

hawk because they are dealing with this problem, like that young man who was found dead last night, understand that resources are needed, just like in any other natural disaster or public health emergency facing this country.

Again, we need to turn this map around. We need to change this so that, again, the devastation that is being caused in families of middle class, upper class, lower income families across the country is going to stop.

There are real-life solutions that the folks who are at the front lines are prepared to move forward. They are on standby. What they are waiting for is this Congress to move forward with the real resources that we would deal with as a great Nation in terms of any other epidemic or any other massive public health or health emergency in this Nation.

We need to include H.R. 4473. We need to listen to the 21 organizations that deal with this problem all across America so that we get real help out on the streets of America and not just give lip service to solving this critical problem.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF CAPTAIN JAMES T. DEAN, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Captain James T. Dean, Jr., an Army veteran from the Vietnam war.

Jim was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1944. In 1962, he joined the Army and graduated from Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He served in Korea with a Sergeant missile unit before being deployed to a beautiful place during an ugly time. He served in Vietnam from January 1968 to September 1969, serving with the 2nd Battalion, 40th Field Artillery, of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

A proud redleg, Jim received the Bronze Star with "V" device for heroism in ground combat, the Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters for meritorious achievement in ground operations against hostile forces, the Purple Heart for wounds received in action, along with numerous other awards and decorations for his service.

Following his service, Jim and his wife, Carla, moved to Naples, Florida, where he started several businesses before returning to his true passion, horticulture.

Jim worked for the city of Naples as the assistant parks and parkway supervisor. He was proud to have played a significant role in the Naples-scape project to beautify the city.

He was a civic leader, serving on the board of the Greater Naples Better Government Committee as well as the Marco Island Kiwanis. He was an ordained elder within the Presbyterian Church, and he and Carla were members of the Collier County Republican Executive Committee.

Jim also battled bladder cancer and, with Carla and other friends, formed

the Bladder Cancer Foundation of Florida to raise awareness.

Sadly, Jim succumbed to bladder cancer and passed away last month, on March 23. His name will not appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall; however, make no mistake about it, like too many other survivors, Jim was a casualty of the war due to his exposure to Agent Orange.

Recently, the National Institute of Medicine forwarded to the VA that "there is limited or suggestive evidence of an association between chemicals of interest and bladder cancer."

Adding bladder cancer to the list of medical conditions that qualify veterans for a presumption of exposure to Agent Orange would allow veterans easier access to critical healthcare benefits.

Unfortunately, it is too late for Jim, but many Vietnam veterans continue to suffer from this disease. I call on VA Secretary McDonald to approve this designation so our Vietnam war veterans can receive the help that they have so solemnly earned.

I know I speak on behalf of the entire Congress and a grateful Nation to express our deepest condolences to his widow, Carla; daughter, Michelle; and his many friends and loved ones. I pray for God's mercies upon them as they cope with their pain.

BUDGET CUTS AT THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this week in 2 days is April 15, the day that our income taxes are due. We have seen that day difficult enough under the best of circumstances, be made even more difficult, purposely, for millions of Americans. My Republican friends have decided to take out their differences with the IRS, their opposition to taxation, by deliberately torturing the American taxpayer.

Ours is the largest tax system in the world that relies primarily on volunteer compliance. Each 1 percent where people decide not to comply costs the Treasury \$30 billion. Now, most, in fact, do comply, but an ever-increasingly complex tax system makes compliance difficult.

It should be noted that it is not the IRS that makes the Tax Code complicated; it is Congress that is constantly changing that Code. Sometimes it is so late in meeting its obligations with tax changes that the Service doesn't even have time to print the forms on time.

In order to help citizens with Congress' complex tax system, the Internal Revenue Service runs the largest consumer service operation in the world. Last year, it was a disaster. Well, this process has been deliberately sabotaged by the Republican approach to the agency budget. It has 30,000 fewer

employees than it had in 1992, down 13,000 from 2010, despite the fact that the Code gets more complex and there are more people filing returns every year.

Congress should have been a constructive partner in streamlining, modernization, with new computers, but the IRS budget prevents it from modernizing information technology. It still uses applications that were running in the early 1960s. And you cannot completely computerize the simple task of answering phone calls and talking to taxpayers.

When you visit the IRS offices, as I have, you find employees who are sad and angry that they are unable to meet the needs of the taxpayers. They don't like getting somebody who has been on hold for 20 or 30 minutes and then not having the time to work with them to answer their questions. It frustrates the taxpayer, and it breaks the heart of our employees.

Now, it is no secret that some people forget or cheat on their taxes, but Congress has not equipped the IRS to do the audits necessary to actually collect the money that is due. This year, when we have a big deficit, there will be \$300 to \$400 billion of taxes that are due and owing but won't be paid. Yet Congress is deliberately trying to make it worse. They have 12,000 fewer enforcement staff, a reduction of 23 percent, and I am going back to a Ways and Means Committee where one of the proposals would cut that budget another \$500 million. It is not fair to the taxpayer, it is not fair to our employees, and it makes it hard to fund the needs of our Nation.

People talk around here about running government like a business. What business undercuts, underfunds, and slashes its accounts receivable department? They may think it is good politics to make the taxpayer experience as miserable as possible, but it is ultimately bad judgment, poor politics, and a disservice to the American people as we undercut the ability to fund essential government services.

Many of my Republican colleagues have been looking for scandal within the IRS. Whatever problems they uncover or imagine, the real scandal is how they are treating the American public and the people who work for them at the vital service of the Internal Revenue Service.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 195th anniversary of Greek independence.

Citizens of Greece have always been a proud people in body, mind, and spirit. From Pericles, Greek statesman and general, dubbed "the first citizen of

Athens"; to Plato, who laid a groundwork in philosophy so vast that the entirety of European philosophical tradition is said to simply be a footnote to his work; to Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first head of state of an independent Greece, Greeks have been exceptional and continue to be exceptional, Mr. Speaker.

I am almost certain that Thomas Jefferson cast an eye across the Atlantic towards Greece when he uttered these words in 1821: "The flames kindled on the Fourth of July 1776 have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism. On the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them."

I am blessed to be of two cultures, Mr. Speaker, that have been beacons of liberty for all of civilization: the place of my birth, the land of the free and the home of the brave, the United States of America; and the land of my ancestors, the birthplace of democracy, the Hellenic Republic.

Many Greeks fought for years, holding on to their heritage, their culture, their faith. Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the emblem of freedom for Hellenes, the flag bearing a white cross and nine blue and white stripes representing the nine letters, "Eleftheria," which means freedom.

Eight years of bloodshed and battle led to the Treaty of Adrianople, the formal declaration of a free and independent Greece.

Greece was the world's first advanced civilization, one that provided a cultural heritage that has influenced the world. Firsts in philosophy, mathematics, politics, sports, and art stemmed from a free Greece.

Liberty and justice, freedom to determine the path of one's own life, these are human desires and were embodied by Greece throughout their fight for independence. Those unyielding Hellenes paid life and limb for those desires, and generations of Greeks for decades to come owe their ancestors thanks.

As George Washington once said: "Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth." This held true in Greece in 1821, as it did in America in 1776.

"Freedom or Death," Eleftheria i thanatos, was the battle cry of the revolutionaries nearly 200 years ago. It rings true today.

Freedom is a powerful and beautiful notion. The Greek people achieved that for themselves 195 years ago, and I am proud to celebrate in memory of those who fought bravely to shed the shackles of the Ottoman Empire.

Greece has its own unique challenges today but, also, a history of resilience and ability to climb its way out of turmoil. As centuries-long allies, we must continue to creatively come up with solutions to help Greece control the flow of refugees arriving on its shores.

I am encouraged by the growing cooperation and collaboration that our

closest allies in the Eastern Mediterranean are proving this year. The trilateral agreements between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel are a refreshing reminder that we stand united with our allies in the fight for security, stability, and prosperity in a volatile region.

We celebrate Greek independence to reaffirm the common democratic heritage we share, and, as Americans, we must continue to pursue this spirit of freedom and liberty which characterizes both of our great nations.

Zito I Ellas. God bless America.

□ 1030

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, this morning I intend to comment on middle class budgets. But, before that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just very briefly reflect on a trip I just took to visit with our troops in the Middle East, in Iraq and elsewhere.

I have been to Iraq about 10 times. I think one of the fundamental responsibilities we have, as Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, is not just to talk about supporting our troops, but to go into the theater, visit with them, and learn firsthand the challenges they face.

Every time I visit with our troops, when I come back, I think the same thing: that we are so blessed to live in a country that gives us the right to agree with the decision to put people in harm's way, we have the right to disagree with that decision, and we have the right to remain silent, but no American has the right to forget even for a day the sacrifices that those men and women are making for us every single day.

We owe them our support and our awareness for the work that they do and, more importantly, supporting their families who are here and supporting our troops when they return as veterans.

Mr. Speaker, Friday, April 15, is a day of two deadlines. That is the deadline most Americans know by which they must pay their Federal income taxes. Everybody understands that deadline, and Americans don't have a choice but to comply with that deadline.

The other deadline is that that is the day by which Congress must pass a budget, and it is up to the Republican majority to produce that budget and bring that budget to the floor for a vote.

Unfortunately, the Republican majority will miss that deadline and fail the American people in our fundamental responsibility to earn our pay by passing budgets.

That is what we are put here to do: to debate priorities and pass budgets; yet,

this deadline will be missed. Failing to pass a budget by the deadline is a fundamental failure to the American people.

I will say, however, that, in this case, a missed budget may be a little better than the bad budget that Republicans have originally proposed. It is a budget that fundamentally fails the middle class.

It is a budget, as proposed, that gets rid of the Medicare guarantee. It is a budget, as proposed, that slashes \$6.5 trillion in fundamentally important priorities to the middle class in making sure that their kids are well educated, making sure that we are rebuilding America with infrastructure and trying to reduce traffic jams, rebuilding our bridges and our tunnels, and modernizing our airports. It is a budget that undermines the middle class. It is a budget that fails the middle class.

Now, I understand the need for us to reduce spending, and I have supported significant reductions in spending in my time in Congress.

But what this budget does is it takes away from the middle class in order to further enrich the most powerful: the special interests.

That is why people are so angry out there. They understand that Washington has to do more with less, but not give more to people who already have the most.

That is what the Republican budget does. That is the architecture of spending tax dollars that must be paid by April 15.

You take away from the middle class and you give more to people who are doing pretty well already, people who are doing so well that they can hire all sorts of friends to do their work here in Washington and maybe even contribute to some super-PACs. I think that is wrong.

People are angry because not only are our priorities wrong, but they see very little evidence of a Congress, under Republican leadership in the Senate and the House, that is doing its job.

They are angry because the Republican Senate won't even debate and vote on a Supreme Court nomination. You can vote for it. You can vote against it. They won't even vote on that nomination.

That is a failure to do the job that they are paid to do. They are angry because the majority here in the House of Representatives won't do their job and pass a budget.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, maybe no budget is better than a bad budget, but both represent failure for the American people.

The Pew Research Center did a study just several weeks ago that said that, for the first time since the Depression, to be in the middle class in America is to be in the minority. About 49 percent of Americans are in the middle class. The rest are either richer or poorer.

An economy grows best when the middle class is strongest. We need to