budget time in the springtime here in Washington. We are scraping around for every dollar we can find to pay for Federal programs. Here is a gift I will give to Congress. It is a \$5 billion gift this bill would save over 5 years as estimated under the Congressional Budget Office, and it does the same things on a national scale as the Texas legislature was able to deliver for their patients back home in Texas.

One of the unintended beneficiaries of this whole process was the small,