

And then there's another program to increase the number of primary care residencies that are available, again, in high-need areas, medically underserved areas for specialties that are in high demand, and, again, we are principally talking about the primary care specialties.

The barriers for entry for a medium-sized to moderate-sized hospital to start up a residency program are essentially costs. And some of those start-up costs in this legislation can be provided for in a loan. And there will be a loan that is paid back so that money will recycle, and the overall return to the taxpayer is increased that way. It will allow those hospitals the ability to set up a residency program where none has existed in the past. And I can think of many, many hospitals in my home State of Texas that could benefit from that type of activity.

And one of the things when people study how physician manpower is distributed, you can say a lot of things about doctors, but sometimes we are not very imaginative and we don't tend to go very far from where we trained, and there are some valid reasons for that. You get comfortable with referral patterns. People know you from your training program, so they're apt to refer to you. There's a degree of comfort there. And myself, for example, I went into practice less than 25 miles from where I did my training. A lot of doctors do follow that same sort of trajectory.

So if we can move the training programs into the areas that need the physicians, it may then follow that those physicians who train in those programs will end up staying in those medically underserved areas.

It's difficult for me to come to the floor of the House and talk about things related to health care and at least not mention some of the problems that we face with our medical justice system in this country. And I know there are lots of people out there with a lot of different ideas, caps on noneconomic damages, medical courts, early offer arbitration. The time has come for us to have a serious discussion to put some of the partisan differences aside, to put some of the special interests aside and have a rational discussion about how we can meaningfully impact that problem in this country.

My home State of Texas passed rather significant legislation 4 years ago dealing with the issue of caps on noneconomic damages. It was patterned after an earlier California law, the Medical Injury Reform Act of 1975. It was passed out in California, which put a \$250,000 cap on noneconomic damages. The Texas legislation was a little bit different. Instead of a single cap, there were three different caps, each capped at \$250,000, but the aggregate was \$750,000 compensation available for noneconomic damages. It has worked very well in my home State of Texas.

The year that I left practice to come to Congress, we were in crisis. We had

gone from 17 medical liability insurers down to two. You certainly don't get much in the way of competition when you only have two insurers, and as a consequence, the price for those premiums was ever escalating. Now we have had many insurers come back to the State. They've come back to the State without an increase in premiums. And, in fact, Texas Medical Liability Trust, my last insurer of record, has returned, the last time I checked, 22 percent reductions and dividends back to their physicians that they cover. And that's significant because, remember, these premiums were going up by 10, 15, 20 or 25 percent year over year, and then on the past 4 years, they've not only stabilized, but they've come down 22 percent.

Small and medium-sized hospitals that self-insure for medical liability have had to put less in reserve against a bad judgment, and as a consequence, there has been more money to spend on just exactly the kinds of things you want your community hospital to be spending its money on; things like nurses' salaries, capital improvement, investing in their capital infrastructure.

So it is a good news story from the State of Texas in terms of what we've been able to do with liability in my home State, and I'm not going to say that's the only answer, but I think it is a very good answer. I introduced legislation, H.R. 3509, to essentially provide the Texas legislation on a national scale.

In fact, we had a lot of talk about the budget earlier tonight. Last year, I offered that bill to the Budget Committee because the Congressional Budget Office scored it as nearly a \$4 billion savings over 5 years. I realize that's not much when you are talking about a \$3 trillion budget, but that's \$4 billion. That's a significant savings, and I was willing to donate that to the Congress.

Take up that concept, write it into law in your budget resolution, and let's get something done to stabilize medical liability prices in this country, not so much for my home State of Texas, as we've already done it. But what about Pennsylvania? What about New Jersey? What about Maryland? What about New York? Maybe those areas could benefit from some of that same type of thinking as well.

Well, suffice it to say that that concept was not accepted, but I will extend the offer to members of the Budget Committee on both sides of the aisle that \$4 billion in savings is still available to you. H.R. 3509 is the bill, and I will be happy to relinquish all ownership rights and donate that to the greater good of the United States Congress and the people of the United States.

One last piece of legislation that I want to mention, and it was introduced right at the end of the year, H.R. 4190. We talk on the floor of this House a lot about the problem of the uninsured. In

fact, I've spent some time talking about it this evening.

H.R. 4190 isn't a new insurance program. It isn't a new expansion of Medicare or Medicaid or SCHIP. What H.R. 4190 does is take the concept of being uninsured and extend that privilege to everyone who serves in the United States Congress. H.R. 4190 would remove us, as Members of Congress, from the Federal Employee Health Benefits plan, provide us a voucher, if you will, to go out and purchase insurance on the open market. And I can't help but think, if we were put in the position of many Americans who are faced with those decisions about having to buy health care coverage on their own out in the open market, perhaps we would get a little more creative about the unequal treatment from the Tax Code for employer-derived insurance versus an individually owned policy. Perhaps we would get a little bit more creative about providing a little more flexibility in a health savings account.

Perhaps we would get a little bit more flexible even if we are of the mindset that said, Well, we are going to extend our single-payer health care to more and more people. Well, what if Members of Congress had the same problem finding a doctor that your senior citizens at home tonight are having when they call up the doctor they've seen all of their lives and are told, Sorry, we can't take any more Medicare patients?

Well, H.R. 4190 is an intriguing concept. I haven't had much interest as far as cosponsorship is concerned, but it's still out there. It's still available, and I welcome Members from both sides of the aisle to think about that, to look at that, and see if we couldn't forge a common bond and a good-faith effort to really do something for the people who lack insurance coverage in this country or the people who are fearful that they will lose their insurance company if their job changes or their financial situation changes.

There's a lot of things out there on the horizon, Madam Speaker. There is a lot of good that this Congress can do. I think it is important for me to make the point one last time that medicine is evolving in a big way. It's going to change significantly in our lifetime.

□ 2045

Congress can participate in that evolution, and actually participate and be a force for good if we're only willing to pick up and take on the work that the American people have sent us here to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, we're here this evening as part of the Speaker's 30-Something Working Group, and I'm going to be joined by some other members of that group who will be familiar faces to our colleagues who have participated in these Special Orders presentations.

We're going to talk specifically tonight about the budget that the President dropped on our doorstep on Monday. Now, this was an exciting series of days for the American people. We, of course, had Super Bowl Sunday, one of the most exciting Super Bowls we've ever seen. We had Super Tuesday last night, very exciting for all the American people to watch the unfolding for the Presidential election for this year. And in the middle of that, we had Monday.

And what happened on Monday? Most Americans say, well, not a whole lot happened, but in Congress a lot happened because the President put before us a \$3.1-trillion budget. Now, the American people may say, well, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is a lot of money. But what does it look like? What does \$3.1 trillion look like? Our colleagues may be interested to see that. This, Madam Speaker, is what \$3.1 trillion looks like. This is what the President sent us, both electronically and in paper format. This is a very big document, the entire Federal budget as proposed by the administration for the coming fiscal year 2009.

I'm going to talk a little bit about what's in this budget, but before I did that I wanted to take a little walk down memory lane for our colleagues. And many don't need to be reminded of this fact, but in the last 4 years of the previous administration we had four consecutive budget surpluses. And those surpluses, at the end of that administration and the beginning of the current administration, budget surpluses were forecast as far as the eye can see. And there was every reason to expect that the budget was going to be balanced throughout the next administration. The projection over 10 years by the Congressional Budget Office was \$5.5 trillion of budget surplus over 10 years. That was the projection.

Well, now we're 7 years, going on 8 years, into this new administration. This is the eighth and final budget that President Bush is going to send to this Congress. And what has been the outcome of this \$5.5 trillion surplus? And we talked about the Presidential election, Madam Speaker, and I would remind my colleagues about the debate of the 2000 election. The number one issue that was discussed in that election was, what are we going to do with this surplus? We have an enormous budget surplus, \$5.5 trillion, and all the ways that that money could be used. Are we going to pay down the debt? Are we going to shore up Social Security, put that money into the trust fund? How are we going to use this enormous surplus that's facing us over the next 10 years? That was the debate in the year 2000.

Well, in this Presidential election year we're not having that debate anymore because, you see, Madam Speaker, that surplus is gone. That surplus was gone in the first year of this administration. Instead of \$5.5 trillion of budget surplus over a 10-year period, we've had \$3.5 trillion of deficit spending over the first 7 years of this administration. And I'm going to talk in some detail about what this fiscal year 2009 budget says, and it includes an enormous amount of deficit spending.

What we have before us is a budget that for the eighth time in 8 years continues enormous deficit spending. But we can't lose sight of the fact that when this administration first came into office, that wasn't the projection. That wasn't the way it was supposed to be and that wasn't the way it had to be. But, unfortunately, decisions were made in a fiscally irresponsible manner, and now before us is a budget that is \$407 billion over budget. We have a \$407 billion deficit for one year, fiscal year 2009, the third highest single year budget deficit ever submitted to the Congress behind only the budget that was sent to us last year by this President, which was \$410 billion, and the 2004 budget also submitted to this Congress by the President.

So we have a record here of destroying projected surpluses and creating record deficits. \$9.2 trillion of debt, Madam Speaker, faces this country before this \$400 plus billion deficit that's been submitted to us.

We can't continue to charge things to the credit card. The way the previous administration turned the all-time record deficits of the 1980s into all-time record surpluses in the 1990s was through pay-as-you-go budget scoring. And that's very simple: It's what we all do in our own home checkbooks. It's what every business in America is forced to do. You have to have money on one side of the ledger to spend it on the other. And if you want to increase spending or if you see a decrease in your revenue, you have to have an offset on the other side to balance it out. Well, those are the rules that this Congress operated under from 1991 through 2001.

Unfortunately, this administration did away, and the Congress, in conjunction at that time in 2001 going into 2002, did away with pay-as-you-go budget scoring. And since that time, before this current session of Congress, every penny that was spent through the Federal Government was charged to the national credit card. We're going to let somebody else worry about it. We're going to transfer this funding to our children, our grandchildren, and our grandchildren's grandchildren. Well, unfortunately, the problem with using credit cards that way is the bill comes due, and the bill has come due, Madam Speaker.

We're going to talk about the coming economic crisis that this country faces, the possibility, if not the certainty, of a recession, and the economic stimulus

package that this Congress came together in a bipartisan way to put forward to help resolve that issue. We're going to save that discussion for a little bit later.

But in the discussion over the budget, it can't be lost that in presenting a \$407 billion deficit budget before this Congress, that this President has made incredibly deep cuts in some very important programs that mean a lot to a lot of people in this country. Veterans programs, veterans health care, slashed. Medicare cut by \$556 billion over 10 years, a cut in Medicare at a time when you're exploding the deficit by \$407 billion. And we're going to talk specifically about the misplaced priorities included in this budget.

Before we go line by line and get into that level of detail, Madam Speaker, I do want to turn it over at this point to my 30-Something colleague, Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut, who has joined us and is going to give us some detail on what he views this budget to be.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you very much, Mr. ALTMIRE. I don't want to take too much time because I know the American people are eager to hear your detailed line-by-line analysis of the President's budget, so let me be brief.

You hit it on the head here. I mean, this budget that the President has proposed to us is the worst of both worlds. It cuts spending on programs that everyday middle-class families and seniors and the disabled use to simply grab hold of the apparatus of opportunity that has been stolen from them, and at the same time, it continues to spend wildly in other parts of the budget. It continues to give away massive, unjustified tax breaks for the richest 1 percent of Americans that aren't even being asked for by many of those people. And it results in a pretty ugly picture over the next several years for this country if we were to adopt the budget that the President put before us.

It would mean massive cuts, as you've already laid out, to health care programs, to law enforcement programs. And, Mr. ALTMIRE, this budget has got a 100-percent cut to the COPS program. The COPS program is the acronym for the community policing initiative that was started by President Clinton over 10 years ago. It is one of the most successful law enforcement programs that this Nation has ever seen. Any Member of this House on the Republican side of the aisle or the Democratic side of the aisle can just go down to their local police department, any one of them, and ask their local cops whether or not community policing has worked. It has. That's not me saying it, that's not just the statistics saying it, that's the experiences of thousands of community policemen who have been on the beat for years.

Now, what's happened over time is the Republican Congress year after year slashed and burned that line item, and so many communities either had

to take cops off the community policing beat or start picking up the tab themselves. That means increased property taxes for people because somebody has to pay for it. And this budget that we're looking at right now takes out the entire amount for community policing. I guess I just don't understand how you justify that. I mean, I would love to have somebody from the administration on this floor try to explain in a commonsense way why they don't believe that the experiences of thousands of communities and thousands of police officers is true, which is that community policing works.

But here's the other side of this equation, Mr. ALTMIRE, and I know we're going to talk about this. At the same time, it's not like we're getting anywhere for all of the cuts in this budget because this budget envisions the Federal deficit continuing to explode. Now, this is a small little chart, you probably can't see it, but this is a pretty dramatic, but accurate, representation of what's going to happen to the Federal debt.

In 2001, we had about \$5.8 trillion in Federal debt, and you can at least see that it only is going in one direction. Under the President's budget, by 2013 we're going to owe \$13.3 trillion to foreign nations, Mr. ALTMIRE.

We are cutting funding for programs that matter, we are spending money wildly in other parts of the budget, primarily in the defense budget, and what we get in the end is a Federal budget that is more out of whack, more out of balance than it ever has been, and families who are struggling, amidst this economic slowdown, who are going to see less services and less help from their government.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I'm sure the gentleman from Connecticut would agree that it's ironic, given the fact that it was a week ago that we sat here together in this Chamber and listened to the President's State of the Union Address. And I liked some of what the President had to say on fiscal responsibility, challenging the Congress, challenging his administration to take the budget and make tough decisions and be fiscally responsible.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Let me stop you there for a second, because I liked what he said, too. But I would have liked it if he had said it for the last 7 years of his administration. I mean, you know, I hope it wasn't lost on anyone watching that State of the Union speech that for the last seven Congresses, as the Republican-led majority has spiraled spending out of control, has added on political earmark after political earmark, the President was absolutely silent on that matter. And it is just incredibly convenient that in the year in which the Democrats take control of the House of Representatives is the first year that we hear in a State of the Union speech the President talking about grants in Federally approved budgets.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Well, and again, the things that were said as far as fiscal responsibility made some sense, and I was happy to hear them. And you're right, we had not heard them over the past 7 years, and that led to the deficits that the gentleman and I have both talked about.

Now, we sat here and we heard that. And I thought that hopefully that would translate to the President submitting a budget where the actions actually matched the words that we had heard a week ago. Unfortunately, it didn't. The President, a week later, submits to Congress a budget that's \$407 billion out of balance. And we're living in a time when the second largest line item in the Federal budget that is before us is the interest on the national debt, which is \$9.2 trillion. The second largest line item in this budget is interest on the national debt. Now, that alarms me, Mr. MURPHY, and I'm sure it alarms you. And I would want to do something about that if I was submitting a budget before Congress. And I would want to show, having just talked about fiscal responsibility, that I was committed to fiscal responsibility. But, unfortunately, we have a budget that makes all the wrong decisions because it is fiscally irresponsible, it does have misplaced priorities, it does move in the wrong direction as far as increasing the deficit at a time when we already have a record debt, but it cuts programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

This is at a time when more and more Americans are struggling to afford health care, especially senior citizens. And to propose a budget that cuts Medicare by \$556 billion over a 10-year period, at the same time freezing payments to hospitals, to nursing homes, to hospices, to home health agencies, it just doesn't make any sense because health care costs aren't going to stop. Health care costs have been going up above the rate of inflation every year for as far as anyone can remember.

□ 2100

The technology that's used for health care, the increase in the amount of baby boomers that are qualifying for the Medicare program for the first time this year, in 2008. The costs of Medicare are exploding. So to just say we are going to cut Medicare over the next 10 years by \$556 billion doesn't mean health care is going to be less expensive, fewer people are going to qualify for Medicare, and fewer people are going to use the program. And certainly it doesn't mean that home health agencies, hospices, and hospitals are going to have fewer expenses just because we are going to be reimbursing them.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ALTMIRE. I would.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Let's hammer that home in a real world way for people. What does it mean when the President's budget reduces payments

to nursing homes? In Connecticut, we have had a real crisis with a particular nursing home group that has gotten a lot of attention in the paper, Mr. ALTMIRE, in the last several months regarding some really inexcusable conditions in those nursing homes, low levels of staffing, no remediation when violations had been found. And that problem is not going to get better if the solution from the Federal Government is to cut the funding that goes to those nursing homes. These nursing homes are already stretched very thin. There already isn't enough staff to cover the residents and make sure that seniors that are staying there are living under safe and humane conditions at all times in some places.

This cut that the President is talking about in the cut and reimbursement rates to nursing homes is going to have a direct effect on the care that many thousands, hundreds of thousands of seniors get in this country. Your loved ones, your neighbors, their care is going to be compromised by this.

The safety of your community is potentially going to be compromised by a zeroing out of the COPS budget. Communities will be less safe because there will be fewer community police on the beat. Those are the real world consequences of the budget that the President is putting before us.

And the question is just a matter of choices. And that's what I hope that every Member of this House goes out and endeavors to ask over the next month or so as we debate this Bush budget, which is are you sure that your community wants to spend another \$70 billion in Iraq rather than put cops on the beat or put staff in your grandmother's nursing home? Are you sure that the constituents in your district want to give away another massive tax break to the richest 1 percent of Americans instead of putting cops on the beat or putting staff in your grandmother's nursing home? Those are the questions that people are going to have to ask. And I think, Mr. ALTMIRE, there's only one answer to that in any district in this country whether you are represented by a Republican or a Democrat.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And the gentleman knows that there are three legs to this stool that we are talking about. One is the increase in spending leading to the deficit. One is the misplaced priorities of the cuts to programs that are critically important. The third is what's left out of this budget that we all know we have to deal with, and I'm going to save that discussion for a little bit later as we walk through some of these programs. But the full cost of the Iraq war and the cost of the alternative minimum tax relief for this year are not included in this budget. So a \$407 billion deficit without even including probably the two largest items that we are going to have to face in the next year, we'll get to that point, but there are a lot of issues here.

When I talk to people when I go back home in the district, I hear a lot about

entitlement spending, and when I go home, I think I can make a pretty good case that Medicare is important and we shouldn't be cutting Medicare at a time when the number of people qualifying for Medicare is rising exponentially and health care costs are going up. I can make a pretty good case, I think, for that. But I will still hear people say, You know what? I'm not on Medicare. That's an entitlement program. I don't care about that. Cut it. It's a boondoggle. Just cut it. I do hear people say that. They're wrong, but they say it. Well, there are some things in this budget that nobody, nobody in their right mind could justify freezes or cuts in these types of programs. And maybe our colleagues are out there and they say, Show me. What are you talking about? What is in the budget that we shouldn't cut?

Well, how about research, health care research through the National Institutes of Health? I think that's something that affects everybody. If you're not directly affected by health care research, you certainly have somebody in your family or you have somebody, a loved one or a friend, that is affected. And let's talk about the type of research that we are talking about.

This budget freezes funding for life-saving medical research at the NIH, National Institutes of Health, regarding diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, and heart disease. At a time when our medical technology in this country is greater than anywhere else in the world and our research and our ability to find treatments and cures for these diseases exceeds any time in the history of the planet, we are going to cut funding for medical research for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, and heart disease? I think, Mr. MURPHY, that we make a pretty good case that that's not a cut that should happen.

This budget also slashes funding, and this is inexcusable, slashes funding by \$433 million, 7 percent of the overall budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, responsible for infectious disease control, prevention programs, and health promotion. So we hear a lot about the avian flu, the bird flu, the possibility of a pandemic through diseases, whether it be a terroristic issue or just something we can't control on the health side. That may be the number one public health threat facing the country right now, the possibility of a pandemic flu, a worldwide spread of some disease, and we're going to take this opportunity to cut the Centers for Disease Control specifically for infectious diseases by 7 percent? That's what we are going to cut in this budget when we are adding \$407 billion to the national debt for 1 year? I think it's inexcusable. So I really don't think there is anybody that I am going to run into in my district that's going to say that's a good idea.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I just want to share a story with you, if you

will yield, Mr. ALTMIRE. I was getting on a plane this morning to come down to Washington from my district, and an older gentleman recognized me as I was going through the security checkpoint. And he stopped me, and he said, I have written you a letter. I've got a real problem with what you're doing down there. And I said, Talk to me about it.

And he looked me in the eye and started to tear up a little bit, and he said, My wife died of cancer last year. And he said, I can't for the life of me understand why you guys, and he lumped us all together, and I tried to explain the differences a little bit to him, but it was a very emotional moment. He said, I can't understand how you guys are cutting the funding for the programs that might save the life of the next wife who has cancer and instead you're spending money, billions of dollars, overseas on a war that's making us less safe. And he was tearing up.

I mean, this is a personal and emotional issue for so many people in this country, as it should be, because they know. They read about the advances that are being made in science. Whether it be stem cell research or the thousands of other lines of inquiry that are making progress every day in this country, they know that it could be their loved one's disease whose cure or treatment is right around the corner. This should be a personal issue to everyone in this Chamber, and everyone should have to answer that question that you posed as to how on Earth we can pass a budget that freezes medical research that is going to cure diseases and make people better just in order to balloon a deficit, just in order to fund a war, just in order to fund massive tax cuts for the wealthy. The priorities are just so screwed up, and any person in this world can tell a story of a loved one who would be hurt by those cuts.

Mr. ALTMIRE. Absolutely. And I thank the gentleman for that story. And I've had similar circumstances in my district where people wonder why we are cutting Alzheimer's funding, where they have a loved one who has struggled with that disease.

I also want to talk about education and what this budget does for education. I think just about anyone should agree that's a national priority. Few things in the budget are more important than education. Well, what does this budget do?

This budget freezes education funding, which results in cuts in real terms. And instead of investing in innovation in the classroom, the budget eliminates, eliminates, the \$267 million program providing grants to States for classroom technology. It freezes the \$179 million mathematics and science partnerships. At a time when we're struggling to compete in the global economy with countries like China and others that are investing heavily in science education, we are cutting it. At least the President is proposing cutting it in his budget.

It freezes targeted improvement and achievement in math and science programs that do that. And instead of making college more affordable, the budget eliminates, completely eliminates, supplemental education opportunity grants; the Perkins loan program, one of the staples of student assistance for higher education in this country, eliminates; and the Leveraging Education Assistance Partnership program, the LEAP program, which many of my colleagues know is necessary to provide financial support specifically targeted to needy students who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to pursue a higher education. These are the programs that are being eliminated under this budget. Not frozen, not cut, but eliminated.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. At the very time, Mr. ALTMIRE, where our country is most in need of a skilled workforce. I mean you know it, because you do the same tours that I do to manufacturing facilities and work-sites, that every company in our district is screaming to us, Do something about the workforce. I can hire people if you make sure that they are trained and educated and ready to work on day one. And so as we're sort of seeing a massive slowdown in this economy, potentially on the way to a recession, this is the very worst time to be cutting back our commitment to higher education programs, to worker and job training programs. And it runs totally counter to what we have been doing here in this Congress.

I mean, we need to remind the President that he signed into law the biggest expansion in college aid since the GI bill, increasing the maximum allowable Pell grant, the direct grant to students by \$500, providing for loan forgiveness to potentially tens or hundreds of thousands of students who go into public service professions; and, most importantly, cutting the interest rate for student loans in half from 6.8 to 3.4 percent, which is going to save the average college student in Connecticut about \$4,000 over the lifetime of the repayment of their loan. That's real dollars when you couple it together with the other benefits that that package had.

And that was a bipartisan success. That was conceived by Democrats. It took Democrats taking control of Congress to put that on the agenda. But there were a lot of our friends on the Republican side of the aisle that voted for it, and there was a President, maybe reluctantly, because he changed his position over time, but there was a President that signed that.

So we have come together as a Congress to recognize the importance of helping kids and helping families pay for the increasing cost of higher education, and we should especially recognize the importance of that when our economy is having trouble getting its engine going. That's when we should be investing in workers. That's when we should be investing in education. And

as you have so ably and accurately outlined, Mr. ALTMIRE, this President's budget does an immediate 180 degree turn on the investments that we have been making and should continue to make in higher education.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And the gentleman from Connecticut represents a district in some ways that is similar to my district. We both have a manufacturing base that has suffered in recent years as a result of the global economy and a variety of factors. And as the gentleman said, at the very time when we should be finding ways to help people that have suffered as a result of these job losses and a loss of manufacturing, find new job training sources, find educational opportunities for our kids so they can stay in our communities instead of having to leave town, a problem that we are struggling with, I think, probably in both of our districts, the President uses this budget as an opportunity to eliminate, not freeze, not cut, but eliminate vocational education.

And he slashes the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program by 45 percent; afterschool programs by 26 percent; teacher quality State grants by \$100 million, which helps incentivize high quality people to go into the teaching profession, people who have other options, who could become doctors or lawyers or chemists or any other profession. We want to incentivize the best and brightest in this country to go into teaching to educate our kids, and everyone knows the importance of what goes along with that. Well, the President proposes cutting the budget by \$100 million for that program.

And, similarly, the gentleman from Connecticut talked about the fact that middle-class workers are seeing their wages stagnate and American jobs have been lost, 17,000 lost jobs just last month. And at this time when we should be finding ways to stimulate the economy and create jobs, instead, the President's budget slashes \$234 million for job training programs.

□ 2115

Again, not to repeat myself, but it is worth pointing out, in an atmosphere of a budget that creates \$407 billion in deficit spending, out of balance, and that slashes employment services more than \$500 million in cuts for Americans looking for work. These are people who are motivated, who want to find jobs, who are looking for work, and he eliminates grants to States to provide employment services for job seekers and employers cutting one-stop career centers. These are all programs that my constituents benefit from that get heavily used in western Pennsylvania. We have had manufacturing losses, and we are trying to find ways to retrain those workers so they can move into other careers, educate themselves so they can stay in western Pennsylvania, and what are we doing? The President is proposing cutting these job training programs. It is just inexcusable.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It doesn't make sense. It wouldn't make sense even in good economic times, Mr. ALTMIRE, because you know even in the so-called boom years of the 1990s and earlier in this decade, those jobs were still leaving Pennsylvania. Those jobs were still leaving the northwestern part of Connecticut. And you always need to have just that safety net, just enough help for people to bounce back, because the folks that live in our districts, as they do across the Nation, these are proud, proud people. They want a job. They want to work hard. They do not want to be out of work. They do not want to be undertrained. And they are going to take the opportunities that we give them just to be able to bounce back and reenter the economy. That is all we are talking about with these programs. This isn't permanent job assistance. This isn't the welfare state. This is just, listen, your company went out of business, shipped their jobs over to China, shipped their jobs down to Mexico. We're going to help you for a certain period of time learn a new skill so you can get back and be a productive member of society. That is an important project to undertake in any economic time but most critical now when more and more people need that help, Mr. ALTMIRE, that is critical right now.

Mr. ALTMIRE. And the gentleman knows there is another thing that our regions in the country share and that is that we have harsh winters. We have been known to have harsh winters. And another thing that gets cut in this budget inexcusably is home heating assistance. And with regard to energy generally, we have a time where we have all time record energy prices. Families across the country are struggling with finding a way to pay their bills directly related to the price of oil and gas.

And at that time, you would think that the President would view that as a priority in his budget. But instead, it severely cuts assistance to seniors and to families with children in paying their home heating bills through the LIHEAP program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, very important in my area in western Pennsylvania. He cuts it by \$570 million nationwide, \$19 million of which comes from the State of Pennsylvania. And this is going to force States to reduce the number of households getting help through the LIHEAP program nationwide by 1.2 million people. These are low-income families with children. These are senior citizens that simply don't have the financial ability to pay their heating costs, and we are going to knock, with this budget, 1.2 million of them off the rolls.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Let's view this through a broader prism, and I think if you do, you see that this cut, in particular, is even crueler because we were set up for this moment. I mean, this has been 7 years of an energy policy which has been designed to

do only one thing, a cynic might say, put more money into the hands of the big international oil companies, run by a lot of the friends of the folks that are in this administration. We have had an energy policy which has done nothing, has done nothing, essentially, to decrease the amount that people are paying to gas up their car or heat their homes. We have profits of record magnitudes coming from ExxonMobil and Chevron and BP and all of these major multinational oil conglomerates. We have had a Federal policy, led by this President and probably more accurately led by this Vice President, Vice President CHENEY in his secret, closed-door meetings that have constructed most of this energy policy, that have stolen millions of dollars from American consumers with the tax breaks and regulatory giveaways to the oil industry that have allowed them to continue with no abandon to rip off American consumers. The LIHEAP program is just an added insult to an energy policy which has been taking money out of American taxpayers' pockets and putting it into the oil companies' treasuries.

The LIHEAP program simply says this, this has been the policy of this administration and the Republican Congress for the last 8 years, for the last 6 years, they have said, we're going to do nothing to help you with prices, we're just going to continue to watch energy prices spiral and spiral and spiral and have no short-term or long-term strategy to do anything about it. But on the back end, we're going to help you a little bit with some subsidy dollars for the people in your community that are so hard up they are going to need some help to pay those bills or else they would freeze in their houses, which is what you're talking about. You're talking about people who would potentially freeze in their houses if they don't get a little bit of help from their government to pay for their heating oil bills, largely seniors on fixed incomes in our community. And now not only do we have an administration that is not willing to work with us on reforming our energy policy to break our addiction to foreign-produced oil, to finally get a grip on these spiraling oil prices because we have got an administration that cares more about the pockets of their oil company friends than the pockets of the regular, average, everyday consumers, now also we are taking away that small, tiny little subsidy that prevents people from freezing in their homes because they can't afford to heat it.

When you step back a little bit, when you are right in that budget, everybody here should make it one of their top priorities, whether you live in a cold weather State or a warm weather State, to put the money back for the LIHEAP program. Put the money back for the heating assistance for low-income people. But let's also understand that it is even more egregious given

the fact that we could have done something 10 years ago, 5 years ago, to prevent ourselves from getting into a position where we are continuing to subsidize these big energy companies and have to be reliant on low-income heating assistance to keep people warm in the winters.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I think this is exactly why it is important to have this discussion, to walk through these programs in the budget and talk about what exactly are we talking about when we talk about these draconian cuts that we are facing? And as I said earlier, I have people in my district that say, cut it, cut it, Federal spending, we need to cut it. And we do have an enormous deficit. We have an all time record debt, and we do need to find a way to reduce the Federal deficit. Nobody can disagree with that.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Just to make one point there, the Democratic budget that we passed last year balances the Federal budget in 5 years. For the first time since the Clinton administration, we are going to have a balanced Federal budget. This isn't pie-in-the-sky rhetoric that you are putting out there, Mr. ALTMIRE. The Democratic budget found a way that we passed at the end of last year to invest money in education, in environmental protection, in health care and do it in a responsible way that provides for a balanced budget in 5 years. There is a way to do it, and we are finding it here. We can do it again.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is exactly where I was going to go. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I'm in your head, Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I appreciate that. The fact is the Democrats in this Congress have made the tough decisions. We submitted a budget last year, and I am sure we will do so again this year that achieves balance for the first time since the previous administration. Nobody can disagree that there is room for more cuts. There is room for more reductions. But what we want to do here tonight in this 30-Something Special Order is to talk about the programs that shouldn't be cut, the programs that are critically important to this country that the President has made a decision to reduce.

We talked about Medicare. We talked about life-saving medical research. We talked about the Centers for Disease Control, infectious disease prevention. We talked about education. We talked about the LIHEAP program, home heating energy assistance, and unfortunately the list doesn't end there. It is incredible to think that at a time when we are facing a recession in this country driven by a lot of different factors, but nobody can dispute perhaps the number one driving factor over the past several months and maybe the past few years has been this subprime mortgage issue and home foreclosures and people struggling to afford their mortgages, finding a way to make that

monthly payment. Despite the growing problems in the subprime mortgage crisis, inexplicably this budget that we are talking about tonight cuts loan counseling for those at risk of losing their homes. The name of the program is the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. It cuts it by 87 percent, at a time when we are struggling as a Nation with a subprime crisis that the world has never seen before, or at least America has never seen before. At a time when the crisis is at its most acute point, we are going to cut by 87 percent the program that helps those most at risk, 2 million people in this country at risk of losing their homes. The people most at risk of losing their homes are facing an 87 percent cut. It is ludicrous.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I know we have our freshman colleagues coming in after us, so we are going to give them some room here.

But I want to turn for a few minutes to a subject that you alluded to earlier, and I know you may have some more areas here in which we want to talk about what the devastating cuts are going to do, but I want to talk for a second before we hand it off to some of our other freshman colleagues about what is not in the budget, and you alluded to it before, most importantly, the cost of the war isn't truly reflected in this budget.

In fact, some staff members on the Republican side made a comment earlier today that they even admit that the \$70 billion that is put in this budget is essentially just a downpayment on what we are going to need to perpetuate the costs of this war in Iraq for the rest of the year. And it is just I think becoming impossible for our constituents to really understand why we can't include the costs of this war, whether you agree with it or disagree with it. We will save that for another day. Mr. ALTMIRE, you know where I am on this question. I believe that we should get ourselves out of this mess sooner rather than later in a planned-for way. But while we are there, and while we are still spending money, let's pay for it. Let's budget for it responsibly.

Now, I think you could probably make the argument in the first year or 2 years of this conflict that it was emergency spending, and that there was an argument to be made in the first few years of the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan that we were going to need to borrow some money for that. I have no problem understanding that in emergency circumstances, we are going to have to do some deficit spending. Nobody likes that. But with regard to the economic stimulus package that we are passing, it makes sense in very narrow circumstances to borrow some money in order to get some short-term gain when the spending is on an emergency basis. But we are 5 years into this war now, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is not catching us by surprise anymore. It

is not an emergency expenditure anymore. We can plan years in advance for the money that we are spending on this war. There is no justification for this money not being in the budget. What happens is it is just hidden. When you get these figures about how big the deficit is going to be when we pass the President's budget, which we obviously won't do, but if we were to pass the President's budget, that doesn't even take into account the real costs of this war. If I were a taxpayer out there that was for this war, or if I were a taxpayer out there that was against this war, I would be greatly aggrieved, and I think they are greatly aggrieved by the fact that we are not paying for it. Well, we're going to. We're going to. Because these bills, whether they are on the tab of the war or whether they are on the tab of the domestic programs that haven't been paid for for years, they are going to be paid at some point. Those bills and those promissory notes are going to come due, and they are going to be paid for by your children and my future children, and your future grandchildren and my future grandchildren. We are hamstringing generations to come to pay for the costs of this war, and we should account for it.

The second thing that is not covered, Mr. ALTMIRE, is this thing that we keep on talking about down here called the alternative minimum tax. Now, I know there are still a lot of people out there that don't understand what the alternative minimum tax is because year after year, Congress has done the right thing and has held in abeyance the adjustment to the alternative minimum tax that would essentially make it cover most middle-class taxpayers in this country. In my district in Connecticut we have about 20,000 people that pay the alternative minimum tax that was initially set up just to cover the richest of the rich who weren't paying any tax through deductions or were paying very little tax through deductions and credits.

□ 2130

If we don't fix the Alternative Minimum Tax again this year, in my district it is going to go from like 19,000 people paying it to like 80,000 people paying it. It is going to be a huge problem, thousands of additional dollars in tax obligations for millions of Americans. Well, the President doesn't say anything about that in this budget. I think he just assumes that we are going to fix it again, but he doesn't put the cost of doing that in the budget.

So, if you tack on the costs of the war that aren't in this budget, if you tack on the costs of once again fixing the Alternative Minimum Tax which we should do and put that in the budget, this deficit is enormous, is enormous. I think we should be having a real argument over the real cost of this budget. Through all this sort of gimmickry that we see, all this trickery in how the numbers are accounted for, the

war is not in there, the Alternative Minimum Tax fix isn't in there.

I know this sort of goes over the head of a lot of people out there, because they say this is just the logistics of a budget. This is just numbers, where you put one number, where you put another number. It matters, because you can't hide money that we have to spend. Whether you put it in the budget or out of the budget, if you spend the dollar, somebody is going to have to pay for it. Maybe not now, but in 10 years or 20 years.

Mr. ALTMIRE, part of the reason that the 30-Something Working Group talks so much about deficit spending is because we are going to be around when those bills come due. We have an obligation, I think a special obligation as some of the younger Members of this House, to cry bloody murder when this President tries to do more deficit spending than he is even telling us here, because it is going to be our generation and our kids' generation that are going to have to pay for it.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is right. The gentleman talked about the assumption in the budget being submitted. Because the gentleman wasn't here when I showed this, I want to show the gentleman, as he knows, what \$3.1 trillion looks like. This is what it looks like. This is what the President dropped on your desk and mine on Monday. This is the budget we are talking about. So for our colleagues who are joining us late, this is the budget that we are discussing tonight.

The assumption that was made in putting this budget together by the administration, by President Bush, was that Congress would act on the Alternative Minimum Tax, and, of course, we will. We are not going to allow that to lapse, which would result in an increase for 23 million people in the country, a tax increase, 70,000 in my district, I think the gentleman said 80,000 additional in his district. So, of course, we are going to deal with the AMT.

It is tough. It is a difficult way to have to do policy, to do it year-to-year. It is probably not the best way. We made a tough decision in December, we will make another tough decision at the end of this year, and the President knows we are going to have to do it and we are going to have to pay for it, because that is what we have to do. It is not included in the cost of this \$3.1 trillion budget.

I know we are running short on time, so I did want to just summarize a few of the other programs, saving one in particular for the end that near and dear to my heart, that are cut in this budget. Because, again, people say what are we talking about when you talk about all these cuts?

We talked earlier about the subprime mortgage funding and so forth. How about highway funding? Is there anyone in the country that can disagree that we have a national crisis with infrastructure? We had the unfortunate

situation last fall with the bridge collapse in Minnesota which highlighted a problem that many knew but really in a very tragic way shined the spotlight on the incredible need that exists in this country for infrastructure improvement, for bridge repair, for highway repair. We simply do not have anywhere near close to the amount of money necessary to fix the roads and bridges that need fixing right now, let alone all the new construction that needs to take place.

The district that I represent, we are talking about funding for bridges and roads and docks and dams along the riverways. Well, with highway funding in particular, the President's budget unbelievably proposes to cut funding for highways by \$800 million below the amount guaranteed by the previous transportation reauthorization bill that we did several years ago.

Every \$1 billion in new infrastructure investment creates 47,500 jobs in this country and a shortfall in highway revenue is projected in fiscal year 2009, which is what this budget covers. So we have a projected shortfall, yet the President still recommends a \$800 million cut. And at a time when we lost jobs in January, who knows how many jobs we are going to lose in the months ahead as we face what may turn out to be a recession, we are talking about a problem that can create nearly 50,000 jobs for every \$1 billion in new investment, and we are going to cut \$800 million. It makes no sense.

Homeland security, the gentleman from Connecticut talked about the importance of homeland security, which nobody can dispute, perhaps the number one issue facing the country today. Well, so what does the President's budget do? The calculation of his budget excludes \$2.7 billion in border emergency funding from Congress, which was approved in fiscal year 2008. When this is taken into account, the President is only proposing to increase less than \$100 million for fiscal year 2009 for homeland security needs for the entire agency.

In addition, the budget slashes funding for State Homeland Security Grant programs, first responders, police, firefighters, EMTs, people right out there on the front lines in our communities, many of them volunteers. This President's budget cuts \$750 million, 79 percent below the current year's funding level. For firefighter grants, \$450 million, 60 percent below, just for firefighter grants, and 79 percent below for all first responders.

It is incredible that this is the budget that was put before us. Who could possibly argue that that is a good policy decision, to cut funding for first responders by 79 percent?

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. This is all sort of hard to take in. As you said, that massive budget document gets dropped on us, and the parade of horrors is endless in terms of all of the commonsense programs, whether it is homeland security, whether it is law

enforcement, whether it is health care, whether it is research spending. It is just hard to handle. It is like it gets your brain going in overdrive. Then you got to step back for a second. I think it does make sense to step back and have a little bit of faith that now cooler and calmer heads can prevail.

It used to be when that budget was dropped on Congress' desk in January or February that it basically was the law of the land, that with a few changes here or there, the Republican-led Congress was going to rubber stamp that President's budget.

As much as Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ before we got here would come down and try to expose all of those damaging harmful cuts to middle-class families throughout this country, to people trying to make their way in this world, that it didn't matter, because so long as Republicans controlled this place, there was going to be essentially a rubber stamp on all of those cuts and more massive deficit spending, the most fiscally irresponsible set of Congresses in our lifetime.

That has changed now. That is different. And, listen. We are all fallible. We don't get every single choice right, even on our side of the aisle, Mr. ALTMIRE. But the good news is, is that we are going to find a way to push back most of those cuts, if not all of them. We are going to find a way to pass another budget which gets us a little bit closer to a balanced budget.

Now, the way we do that is sit here and expose all of the very harmful cuts and all the very harmful spending in this President's budget. But the American people should have some faith that you sent a new Democratic Congress here. You sent this new freshman class that we are a part of to pick apart that budget for the first time, and decide not only how to more compassionately spend American taxpayer dollars, but to more smartly spend them so that we are not racking up those huge deficits, so that we are starting to balance budgets again.

So this is all very damaging news, and I know we are probably going to close on some of the worse news in the budget, but I think people should have faith that we now have leadership in charge of this Congress that is going to be able to pull apart that budget and start setting us on a commonsense and compassionate course again.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the gentleman. I am going to talk about the most egregious, in my opinion, of all these cuts. And I know it is hard to believe having walked through them that there could be one in particular to point to. There is one that is particular to my constituents and to something that I support. We are going to turn it over momentarily to our freshman colleague, Mr. YARMUTH from Kentucky, who I am sure is going to talk more about some of these issues.

As Members of Congress, we are all given the opportunity to testify before

the Budget Committee and say here are our priorities. These are the one or two or three at the most things that we care about that we really want to see addressed in the budget.

I was asked over the break that we had in between the first session and the second session during the holidays, somebody came up to me in a shopping center and recognized me and said, hey, you know, how has the first year been? What are your experiences? What are you most proud of?

Without hesitating, for me, what I am most proud of that this Congress did last year was we had the highest funding increase for veterans health care in the 77 year history of the VA. We had to fight tooth and nail. We had to do it over multiple opportunities throughout the year. But in the end, the budget that we passed exceeded even the recommendations of the service organizations. The VFW, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, those organizations every year present to Congress their recommended funding levels for what they feel that they are going to need. For the first time ever, this Congress exceeded that.

So I am very proud of the work that we did as a Congress on veterans. And it was a bipartisan effort. It is something we can be proud to have worked together on.

Well, what does this budget do for veterans, something that I have made my number one priority in this Congress. And I think we as Congress have a good record so far on veterans, and I want to keep that good record going, and I want to prevent the cuts that the President's budget talks about.

It cuts veterans health care by \$20 billion over 5 years. Let me repeat that. This budget cuts veterans health care by \$20 billion over 5 years and cuts funding for constructing, renovating and rehabilitating medical care facilities in 2009, for which this budget is authorized.

Now, for me, that is very parochial, because I have \$200 million of VA health construction going on in Western Pennsylvania, a lot of which is in my district. Two different projects, \$200 million. So the President is coming in here at a time when we have the opportunity in Western Pennsylvania to be the preeminent health care system in the entire VA, top notch facilities, he is going to cut the construction funding, and he is going to cut funding even more egregiously for veterans health care by \$20 billion.

I am sure the gentleman can agree, there is no group that should stand ahead of our Nation's veterans when it comes time to make funding decisions.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It just begs the question, Mr. ALTMIRE. What was going through the minds of the Bush administration budget negotiators when they were sitting at the table last year negotiating with us as we were insisting on the biggest increase in veterans funding in the his-

tory of the program? I mean, we pushed that and pushed that and pushed that. You were courageous from the very first day that you got here in making that a priority.

It is just so terrible to think that, well, the Bush administration was sitting there finally saying yes to that enormous and important increase in veterans funding, that all the while they were drafting that budget. All the while as they were agreeing just 60 days ago to the biggest increase in veterans funding since the VA program began, they were drafting secretly a budget that was going to reverse everything they just agreed to. That just speaks to the worst of what happens in Washington, D.C., Mr. ALTMIRE.

Mr. ALTMIRE. That is right. I thank the gentleman. We are going to wrap it up as our time has expired. I would only point out on that note that this is the sixth year in a row that this budget raises health care costs on 1.4 million veterans, imposing \$5.2 billion in increased copayments on prescription drugs and new enrollment fees on veterans over 10 years. I wish I had more time to talk about that.

At this time I am going to thank the Speaker for the opportunity to address the House this evening with my colleague Mr. MURPHY from Connecticut.

□ 2145

THE BUDGET AND NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ARCURI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. YARMUTH. I want to thank my freshman colleagues for the very insightful and compelling arguments they raised concerning our budget, the budget proposal by the President for the 2009 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that what we are dealing with here is a situation in which those of us who were elected in 2006, freshman Members, so known as the majority makers, came to this Congress because the American people in that election of 2006 thought that the country was going in the wrong direction, and it wasn't so much one thing, I know a lot of people think that we were elected because of the war in Iraq, and certainly that was a factor.

I think more than anything else, the American people collectively decided that the priorities that have been established by the administration that was in office, beginning in 2000, we were taking the country in the wrong direction, that we were spending money, that we were emphasizing things that did not represent the best interests of the majority of the American people. They sent us here, therefore, to set a new pattern of doing business, a new way of setting priorities.

They wanted us to put the American people first. They wanted us to recog-

nize the true needs of this society, to recognize that government is a way of reorganizing and organizing our responsibilities to each other, that we could, as a government, actually create an economy that worked for everyone and not just for a very few, but that we could, again, set the country on a different direction, that we could use the tax revenues that were flowing to the Treasury to empower all people to make the best of their lives, to contribute to a more dynamic society. We really have set a different direction in this Congress, and I think we need to do much more.

But let's think back to 2006 and think about what the American people were confronted with when they looked at Washington. They looked at Washington and they said, we have a government there that is arrogant, that tends to favor the richest people in the country, that tends to favor global corporations, that thinks that if we allow the wealthiest and most powerful people to do as well as they possibly can financially, that there will be a trickle-down effect and it will, quote-unquote, float everyone's boat, and that this is what the proper role of government should be.

The American people said, no, we don't buy that. We've tried that. We tried it under the Reagan administration. We saw then that trickle-down economics does not work. We tried that for a few more years under the Bush administration. We found that, no, that doesn't work because, in fact, what we have seen is that from 2001 to 2006, 100 percent of the income growth in this country accrued to the benefit of the top 5 percent of the population, that, in fact, 95 percent of the people in this country did not see their standard of living increase despite the fact that they are working harder, they are working longer.

The average family has been working, the average household, 95 hours a week. That's two people working more than full time and still not getting ahead. So the American people said to us, we want to go in a different direction. We think that government can be a tool for progress, it can be a tool to create a society that distributes its benefits more broadly, and that we ought to take the position that rather than trying to let this trickle-down theory flow to everybody's boat that we ought to make a society in which everybody has a really good boat, and that everybody can swim on their own. In fact, the way to create a society that truly works over the long term is to empower every individual to be productive, to contribute to society and to have the power and the freedom and the support to improve his or her way of life.

Now we are confronted, once again, with a budget from the President of the United States which does exactly the same thing that they have been trying over and over and over again with very