

I want to thank the gentlelady for hosting this hour.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin, and I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CONAWAY. On policies we debate in this Chamber, we always have choices. And it seems as though recently with respect to spending, the choice is to spend more. With respect to taxes, the choice is to tax more. With energy, the choice is to raise energy costs. All of those things are not good for the American taxpayer. All of those things are not good for the health of this country. And in particular, the seven grandkids that I love the most, it is clearly not good for their financial health or well-being, and we clearly need to do something about it.

I thank the gentlelady for letting me participate tonight.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. The gentleman from Texas talks about his seven grandchildren and the gentleman from Wisconsin talks about his three children. I have two adult children, and I am going to have a grandbaby in just a few days, and it is so disappointing when you see what that child is going to be responsible for when they come on the face of this Earth.

This year alone, Washington is going to spend over \$25,000 per household and that is going to be a heavy burden for every man, woman and child to bear.

Just as a reminder, our budget school, the right to know how you spend your money, if you want to see how the Republicans would have approached this budget this year and not raised taxes, how the Republicans fought a \$683 billion tax increase, \$683 billion, this is where you go: Budget.house.gov/Republicans, and you can pull that response down. To get more information on our Republican Study Committee, budget and school resources, go to House.gov/Blackburn. That is a great way to figure out how we think is the best way to approach fiscal responsibility, how to be a good steward, a wise steward of the taxpayer dollar.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for having yielded the time tonight.

IRAQ AND THE ECONOMY

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

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Madam Speaker, good evening. It is a pleasure to be here tonight on behalf of the freshman class. It certainly has been an honor to serve here this last year, and to be joined by Mr. HALL of New York, and a number of other Members who are going to join us tonight.

What we are going to talk about tonight is something that I think is weighing very heavily on the minds of Americans right now, and that is the

economy. We understand because the United States is the most resilient, optimistic, innovative country in the world, that we will persevere and we will work out the issues that have caused some of the problems in our economy right now.

But that being said, as we speak today, there are people all over the United States who are hurting. They are hurting because their jobs may be threatened or they have lost their jobs or lost confidence that their job may be here in the next weeks and months. They are hurting because their home may be threatened from foreclosure or difficult terms. They may be hurting because gas prices have shot up. If we think about what the cost of oil was not that long ago, literally back in 2002, it was \$28 per barrel. And we know as of today, it hit \$114 per barrel. Shame on all of us for allowing that to be the case today and for having this dependence on oil. We have leadership in this House that is working on that.

Americans may be hurting because their health care is a threat, pre-existing conditions, things that are not covered by their policies, and the cost of insurance is just beyond their means.

There are a lot of things that people are thinking about that are weighing them down. At the same time, we have a war in Iraq and in Afghanistan. And a fight that we, as Americans, obviously understand that when America is challenged, we will fight back. But I think there is also a broad recognition that the war we are in, at least in Iraq right now, we may have gotten into for some of the wrong reasons, and without justification.

With that being said, I want to thank the men and women who serve this country and put their lives on the line every single day in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. And their families that are back home, persevering and doing the necessary things to carry on while their loved ones are gone. I know this Congress has taken upon itself to be certain and put all of the dollars on the table that have been promised in the past but not delivered, to make sure that every man and woman when they come home from service in the armed services, that they are given all the medical services, mental health services, physical health services, and a lifetime of care if necessary. We are committed to doing that as Congress.

But the question today is what should we be doing about Iraq, and how does this interplay with the economy. That is the subject of what we are going to talk about tonight. Are there things that we should be doing to help us as Americans, help us in our daily lives in the United States, help us make sure that we have the future, a better future, as our parents wished for us, that my children who are in college right now, that they will have a better opportunity than I did. That is something that is the American dream, and

it has been around for generations. And yet people today are questioning if that is where we are going.

We have to say what do we have to do to make sure that Americans come first and also protect our national security and evaluate this foreign policy, this fight in Iraq and other places, yes, is it in fact making us safer at home and on our streets. Or is it a disastrous situation that has cost us \$600 billion up to this point, over 4,000 lives of our brave men and women, and 30,000 to 40,000 brave men and women who have come back with severe injuries and will require lifetime care.

We are going to talk about those issues, engage each other on the floor, and we are going to continue to invite the American people to work with us and come up with some good solutions.

I am joined by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HALL) who has been a strong leader and very focused on the fact that our security is important, but our economy is equally important, and I turn the floor over to Mr. HALL.

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, it is good to be here with Mr. KLEIN and Congressman BRALEY.

Before I talk about Iraq, I have to respond to a couple of things that were said a few minutes ago by our friends from the other side of the aisle who used the word "truth" frequently and talked about their children and grandchildren. And I am sure they are sincere, but to those of you Americans out there listening, I am sure you can remember that when President Bush took over with Republicans controlling both Houses of Congress in the year 2001, he had a surplus delivered to him by the Clinton administration.

In the years since then, these folks you just heard talking, who profess to know what is best for our economy, have delivered to the United States, from a surplus when we were paying down the national debt, now the biggest deficit in the history of our country, the biggest balance of trade deficit, the biggest individual debt by Americans that is held, whether it is credit card debt or home second mortgage debt, and now we have the housing crisis, the subprime crisis, and various big box stores I was reading today are getting ready to file for or have already filed for bankruptcy, including some that we have seen proliferating around the country and have assumed that they were on solid ground.

So I would take all the proclamations you just heard and the fancy charts that you just saw from the Republican hour before us with a grain of salt.

The tax increase that they claim we are voting for is actually something that they, when they installed their tax cuts early in the Bush years, they installed it by putting in a sunset provision that is their creation, not ours. So I stand here and say that we have not in fact voted for anything like this biggest tax increase in history. It is a theatrical and dramatic presentation,

well acted, and possibly even believed by them, but it is not the truth.

As far as Iraq goes, we are spending \$12 billion a week in Iraq, and I have started to look at the needs of our country and my district in particular in terms of how that money could be used here because we are basically running on fumes financially. I just visited 13 bridges that are on the dangerous faulty bridge list that came out after the I-35 bridge collapse in Minnesota, and the estimate of the New York State Department of Transportation is that it will cost about \$60 billion to fix all of the deficient bridges in the State of New York. That is 5 months in Iraq.

I just came back 2 weeks ago from visiting a Nogales, Arizona, checkpoint on the Mexican border. Congressman BRALEY was on that trip, along with Congressman ARCURI. And we asked at every step of the way the Customs and Border protection officials what they need from Congress and what would their wish list be.

They said basically if it was Christmas and they could have everything that they wanted in terms of infrastructure, primarily what they need is more loading docks to unload the bales of marijuana that are stacked in front of an 18-wheeler behind a load of watermelons, or more bandwidth for more computers so they can get 10 fingerprints processed faster to establish somebody's identity. All of it, northern border, southern border, all ports on both coasts, \$500 million a year for 10 years. That is \$5 billion.

□ 2030

That's a little bit less than 2 weeks in Iraq to secure both of our borders and all of our ports. That sounds to me like it would actually make our country more secure; not that we want to shut the borders down, but we'd like to know who's coming and who's going, what's coming in and what's going out in terms of drugs, in terms of agricultural products that might be infested, in terms of currency smuggling. So anyway, there's a real cost to all these things.

And I would just say, after hearing General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker for the second time, it's clear that the goals in Iraq that we're spending this \$12 billion a month on have been changing, that the goal posts have been moving, that 5 years after the initiation of this war and the death of 4,017 of our mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, I have a figure of 29,676 wounded, the estimate before the VA, Veterans Affairs Committee, last summer was that if the war stopped at that point we'd be looking at \$1 trillion for the lifetime care of grievously wounded soldiers returning from Iraq. That's four injuries primarily, traumatic brain injury, PTSD, spinal cord injuries that cause paralysis, and amputations.

And these are, fortunately, men and women who we're able to save today in the battlefield because our battlefield

medicine is so much better than it was in Vietnam, for instance. The ratio is about 16:1 wounded to killed where in Vietnam it was about 2½:1. That's the good news is that we're saving more of these mostly young lives of brave Americans who've gone over there and fought and carried out their mission.

But the bad news is that the American public has not been told yet that, on top of the figures you mentioned, there's at least \$1 trillion lifetime care for the wounded from this war that we're already looking at being responsible for. And we have to take care of these wounded warriors. You can't pay for the war and forget about the warriors.

So I would just say that we need to look at this in terms of a broad view of national security and a realistic, clear-eyed view of where we are financially and whether we can afford it.

And with that, I yield back to Mr. KLEIN.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Thank you, Mr. HALL. And again, exceptionally well-stated. I think we all understand the costs of war. I think we all understand, as Americans, there are going to be times, historically, when we have to be prepared to fight and to make the necessary commitments.

There are also times when we recognize that, you know, we have to look and say, is this the right thing? Is it really achieving our national security interests?

I think we've heard over and over again, and I'm on the Foreign Affairs Committee. I know many of you are on the Armed Services Committee, we've heard about the fact that we have, the real problem, the terrorist threat is in Afghanistan or Pakistan or Iran. And unfortunately, the strategy that continues in Iraq is one that puts all of our resources and assets and our men and women in one location where al Qaeda was not a problem initially. There may be some al Qaeda there, but we don't have to deal with them necessarily with a 160,000 troop contingent.

I'd like to now just bring into our conversation another esteemed member of our freshman class, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY).

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. I'd like to thank my friend from Florida and also my friend from New York. We did have a very enlightening trip to Nogales, Arizona, and the Border Patrol and Customs agents that we spoke to were all, I think, doing a fantastic job of trying to deal with a very difficult situation.

But one of the things that trip emphasized to me is we often talk in this body about the cost of providing border security, the cost of providing national and international security.

And what we know is that the Pentagon traditionally publishes reports that provide this body that we serve in their estimate of the cost of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. And we've seen those figures. We've viewed some of those figures with skepticism. And we've talked about what the published costs of this war are.

But what we don't talk enough about is what we talked about in repeated hearings in the wake of the Walter Reed fiasco. And I was fortunate enough to be serving on the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, when we had that first hearing out at Walter Reed. We talked to the highest ranking Army and Department of Defense medical officers. We had a follow-up hearing after the independent review group chaired by General Togo West presented its recommendations for the wounded warriors project. And I repeatedly pressed the top ranking Army medical officers on that very question; what are the hidden costs of the war that the American people aren't hearing about?

And I'm glad my friend from New York brought this up, because there is so much going on beneath the surface that the American public doesn't hear about.

If you take the average life expectancy of a 19-year-old male, which is representative of who we're sending to Iraq right now, you will find that under the published U.S. life tables, those young men have a life expectancy of approximately 55 years.

Now, when they come back in unprecedented percentages with life-threatening injuries that we will be responsible for caring for the rest of their lives, there is an enormous economic cost that we aren't hearing about. And so I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with my colleagues tonight what some of those hidden costs are, and what the American people need to be thinking about as we look at the overall economic impact, not just throughout our economy, but on the long-term burden we're placing on our children and our grandchildren to provide these deserving veterans with the best possible medical care that we can.

Before I get to that though, I want to talk a little bit about what we're giving up right now, through the amount of funding that we are committing every year to the conflict in Iraq because, just for Fiscal Year 2007, we know that this war is costing, under the most conservative estimate, \$137.6 billion. So the American people may wonder, well, what would that actually provide if it wasn't going to Iraq?

Well, for 40 million people in this country, that would provide comprehensive health care. Now, think about that. We know that right now there are nearly 47 million Americans without health insurance. So that cost alone would almost completely eliminate that gap.

We know that that cost that we're spending this year in Iraq would hire 2.2 million elementary school teachers, provide affordable housing for over a million different housing units, and provide 142 million homes in this country with renewable electricity.

And to break that down into a smaller level, I represent the First District of Iowa. The taxpayers I represent in the First District have paid, to date,

\$770 million in one congressional district alone, as their share of the cost of this war. What would that mean back in the First District of Iowa?

Well, it would hire almost 19,000 public safety officers. It would hire almost 17,000 music and art teachers. It would provide 126,000 full tuition university scholarships at public universities, and build 86 brand new elementary schools. So when we talk about the actual financial burden that we are facing every day because of the rising cost of this war, it is enormous.

And Congressman KLEIN, maybe you could talk a little bit about what you've heard from the people you represent in a different part of the country, where there are different needs, but also very similar problems that taxpayers you represent are facing.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. I thank the gentleman from Iowa for explaining, not only the aggregate cost, but certainly what's happening in Iowa. I know one of our colleagues in our freshman class, Mr. SPACE from Ohio, he has explained to us the impact in his district in rural parts of Ohio and how important it is for him to help the local people get beyond this.

I'm going to explain it a slightly different way, because, again, I think it's the tangible side of this thing that people need to understand. The cost per day that we are currently spending, and this is independent information; there's no question that this is accurate. It comes from the Library of Congress Research Service.

The cost per day that the war is costing us, if you will, \$339 million per day. That is a staggering amount of money.

Now, again, I'm not here to say that we don't have to fight wars, or don't have to do the necessary things to protect Americans. But when we come to the conclusion, as most Americans have, that the strategy of keeping the men and women in place the way they are is not advancing our national security, we should question whether that money is being well-spent.

But I've introduced something today in the House, which I'm going to begin to talk about more actively, and I'm sure the gentlemen here tonight will chime in on this as well, and that is, whether people support the war or not, and I know there's differences of opinion on this, I think every American understands that at \$339 million per day, it's about time that the Iraqi government step up and pay its fair share.

And whether we're talking about the cost of fuel for our operations over there, whether we're talking about the cost of rebuilding, whether we're talking about the training of their military, after five full years and \$600 billion, now coming out to \$339 million more every single day, for all the reasons that Mr. BRALEY has already mentioned about the savings and what could be applied in the United States, or maybe dealing with reducing the deficit or dealing with taxes, any number of different strategies to make life

better for Americans, it's about time the Iraqi people step up, and if they want us there, the government, pay their fair share.

And I'll just throw out a few facts as to why I believe this is so important. First of all, our President, Mr. Rumsfeld and others, when the war was presented to us in the first place, they told us that this was a war and a rebuilding effort that was going to be paid for by Iraqi oil money.

Iraq sits on the second largest quantity, second largest quantity of oil reserves in the world. They've got tens of billions of dollars in bank accounts, as we speak, that are not being applied toward the rebuilding effort. That is unacceptable.

As an American, as a taxpayer, I hope every American understands this and joins us. This is not a Democrat issue. This is not a Republican issue. This is an American taxpayer issue that we need to all band together and say, you know, whether or not you're for the war or not, absolutely, every American should say, enough is enough. We've paid our fair share. We've put our men and women on the line, and it's time for the Iraqis to pay for the cost of this continuing effort to the extent it continues into the future.

So I've offered House Resolution 1111, which was filed today, and I'm looking forward to discussing this with many of the Members. I've already spoken to a number of Members, and they're very interested. It's being offered in a bipartisan way in the Senate, and I think this has the opportunity of finding some common ground in changing the dynamics of who's paying for this, the American people or the Iraqi government, who wants us, for whatever reason, to continue this effort in this way.

And I would suggest to you, and rightfully so, that 1 day of the war could provide for 48,000 homeless vets to have a roof over their head, men and women who served in Vietnam and other wars.

2,000 new Border Patrol guards. And Mr. HALL just told us, and Mr. BRALEY, about how they were down on the border and saw what's going on. We have border patrol needs. And just again, just 1 day, 2000 more Border Patrol guards for a year.

We talked about health care. We can go on and on and on. But the bottom line is, it's time for a change. It's time for a change with the policy, it's time to re-look at this whole effort. But certainly, at a minimum, it's time for the Iraqi government to pay for the cost of this operation.

Mr. HALL, I know that you've got some thoughts on this as well, so please join us in this conversation.

Mr. HALL of New York. Well, in fact I do. And I thank the gentleman. You know, I saw 60 Minutes, I think this last Sunday, and they had an interview about the topic you just mentioned, the Iraqi windfall due to the price of oil, and how those tens of billions dollars are sitting in accounts. And the

Iraqi officials interviewed on the TV show said they can't get at them to pay for their own reconstruction; and the American taxpayer has to keep paying the way we are because they don't yet have the systems in place or the infrastructure or the banking technology to be able to transfer the money.

Now, either that's a really lame excuse, or we've been missing the boat by not helping them set that up. Or both.

But you know, I have to just, not to be, not to carp on an old topic, but to hearken back to the previous hour and the other side of the aisle, our friends' presentation about budgetary truth. I would point out that the President's budget that he sent down to us this year shows no money for Iraq after the first of the year. So that's obviously not an honest document.

It also assumes the AMT, the Alternative Minimum Tax which was supposed to be a tax on the richest of the rich and has become instead a tax that's been digging deeper and deeper into the middle class, and we've been working to change that. Our budget does change that and pushes it back up to the wealthiest 4 percent or so of Americans.

But the President's budget assumes all the money that will be scooped out of the middle class, if nothing is done, will be available. So I just had to say those couple of things about that.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Would the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. HALL of New York. Yes, please.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. One of the things that we face every year is something called an emergency supplemental, which is a request from the President for billions of dollars of additional funding to fund the ongoing war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now, I would just ask my colleagues, and I'll pose this first to you, Mr. HALL. Where I come from in Iowa, an emergency is something that is unexpected and unanticipated that you can't plan for. But I am at a loss to understand why, after being in Iraq longer than we were engaged in the Civil War, after being in Iraq longer than we were engaged in World War II, we continue to face emergency supplemental funding requests for these wars, when the Department of Defense and the Pentagon and the President have to know how much they anticipate when they send their budget down for us to consider.

□ 2045

Mr. HALL of New York. Not only do they know, but the President, as we speak, is negotiating, or his representatives are negotiating a status of forces agreement to keep our troops in Iraq for some unknown time. So they obviously are planning on it. They're just not putting it in the budget.

And I agree with you that the first year you could call it an emergency, but after that, this should be on budget. We're building up enough debt that we're passing on to our children and

grandchildren with interest anyway, and in order for the public to know what is really being done in their name, this should not be a supplemental; this should be in the budget.

I would also like to comment about my trip to Iraq last October. When I slept in the Green Zone in one of Saddam's pool houses next to one of his mansions, which, by the way, I think we should give back to the Iraqi people at this point. He was a tyrant, but he was their tyrant, and he built the mansion with their money and it might help us lose that image that some of them have of us as occupiers if we gave them back their property.

But at any rate, when I slept in the Green Zone, we were told, use the bottled water, don't drink the water out of the tap; if you hear a siren, there's a concrete bunker over there; go jump in it because we've had a few mortar rounds coming in. But that was basically all the warning we got.

Last week when the fighting was going at a higher level of intensity when the battle of Basra was on and the Green Zone took so many mortar and rocket rounds that we lost two soldiers dead and 17 wounded in the Green Zone, they were telling people then and since then to sleep in your body armor and your helmet. So October, we were not told that. Last week and the week before, they were telling our diplomats and our traveling Members of Congress that. That's not progress; that's backsliding.

And Albert Einstein, I think, was the guy who once defined insanity as trying the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. That's where we're at now.

There's a friend of mine who's a sheriff in one of the Upstate counties of New York who is a West Point graduate and a classmate of my brother-in-law, 1969 West Point grad, who told me a couple years back that one of the first things they learned at West Point in officer training class is never send a military force to do a job that is not militarily achievable.

And this is to say nothing critical or to overshadow the accomplishments of our forces. Our men and women in uniform have done an extraordinary job and we should all be extremely proud of them. They have been creative. They have been extremely loyal not just to our country but loyal to each other. They have been energetic and committed. They will do anything we ask of them and anything their commanders ask of them.

But our responsibility as a civilian government, the kind of government that our Constitution sets up where the civilian government and the President, ultimately, is Commander in Chief, but Congress as well has the right to not only declare war but also to fund Armies. And we need to be careful that we use them responsibly. These are not chattel. Our men and women in uniform are human beings that are stressed out with record rates right

now of suicide, divorce, and bankruptcy among veterans that have returned from this war, as well as among veterans of previous conflicts.

And I think that it's time for us to reevaluate whether this is really making our Nation more secure and whether it is worth the \$12 billion for nation building that we might better use for rebuilding the Nation of the United States.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. And these are certainly the questions that our country is wrestling with right now, and as I turn it back over to Mr. BRALEY, I will just mention again that on the economy side of this thing, and I think about the people back home and what they're thinking about as they're looking towards the next election and just thinking about the next week's expenses. And one statistic jumped out at me when I was hearing about gas prices. Gas prices in the United States are about \$3.39 per gallon, extraordinary, at a time when the oil companies are still going to be making historic profits.

The United States military is paying \$3.23 a gallon in Iraq. That's \$153 million per month. At the same time, Iraqis, when they can get gas, are paying \$1.30 per gallon of gas. What is wrong with this picture? Our military is paying \$3.23 to buy gas in Iraq on our dime, and Iraqis are getting it at \$1.30.

So again, it's this question of as Americans, and being the great people that we are and trying to do what we can to help here and there, what can we do differently to help protect Americans deal with their daily lives and, at the same time, protect our country?

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Well, as our good friend and colleague from Arkansas MARION BERRY would say, That dog don't hunt. This is a classic example of what we've seen over and over and over again from procurement decisions that are being made that have an adverse effect on American taxpayers. And I think if you go back to the beginning when they set up the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, that it was set up with the intent of using Iraqi assets to rebuild the country and to shift the dependency from the government or from the United States back to the Iraqi people through the oil revenues that we're talking about.

And we've seen in committee hearings here photographs of Ford trucks full of pallets that had \$250 million in cash per pallet that were part of a \$2.1 billion one-day transfer of cash to the Iraqi government, the largest single transfer of cash in U.S. history. And that was part of a transfer of cash that led to \$9 billion of missing money that was supposed to be part of the initial reconstruction of Iraq.

Then the idea was to use those Iraqi oil revenues to pick up the responsibility and complete the work of rebuilding Iraq. And instead, we know that one of the big challenges the Iraqi government has faced is coming to some agreement on the division of oil

revenues, and that's been a major obstacle to rebuilding the country and bringing about national reconciliation. And who is paying the tab for that? U.S. taxpayers.

That is why the issue we're talking about is so important. Because when U.S. taxpayers are bearing the burden of this war, it has an enormous ripple effect throughout our economy because one of the things we know is that when we have these ever-growing trade deficits with countries like China, which is our principal creditor, it makes it very difficult to keep the economy in this country rolling along providing the types of goods and services at a reasonable rate; and that has an enormous impact throughout the economy. And I'm sure as we get further into this, we will have some real examples of the enormous impact on various sectors of the U.S. economy from the burden that we are all responsible for.

But I have to tell you, the idea that you mentioned about shifting the burden in H. Res. 111, I can tell you this is an enormously popular bipartisan idea. In fact, last weekend in my home State of Iowa, the Des Moines Register interviewed every member of the Iowa congressional delegation, Republicans, Democrats, Senators, Representatives, and everyone was unanimous in their sentiment that is exactly the one you expressed in your resolution.

It is time for the Iraqis to pick up the tab for their own well-being and let the American taxpayers focus on the enormous economic problems we're dealing with at home: The bailout of Bear Stearns, the subprime mortgage crisis, all of the things that you work on every day in the Financial Services Committee. And because of that unique role that you play here in Congress, I think you have some special insights that probably would be very enlightening to the people watching tonight and the people of this country about what you're dealing with on a daily basis that's being impacted by this ongoing financial commitment.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. I thank the gentleman, and being from Iowa, and obviously one of our farm States, you have a direct understanding of what the cost of food production is and for farmers, the cost of fuel and the cost that is just driving the inflation numbers in the United States. And most Americans aren't even aware of the fact that when you hear this inflation discussion that energy prices, that's gas prices at the pump, and food prices, are not even part of that discussion. That's not factored into these inflation numbers. It's everything else.

And the story we're given is, well, those fluctuate too much. That's not a reliable factor. Well, you know something? That's the bottom line. When people go to the grocery store every week, I know back in my town, and they see a dozen eggs cost this and all of a sudden they're up 80 cents for a dozen eggs or a gallon of milk or bread or vegetables, no matter what it is,

there is a huge inflationary factor tied into the cost of food at a time when wages are not keeping up. So people are feeling stretched and pushed and stressed.

So it is important for us to focus on this, and again, I appreciate the gentleman's comments on our House resolution because I think it is going to be something that all of us, and everybody has been talking about this; this is certainly not my idea. I think we can all work together in changing the direction of how this is going to play out.

And yes, it will probably be a new President before there may be some major changes in the military strategy, and I would hope and I know I have heard a lot of good generals talk about some of the different ideas that they have on changing that. But at a minimum, I think most Americans would say that wow, I thought they were already paying for it, and if they're not, they should be. And that's something that I hope that we can find common ground. That's what Americans elected us for, not to be Democrats or Republicans, but to come together as Americans and say how do we solve this problem, just like we started the discussion tonight.

Mr. HALL maybe can share with us some of the economy and the economic issues that you're hearing from your neighbors and friends and how we can try to address some of these.

Mr. HALL of New York. Well, yes. I would just tell you that we are way behind on our infrastructure in this country in terms of keeping it maintained to a level of safety or efficiency just to keep traffic moving.

I had a construction worker tell me yesterday that he was working with some of his compatriots on the Tappan Zee Bridge which, as you know, crosses the Hudson River just north of New York and carries the New York State thruway and millions of cars a day commuting to and from the New York metro area.

Twelve years ago they were replacing and welding plates to repair potholes and damage that has been done by the salt and acid rain, and pigeon droppings, if you can believe it, are a major cause of corrosion on bridges. And at that time 12 years ago, he and his men that were working on the bridge said if they did not have to drive across it to go to work to feed their families, they would not drive across it because they felt it wasn't safe then. And they told their kids if they could help it, please don't drive across that bridge. 12 years ago.

Now we're finally getting down to the point where the thruway authority and the State of New York are looking at building a new Tappan Zee Bridge because the support pilings of the bridge are either being undercut by the tide or eaten by aquatic worms, if you can believe that, or both. There are so many kinds of damage that has happened in a bridge that only had a 30-

year life span, and it was built more than 30 years ago, and nothing's been done to get ready to build its successor.

As I'm sure you both do, I'm approached in the district every week by town supervisors or mayors or what have you asking for help with a sewage treatment plant, for instance, in the town of New Windsor, New York, that's 60 years old. It's well beyond its design life, and when it breaks down, if there's a heavy storm rain event and it becomes overtaxed with capacity from the storm run-off, you get raw sewage running into the Hudson River, which we've been trying and pretty much succeeding in trying to clean up in terms of sewage. The river is much better. It's actually swimmable, and to some extent, some people eat fish out of it, but I think that disregards the PCBs, which is another issue.

But every one of these water treatments for drinking water, sewage treatment for disposing of wastewater, bridges, tunnels, roads, rail, which we are so far behind the rest of the world in, Japan, the European Nations in the EU have a so much more advanced rail system that it actually substitutes for a short hop air travel in this country, what we would consider to be flying from New York to Washington or New York to Boston. They do that by train on a high-speed train that takes virtually the same time or less because it delivers them from inner city to inner city. It eliminates the taxi ride out to the airport and back in from the airport at the other end.

□ 2100

It eliminates the taxi ride out to the airport and back in from the airport at the other end. These are all things that cost money.

And you know what else? They hire people. They hire construction workers, they hire sheet metal workers, they hire engineers, they hire electrical workers, they hire plumbers. And just as FDR did back when we had the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, and the incredible unemployment and deprivation when schools were closed across the country for lack of money to pay teachers, we saw really desperate times in this country which I hope we don't see again. And I hope we move fast enough to try to take the steps, not just to build assets here at home, but at the same time, to put money back into the economy by hiring people to build this infrastructure. That's the first place that I would start.

And I think that there's a lot of agreement, when I talk to Members on both sides of the aisle, and certainly when I talk to my constituents, that that's a good use of the money that we're—whether we're borrowing the money or not, and hopefully we will be able to pay as we go, as in this Congress, this House of Representatives, under PAYGO, we've been trying to do it, but wherever we come up with the

money, putting it into our own infrastructure here at home is a really good place to jump-start the economy.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. BRALEY, obviously a lot of things happening in Iowa and in the Midwest, and the economy and its impact on the communities that you represent. Why don't you share with us some of the experiences you're having and some of the things we're doing in Congress to address them.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Sure. And I'm just going to pick up where Mr. HALL left off. We both have the pleasure of serving on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee here in Congress. And one of the things that we hear about every day is not just the benefits of having, oh, \$137 billion to invest in infrastructure—let's just pull that number out of the air—but what happens if you don't address your critical infrastructure needs. Because we hear, for example, that for every 1 minute delay that UPS drivers have in congested urban areas in New York, in Florida, maybe lesser in Iowa, but unique, different types of delays, it imposes enormous economic costs in shipping those goods, which is then passed on to consumers all over this country.

So when I fly into the airport in Moline and I have to cross the I-74 bridge, which is one of the functionally obsolete, structurally deficient bridges in my district, and they've got a lane closed down either for repair work or because an accident is there, it may take you half an hour to drive from one side of the Mississippi River to the other side. And all that does is slow down commerce, it slows down people. And at a time of rising fuel costs, it adds enormously to the prices that we pay to get where we need to go.

And each of us has unique transportation delay issues. Mr. KLEIN comes from an urban area in Florida where traffic congestion in many ways is a way of life. And you're sitting there waiting to move, your engine is running, and you don't get very high fuel efficiency from that expensive fuel you've got. A lot of my constituents live in rural parts of Iowa, and for them to get basic goods and services they have to drive to a county seat town or to a larger urban area to get what they need. And they have larger fuel costs simply to get what they need to buy to take care of their basic needs. And when we ignore these infrastructure needs that we've been talking about, all it does is have very large ripple effects.

But one of the other things that we talked about here is our whole energy policy. I am very proud of the fact that my State is, I believe, pretty much in the epicenter of the renewable energy explosion. Whether it's ethanol, biodiesel, wind energy, one of the things we're trying to do is create an environment where we can reduce our dependency on foreign oil and not have to worry so much about the impact of what's going on with the Iraqi oil fields on our domestic fuel availability.

And so it's very exciting to see the potential, but one of the things that's disturbing is when we miss opportunities to do more. So if you look at wind energy capacity, most people would be shocked, I think, to realize that the State of North Dakota has the highest wind energy capacity of any State in the country. So they are a prime location for us to sell these wind turbines we're producing in Iowa and start to reduce that dependency on foreign oil.

But they've got a problem. It's the exact same problem Mr. HALL and I saw with the border patrol down in Arizona, and that is, it's one thing to say we need to secure our borders, but if you don't have infrastructure in place to access the border, you can't do your job. They've got a problem in North Dakota because they don't have a grid right now that can handle the energy capacity they would generate and put onto the grid and send out to people in Florida and New York, who have high demand and don't have the ability to meet their energy needs.

So when we're talking about how this war and the funding for the war is impacting Americans, I think that the ripple effect is enormous. And we're really only scratching the surface.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Well, I would certainly pick up on that because one of the first things that this Congress did, with our freshman class encouraging the way, was to say that we were going to change the way Congress paid for and spent the American taxpayers' money, and we adopted something called "PAYGO," pay-as-you-go budgeting. In other words, we can't pass a bill without it having been paid for in the budget. You've got to find the money somewhere in the budget; you can't say, well, maybe we'll have more money next year. That's just the way everybody runs their business back home, that's just the way everybody runs their personal checkbook. I know that my wife and I operate that way, and I'm sure everybody else on the floor here does the same thing. You just can't keep spending without having the money to pay it back.

And the reality is that, if you think about that, if you think about that responsible budgeting and the fact that we're spending—the number I keep throwing out—\$339 million per day, think about the opportunity of investing in new energy alternatives. And you hear, well, maybe with some of the types of energy alternatives, the renewable energies, they're not ready for prime time yet; there are pollution problems with this type or some type of hazard. I'm from Florida; we should be leading the world in solar power, but there is a battery storage capacity issue. Is there an answer? You bet there's an answer. It requires our scientists, our business entrepreneurs to sit down and figure it out. And with the kind of money that would be available to challenge our scientists, our business entrepreneurs to develop solar, wind, wave, any number of var-

ious alternatives, to make us energy independent and then get rid of this oil import of 60 percent of our oil from the Middle East and Venezuela every day, which I think every American understands is a national security problem and all the other things that go along with that, we would be in great shape.

And that is what we, as Americans, are all about. We think forward, we're visionary, and we need to recognize that these opportunities that are being presented to us on becoming energy independent over the next number of years, as many of us refer to it, the Apollo Project—Mr. HALL is a leader in our class on these issues—that this is where we need to be moving forward for our future on national security, for our jobs, and opportunities that will help us engage in a stronger future economy, and for an environment. It all ties together very nicely.

Mr. HALL, I know you are very interested in this as well, so please join us.

Mr. HALL of New York. I thank the gentleman from Florida.

And I am happy to tell you that there is a solution to the problem of what to do with that power while the battery is being developed, it's called "net metering." And most States, New York being one of them, I believe have net metering which enables you to, if you're a homeowner or a business and you put solar panels on your property or on your roof and you don't use all that power, it winds the meter backwards and puts the power back into the grid and uses the grid as a battery. So that's what most people are doing today who have solar panels.

In fact, I helped the Action Club at the Arlington High School in Dutchess County, New York recently acquire a grant from the Dyson Foundation of New York, who were very generous and came up with funding for them to put solar panels on the roof of the high school. This is leadership by high school students who went first. And NYSEDA, the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority, I got part of the funding from them, developed a design to produce a certain number of kilowatts from, I think it's 123 kilowatts or so, anyway, it's a substantial amount of power toward what their school uses.

And then they came to us. And knowing how the appropriation process here in Congress can take so long and it's not a sure thing—last year our appropriations were finally signed into law by the President in December—I didn't want them to have to wait that long, so I was able to find a private source of funding for them.

But the point is that, it not only works, but the school kids know about it and they want their school to be solar. And I told them after they get that installed, they should go get the school bus fleet to use 20 percent biodiesel.

I'm burning heating oil in my home in the northeast, where heating oil is a major expense, especially this last win-

ter, the cost rising the way it has has been very harmful to many people, especially those on fixed incomes. And I just called up the local dealer for heating oil and said, do you have a biodiesel blend? And the guy on the other end of the phone said, sure, it's a 20 percent soy/biodiesel blend, and I own the company, I burn it at home myself. It burns cleaner than regular oil. And so I said, send it on over. And for the last two winters now my wife and I have been heating our home with a biodiesel blend. And that's 20 percent less than has to come from Saudi Arabia or some other unstable part of the world where we're funding governments that don't like us, that use that money to buy weapons or to fund madrassas that teach young people who don't have much opportunity in their country, by the way, to advance economically or educationally, they teach them to hate Americans or hate Israelis and to do harm to us. And then, as Tom Friedman likes to write in the New York Times, we have to pay for the other side of the war on terror by sending our troops over there to stabilize these unstable parts of the world.

So that's a lose-lose policy, the old policy that we've been stuck on of oil dependency. The win-win-win policy is the one that we're talking about, where we use wind, we use biofuels. I mean, Brazil did this 20 years ago. They decided that they were going to use sugar cane ethanol. And they converted their vehicle fleet in the entire country over so that now when they drill offshore for oil in Brazil, they sell it on the world market and make money off of it, but they don't use it in their own vehicles. I think they're a few steps ahead of us. But we can get there. We're the nation that put a man on the moon. We're the nation that has been able to lead the way in many areas of medicine and technology, and certainly computer and software and Internet technology. This is something we can do. And we, in government, can incentivize it and try to encourage private industry and encourage individuals to do it. And make it patriotic, make people know that it's patriotic to drive the most efficient vehicle you can in the most efficient way that you can. It's patriotic to carpool, it's patriotic to use mass transit when you can, and it's certainly patriotic to let your elected officials know at every level of government, whether it's snowplows in the winter, school buses or UPS fleets or the thruway trucks that drive up and down all the time from Albany to New York, governmental fleets of vehicles, if we can buy hybrids, as West Chester County has done with their bus fleet, they're running not just hybrids, but biodiesel hybrids, they're already pyramiding in West Chester County on the B line, as they call it, the county bus route, they're pyramiding one new technology on top of another. And the next step would be plug-in biodiesel hybrids.

But we can do this. The technologies are here and available. And the sooner

we start getting on the program and using them, the sooner we will be able to tell some of the countries that we've, unfortunately, been beholden to, whether it's the Saudis to get the oil or whether it's the Chinese to borrow the money to pay for the oil, we will soon be able to tell them, we don't need you quite so badly, and by the way, we'd like to talk to you about human rights and some other things that right now we can't be honest about because, in effect, we've lost our sovereignty because of this dependency.

But at any rate, it's a lose-lose-lose policy on one hand and a win-win-win policy on the other, and I want to see us go for the win-win.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Well, as we begin to wind down, we started this discussion about the impact of Iraq and the economy, and the economy and Iraq. And I think we started it from the beginning saying this country, we Americans have spent \$600 billion on this effort in Iraq. And at a minimum, as we've discussed tonight, what could we do, certainly in the future, in terms of Iraq, from the right standpoint, taking responsibility and making it stand up and step up for itself and paying for its reconstruction, its fuel needs that Americans are having to pay for right now, and the training of its military.

And those resources, those American dollars can certainly be applied in a way to make us safer in dealing with, as you express, national security interests by taking us away from the addiction to oil and coming up with wonderful new renewable energy sources. The technology is there, it's being developed, it's being refined. We can take the question of the jobs and our economy right now, and of course the environment.

And so, as we begin to wrap up, if you can give some final thoughts as to how the Iraq and the economy are tied together and how we can get beyond this point and do good things for this country.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Well, I thank my friend for the opportunity, and also the opportunity to spend time with two of my good friends tonight talking about very, very important issues.

We've focused primarily on the impact of the war in Iraq and the cost of the war on the domestic economy here in the United States. But when I look at my friend from New York and I look at my friend from Florida, two States that really symbolize a growing connection between our domestic economy and the global economy, one of the things we know is a lot of the issues we've talked about tonight all come back to something we all are charged to do when we swore to represent this country, and that is to provide security.

□ 2115

Now that may be security from harm, from foreign interests. It may be economic security. But it all comes together. And we know that many devel-

oping countries, the addiction to energy needs is what keeps them suppressed in reaching greater levels of economic stability, and that's why oil and the pursuit of oil has played such an important role in the last 100 years in the world economy.

By exporting our knowledge about renewable energy, about new emerging economies that can be shared and applied in the global economy, I think we can give a great gift to the American people in the return of a safer world, a more secure world, and a world where we have the ability to be able to predict with greater certainty what the current economic trends are going to be and set economic policies, with the assistance of the administration and the Federal Reserve, to address these crises before they become the full-blown crises that we have been talking about on the floor tonight.

So I look forward to working with my friends and my other colleagues here on both sides of the aisle in trying to provide some guidance and direction as we get our hands on this very important subject.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. I thank the gentleman from Iowa for participating tonight on behalf of our freshmen class.

And if you would like to, Mr. HALL, take a minute to give a close.

Mr. HALL of New York. Quickly I would just add about Iraq two quotes, one from Ambassador Ryan Crocker. When I was over there with our Republican colleagues TOM COLE, RIC KELLER, DAVE LOEBACK of Iowa, the four Members of Congress sat with the Ambassador, and he was asked by one of us, "What's the state of reconciliation and peace and resolving the conflicts between the tribes and the different religious sects?"

And I was sitting right next to him; so I wrote down his response to be sure I had it right. His response was, "The Maliki Government is somewhere between challenged and dysfunctional." Now, that was October.

In March General Petraeus stated on March 13, "No one feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation."

So it's my contention that not only do the Iraqis need to start paying for their own reconstruction, I think they need to take responsibility for their own security as well because as long as we are putting our men and women in a police role to try to police their civil war and their ethnic and tribal and religious differences, it's just going to let them continue to be dysfunctional. And when we phase out or pull out or whatever you want to call it and get back to the real business that this country faces, the real dangers that we face, which, as you said before, I believe, are Afghanistan and Pakistan certainly more in terms of terrorism, that they will be forced to come to terms with whether they want to be a country or whether they want to be three separate groups of Kurds and

Sunnis and Shia or whatever it is. But that's one thing.

And the other thing is I am a firm believer that after 5 years and a least \$600 billion spent and over \$1 trillion in veterans' benefits that we have incurred that we will have to pay out of responsibility and the debt that we owe to the men and women who fought in this conflict that it's time for us to start looking at what those dollars could do at home for the things that we really need to take care of, not just for national security but for economic security, education security, health security, and all the other meanings of the word.

So I thank my friends both, and I thank the gentleman from Florida for chairing this session.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. I thank the gentleman from New York and the gentleman from Iowa. It's been an honor and privilege to serve with you and all the rest of the Members of our freshmen class, both Democrats and Republicans.

I know the future of our country, the future of our families, our children, and I have got two kids in college right now and I know all of you have kids in high school and college, we think about that every day as we try to make decisions which will be the best for our country both from a national security and economic security point of view. And I know that we're going to work together in a collegial way to accomplish those.

So I thank you, wish you a good night, and look forward to seeing you next week at this time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. MEEK of Florida (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 2 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. COURTNEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ALLEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BURTON of Indiana) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, April 23.

Mr. TANCREDO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, April 23.

(The following Member (at his request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. ENGEL, for 5 minutes, today.