

Israeli-Palestinian conflict to broader issues in the region rears its head over and over again. Zbigniew Brzezinski did it in the 1970s, trying to blame Soviet influence in the region on the absence of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Prior to the first Gulf War, there were those who opposed the war on the grounds that we needed first to address the Palestinian issue before we could credibly confront Saddam Hussein. And early on in the Obama administration, reports were circulating suggesting that American interests throughout the Middle East were dependent on progress on the Palestinian-Israeli front.

Henry Kissinger, in his magisterial two-volume memoir, dealt with this matter head on. He demonstrated during the Cold War that America's ability to further its broader regional interests was connected not to a need to resolve the Palestinian issue, but to showing America's moderate allies in the region—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Gulf States—that it paid to be allied with America. The best way to prove that? When Israel was under attack by regional extremists supported by the Soviets, it was vital for the US to make sure that Israel triumphed. By doing so, the moderates would absorb the truth that the future lay with the US and its allies. Standing up against radicals and with one's allies, rather than blaming one's friends for problems in the region, continues to be the best formula for serving US interests in the Middle East.

Now we are hearing the linkage theme once again. After the brouhaha between the administration and the Israeli government surfaced, a story emerged indicating that a military team under General David Petraeus's CENTCOM command reported to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen in January that Israel was jeopardizing US standing in the region. And then Petraeus himself, speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 16, reinforced this message. He stated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "fosters anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of US favoritism for Israel." He went on to say that "Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of US partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR (Area of Responsibility) and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world."

Once again, an illusion is at work here, one that will, if pursued, invariably result in no real progress being made in the region. We all want peace between Israel and the Arabs. And putting more effort toward such a goal is a good thing. What is not real, and is dangerous, is putting most of America's eggs in the region in this basket.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has never responded to such a heavy emphasis. Progress is made when Arab leaders decide it's time for peace. Maybe Assad of Syria is considering this, and it should be explored. But that's very different from placing this conflict at the center of everything. Disappointment, as always, will follow since the gap between what the Arabs want and Israel wants is substantial. Moreover, Arab willingness to accept Israel's legitimacy as a "Jewish State" is belied by everything that comes from Arab leaders and Arab media.

What inevitably happens if such unrealistic weight in the region is given to the Israeli-Arab conflict is that Israel comes to be seen as the problem. If only Israel would stop settlements, if only Israel would talk with Hamas, if only Israel would make concessions on refugees, if only it would share Jerusalem, everything in the region would be fine. Iraq would be fine. Afghanistan would be fine. Pakistan would be fine. Iran would be fine. Lebanon would be fine.

Of course, this is nonsense. These problems would remain even if Israel did not exist. The result of such an approach would be no progress on America's interests and great stress in US-Israel relations.

The Kissinger approach of strengthening moderates may be tainted in some minds because it may be associated with Bush's policy—but it doesn't have to be. One doesn't have to be a Bush supporter to understand that the greatest need in the region today is for victories by the moderates over the radicals. In Israel's case, radical challenges exist from Hamas in the south, Hizbullah and Syria in the north, and Iran. All are complicated challenges. US support for a strong and wise Israeli policy in response to these challenges will provide the best opportunity to strengthen American interests. Holding off Hamas, weakening Hizbullah, or preventing Iran from gaining nuclear weapons will provide the biggest boost to moderates throughout the Middle East. If the Obama administration can help bring about one or more of these accomplishments, it will go a long way to restoring American influence in the region and, by the way, make Israeli-Arab peace far more likely.

This linkage trend, if continued, is dangerous and counterproductive. It could undermine the historic bipartisan support for Israel in America, a support based on moral and strategic grounds, that has been—and still is—good for both countries. It will reduce whatever incentive the Palestinians have to reach a compromise peace with Israel; if America is backing away from Israel, the Palestinians would reason, then hopes of Israel's disappearance will be strengthened. It will raise questions about American loyalty and credibility among the Arabs who, despite their rhetoric criticizing US support for Israel, would be far more distressed about the US abandoning an ally.

It diverts attention away from the larger challenges in the region—Iran's nuclear program, and the challenge of Islamic extremism and terrorism. Finally, it has the smell about it of blaming the Jews for everything. The notion that al-Qaida's hatred of America or Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons or the ongoing threat of extremist terrorist groups in the region is based on Israel's announcement of building apartments is absurd on its face and smacks of scapegoating.

It's time for the administration to step back not only from the harsh rhetoric but also from the illusionary thinking about Israel hurting American interests. America and Israel can have their differences, but the US has no better ally than Israel. The administration needs to recognize this and find ways to reassure those who are raising concerns.

#### OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

#### HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today our National debt is \$12,662,466,657,519.82.

On January 6, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$2,024,040,911,226.02 so far this Congress.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

HONORING MARIA COSTA SMITH

#### HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Maria Costa Smith, successful horticulturalist, businesswoman and agricultural engineer in South Dade, Florida.

Maria currently serves as the color division president of Costa Farms. She is part of the third generation of the Costa family to run the farm. Started in 1961 by her grandfather, Jose Costa, and father, Tony Costa, Costa farms is one of South Dade's largest small businesses, now employing 2,200 and owning over 2,600 acres of land. In addition to its thriving foliage and plant divisions, Costa Farms operates merchandising and transportation companies in south Florida, North Carolina, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. Maria runs the farm with her husband, Chief Executive Officer Jose Smith, and her brother, Jose, who is vice president of the foliage division.

Recently, the Dade County Farm Bureau Women's Committee recognized Maria Costa Smith as the 2010 Woman of Distinction in Agriculture. She was recognized for her valuable contributions to the South Dade agriculture and agribusiness. Today I honor her for those reasons and many more, including her commitment to seeing through the dream of her grandfather, helping others in the community and ensuring that South Florida's local economy continues to flourish.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in congratulating and thanking Maria Costa Smith for her outstanding dedication, work ethic and desire to see her community prosper.

#### PRESIDENT MORE POPULAR IN THE NEWS THAN AMERICANS

#### HON. LAMAR SMITH

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Madam Speaker, President Obama is far more popular in the news than he is among American people.

Sixty percent of national media mentions of the President were positive over the past week while 40 percent were negative, according to Rasmussen Reports' new "Media Meter."

In contrast, just 48 percent of Americans approve of the job the President is doing.

By a 10-point margin, more Americans "strongly disapprove" of the President's job than "strongly approve." And just one-quarter say the country is "on the right track."

Wouldn't it be nice if the national media reflected the views of the American people?

The national media should give Americans the facts, not tell them what to think.

# INTRODUCTION OF THE INFORMED TAXPAYERS' FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNUAL REPORTING ACT OF 2010

**HON. KEVIN MCCARTHY**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Mr. MCCARTHY of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of legislation I introduced, along with my colleagues Congressman ERIC CANTOR, Congressman DAVE CAMP, Congressman PAUL RYAN, and Congressman KEVIN BRADY, that would require the Internal Revenue Service, IRS, to publish certain fiscal information on the Federal government each year and make it available to taxpayers online and when they prepare their taxes.

Just like publicly-owned companies in the United States provide information on their finances in annual shareholder reports, I believe the Federal government ought to provide important transparency about the state of our Nation's finances. Taxpayers are like shareholders of the Federal government and ought to have access to similar information on their government.

Unfortunately, statistics on Federal government tax revenue, spending, deficits, and debt are often buried in random reports or on government websites and presented in a confusing manner with technical jargon or confusing formats. Why must it be that difficult for Americans to learn about what their government is doing with their money? It should not be, and this is the purpose of the Informed Taxpayers' Federal Government Annual Reporting Act.

Specifically, this bill would require the IRS to publish a chart on government finances to be included in the instruction booklets taxpayers use when filing their income taxes each April and post this chart on the IRS online homepage. The chart would be broken down into three sections. The first section, "Current Federal Government Finances," would be required to include current Federal tax revenue, spending, deficits, and public debt statistics. "Federal Government Finances & You," the second section, would include per capita data, such as each taxpayer's share of the national debt. And the last section, "Projected Federal Government Finances," would be required to include estimated Federal tax revenue, spending, deficits, and debt over the next ten years as put together by the Congressional Budget Office, CBO.

With enactment of the Federal government takeover of health care and the \$1 trillion stimulus bill—including interest—it is all the more important for the American people to know what their government is doing and how this impacts our nation as whole. These policies have contributed to the current amount of taxes, spending, deficit, and debt, which are all in the trillions of dollars. Unfortunately, it seems in Washington that trillion has become the new billion.

The Federal government takes in over \$2 trillion in tax revenue annually, but even with that incredible amount of taxpayer dollars flowing into the government, this Congress and the President continue to spend with borrowed money—\$1.4 trillion last year. This means Washington spent almost \$3.5 trillion. And this year, it does not look that much better with deficits projected to be \$1.5 trillion, according

to the Office of Management and Budget. With all this runaway spending, the Federal debt continues to grow, and CBO projects it to be \$13.2 trillion this year.

These numbers are not only shocking, but unsustainable.

The Informed Taxpayers' Federal Government Annual Reporting Act is designed to build upon fundamental tenets of American democracy of transparency and openness in government by helping ensure that all Americans have access to easy-to-understand information on how their tax dollars are being used by their government.

## TRIBUTE TO WAREHAM HIGH SCHOOL—THE 2010 MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION III BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONS

**HON. BARNEY FRANK**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, today, I would like to pay tribute to the Wareham High School Basketball team who just captured the first Division III State Championship Title for the town of Wareham, Massachusetts. This was their first state title since 1956. This impressive team is led by Coach Kevin Brogioli and includes Jules Tavares, who scored a game-high 25 points and Pat Murphy, who scored 11 points, including his 1,000th career point.

This season, the Vikings have scored 100 points or more in four games, beating Cardinal Spellman 78–71 to clinch the Division III South Sectional Championship, besting Bedford at the TD Bank Boston Garden 63–49 to become the Division III Eastern Championship and defeating New Leadership of Springfield 80–57 at the DCU Center in Worcester to capture the Division III State Championship Title.

Congratulations to Coach Brogioli, Assistant Coach Steve Faniel, Assistant Coach Mike Ponte and the Vikings team, listed here in alphabetical order: Darien Fernandez, Sheldon Frye, Jowaun Gamble, Marcus Gomes, Darren Gray, Jeff Houde, Harry Irving, Dylan Marcal, Mike Mendes, Pat Murphy, Ryan Pina, Jordan Rezendes, Dwight Senna, Jules Tavares, and Nikko Vasconcellos. We are very proud of their teamwork, dedication, and sportsmanship.

I am enclosing a proclamation by the town of Wareham and an article that further describes this important achievement.

### TOWN OF WAREHAM—PROCLAMATION BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Whereas, the Wareham High School Boys' Varsity Basketball team, known as the Vikings, have demonstrated exemplary sportsmanship and teamwork, and

Whereas, their coach, Kevin Brogioli, along with the assistant coaches, parents and supporters, showed great faith and encouragement to the Vikings, and

Whereas, the Vikings had scored 100 points or more in four games, averaging 87.8 points per game in the regular season, and had three players to reach 1,000 or more points scoring, and

Whereas, the Vikings beat Cardinal Spellman 78–71 to clinch the Division III South Sectional Championship, and

Whereas, the Vikings defeated Bedford at the TD Bank Boston Garden 63–49 to become the Division III Eastern Champions, and

Whereas, the Vikings defeated New Leadership of Springfield 80–57 at the DCU Center

in Worcester; to capture the first Division III State Championship title for Wareham,

Now, therefore, We, the Wareham Board of Selectmen, do hereby proclaim Saturday, March 13, 2010 through Saturday, March 20, 2010 as:

"STATE CHAMPION WAREHAM VIKINGS WEEK"

In Wareham, culminating with a Parade on Saturday March 20, 2010, to honor the young men and the coaches of Wareham Vikings Basketball team that have made this town so proud.

[From SouthCoastToday.com, March 14, 2010]

### WAREHAM BOYS BRING HOME FIRST STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

(By Ed Collins)

WORCESTER.—Having gotten all the way to the Division 3 State championship game, and needing 32 good minutes to win it all, the Wareham boys basketball team left nothing to chance Saturday afternoon.

The Vikings saved their best game of the season for their last, digging deep on defense, flying high on offense and even finding time to help senior Pat Murphy reach an elusive milestone en route to an 80–57 win over New Leadership Charter School of Springfield at the DCU Center.

"We executed our game plan to near perfection," a smiling Wareham coach Kevin Brogioli said after bringing home the first state basketball championship in school history. "We got the job done on defense and we played some good Wareham fast-break basketball."

"We came here expecting to win, but we thought it would be a last-second game," junior Jules Tavares said. "It didn't work out that way though, because we played great. To play like that in our biggest game of the season says a lot about the kind of team we have. This was a dream game for us."

New Leadership certainly wasn't expecting the kind of defense it saw from Wareham.

"We're known for our offense and that's been a key for us all season," Brogioli said. "But, we also take a lot of pride in our defense. Our kids always work hard on defense and that gets overlooked sometimes."

In comments made before the game, Wildcats coach Capus Gee talked about how his team planned to beat the Vikings by pounding the ball into the paint and shutting down their fast break.

Wareham's Ryan Pina, a 6-foot-3 senior center, took offense at the remarks and came out fired up to play his best defensive game of the season.

"I read what he said and took it as a personal challenge. I wasn't going to let them push us around," Pina said. "Our offense gets all the headlines, but we can play defense against anyone and we proved that today."

Senior guard Darren Gray set a good tone right away for Wareham with some tough man-to-man defense against New Leadership point guard Phillip Warrick, who ended up scoring 18 points, three below his average.

"Defense wins championships and coach (Brogioli) has been preaching that to us all season," Gray said. "We knew we had to get the job done on defense. We never have to worry about scoring points, but you don't win games at this level if you don't play good team defense."

The Vikings made some early stops, hit the boards hard, and shifted into overdrive on offense after the first of two thunderous dunks by Tavares lit a fire under them.

Wareham, which had two shots blocked by the athletic Wildcats (21–4) in the opening minute, took the lead for good at 10–8 and never looked back after building a 22–13 lead in the first quarter.