

to get this amount of money, cutting out the taxes, and then I can spend it on this. We do just the opposite. We decide how to spend money, oh, and then we'll just get the money. We'll tax it or go into debt. Uncle Sam needs to budget like other Americans.

These are some considerations and some New Year's resolutions for Uncle Sam. I hope we impose a few of those. I think it's time we stop the credit card government.

And that's just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL'S YEARS OF SERVICE IN SENATE

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

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the now longest-serving Kentucky Senator in the history of the United States Senate. This is truly a historic milestone for both the Commonwealth of Kentucky and Senator MITCH MCCONNELL.

Recently, Senator MCCONNELL celebrated 25 years in the United States Senate, surpassing the great Senator Wendell Ford's previous record. By no means is this a small accomplishment, as our State has been the home to such noted Members of the Senate as Henry Clay, John J. Crittenden, Alben Barkley, and John Sherman Cooper, just to name a few.

The Senator did not become the influential man that he is today without hard work, dedication, and determination. He started his career as an intern on Capitol Hill, moved to legislative assistant, eventually deputy assistant attorney general under President Ford, to County Judge-Executive in Jefferson County, the largest county in our State, all before being elected by the people of Kentucky to serve in the United States Senate in 1984.

He led his classmates as student body president in college and then went on to be the president of the Student Bar Association in law school. He has garnered the respect of his peers for years; so it comes as no surprise that he has risen to be the leader of his party in the Senate, an accomplishment only one other Kentuckyan in history has ever achieved.

Parties aside, Senator MCCONNELL has fought for what he believes in with the same dedication and fervor as he did when fighting polio in his early childhood. He can point to a number of achievements, such as aiding struggling Kentucky tobacco farmers by orchestrating the tobacco buyout and providing significant aid to Kentucky's colleges and universities. His influence also extends outside the Congress and the Commonwealth with his work on the Appropriations, Agriculture, and Rules Committees, opposing dictators in Myanmar and fighting for human rights in Egypt and Cambodia among others. Like Senator Wendell Ford,

Senator MCCONNELL won his first statewide election by a small margin, but since that time he has become a mainstay in Kentucky.

Senator MCCONNELL and I are both students of history, and regardless of political differences, and we have a few of those, I believe it's important to recognize his truly outstanding achievements.

Mr. Speaker, today I ask the House to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL.

STATEMENT ON A PRESIDENTIAL COMMUTATION FOR FORMER U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS RAMOS AND COMPEAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, before President Bush leaves office next week, he has the power to correct a terrible injustice.

Over the past 2 years, Members of Congress have written to the President, as a group and individually, asking him to commute the sentences of imprisoned U.S. Border Patrol Agents Ramos and Compean.

It is well known that these border agents were convicted and sentenced to 11 and 12 years in prison for shooting and wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought \$1 million worth of marijuana across the U.S. border in 2005. This Saturday, January 17 of 2009, will mark the beginning of the agents' 3rd year in Federal prison.

On November 24, 2008, President Bush granted 14 pardons and two commutations. Clemency was granted to individuals convicted of crimes such as drug conspiracy, tax evasion, poisoning bald eagles, dumping hazardous waste, bank embezzlement, and theft of government property.

On December 22, 2008, the President issued 19 additional pardons and one commutation. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Ramos and Compean have not made the list.

With the help of Lou Dobbs and countless other news outlets, Americans across this Nation have learned of the unjust prosecution of these two men who were doing their job to protect our border. Since the agents' convictions, the White House has received thousands of phone calls from outraged citizens and letters sent by Members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle.

On November 20 of 2008, I joined Congressman BILL DELAHUNT, DANA ROHRABACHER, and others in a letter to pardon Attorney Ronald Rodgers, which outlined the reasons for our request. And most recently on December 11, 2008, I wrote the President that he commute the agents' sentences before they have to spend another Christmas in Federal prison, and, Mr. Speaker, I submit the letter for the RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 11, 2008.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to express my deep disappointment that the 14 pardons and two commutations you granted on November 24, 2008, did not include commutations for imprisoned U.S. Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Alonso Compean. Instead, clemency was granted to those convicted of crimes such as drug conspiracy, tax evasion, poisoning bald eagles, dumping hazardous waste, bank embezzlement and theft of government property.

Mr. President, this week I opened a Christmas card which pictured two beautiful families with three children each. I was deeply saddened when I realized these were photos of the Ramos and Compean families—who will face another Christmas with husbands and fathers locked away in federal prison if you fail to intervene on their behalf. Knowing that it has become customary during the final days of a president's term to grant pardons and commutations in criminal cases, I urge you to take the time to personally review the prosecution of agents Ramos and Compean. I am confident the facts of their case will lead you to the same conclusion countless American citizens have already reached: there are no individuals more worthy of presidential commutations than agents Ramos and Compean. The facts of the case will show—as Judge E. Grady Jolly stated on December 3, 2007, during the agents' appeal—"the government overreacted here * * * for some reason, this one got out of hand." By attempting to apprehend an illegal alien drug smuggler, agents Ramos and Compean were enforcing our laws—not breaking them. Simply put, the indictments against these men were unjustified.

As countless Americans and many in Congress have brought to your attention over the past two years, agents Ramos and Compean were convicted and sentenced to 11 and 12 years respectively for shooting and wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across the U.S. border in 2005. Both men entered prison on January 17, 2007, and have served nearly two years of their sentences. Since the agents' convictions, your office has received thousands of phone calls from concerned citizens and numerous letters from members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. Most recently, on November 13, 2008, I wrote a letter urging you to commute the agents' sentences to time served. On November 20, 2008, I also joined Congressmen Bill Delahunt, Dana Rohrabacher and others in a letter to Pardon Attorney Ronald Rodgers which outlined the rationale for this request.

Many disturbing details of the Ramos and Compean case have garnered national attention and raised serious concerns over the lack of fairness in the proceedings against these two men—including the prosecution's efforts to seek out and offer immunity to a habitual Mexican drug smuggler, a sealed indictment of the smuggler's subsequent drug offenses and insufficient proof of whether or not the smuggler was unarmed, as he claimed at trial. All of these factors strongly call into question whether justice was served.

Among the most serious matters warranting your consideration is the U.S. Attorney's decision to charge Ramos and Compean with violations of 18 U.S.C. §924(c)—which pertains to the use of a firearm during and in relation to the commission of a crime of violence and carries a mandatory 10-year sentence. Any failure by the agents to report

the shooting of the drug smuggler constitutes an administrative error that should have been addressed. However, the application of 18 U.S.C. §924(c) to two U.S. Border Patrol agents in lawful possession of their firearms appears grossly inappropriate. Because agents Ramos and Compean were required to carry firearms during the course of their duties, I urge you to consider commuting this 10-year mandatory minimum sentence enhancement.

Mr. President, the end of your term is quickly approaching and time is running out for you to heed the calls of the American people and reverse the grave injustice committed against agents Ramos and Compean. No useful purpose is served by the continued incarceration of these distinguished law enforcement officers. During this Christmas season, a time of peace and thanksgiving for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, I urge you to open your heart to the pleas of the American people and commute the sentences of these two Hispanic-American heroes.

Sincerely,

WALTER B. JONES,
Member of Congress.

A response from the White House said that the agents' requests for commutation "are receiving a careful and fair review." If the President takes the time to personally review the agents' case, I am confident the facts will lead him to the same conclusion that the majority of Americans have already reached: The indictments against these men were unjustified.

The President should carefully consider one of the most troubling aspects of this case: The agents were charged under a statute intended for violent criminals carrying guns, not for law enforcement officers acting in the line of duty. Because the border agents were required to carry firearms during the course of their duties, I urge the President to commute the 10-year mandatory sentence for these charges.

Mr. Speaker, time is running out for the President to reverse this grave injustice committed against Ramos and Compean. I pray that he will open his heart to the pleas of the American people and commute the sentences of these two deserving men.

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

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

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

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

IT'S TIME TO GIVE DIPLOMACY A CHANCE

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. A breath of fresh air filled the Capitol this morning. It happened during the confirmation hearings for HILLARY CLINTON. The Secretary of State-designate in her testimony said that "diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy" in the Obama administration.

□ 1945

This is exactly what the American people have been waiting 8 long years to hear. The current administration never used diplomacy, and the results have been devastating for us and for the world. The occupation of Iraq hasn't made us any safer. It has cost over \$1 trillion so far, helping to put our economy into a deep recession. It has devastated our reputation in the world. All of this is clear to just about everyone except our current leaders in the White House.

At his press conference yesterday, President Bush insisted that the occupation of Iraq hasn't damaged America's moral standing in the world. But his administration's policy of shooting first, asking questions later, has badly damaged our Nation's moral authority.

The use of torture has damaged it even more. Yesterday President Bush called the human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib a disappointment. But in recent weeks we have seen convincing evidence that Abu Ghraib was the result of deliberate administration policy. Talk about disappointment.

In February of 2002, the President signed an order stating that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to members of al Qaeda or the Taliban. Then high-ranking American officials took a series of actions that made torture a part of our interrogation practices in Iraq and elsewhere. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was one of the officials who gave his stamp of approval.

A bipartisan report issued by the Senate Armed Services Committee on December 11 documented this illegal action and how these actions came about. According to the committee, the authorization of aggressive interrogation techniques by senior officials conveyed the message that it was okay to retreat and degrade.

Then a week after the committee issued its report, Vice President CHENEY gave a shocking interview to the Washington Times. In the interview, he admitted that 33 prisoners were subjected to what he called "enhanced interrogation techniques." That's fancy bureaucratic language for torture. He even admitted that prisoners were subjected to waterboarding, which has been considered a form of torture ever since the Spanish Inquisition.

I know that conservatives like Vice President CHENEY have looked backwards for their policies, but the 15th century, Mr. Speaker, is much too far back. Look at the consequences of these policies of war, occupation and torture. The Middle East continues to be in turmoil and flames. Iran's influ-

ence continues to spread. People all around the globe have a negative opinion of the United States, which makes it much harder for us to get their help.

When America loses its moral authority, Osama bin Laden and other terrorists find it a lot easier to recruit new members. But with the change in our Nation's leadership on January 20, America has new hope. We have new hope for the future.

In addition to her comments about diplomacy this morning, HILLARY CLINTON said that "We must build a world with more partners and fewer adversaries," and she promised to work with Congress and not to treat us with contempt, as the current administration has. She said, and I quote her, "For me, consultation is not a catchword—it's a commitment."

And she quoted Terence, the Roman playwright, who said, "In every endeavor, the seemly course for wise (people) is to try persuasion first."

The current administration tried war and occupation for 8 years, and it didn't work, so it's time to give diplomacy a chance.

YOUR HARD-EARNED MONEY BELONGS TO YOU

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

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, this summer, spring, we sent Americans a stimulus check to help stimulate the economy. We actually gave them some money. We had already spent the money that they had given us for taxes, and so we went and borrowed some money and sent that money to the American people to let them try to stimulate our economy.

Evidently that didn't work as well as a lot of people thought it would, and so now there is a movement to spend much more, larger amount, triple, quadruple the amount of money that was spent this spring. Guess what? We don't have the money, and so we are going to go and borrow it.

So what we are on is this system of tax, spend, borrow. Tax, spend, borrow. It isn't working. The American people know that that's not the right prescription for getting us out of this economic slump. Yet that is the plan that will be brought before this body possibly this week.

This is going to be a big week for your children and grandchildren. We are going to have a \$350 billion second half of the stimulus or the bailout program, and now we are talking about nearly \$1 trillion in new spending for a stimulus package, \$1.3 trillion.

My friend from Texas spoke about the fact that Members from Congress are using their voting cards as credit cards. It's time, actually, for Members of Congress to start using their cards not as credit cards and mortgaging the future of our young people, but investing and beginning to spend money that