

them out. We're already setting up private companies that don't—have never done what they are going to take away from a government entity that's been the most successful in all of mankind, NASA, this effort, give it to this private company and already know that if they have a problem and they can't get the space flight going, they'll go broke and we'll have to bail them out. We know that going in. Is that smart? My goodness, the things we're doing at the worst possible time make no sense. It just makes no sense.

But as time runs out as allocated, I want to finish with one other thing going back to Israel.

The world needs to know, make no mistake about it, Israel is a close ally. They believe in the same type of human rights that we do in this country. And so why wouldn't you be an ally with a country that believes in the rights of women, believes in the rights that we hold dear here, believes that there's no such thing as an honor-killing of women who've been raped, that has the same kind of beliefs, Judeo-Christian beliefs, and the value of mankind that this country has always held so dear.

For that reason and because there's been snubs by the administration overtly that are being misread around the world, we are not going to abandon our friend, Israel. There are too many people on both sides of the aisle that will not stand for that.

And I've been working privately behind the scenes. I've been told by people that I respect, the most knowledgeable people, I think, on Israeli affairs, that it's time to start pushing this publicly so people will publicly get on board.

So I've got a letter now, and it will be going out to all of my colleagues. And it will ask them to get on board because I would like them to sign on to a letter to Leader REID down the Hall—because both the House and Senate have to do this—and the letter simply says, Mr. Speaker, this letter is to simply state the obvious need for the Prime Minister of our dear friend Israel to address a joint session of Congress. He's been here in Washington on numerous occasions but has not addressed a joint session of Congress since 1996.

In our Nation's history, we have invited over a hundred leaders of 50 different countries to speak before joint sessions of Congress. At this time with the enemies of America and Israel looking for weaknesses in our close relationship, we can show them that Israel is our friend and will be our friend and that we want to hear from its leader, Prime Minister Netanyahu. With the magnitude of international events and the tensions swirling in recent years and the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, it is desperately important that we show the world the importance of our relationship with Israel by inviting Prime Minister Netanyahu to come address this body. The sooner we extend such

an invitation, the more stabilizing it will be. And then signature lines from Members of Congress. I've got over 40. But we need most of this body to sign on. We need to send that message.

The letter to colleagues basically highlights the same things.

And with regard to the flotilla, it points out in this letter that we'll send the "dear colleague" letter asking them to sign on the letter requesting Majority Leader REID and Speaker PELOSI invite Prime Minister Netanyahu, this letter says—and let me preface this by saying it was entirely predictable that there would be an effort to test our commitment to our ally Israel. It was entirely predictable. When you show that separation between your strongest ally to your enemies, then your enemies are going to think about testing to see if this may be a good time to attack. And that's what the flotillas were doing. They were a test.

And what they saw was the United States, through this administration, being reluctant to jump out there and make it clear how inappropriate it was to send people to intentionally run the blockade when all Israel was trying to do was protect themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that people will encourage their Members of Congress to sign on so we can get the Prime Minister here as quickly as possible so that the world will see both sides of the aisle standing and applauding this great leader of this great nation.

And then there is a resolution. People keep talking sanctions, and it is beyond time to talk about sanctions. According to IAEA, Iran already has enough enriched uranium for two nuclear weapons. How many do you think it would take to wipe out the small nation of Israel?

And they made clear, Ahmadinejad's made clear, we're not going to stop with wiping out Israel. We want to wipe out the little Satan, Israel, and then the big Satan, the United States. And we saw on 9/11 how vulnerable we can be, and you begin to realize, man, you set off a nuclear weapon in New York, Houston, L.A., Chicago, other points that are critical to our protection, and with a handful of nuclear weapons, you could debilitate this country to an enormous extent.

And then we're told a greater risk is if you can get an EMP, electromagnetic pulse, generated from a nuclear weapon a few hundred miles above the middle of the United States, it would fry every computer chip in the country. The power would go out indefinitely. Wal-Mart says they wouldn't be able to function if all of their computers are fried.

It's time to act. We cannot wait. And this resolution goes through, points out quotes from Ahmadinejad, quotes from our great President in saying that as he said that bond is much more than a strategic alliance between us and Israel.

We have got to act, and I hope people will sign on this resolution when we come back next week because we've got to get this done. We need to show our support for Israel. We need to quit playing games with this critical ally in such a difficult area.

You want to talk about peace? Like Patrick Henry said, People talk peace, but there is no peace. And I can tell you there will not be peace in the Middle East of any nature until people know that this Nation, America, will go to war against anyone that breaches the peace or attempts to breach the peace as this flotilla did.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see the indication my time is expiring. And I appreciate the opportunity to be here and discuss these important issues.

And with that, I yield back my time.

GET A BUDGET

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

Mr. DJOU. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I'm rising to speak very briefly on the fiscal situation facing our Nation today.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I have the privilege of having won a special election in the State of Hawaii just a couple weeks ago. I'm the junior-most Member, of course, right now in the U.S. House of Representatives. But I ran on a very simple platform: that we need to put our fiscal house in order, that our government is spending far too much money, and the mentality here in Congress today is that of spend, spend, and spend some more and if that doesn't fix the problem, throw more money at it. That is, I believe, a recipe for a fiscal disaster.

I pledged to my constituents in the State of Hawaii that I will never ever forget that every single dollar the government spends comes from a family like yours. And right now, we're spending far too much of that money.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I want to highlight what transpired yesterday in the Budget Committee in the hearing by Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke.

In that hearing, during which I had the privilege of questioning the Federal Reserve chair, I thought he highlighted some very important measures that our Nation should take note of and this Congress must take note of.

The Federal Reserve chairman pointed out that currently our budget deficit here in the U.S. Congress, in his words, is not sustainable. The Federal Reserve chairman clearly articulated that we need more fiscal restraint, and right now unless the Federal Government gets a control of its enormous budget deficit, major problems and consequences will occur to our national economy.

The Federal Reserve chair pointed out to all of us right now that although a Federal budget deficit of hundreds of

billions of dollars—or in our case right now, trillions of dollars—might be okay in the short term if there is a fix, over the long term it will seriously damage our Nation's economic growth prospects.

The Federal Reserve chair, when I asked him, pointed out that perhaps a budget deficit of about \$300 billion could be sustained. We are, of course, looking today at a Federal budget deficit well in excess of \$1 trillion—with no end in sight. And what's even more troubling to me is the Federal Reserve chairman pointed out to this Congress that we have no fix in place.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I want to reiterate and further urge all of the Members of this Congress as we go through this budgeting process—and it is a tragedy that this Congress has still yet to pass a budget—we have to exercise greater fiscal restraint, reduce the amount of enormous spending going on in this government. If we do not take care of our Nation's budget deficit, this budget deficit will take care of us.

I remind all of the Members of this Chamber we do not have to look any further than what's happening in the nation of Greece right now and the fiscal and enormous financial problems going on in Europe. If our Nation and our Congress do not restrain the spending, reduce taxes, and limit government, we will be in the same mess.

BP OIL SPILL DISASTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, in the United States right now we are experiencing an environmental catastrophe. We are experiencing with the BP oil rig the largest single oil spill in American history. It's a little hard to contemplate just how big this oil spill is; 21 million to 44 million gallons of oil—four times the oil spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster—have so far spilled into the Gulf of Mexico. 12,000 to 25,000 barrels a day—that's a million gallons a day—are spilling, a rate 12 to 25 times higher than BP's original highest estimate of 4,600 gallons a day. The biggest oil spill in American history.

If we want to know just how big that is, this is the extent of the oil spill today in the Gulf of Mexico. It is the equivalent in terms of size of Delaware, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined. Think of that geography. Hundreds of square miles. That's what this is.

Just recently it was announced that underwater plumes, not just the surface plume depicted here, have been detected 150 miles away in distance from the original site of the oil spill.

Locally what that means is essentially we have an oil spill, a surface oil spill that covers the territory that

would be the equivalent of the distance between Washington, D.C., and New York City. That's as of today. In my 11th Congressional District of Virginia, that would mean starting in Dale City near Manassas in Prince William County and going as far as Wilmington, Delaware. That's the thick oil spill.

The broader oil spill, as I said, would go all the way to New York City. That's an extraordinary stretch in terms of this oil spill.

This oil spill could have been prevented.

In 1969, an oil well spilled 200,000 gallons of crude oil on the California coast. In response, like this and other environmental issues, like the burning of the Cuyahoga River, Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act, known as NEPA, in 1969.

□ 1700

NEPA requires companies to plan to avoid environmental disasters like that 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill by conducting simple environmental impact statements. Ironically, the Minerals Management Service, known as the MMS, granted the Deepwater Horizon rig a categorical exclusion from this process so it did not have to conduct an environmental impact statement based on research in 2007 in which the MMS, the regulator, decided that a deepwater spill would not exceed 4,600 barrels and would never reach the shoreline. What a tragic, ironic twist of fate. None of that turned out to be true.

Congressional Republican majorities and the Bush administration even directed agencies to use categorical exclusions for oil development. Action by the Secretary of the Interior in managing the public lands, it said, or the Secretary of Agriculture in managing national forest systems lands with respect to any of the activities described in subsection B shall be subject to a rebuttable presumption that the use of categorical exclusion under the NEPA of 1969 would apply if the activity is conducted pursuant to the Mineral Leasing Act for the purpose of exploration or development of oil or gas. An explicit exemption made for oil drilling in America by the previous administration. Just following the NEPA process could have led to a review that would have resulted in better safety equipment. Might have even resulted in an inspection that might have caught early the flaws in this design.

The 2009 Government Accountability Office report said that during the previous administration categorical exclusions were issued far too frequently and it could lead to serious problems. Well, indeed, it did. I find this particularly ironic because, in my district, we have been fighting for a long time to get rail to Dulles, an extension of the rail system here in metropolitan Washington to Dulles International Airport. We finally got that process approved last year, but that process required a NEPA review. This is a public transit project, but it had to go

through a 2-year environmental review that cost millions of dollars of taxpayer-funded money for a public project. But ironically, a private oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico was excluded from that process. It didn't have to do it.

I see on the floor my friend from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER). I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy, as I appreciate his leadership, and I think it is important for people to understand the genesis of the problem that we are facing here now.

We've heard some of our friends on the other side of the aisle come to the floor somehow trying to lay this at the feet of the President of the United States, but sadly, what has happened here in the gulf is a direct result of policies that we have seen implemented by our friends on the other side of the aisle when they were in charge, particularly under the watch of President Bush, where it was routine to come to the floor repeatedly in efforts to undercut environmental protections, where agencies that were supposed to regulate the industry were stopped with refugees from the very industries, from lobbyists and association executives who are going back now and looking at from whence they had come.

We had situations that, by the end of the Bush administration, it was clear in the MMS that there were people in that critical agency tasked by law with the protection of the public interest who were not only avoiding that responsibility, they were literally in bed with the industry.

I look forward to an opportunity in the course of the next few minutes to discuss with you further the genesis of the problem that we face and approaches that we should be taking to make sure that we're no longer held hostage to what even President Bush referred to as our addiction to oil.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. I thank my colleague, and I think his point is a very cogent one, and it's even worse than we're discussing because not only did we consciously decide during the Bush administration and by previous Congresses, frankly controlled by our friends on the other side, consciously to exclude such oil drilling from the regular environmental review that could have detected problems, but it was worse than that.

Let me give an example in terms of what measures that at least could have mitigated the impact of this disaster. Canada, as my friend from Oregon knows, requires deepwater rigs to have contingency plans for offshore oil drilling, including the capability to drill relief wells soon after constructing primary wells. If this well, this Deepwater Horizon well, had predrilled such relief wells, it would have allowed the closing of the leak weeks ago, but they weren't required to do so.

Norway and Brazil require something called acoustic valves which are