

That from Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes almost 3 years ago.

One of the biggest causes of our soaring debt and economic insecurity ends up being Pentagon spending. The budget for the Pentagon consumes more than half our discretionary spending. We have seen countless stories of U.S. taxpayer dollars going unaccounted for in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have had countless high-profile hearings on contractor fraud and the lack of oversight at the Department of Defense.

According to the Friends Committee on National Legislation, 39 percent of our income tax dollars last year went to Pentagon spending on past and current wars. And Stiglitz, again, has said that the Iraq war “didn’t just contribute to the severity of the financial crisis . . . it kept us from responding to it effectively. Increased indebtedness meant that the government had far less room to maneuver than it otherwise would have.” So what we have is the U.S. financing war on borrowed money.

We must examine our connection between soaring debt and these two wars, the war in Iraq and war in Afghanistan. Between 2003 and 2008, the U.S. debt increased by almost \$4 trillion. A quarter of that debt is directly attributed to the war in Iraq. The cost of the war in Afghanistan has been over \$455 billion to date, and the deadline for that keeps sliding past 2014.

Now, in the nationalpriorities.org, they talk about a sustainable defense. And one report says that there are options for reducing military spending, saving nearly \$1 trillion over the next decade without adversely impacting U.S. national security interests. So we can have a strong defense, but we’re spending so much money, we’re undermining our ability to be able to provide for the American people here at home. And we have to start taking care of things here at home.

What will we sacrifice? Will we sacrifice the education of our children for these wars? Will we sacrifice Social Security for these wars? Will we sacrifice Medicare or Medicaid for these wars? Will we sacrifice our infrastructure for these wars? Or will we say the war in Iraq was based on lies; let’s bring these troops home? Will we say that Afghanistan is a hopeless, corrupt mess and it’s time to bring our troops home, and then begin to use the resources of our country, those resources that are hard-earned taxpayer dollars, use that money for things here at home? Let’s have that debate as we talk about cutting the budget.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o’clock and 18 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Infinite God, You are without beginning or end. We begin each formal session of this law-making Chamber with reflection on Your Holy Word and prayerful petition.

This representative government, Lord, is laden with great expectations and innumerable problems; so in the early hours we seek Your light and inspiration to set priorities and shape proper means to achieve common goals of legislation.

In this information age surrounded by media opinions, kindly lead us to the essential truth on all the issues.

In the evening, before we take our rest, Lord, help each Member find the time for grateful prayer to renew love and loyalty, lest we be consumed by work or become tepid due to debate and criticism. Renew us in our commitments to be faithful both in love and service.

In the beginning and in the end of each passing day, may we draw closer to You now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day’s proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. YOUNG of Indiana led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

NLRB THREATENS VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this week I was startled to read in Free Times a brief by Corey Hutchins that the National Labor Relations Board announced plans to sue South Carolina and three other States because voters approved ballot amendments in November.

In South Carolina, more than 85 percent of voters chose “yes” on an

amendment to give employees the constitutional vote by secret ballot on union representation. This threat is an insult to the voters of the Palmetto State, and it is an insult to the sacred right of secret ballot. Sadly, this is an underhanded admission by the administration that union bosses want to evade voters and deny Congress its right to stop Card Check, which has forced unionization of workers.

It’s an admission workers know that today union leaders are more focused on their own personal enrichment with union dues than the rights of workers.

Fortunately, South Carolina is a right-to-work State where workers are protected, new jobs are created, and we respect the votes of all citizens. I commend the efforts of South Carolina Representative Eric Bedingfield and Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler for sponsoring the amendment.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

HONORING PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ZACHARY SALMON

(Mr. YOUNG of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Private First Class Zachary Salmon, an Army Cavalry Scout with the 1st Battalion, 32nd Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. On January 12 of this year, he was killed in action in Kunar province in Afghanistan after insurgents attacked his unit. This past Friday, he was laid to rest in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Just 21 years old, PFC Salmon enlisted in the Army 3 years ago as a way to provide for his then-newborn son, Noah, whom he adored.

While I never had the honor of meeting him in person, I learned at his wake this past Friday that he exhibited all the best qualities of our men and women in uniform: a patriotic sense of duty, a strong desire to help others, and a keen awareness of his weighty responsibilities as a man in uniform. Known to his friends as “Fish,” he also had a bright sense of humor and a huge heart. In addition to his son, Noah, PFC Salmon leaves behind his mother and father, his stepfather, his brother, and two sisters. We all owe a debt today to PFC Salmon for making the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our country.

Thank you, PFC Salmon. May God watch over you, little Noah, and the rest of your family.

THE NATIONAL DEBT—NO DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE EXEMPT FROM BELT-TIGHTENING

(Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, later today we will vote on a resolution to reduce Federal non-security spending to the 2008 level or in some cases less. This is a very good first step if we follow through and abide by this resolution. However, we need to make sure that these cuts are real and not simply cuts that will be reinstated later in an end-of-the-year omnibus spending bill.

More importantly, I want to add my voice to the growing chorus that is saying loud and clear that nothing should be left off the table. There is waste in every Federal department and agency, and the waste in the Defense and Homeland Security Departments is huge. No department should be given a free pass and made exempt from cost savings and belt-tightening.

We have a national debt of over \$14 trillion, a mind-boggling incomprehensible figure. Even *The Washington Post*, which has usually supported every Federal spending program imaginable, editorialized recently, "It's time to stop worrying about the deficit—and start panicking about the debt. The fiscal situation was serious before the recession. It is now dire."

THE LEAVING ETHANOL AT EXISTING LEVELS ACT

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about legislation that I will reintroduce that will put a pause on the Environmental Protection Agency's actions in moving forward with a waiver for an increase in the amount of ethanol in gasoline.

Currently, gasoline contains a 10 percent blend wall. In October of this past year, the EPA granted a waiver for the allowable amount of ethanol to increase to 15 percent.

I have questioned their decision to move forward with a waiver for E15. I was wholly dissatisfied with the response they gave in a briefing last fall. They deferred to the Department of Energy's research. Does the EPA not employ its own scientists and experts? Is it the EPA's position that it is incapable of doing its own research?

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the problems that occurred in 2008 with food-to-fuel diversion and the resultant increase in price in commodities. I don't believe the EPA has done its due diligence. And certainly they haven't provided information that would disprove any fears about the use of E15 causing mechanical failures and fires, particularly in smaller engines.

My bill will allow for a pause and allow for more assurances to be made that the increase in the blend wall for ethanol will be safe. The security of the public's well-being should be paramount in this issue.

CALLING FOR A SPECIAL ENVOY ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, last week the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing on the plight of Christian minorities in Iraq and Egypt. In the wake of the devastating attacks targeting Christians in both countries, it is clear that religious minorities in the Middle East are facing a serious threat that must be addressed. This recent spate of violence has driven many Christians and other religious minorities to flee the lands they have inhabited for centuries and attempt to emigrate to the West. If the international community fails to speak out, the prospects for religious pluralism and tolerance in the region are bleak.

President Reagan once said that the U.S. Constitution is "a covenant that we have made not only with ourselves, but with all of mankind." I believe the United States has an obligation to speak out for the voiceless around the world.

This week I will introduce, with other Members, a bill which would require the administration to appoint a Special Envoy for religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia in order to make this issue a foreign policy priority, and I ask my colleagues to join me.

□ 1410

HONORING TODD BUCH

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Middletown Community Foundation and to honor one of my constituents from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Mr. Todd Buch.

Each year, the Middletown Community Foundation honors a local resident with the Humanitarian of the Year award. The Middletown Community Foundation is a nonprofit organization created to improve the quality of life for individuals who live and work in my hometown of Middletown Township, Bucks County.

This year it is the Humanitarian Award that is being presented to Mr. Todd Buch. Todd is the president of McCafferty Auto Group in Langhorne. Todd and his family have been generous and enthusiastic supporters of their community for decades, and his award from the Middletown Community Foundation is very fitting. Todd's business achievements alone have been impressive, with his dealership sustaining hundreds of jobs in Bucks County. Todd's contributions to the community have gone beyond his leadership in the business community.

Mr. Speaker, the time allotted to this speech today is frankly insufficient to list all of Todd's achievements and contributions in this regard. Just a few recipients of Todd's generosity have been the Neshaminy High School Choir, the Neshaminy High School Aloha Bowl Parade, Pennsbury High School, Bristol Township High School, the United Way, Middletown Township, and countless others.

Mr. Speaker, during a month when we honored the service of Martin Luther King, I am reminded of the great civil rights leader's quote that "anyone can be great because anyone can serve." By this measure and countless others, Todd Buch is truly great; and I am proud to honor him today.

MEDICAID

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, most States, including my own State of Pennsylvania, are facing significant budget problems this fiscal year. The fiscal situation in some States eerily resembles Greece and Ireland.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government is adding fuel to the fire with new Medicaid mandates that could cost the States billions of dollars. ObamaCare burdens the States in two ways. First, it requires them to enroll millions more beneficiaries. While the Federal Government will at first pay for the benefits of these new enrollees, the States will gradually have to start picking up the tab. Second, the Federal Government will only help cover the cost of benefits, not the administrative costs associated with all these new enrollees. Since some States will be forced to nearly double their Medicaid rolls, this will certainly hit their budgets hard.

We cannot forget that 49 of 50 States are required to balance their budgets every year. They will face the grim choice of discontinuing their Medicaid program, raising taxes, or slashing other essential government services.

We have talked a lot about ObamaCare bankrupting the Federal Government, but we can't forget that it could drive States over the cliff at the same time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1715

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro