

that a Texas child has died from the recent outbreak of the H1N1 flu. This is a very worrisome situation, and we are all following it very closely.

Yesterday, Secretary Napolitano briefed Republicans on this matter, and we appreciate the administration's coordination with Congress. The administration has said that it currently has all the personnel and equipment it needs to handle the situation, but going forward, Congress is prepared to work on the request for additional funds in the supplemental.

I would note that Congress is in a much better position to deal with outbreaks such as this as a result of the hard work of Senator BURR and others, who have done a great deal on the issue of biopreparedness and on coordinating all of the relevant Government agencies. We stand ready to closely work with the administration to protect the American people as this situation unfolds.

BUDGET CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, from the very first days of the new administration, Senate Republicans have pledged to work closely with our new President and his Cabinet to find solutions to the Nation's many foreign and domestic challenges.

On the foreign policy front, we felt strongly about the need to work with the new administration on a unified agenda that protects the American people and furthers our interests abroad. So far, we have had two major points of convergence.

On the enormously important question of our strategies in both Afghanistan and Iraq, Republicans support the President's decision to follow, in both cases, the best advice of his military commanders on the ground.

We may part ways on a number of other foreign policy issues, some of which I outlined in greater detail earlier this week, but when it comes to the question of Iraq and Afghanistan, the President's strategy is one that most everyone can support.

Here at home, there have admittedly been fewer opportunities for agreement.

An ongoing recession and the continuing reverberations of a financial shock that began in the housing industry led both parties to come up with their own respective plans to jumpstart the economy in the short term and strengthen its foundations in the long term.

The administration's plan revolved around a trillion dollar stimulus that was neither timely, targeted, nor temporary—as well as a decision to press forward on several major, controversial legislative proposals. If the President's budget is fully implemented, it would double the national debt in just 5 years and nearly triple it in 10.

Republicans had a different approach. We worked closely with Democrats last fall to pass a financial rescue plan

aimed at stabilizing the overall economy. But we refused to support a second round of funds when the administration couldn't assure us it would only be used to address the crisis at hand.

When it came to an economic stimulus, Republicans pointed out the glaring weaknesses in the Democrat plan and we offered a plan of our own that would have cost half as much and gone straight to the root of the problem, which is housing.

We also suggested that instead of spending billions on wasteful projects, we loan State and local governments money. This would have encouraged the careful use of taxpayer dollars since State and local governments would have known they would have to pay the money back when the economy improved.

We also refused to support bailouts for the auto industry, since we don't think the Government should be picking winners and losers. We said bailouts would only delay necessary reforms for long-term success. Our position was recently vindicated when the automakers came back for even more money, forcing the administration to talk seriously about bankruptcy as a means of achieving the necessary restructuring.

When it comes to protecting taxpayers and to a mounting debt that our children will inherit, the new administration has been remarkably carefree. Most of this debt is being financed by China and countries in the Middle East, which of course increases the economic leverage these countries have over the United States.

Americans are worried about this and they should be. In a time of economic hardship, we should not be borrowing money we will not be able to pay back.

The current administration seems to disagree. In just 1 week in February, the administration's acts cost the American taxpayers more than \$1 trillion, or more than the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina combined.

Federal support for a single company in the financial sector now amounts to almost \$175 billion over the past year alone. That is more than what we will spend this year on the deployment costs of our Armed Forces fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

So far this year the most far-reaching legislation we have considered is the budget. In the middle of a recession, the same Democrats who were outraged over a \$455 billion deficit last year came to us this year with a budget that would lead to trillion-dollar deficits and which saddles Americans with more debt than all the debt we had accumulated from George Washington to the present day, combined.

Hundreds of thousands of American workers are losing their jobs every month. They are concerned that all this spending and debt will not just slow the economic recovery but make it harder to keep or find jobs. These

Americans may like the President, but they do not understand how a giant expansion of Government will help create or preserve jobs.

They do not think the administration has done enough to explain how borrowing money to create those programs will make America stronger, more secure, and more economically sound.

Americans are also increasingly concerned about the administration's approach to a number of foreign policy issues that are related to our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the most troubling of these decisions relates to the terrorist detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Shortly after taking office, the new Attorney General was tasked with closing Guantanamo by next January.

Yet 3 months later, the administration still has not provided the American people with any further details about what will happen to these inmates once the January deadline arrives. The American people do not want terrorists back on the battlefield, and they certainly do not want them released into their neighborhoods, as some in the administration have shockingly proposed, according to news accounts.

The administration has not been clear about its reason for closing Guantanamo before it has a plan for these detainees. But its reason cannot be that the facility is poorly run, since Attorney General Holder has said himself that the facilities there are good ones. It cannot be that the administration has a better alternative. If it did, we would have heard about it by now. The American people do not want trained terrorists released into their neighborhoods. They want answers. Unfortunately, the administration has only offered silence.

In the face of tremendous challenges at home and abroad, the new administration offered a burst of activity and a veritable explosion of debt. Meanwhile, Republicans have proposed responsible solutions that are meant to empower the American people and improve the quality of their daily lives.

On this front, Republicans will continue to offer sensible ideas on health care that address the concerns Americans have about the high cost of doctors visits, about finding good health coverage, and about keeping the coverage they have.

The lesson of the failed health care proposal of the Clinton era is not that Americans do not want reform, it is that any reform should reflect the needs of all Americans, not just a select few in Washington. Americans do not want a health care solution that puts bureaucrats in charge of medical decisions, delays appointments or diminishes the quality of health care they already receive.

Health care is an area where Americans expect the President and Congress to work together. The divide-and-conquer approach did not work in 1993, it will not work in 2009.

Energy is another area where Republicans have offered and will continue to offer commonsense solutions. Last year, even before gas prices hit the roof, we proposed a sensible approach of finding more and using less. Republicans are also proposing a dramatic expansion of nuclear power. This would match the high demand for energy in the world's largest economy with a growing public desire for cleaner, more efficient energy sources.

Health care and energy are just two of the areas where Republicans will continue to offer better ideas in the coming months. We hope our friends on the other side are more supportive of these ideas than they have been of our proposals on the economy.

On this point, it is interesting to know that just a few weeks ago, Democrats showed strong support on the Senate floor for Republican proposals to protect small businesses and middle-class taxpayers, as well as a proposal to keep the Nation's debt at a level we can manage. They also expressed strong support for a Republican proposal that climate change legislation not lead to higher gas and electricity bills.

Yet these Republican proposals which drew such widespread support on the Senate floor just a few weeks ago were, for some reason, taken out of the final product that came out of the closed conference.

Democrats cannot have it both ways. Americans are suffering. They are losing homes, and they are losing jobs. Republicans have offered, and will continue to offer, proposals that put the concern of these ordinary Americans first: Democrats' overspending, taxes, and debt.

Massive spending and debt is not the answer to a recession. A one-party solution with no checks and balances is not the answer for health care. Opposing clean, nuclear power and expanded use of other domestic energy sources is not an answer for our energy needs.

Voting for tax relief before voting against it is not the way to show the American people you have their best economic interests in mind. Republicans have not been hesitant to offer our strong public support for the new administration, and, again, I commend the President on his approach to Afghanistan and Iraq. But we have not been hesitant to state our differences clearly.

That has been the story of the first 100 days for Senate Republicans and will continue to be the story for Senate Republicans: Principled support, principled opposition, and pragmatic, creative solutions to meet the challenges of the day.

TRIBUTE TO ROBLEY REX

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise because my State and our country have lost one of our last links to a by-gone era. On Tuesday, April 28, Robley Rex passed away a few days shy of his

108th birthday. He will forever be remembered as Kentucky's last World War I-era veteran.

Ninety years ago, a teenaged Robley Rex landed in France, caring a rifle and wearing a U.S. Army uniform. He was a long way from Christian County, KY, where he was born in 1901 and raised.

Wanting to see the world and fight for his country, Robley enlisted in the Fifth, and later the 28th, Infantry Division and was deployed to Europe. After leaving the Army in 1922, he returned to Kentucky and settled in Louisville, where he became a postal worker and ordained Methodist minister.

Robley was not only the Bluegrass State's preeminent veteran, he was also its preeminent volunteer on behalf of veterans. Decades after his own active service ended, he continued to serve his fellow soldiers by volunteering at the Louisville Veterans Affairs Medical Center, right up until the last years of his life.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars honored him for over 14,000 hours of service in 22 years. I was proud to call Robley a friend of mine. Our lives intersected a number of times over the last 20 or 30 years. A few weeks ago when I was in Louisville, I had the pleasure to read a wonderful article about Robley in the Southeast Outlook. On a sad note, the article mentioned how Robley was looking forward to his impending birthday. I know a lot of the rest of us were too. His friends were planning a special birthday celebration at the Louisville VA hospital next month. Instead, it will be an opportunity to remember how much Robley meant to all of us.

As much as we will all miss him, I take comfort knowing that Robley is reunited with his beloved wife Gracie, who passed away in 1992, after more than 60 years of marriage.

Because I wish to share with my colleagues this article on Robley Rex's long and exciting life, I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Louisville, Kentucky, Southeast Outlook, Apr. 2, 2009]

107-YEAR-OLD ROBLEY REX

(By Ruth Schenk)

Eighteen-year-old Robley Rex weighed just 115 pounds when he landed in France at the end of World War I carrying an 84-pound pack.

Every soldier had a blanket, a quart of water, 160 rounds of ammunition, a Springfield M6 Scout gun and a small khaki-colored New Testament. His uniform was made of a drab olive wool.

Rex signed up for the Army on May 21, 1918, a few weeks after his 18th birthday. He convinced his mom to sign to papers after recruiters told him it was the "chance of a lifetime" and assured the teenager who grew up on a farm in Christian County, Ky., that he'd "see the world, and the world would see a lot of him."

Army pay back then was \$36 a month.

At that time, everybody thought the war would end any day. The Germans and the Al-

lies signed the Armistice on Nov 11, 1918, but they hadn't yet signed the Treaty of Versailles.

Rex, now one of the last World War I-era vets living in the United States, is a celebrity at Christopher East Nursing Home in Louisville and an icon among veterans. In 107 years, he has lived through 20 presidents, two world wars, the Korean conflict, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and the war in Iraq.

He has seen a lot of world change in his lifetime.

Rex was a Private First Class when his ship landed in northwestern France. Word of the armistice hadn't yet reached the trenches, so bullets still were flying. His first job was guarding German prisoners. Remnants of war were everywhere—in the rubble of buildings, hundreds of acres of "torn up" land and big puddles of green water that reminded Rex of gangrene.

French soldiers told him they would have lost the war if it weren't for the Americans.

Back then, military life meant absolute, complete obedience. No one questioned authority.

"If the corporal told us to pick up something on the ground, we picked it up. There was no need to explain or question why we were going to climb a mountain or go to a town," Rex said. "If the captain said you were going, you were going—without any explanation."

Most everyone attended religious services.

"They weren't mandatory, but if everybody from Company B was told to be at the 8 a.m. service, they were there," Rex said. "We went because we wanted to do the right thing."

Rex believes that Army coffee must come from the bark of trees, and that there are no atheists in foxholes.

The faith he'd learned at home carried him through scary times. "When I was walking down a road in Germany or in France, and the fear would rise up in me, I would say, 'I have no fear for Thou are with me' from Psalm 23 or Isaiah 41:10, 'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.'"

There's not much Rex doesn't remember.

All the great military heroes of that day were in Europe: Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton and John Pershing.

"The soldier we wanted to see most was Douglas MacArthur. At that time, he was considered the world's greatest patriot," Rex said.

After 2½ months in France, Rex was sent to Germany with the 3rd Army Intelligence Unit because he had finished two years of high school.

He saw destruction—and need. Rex said he'll never forget seeing German citizens wait for the food the American soldiers threw away so they could take it to their own homes.

Rex spent three years in Europe. The recruiters were right: He saw people and places he never would have seen if he had stayed in Kentucky.

In 1921, Rex returned to the States, was discharged from the Army and settled into civilian life with a job at Marathon Tire in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. By then, he was 22 years old and ready to "settle down." If the job was good, meeting his wife, Gracie, in the Camp Taylor area of Louisville was 100 times better.

It was close to love at first sight.

Rex doesn't remember where they went on dates, but he says the secret to his long life is "marrying the right woman."

According to Rex, Gracie was the best cook and "saver" in the world.

"Grace could walk across the yard, cut off a handful of grass, fry it and it would be