

I would note parenthetically, that Obamacare will exacerbate Obamadebt. (When you eliminate double-counting of Medicare cuts, Social Security cuts, and the use of CLASS Act premiums, the Democrats claim of deficit reduction disappears into another massive wave of red ink of \$466 billion over the first 10 years and \$1.4 trillion over the second 10 years.) Even without passage of this bill, under the President's 2011 budget proposal, federal spending will increase to a record \$3.8 trillion in 2011 alone. By 2020, the President's own 10-year budget analysis projects a more than doubling of debt to a record \$18.6 trillion.

Because Obamacare diverts \$500 billion from Medicare, there is no doubt whatsoever that senior citizens and disabled persons will lose certain health benefits they now enjoy. Medicare Advantage is protected in Florida—the so-called Gatorade fix—but not in my state of New Jersey or anywhere else. Medicare Advantage is used by over 11 million people nationwide including 15,983 people in my Congressional district alone. The Senate bill slashes nearly \$120 billion from Medicare Advantage plans, jeopardizing millions of seniors' existing coverage. So much for the President's promise that if you like your health plan, you can keep it; no you can't!

Madam Speaker, for the first time ever, Obamacare forces Americans to acquire an approved health plan or pay a stiff penalty—like they committed a crime.

The penalty is huge—the greater of \$750 per person per year (up to \$2,250 per family) or 2 percent of household income. No person in America should be coerced into buying medical insurance.

Under Obamacare, premiums for non-group family insurance will increase by as much as \$2,000 per year. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that by 2016, premiums will increase by 10–13 percent over what would happen under current law. Conversely, CBO had estimated that the Republican plan which I strongly support would decrease some premiums by 5–10 percent.

The Republican alternative focuses on lowering health care premiums for families and small businesses, increasing access to affordable, high-quality care, and promoting healthier lifestyles—without increasing taxes or adding to the crushing debt Washington has placed on our children and grandchildren and without cutting Medicare.

Obamacare would also create nearly 160 boards, commissions and programs and would vest sweeping powers on bureaucrats to determine what benefits are covered and not and at what cost.

Even though last September, President Obama stood a mere 20 feet away from where I am standing now, and told a joint session of Congress that “no federal dollars will be used to fund abortions, and federal conscience laws will remain in place,” his legislation today constitutes the largest expansion of abortion since *Roe v. Wade* itself, and makes a mockery of that pledge.

Additionally, Obamacare fails to institute real medical liability reforms to end junk lawsuits and curb the costs of defensive medicine—these have long been identified as significant forces in driving up health costs.

The goal of responsible health care reform should be to provide credible health insurance coverage for everyone, strengthening the health care safety net so that no one is left

out, and incentivizing quality and innovation, as well as healthy behaviors and prevention. This means that the current private health insurance market will have to be reformed to put patients first, and to eliminate denials of pre-existing conditions and lifetime caps and promoting portability between jobs and geographic areas, including across state lines. The tax code should be modernized to promote affordability and individual control, provide assistance to low-income and middle-class families. Medicare requires reform to be more efficient and responsive, with sustainable payment rates.

Of course, responsible health care reform will respect basic principles of justice: it will put patients and their doctors in charge of medical decisions, not insurance companies or government bureaucrats. It will also ensure that the lives and health of all persons are respected regardless of stage of development, age or disability.

It's time to go back to the drawing board and address what's broken and fix it.

The American public deserves better than what's on the table.

HONORING MEREDITH O'MALLEY

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Meredith O'Malley, a very special young lady who has exemplified the finest qualities of service and citizenship. Meredith has recently been named one of the top youth volunteers in Missouri for 2010 in the 15th annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Meredith is recognized for this prestigious award because of the positive impact she has made in her community. Her initiative, creativity, and selfless volunteerism make her a worthy recipient. Meredith should be proud to be a model citizen amongst the youth in her community and my congressional district.

Madam Speaker, I am confident Meredith will continue to use her many talents as tools for the betterment of her community and our nation. I respectfully urge you to join me in commending Meredith on this monumental achievement.

AUTHORIZING NEW AWARD PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL WORKERS

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 15, 2010

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2377, “To direct the Secretary of Education to establish and administer an awards program recognizing excellence exhibited by public school system employees providing services to students in pre-kindergarten through higher education” introduced by my distinguished colleague from Nevada, Representative TITUS.

The program which shall be known as the “National Classified School Employees of the Year Awards,” will allow all of our classified

school employees who work as paraprofessionals, clericals, custodial and maintenance, transportation, food and nutrition, skilled trades, health and human services, security, and technical services who provide exceptional service to public schools in the United States that play a vital role in providing for the welfare and safety of students. The awards program established and administered under the Secretary of Education will recognize those who strive for excellence in all areas of service to the education community and will recognize exemplary employees for their outstanding contributions to quality education in the United States.

Nominations will be submitted to the Secretary of Education by a chief state school officer no later than November 1 and shall consider nominations from local education agencies, school administrators, labor unions and professional associations based on work performance, school and community involvement, leadership and commitment, and local support. Prior to March 31, the Secretary of Education shall select an employee from each occupational specialty to receive an award under this recognition program.

I believe in recognizing those individuals who take time out to make a difference in the lives of our young people and I feel that the “National Classified School Employees of the Year Awards,” will highlight the great work put forth by great people who have a great impact not only in the lives of our children, but in the area of education and in our local communities. I would like to personally thank all of those who work and contribute to the area of education through their selfless service and tireless efforts.

HONORING MEGAN CORBIN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Megan Corbin, a very special young lady who has exemplified the finest qualities of service and citizenship. Megan has recently been named one of the top youth volunteers in Missouri for 2010 in the 15th annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Megan is recognized for this prestigious award because of the positive impact she has made in her community. Her initiative, creativity, and selfless volunteerism make her a worthy recipient. Megan should be proud to be a model citizen amongst the youth in her community and my congressional district.

Madam Speaker, I am confident Megan will continue to use her many talents as tools for the betterment of her community and our nation. I respectfully urge you to join me in commending Megan on this monumental achievement.

H. CON. RES. 248, THE AFGHANISTAN WAR POWERS ACT

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution. The immediate

withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan would put our Nation at greater risk of another 9/11 type attack from al Qaeda.

Unlike the Iraq war, the war in Afghanistan is not a war of our choosing. As President Obama pointed out during his speech at West Point last year, our troops are in the field because on September 11, 2001, al Qaeda launched a direct attack on the United States—killing thousands of innocent Americans. The United States is fully justified in taking action against al Qaeda and the Taliban and we continue to have the strong backing of our NATO allies and the international community.

Unfortunately, under the Bush Administration, many of our troops and resources were diverted away from Afghanistan to Iraq. As a result, al Qaeda and the Taliban began to regain strength and al Qaeda continues to plot against Americans from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. During his campaign for president, Barack Obama made it clear that he would end America's involvement in the war in Iraq and focus U.S. efforts on al Qaeda.

While there is no doubt that al Qaeda operates in parts of Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and other areas, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region remains the operational and ideological center for al Qaeda's global operations. The president is right to conclude that allowing al Qaeda to operate there unchecked poses a serious security risk to the U.S. and American citizens around the world.

The immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan would have two immediate consequences. First, it would immediately strengthen the hand of the most extremist Taliban leaders (those most closely tied to al Qaeda), undercutting any leverage behind ongoing efforts to get some Taliban fighters to lay down their arms and it would also undermine Afghan President Hamid Karzai's new initiative to reach a political accommodation with the members of the Taliban open to national reconciliation. If such a political solution is undermined and the old Taliban regime retakes control of Afghanistan, they will again turn that country into a safe haven for expanded al Qaeda operations. It would also lead to the return of an extreme Taliban regime that encourages horrendous acts like pouring gasoline into the eyes of girls who attempt to go to school. Second, an immediate withdrawal of NATO forces would weaken Pakistan's resolve to confront the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, and al Qaeda. The most promising development over the last year has been the Government of Pakistan's willingness to fight the growing menace of the Pakistani Taliban. In addition, very recently, the Pakistani government has also shown a willingness to confront elements of the Afghan Taliban. The recent capture of Mullah Bandar, the operational chief of the Afghan Taliban, and two Afghan Taliban shadow governors, demonstrates this progress. The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan would sabotage those nascent efforts. Why should the Pakistani forces confront the Afghan Taliban if the U.S. walks away now?

President Obama has developed a carefully considered and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that relies not only on the use of troops but also on the use of civilian resources.

The strategy has three parts. First, coalition forces will reverse the Taliban's momentum by

working to stabilize major population centers and accelerate the expansion of the Afghan national security forces.

Second, the U.S. will work with its partners to create a more effective civilian strategy—with the goal of establishing sustainable economic opportunities for Afghans and strengthening the country's national and local governance structures.

Third, the strategy engages Pakistan as a full partner in these efforts. As a result of better coordination between our two countries, for the first time since the beginning of the war, al Qaeda and the Taliban are being genuinely challenged by the Pakistan military.

The president's strategy contains a timeline which initiates a responsible redeployment of American troops in July 2011. He has established this timeline to send a clear message to the Afghan government that they must take seriously their role in creating a stable Afghanistan and to communicate to the people of Afghanistan that the U.S. has no interest in an open-ended engagement in their country.

The new strategy has already shown promising signs of success. We should not undermine this effort by the immediate and total withdrawal of all U.S./NATO forces.

IRAN EXECUTES OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, freedom is rarely free. When you don't have it, you're under someone else's yolk, someone else's power. And for you to get it, you have to take that power from the oppressor. And while history has recorded some peaceful transitions, the transfer of power most often comes with the shedding of blood. So freedom has to be desired, yearned for, knowing that the struggle for it could cost you your life but is worth it—if not for you to enjoy, then for your children and grandchildren.

The totalitarian regime in Tehran has tortured, imprisoned, and executed thousands simply because they wanted to be free. On January 28, it continued its brutal oppression with the first known executions of opposition activists since unrest broke out following June's disputed presidential elections. Mohammad Reza Ali Zamani and Arash Rahmanipour were men that courageously made the choice to stand up to their oppressor. Faced with the choice between suffering under the indefinite rule of an oppressive regime and giving their lives so that others might be free, they selflessly chose the latter. We honor their sacrifice by continuing their fight so that all Iranians may one day be free.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, March 16, 2010, I was not present for 4 recorded votes. Had I been present, I would

have voted the following way: roll No. 116—yea, roll No. 117—yea, roll No. 118—yea, roll No. 119—yea.

RECOGNIZING PERSECUTION OF FALUN GONG

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 605. I am pleased to cosponsor this resolution, which recognizes the continued persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The peace-loving people who practice Falun Gong have endured the Chinese Government's coordinated campaign to delegitimize and eradicate their belief system for over a decade. In China, Falun Gong has been officially labeled an 'evil cult,' and its practitioners have suffered censorship, extrajudicial arrests and detentions, involuntary reeducation through labor, torture, and even death for their personal beliefs.

Disappearances of Falun Gong practitioners are not uncommon and are especially difficult for family members who must live in uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones. I recently was informed by one of my constituents about the heartbreaking case of Jiang Feng, who simply vanished after going through airport security at Shanghai's Pudong Airport and before he made it to the gate for his flight to Newark, NJ. Jiang Feng and his wife, Mei Xuan, both are Falun Gong practitioners and were arrested in the 1999 crackdown. Because of repeated imprisonments, the couple has been separated for most of their decade-long marriage. Mei Xuan is a well-known musician in Shen Yun Performing Arts, which rekindles the traditional Chinese arts and portrays current events, including the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. She was expecting finally to reunite with her husband here in the United States. Now, she awaits word on his whereabouts and his fate, fearing the worst.

Stories like Mei Xuan's are far too common. As Americans and members of the international community, we have a responsibility to speak out against persecution and to stand up for the truths and unalienable rights that we hold dear. Falun Gong practitioners, and all those seeking to exercise the universal right to freely practice the religion of their choice and to express their beliefs openly, deserve profound U.S. leadership on their behalf. I am pleased to vote for this resolution and to give voice to all those who continue to suffer needlessly and cannot speak for themselves.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, on Monday, March 15, 2010, I was not present for 4 recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted the following way: roll No. 112—yea; roll No. 113—yea; roll No. 114—yea; roll No. 115—yea.