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The President did not Shoot Straight with the American People September 23, 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, we have come back to the floor this evening, the Iraq Watch has come back to the floor, and we are glad to be back. There is new information to discuss, the President's speech today at the United Nations to review. I am looking forward to the next hour, joined by my colleagues, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland); and I know others are on the way.

I would like to just start, though. The previous hour was taken by three distinguished Members of the other side of the aisle speaking about Iraq. I listened carefully to what they said and found myself in agreement with many of their comments. Certainly their frustrations that the press does not accurately report the good news, tends to report and dwell on the confrontations and the failures. That obviously is something we have broad bipartisan agreement on, the failures of the media to cover things the way we would like them to be covered. I would hope perhaps tonight could be the beginning of a more bipartisan discussion during this Special Order when we give our Iraq Watch hour. Perhaps in the future, the Republican Members could join us, not in a confrontational way, but in a way to see if there is common ground and, if we have disagreements, to develop those more fully. The purpose of Iraq Watch is to ask questions about our policies in Iraq, to see if there cannot be more information solicited for the Members of Congress and for the general public and to suggest policy changes that we think are necessary. Perhaps we can do that with our Republican friends in the future.

Let me take a few moments before turning to my colleagues to respond to the President's speech today in the United Nations. I should not say "respond," comment upon the President's speech. He essentially gave a summary of our role and our spending in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in the worldwide fight against AIDS and in measures to fight the traffic in humans and the sex trade. He also challenged the member nations of the United Nations to do more and join us in these efforts. It was a wonderful opportunity for the President to set forth our challenge to the United Nations, our desire for them to be involved in Iraq, to step forward, to provide leadership for the reconstruction and the security that clearly needs to be done in Iraq.

Yet the President, from my point of view, did not achieve that. I found his remarks to be flat and uninspiring. He did not set forth the role that the United Nations could assume in Iraq. He did not discuss the parameters of that role. He surely did not discuss the power-sharing that the United Nations member states have indicated they want to share in order to assume the major role in Iraq in terms of their reconstruction and their security needs. In fact, he made it clear in a reference to America working to submit a new resolution to the Security Council to bring in the U.N., the President's vision is for the United States to stay in control of the occupation in Iraq.

I think one fundamental question Congress has to ask as we consider the \$87 billion request the President has made, does the United States have to be in charge of the reconstruction?

Why should the United Nations not be in charge of the reconstruction and the new governance and the security? That would require the U.N. to step up to the plate, and perhaps they will not. If they do not, then we must finish the job ourselves, because surely we cannot leave a vacuum in Iraq. We must make sure that the innocent civilians of that country have an opportunity to move forward in a pluralistic way toward freedom, toward self-government, hopefully toward democracy as soon as possible. But why does the President refuse to consider the notion that the United Nations be given the primary responsibility, if they will assume it, to reconstruct Iraq, to provide security and bring a new governance forward? From my way of thinking, that is why there is a United Nations.

The President in his campaign for office scorned the notion of nation-building. He did not want to do it. Yet that is exactly what he wants America to do, primarily be in charge of nation-building in Iraq. I would suggest we consider a larger role for the United Nations. It was interesting the other day, the President sort of quickly, without any warning, finally indicated that he believes that Saddam Hussein was not behind the terror attacks of 9/11. He indicated that there is no evidence that Saddam Hussein was behind, or responsible for, those horrible attacks on 9/11.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If my friend would yield for just a moment.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I will indeed.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thought what was particularly ironic was that the day before, on "Meet the Press," President Bush's Vice President, DICK CHENEY, said something entirely different. He made statements in which the only reasonable inference that one could draw is that somehow al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, had a relationship with Saddam Hussein. I want to compliment the President of the United States finally for being forthcoming on that and ending that assertion that I think has caused great confusion among the American people.

Could I just go on for one minute, because, as you did, I witnessed the colloquy among our good friends, the Republicans from the other side of the aisle, and their discussion about Iraq. I have obviously significant disagreements. But I believe there is one thing we can agree on, that our men and women there have acted professionally, have reflected great pride on the military, and, in fact, on a number of occasions have acted heroically. But what I would do is to challenge them that when these men and women return as veterans and are no longer part of the military but assume that honored title "veterans," that we do not disrespect them. Because as you well know, this administration and this Republican Congress failed to support adequate funding for veterans health care benefits to the tune of \$1.8 billion. I wish one of them were here right now. In addition to that, if we are concerned about our veterans, if we are concerned about the men and women that are serving in Iraq today when they come home, it is important that we address the issue of disability for those that have been wounded in combat.

This is a story from yesterday, maybe today's, Miami Herald. I think it is important that the American people know this:

“Three months ago, the Republicans stalled a vote on a bill to erase a century-old injustice whereby the money that disabled military veterans collect in disability pay from the Veterans' Administration is deducted dollar for dollar from their military retirement pay.” This, I daresay, is unacceptable, given the fact that we have a foreign policy that is creating more and more veterans. While we can praise them here on the floor of the House, there is currently right here in this Chamber a place to sign a so-called discharge petition that would redress this injustice, this travesty.

Let me continue with this story that appeared in the Miami Herald:

“A group of 401 retired generals and admirals signed a letter to President Bush earlier this month urging him to do the right thing by changing a law that penalizes disabled military retirees. In the words of one veteran, if George Bush only knew how deep and bitter the sentiment over this issue really is, he would immediately order his stooges and henchmen to back off and do the right thing. It will definitely be out the door in 2004 for everyone who did not support disabled military retirees.” I daresay that there are close to 200 Members of this body that have signed that discharge petition, and it is my understanding there is only one Republican Member of the House of Representatives that has done so. That is wrong.

Mr. STRICKLAND. I would just like to point out to my friend that 202 Democrats have signed the discharge petition. Only one Republican has signed the discharge petition. It is something that I think the American people, especially the veterans in our country, need to know. They need to ask their Representative whether or not they have signed the discharge petition; and if they have not, they should ask them why they have not.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Before I go to the gentleman from Illinois, who has got important information about his American Parity Act and before we come back to discussions of the veterans, let me just quickly return to the point that I yielded to the gentleman from Massachusetts on, his absolutely accurate comments about the President obviously responding to the Vice President's comments when the Vice President tried to once again weave that web that Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11. It reminds me of that movie “A Bridge Too Far.” I would suggest that the President finally leveled with the American people about that because the Vice President made a comment too far. He just said it once too often and the press was paying attention and the President decided he had to say what we have all known, that there is no evidence of that connection between Hussein and 9/11.

But if you look at the President's speech today to the United Nations, he did it again. As another President said, “There he goes again.” There were several references when the President talks about the regime of Saddam Hussein cultivating ties to terror while it built weapons of mass destruction, and nations are more secure because an ally of terror has fallen. Saddam Hussein is a murderous and evil man who was willing to use weapons of mass destruction against innocent civilians. He did it against his own Kurds. He did it against innocent Iranians. But there is no evidence of the so-called ties to terror.

It seems to me, before I yield to my colleagues, that one of the most fundamental things we need from the White House is for the President to level with the American people. The situation in Iraq and with Hussein was bad enough. It does not have to be exaggerated. We do not need to continue to try to make connections with terror that simply do not exist. Hussein is evil enough on his own. And every time a bogus claim is made or an exaggeration is made by the administration and by the spokesmen for the administration, it weakens the President's credibility, it weakens the national credibility, and it does not help us accumulate the international

support that we need to internationalize the reconstruction of Iraq and to get the Iraqis back in charge of Iraq, which must be our two primary goals.

I thank the gentleman for being patient with me, and I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. EMANUEL. I want to thank my colleague again for organizing this Special Order to discuss the news in Iraq. I think it is appropriate to focus on the President's speech, but I am also very interested in Mr. Bremer's testimony the other day and the document they produced about the plan for reconstruction in Iraq. They have produced a blueprint to how they plan to spend \$21 billion of American taxpayer dollars, hard-earned dollars to rebuild Iraq.

I just want to highlight some of the individual items. There is a \$5.6 billion plan to rebuild the entire Iraqi electric grid. In the summer, America had a blackout. The response in the new energy bill for investment in the American electric grid, not a single dollar will be dedicated. As everybody has noted, Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, we have the most modern economy on top of a Third World late-19th century, early 20th Century electric system. It is not up to the power that we need for an economy that is an information-driven economy.

They are going to get \$5.6 billion for an electric grid, a new system in Iraq. Not a single dollar is in the energy bill dedicated to the United States, and we had a massive Third World-equivalent blackout that covered the east coast and parts of the Midwest.

I would like to also note, and it obviously was in the gentleman from Ohio's State primarily, but the estimates are for every billion dollars we spend, we could produce 10,000 jobs here at home. That would create 50,000 jobs here in America if we would spend that money on America's electric grid, upgrade it and bring it up to snuff and the level that is equivalent to the greatness of this economy.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the gentleman how many American jobs, 5 billion-plus that we are sending to either construct or upgrade the electric grid in Iraq, how many American jobs will that generate?

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no idea, but two points on that, if I could, to my colleague. One is we do know it would produce 50,000 here at home if it was spent here. Second, there was an article the other day in The New York Times about how we are paying thousands of Iraqi workers who do not show up for work but just to kind flood the economy with money, thousands of no-show jobs. I am from Chicago. We think we have written the book on no-show jobs. We know something about no-show jobs. And thousands of people are getting paid a salary who do not show up.

Let me bring up a couple other things, if I could, because I think this is relevant to everybody's district. We are going to spend, according to the Wall Street Journal today, \$4.6 billion of the \$21 billion in Iraq, 4.6 is going to go for drinking water, wetlands restoration, environmental policy for Iraq, and also irrigation. I have a bill to invest \$4 billion in the Great Lakes, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, Superior, Lake Huron. Twenty-seven million Americans get their daily drinking water from the Great Lakes. Twenty percent of the world's entire freshwater exists here in the United States. It is the largest body of freshwater in North America. Not a single Federal dollar; yet we are going to spend \$4.6 billion in Iraq for drinking water when we have got 27 million Americans here who get their daily drinking water from the Great Lakes and not a single dollar dedicated?

What I find most fascinating is we finally have an environmental policy for this administration. It is in Iraq because they are going to restore the wetlands.

Third, \$850 million of the \$21 billion will be spent in hospital construction. Of that, Basra is going to get \$150 million for a new children's hospital; \$150 million for a new children's hospital in Basra out of the \$850 million.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I have hospitals in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that, because of the cuts to Medicaid, are on the verge of closing and our people are suffering.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, of the \$150 million, I have a request to spend \$1.5 million for the Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago. It is one of the top five pediatric hospitals not only in the country, but the world. In fact, that hospital saved my life when I was 16 years old. I was there for 8 weeks. 1.5, it equals to 1 percent, and I am struggling to find the money for construction for a new facility to keep it on the forefront of children's facilities in pediatric care; yet we are going to spend \$150 million. So I am going to suggest tomorrow to the Children's Memorial Hospital in the city of Chicago at the corner of Lincoln, Halsted, and Fullerton that they may want to set up a sister program with the Basra Children's Hospital. They want 1.5 million? See if they can set up a sister program and borrow out of \$150 million for the new Basra children's hospital.

I would also like to draw people's attention in this \$21 billion that there is also money for Afghanistan. There is \$40 million to build 275 schools and train 10,000 more teachers in Afghanistan.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for just a moment, the President in his speech today said that he intended to build 1,000, 1,000 new schools in Iraq. And I serve a district where children are going to schools that are unsafe, where they have so many safety violations because of the age of the buildings that if they were a business, they probably would be closed down, where a prisoner that was a ward of the State could not be housed because the safety violations would keep the State from putting the prisoners in those buildings; and we have got school children going to those buildings, and the President is going to use the tax dollars coming from southeastern and southern Ohio where I have one county with unemployment of 13.5 percent, tax dollars are going to come from those moms and dads. They are going to come here from Washington, and the President is going to take those tax dollars and use them to build new schools in Iraq. It just does not make sense.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I also have a request. There is an academy in Chicago called the Chicago Academy, Carnegie endowment, called one of the landmarks for teacher trainings, a request for \$1 million for a landmark facility doing new teacher training in the schools for teachers who get master's degrees. The truth is I have nothing against the reconstruction investment in Iraq, but to vote for these cuts here at home, to ask the people in the gentlemen's districts and my district to pay the taxes, work hard, get the kids off to school, teach them the right values, and see their tax dollars go over there when schools are being closed, teachers are being laid off, police and firefighters are being laid off, health care is being cut, 3 million unemployed Americans, 45 million uninsured Americans, and yet all this investment over there.

As my colleagues know, I have a bill called the American Parity Act, and it says whatever we invest in Iraq, we have got to do here at home. So when that bill comes on the floor, I will offer the amendment to ensure that our investment in Iraq does not in any way supersede our investment here at home because Iraq cannot have a future that is brighter and stronger than the one we are committed to to our families here at home and our children.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman does not mind a friendly correction, he hopes to offer the amendment. I know he will try to offer the amendment, but the House Committee on Rules is unlikely to allow any amendment to be offered to that bill.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, to my colleague, I do think that the House Committee on Rules will give me "welcome to the NBA" treatment. I do see my bill getting stuffed.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I intend to offer another amendment too along with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Strickland) which would provide \$1.8 billion for our veterans, for American veterans who are currently fighting in Iraq so that when they come home, they will have the health care that they need and that they deserve.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, one last thing. I draw these health care analogies, these school analogies, infrastructure analogies, the producing of jobs and building a future at home. There is also a request in there for \$100 million for a witness protection plan for Iraq. The entire budget for the United States on witness protection: \$30 million, for the entire United States. The last time I checked, we could help people who wanted to finger drug dealers, who wanted to finger big gang leaders. We could use that money. Thirty million dollars is all we spend for fighting crime here in the United States, but we are going to dedicate \$100 million to the Iraqi witness protection plan. I think Americans will look at that and think maybe we should have a dual citizenship program. Maybe they should apply over there and start fingering people.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Does the gentleman have any details on this plan?

Mr. EMANUEL. No. It is in there. If we ever get a chance to ask Mr. Bremer or the people that developed this, I am not suggesting they do not need resources to help people who would turn on former Baathists that are living in the neighborhood, but \$100 million for a witness protection plan in Iraq, and we spent our entire Department of Justice request last year in 2001, \$30 million; \$3 million in the State of California. Ten percent of the budget to that. Does anybody really believe that we could not use more money or that is going to be well spent? And yet the American soldiers, their families and their kids in the recent tax credit get only \$450 per child tax credit.

Mr. HOEFFEL. And many of them do not get that.

Mr. EMANUEL. No, they will not get that. There are 12 million children in this country who will not get the tax credit; yet we are going to spend \$100 million in Iraq on a witness protection plan.

There is a desire to build 3,500 units of affordable housing in Iraq. The President's budget submitted had 5,000 units of affordable housing. Iraq's entire affordable housing unit will be nearly equal to the President of the United States' plan for America.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for a moment before he leaves the floor, what I find particularly ironic is that it is the so-called Iraqi Governing Council that is really supporting our premise. They think that the administration is overspending. Stop for a moment and we should explain to those that are watching us here this evening that it was Secretary Rumsfeld and this administration that appointed the governing council.

According to a story that appeared in The New York Times yesterday, they are coming to Congress. They are going around the administration. They are getting frustrated. They are coming directly to the legislative body; and according to this particular story that appeared, again, in yesterday's New York times, they are coming to argue that American taxpayers could save billions of dollars on Iraq's reconstruction by granting sovereignty more rapidly. In interviews, the Iraqi leaders said they plan to tell Congress about how the staff of L. Paul Bremer, the American occupation administration, sends its laundry to Kuwait, how it costs \$20,000 a day to

feed the Americans at Al-Rashid Hotel in Baghdad, how American contractors charge large premiums for working in Iraq, and how across the board the overhead from supporting and protecting the large American and British presence here is less efficient than granting direct aid to Iraqi ministries that operate at a fraction of the cost.

One member of the governing council made this statement: he estimated that in some cases the savings could be a factor of 10 where, and these are his words, our appointee to the group that is commonly described as the governing council, he said where they spend \$1 billion, we would spend \$100 million. What are we doing?

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, we have been joined by the gentleman from Hawaii, but I want to add one thing. What I described was the line items of the \$21 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan reconstruction. I went through the hospitals, the education, infrastructure, the water projects. I did not mention that today in the newspaper there is an additional \$8 billion that was just recently offered for Turkey. I do not have anything against offering assistance to Turkey. They are a good American ally, but \$8 billion so they would participate. What I find interesting is we spend about \$11 billion a year on Pell grants. So Turkey in 1 year will get nearly what we spend for one of the largest Federal assistance programs for kids to go to college here in the United States. That is what we are going to offer Turkey.

So just to put this in perspective, we have \$21 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan reconstruction, the lion's share going to Iraq. That does not count what we are spending now in Turkey that was just approved yesterday. I do not know, but the last time I checked, we fought tooth and nail to get Medicaid reimbursement here at home for our hospitals for the health care of our citizens, and I know our colleagues from Ohio and Hawaii, and I do not want to take more time than is allocated here for me.

But I want to add that piece for Turkey to that number. As we talk about \$21 billion, there is another \$8 billion just offered for Turkey. Again, there are needs at home. It need not be an either/or situation that the President has put us in, America versus some of our allies.

Mr. STRICKLAND. If my friend will yield for a moment, we keep talking about the \$21 billion for Iraq, and that is out of the \$87 billion the President has requested. But we should not forget that we have already appropriated \$65 billion. What we are talking about here is over \$150 billion that has already been requested out of the American taxpayers' pocketbook. So it is maddening to me when the President stands before the U.N. today and he says we are going to build 1,000 new schools in Iraq, and we are underfunding the No Child Left Behind bill by \$8 billion.

We ought to care about Iraqi children, but we ought to care about American children and American kids as well. And then he says we are going to build hospitals and health care clinics, and we are underfunding our VA health care system by \$1.8 billion.

So which is it, Mr. President? Do you care more for the Iraqi citizens or for America's veterans? Do you care more for Iraqi children or America's kids?

It is just maddening to me. I do not think the President has been a straight shooter with the American people, and I do not think it was any coincidence that when the President finally came clean and 'fessed up that there was no evidence that connected Iraq with September 11, 2001, that he did it in the midst of a hurricane, when the Nation's attention was focused on the weather. But the fact is, it is significant, because about 70 percent of the American people apparently continue to believe that we went to Iraq because Iraq was involved in the attack upon our country.

Afghanistan was involved in the attack upon our country, and I think we all supported going into Afghanistan. But the American people need to know that there was no connection between Iraq and September 11, and no weapons of mass destruction have been found. So I find myself asking, what is the justification for what has happened, and how are we going to deal with this mess we have gotten ourselves into?

Mr. HOEFFEL. I just wanted to add to the gentleman's comments that the reference to Afghanistan is important because we have been distracted from the challenge in Afghanistan because of our commitment in Iraq, and things are not going so well in Afghanistan these days. The Taliban is reforming, President Karzi is having a difficult time with security outside of the capital city of Kabul, and clearly we did not get the job finished in Afghanistan, where al Qaeda was clearly located and where the Taliban was allowing al Qaeda to flourish.

Mr. STRICKLAND. And where Osama bin Laden is still hiding somewhere out there planning the next attack upon our people.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

We have been joined by the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie). Aloha.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I came in just at the moment when I could say to our good friend from Chicago, maybe we ought to talk a little turkey tonight.

I just find it extraordinarily interesting that people continue to come to our offices, and I want to emphasize that all of us are here working today, and we find ourselves, do we not, meeting with constituents who come to our offices with concerns, and among them, and perhaps Members here can verify today, they probably saw, if they have any military dependents in their districts, representatives of the Impact Aid Coalition.

For those in our listening audience and for those Members who may not be thoroughly familiar with what Impact Aid means, you will find that when a child is in a school district as a result of his or her parents being assigned there by the United States military, that district is generally eligible for what is called Impact Aid, because that child has an impact on the finances of that school system. That child's parents may or may not be paying the same kinds of taxes, contributing the same kind of financial support, that would be there if that parent was in fact living in that district as a matter of course in their life. So in areas where we have a high number of military dependents, the United States and Congress in its wisdom has evolved a system called Impact Aid.

Now, the astounding thing that is taking place today is here are our constituents on behalf of military-dependent children appearing in our offices asking for funding, full funding of Impact Aid, inside the boundaries of the United States. We will pay foreign nations 100 cents on the dollar with respect to those children and their education, but within the boundaries of the United States, tonight as I speak, those children and their parents have to beg the United States Government for financial assistance for the children of our own military that are serving.

Some of the same military that is serving tonight in Iraq have children in this country whose education is not being paid for by the Impact Aid to which they are entitled. This is the kind of disconnect that is taking place with the prosecution of this war and its aftermath that the people of this country have to come to grips with and come to terms with.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If Mr. Emanuel could tell us how many tax dollars from the United States are going to Iraq to construct or rehabilitate schools in Iraq. What is the dollar figure?

Mr. EMANUEL. The schools number has not been determined. What I do know is they have \$40 million for an Afghan school program, 10,000 teachers trained. The budget is not line-itemed. There is a big number in there for the 1,000 schools that our colleague from Ohio noted the President has planned for Iraq.

The \$21 billion, at this point, we just got this today and are still going through it. The whole line item, as I outlined earlier, it has numbers for the electric grid, for the water projects, for the hospital program.

As my colleague noted, there is a vision there. But there is not a person here among us whose constituents have not talked about after-school programs, teachers being laid off, police and firefighters being laid off, hospital doors closing on the uninsured in this country. So there is not one of us who are not begging for money for their districts and see plans and visions and dollars for Iraq that do not match up with what we hear here at home, in America.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. If the gentleman would yield on that point, all of that is true, but my emphasis here is these are military dependents. These are the dependent children of people who are now fighting in Iraq, and those children and the school districts within which they are now living are not funded under the Impact Aid program that we ourselves have authorized in the Congress.

If this is taken as the basis for our conversation in the immediate, I would point out that is one of the reasons why some of us are insisting that before any of this money be voted, that it be authorized; that the requisite subject matter committees, perhaps the Committee on Education and the Workforce or most certainly the Committee on Armed Services, have hearings on this to determine what in fact should be authorized, how much unexpended funds there are, where funds have been allocated, and have an audit of what has been spent to this point, what is expected to be spent, before we simply go to the Committee on Appropriations and in effect block the entire legislative process that has been established for every other item.

The fact is that an appropriation, an emergency appropriation, a supplemental appropriation, should be handled only under emergency circumstances. These are not emergency circumstances. This is the result of what has taken place up to this point and needs a sober, serious consideration and analysis before we take one step forward.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If the gentleman would yield, to add I guess insult to injury on his point about Impact Aid, we have just been told, my office has been told and a number of you, I am sure, have been contacted, that posttraumatic mental health services for returning service veterans and their families are now being cut, so that certain military bases where our troops will be returning from Iraq, and these are enlisted persons, will not have sufficient mental health services to deal with the trauma that they have experienced in Iraq.

Some of my constituents were in my office just this past weekend talking about that kind of crisis, which leads me to support this whole idea that there has to be an accounting of how these monies were spent.

I just sent to my colleagues a whole list of discussion points about the \$87 billion, which takes into account accountability, full hearings, and I might say that we should question the reason for voting for the total package of \$87 billion without having a separate vote for how much it will take to support our troops in Iraq and get them the kind of equipment and food and services that they need, and then place the rebuilding of Iraq, so we

can address the questions of the distinguished gentleman from Hawaii. Why we are not funding the Impact Aid? Why do we not separate out the rebuild question?

I leave you on this point: I have asked for full hearings on the weapons of mass destruction and what we spent money on, but the real question is, what will our allies pay for? I did not see much in the speech today at the United Nations where I would have been anymore encouraged as an ally to jump in and join us, because I did not see any conciliatory remarks by the President.

But he is asking them to send troops, he is asking them to pay money, and he is asking them to see lives lost. We are already experiencing that.

The question is, before we spend money on the rebuild, what are these allies willing to do? What is the deal we are cutting? How many troops will be sent and how much money will be expended? So we can spend good money on our troops.

The last point is very important: The defense appropriations we just passed, that are coming up, how much of that could we not utilize for the operation in Iraq?

So I thank the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) for having this special order, and I hope that we can have the kind of honest debate that will be befitting of the oversight responsibilities of this Congress and our commitment to the American people.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for joining us. She adds great wisdom and enthusiasm to the discussion. I hope you will be here every week with us. We plan to continue this for the duration.

I know there is one of our colleagues who has been patiently waiting who has not spoken yet. First the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel) has a quick point to make.

Mr. EMANUEL. I want to make one quick point that I left out of my notes, and I would like to draw people's attention to it.

There is \$21 billion in this for rebuilding for Iraq. There is another line item for \$150 million for retraining and recruiting police officers to guard the streets of Baghdad. Yet the President's budget zeros out the police program that funds police on the street here in the United States, the 100,000 police program.

So we will have dollars dedicated to recruiting, training, upgrading the police security for the city of Baghdad and the rest of Iraq, 40,000 of them; yet the President's budget zeros out the COPS program here in the United States to help recruit 100,000 police on our streets, to make sure we have the right types of police on our street, they have the resources they need, so we can actually bring crime down here at home.

These are the people, if we have a terrorist threat, we are going to be calling on. And yet, as I went through the hospital program, I went through the water purification program, I went through the electric program, comparing what was going on there versus the cuts or eliminations here or nonfundings here at home, I left out the police program that I think is also important. Somehow we have placed the safety and security of what goes on in the streets of Baghdad above what we are doing here at home. I did not want to leave that out from the discussion.

Mr. HOEFFEL. I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Emanuel). He has done a magnificent job with this fiscal analysis of the requested money for reconstruction in Iraq. It is a fascinating comparison that I think all of

America needs to pay attention to. You made a reference to wanting to ask Paul Bremer these questions directly. I know the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) and I will have an opportunity on Thursday when he appears before the Committee on International Relations, and maybe we will have a chance to use some of your material, and we will credit you and ask the appropriate questions.

Let me now yield to our colleague the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to note the message that I heard in my district this weekend, representing the First District north of Seattle. I went to the homecoming of the USS Carl Vinson, one of our great aircraft carriers stationed in the west Pacific. They went for a tour that was supposed to be 1 month, but because of the Iraq War, they were essentially out to sea for 8 months, and it was really exciting to see families reunited after this patriotic service in the west Pacific.

But I heard two messages while I was out and about this weekend talking to these folks. One was how proud we are of our people doing this very difficult duty, and the second was being absolutely flabbergasted by the amount that the administration has requested for the reconstruction of Iraq and these expenditures. People were absolutely floored when they saw the numbers that are associated with this project that the President has led us into or gotten us into, depending on one's perspective, in Iraq.

And we worked just on the back of an envelope as I was talking to some constituents about how much money this is. Conservatively this is going to be \$200 billion before we are out of Iraq, conservatively. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Spratt) has done a great job on the House Committee on the Budget, which has done an analysis of the various scenarios, and, conservatively, it is going to be over \$200 billion. That is \$480 million for every congressional district in the United States. That is \$8 million a week for every congressional district in the United States. That means if we think about what this money really means, it means in your town, it means \$8 million you could be spending on a new school or health care, \$8 million a week you could put, conservatively, 7,000 to 10,000 kids in your hometown through college with the amount the Iraq project is going to cost.

Mr. Speaker, that is why people are flabbergasted by this number. The reason they are flabbergasted is because the enormity of the number and because the President simply did not shoot straight with the American people on how much this was going to cost when we started this entire project, and now people are very, very upset about it.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield just for a moment, the numbers are startling, I agree, but I think they are even more troublesome when we put them in perspective. We are talking about billions and billions and billions to rebuild Iraq, and as has been pointed out this evening, we are underfunding our veterans' health care by \$1.8 billion. It seems so easy for the President to talk about billions and billions and billions for Iraq, and yet this administration and the leadership of this House, they are fighting us tooth and toenail to keep us from getting the \$1.8 billion we need just to provide the basic medical services to our soldiers.

I want to tell my colleagues something that I found out today that is shocking. I think the American people will be appalled when they find this out. The soldiers who have been wounded in Iraq and have been brought back to this country and are currently in hospitals a few miles from here, Walter Reed Hospital, when they leave the hospital, if they are able to leave the hospital, they receive a bill. They are being charged \$8.10 every day they are in that hospital for the food they eat. Think of that. You are in Iraq, you get your leg blown off, you come to Walter Reed Hospital here outside of Washington and get medical care, and when you leave the

hospital, they present you with a bill totaling \$8.10 for every day you are in that hospital for the food you have eaten.

Why are we willing to nickel and dime our veterans and be so incredibly generous with those who are living in Iraq or Turkey or elsewhere around the world? It is almost beyond belief.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, it does border on the incredible when we just hear our friend, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie), talk about the issue of impact aid in those school districts which provide education for the children of military personnel, when we reflect on the \$1.8 billion underfunding for health care, when we think about the fact that this Republican Majority is continuing to penalize disabled veterans, and now this, this \$8 per day to feed veterans that are in our hospitals after combat in Iraq. I cannot imagine anything so obscene.

Mr. Speaker, back in the early 1930s there was a very famous march in Washington, and it was the march of the veterans to decry the way they were being treated. We are getting to the point where there will be another march of the veterans on Washington unless this House and this President take action.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield on that point, we have tried to emphasize, and our chairman, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) would agree, that we have tried to emphasize in our remarks in the Iraq Watch, as we have proceeded from week to week, that this is not a partisan attack; this is not meant to be a Democratic Party discussion and analysis. Obviously, anybody can come and join us who wishes to do so. But nonetheless, the plain fact is that the House, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) points out, is going to have to act, the Congress is going to have to act.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. Young), for example, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, is aware of what has taken place at the hospital because I know that the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations and his wife and family visit regularly, and this did not just start with the war in Iraq; this is something that has been a lifelong commitment of the Youngs. They have, that is to say, upon the discovery of that, I know that in at least one instance the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Young) has paid that bill himself, and he has a bill in the Congress now which we should pass instantly. We should have that on the floor.

Mr. DELAHUNT. By unanimous consent.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, it should just come right down on a suspension vote and be passed. But the fact that it has to be passed, the fact that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Young) has to take the lead as the appropriations chair to right this wrong is indicative of the fact that the administration has failed to understand what is at stake here. Surely something like this could be rescinded by an Executive Order. We are apparently able to go to war without the slightest recourse to the Congress for approval; one would think that the administration could rescind this tax on food for wounded veterans in our Nation's military hospitals.

So I think the Congress has the obligation to get involved in this oversight in a way beyond that which is the ordinary passage of bills and the ordinary scope of legislation that we go through in the quotidian details of legislative life here in Washington. This is a perfect example of it. In some respects, it is almost shameful that the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations has to resort to a legislative bill to right this wrong, which is obvious to anyone who would objectively look at the situation.

There is no doubt in my mind that the good offices of the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations is utterly and totally sincere and straightforward. The question is not the motivation of a Republican Member or a Democratic Member; it is that the Congress has to bring any administration, Democrat or Republican, to

account with respect to how we fund things, where we fund things, why we fund things, and what the rationale is behind it. This is our obligation as Members, regardless of party.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I want to note another little secret cost, and this is another reason for congressional oversight of this expenditure. There is a secret little bitter financial pill in here that so far I do not think we have talked a lot about, and that is because the administration wants to borrow, every single dollar for this Iraq operation, the President wants to take it right out of the Social Security Trust Fund, every single dollar. He will be borrowing every single dollar he expends in Iraq from the Social Security Trust Fund. And to do that, of course, we will have to pay interest on that. The interest alone, for which Americans will get absolutely nothing, conservatively, under an optimistic scenario, will be \$83.9 billion in interest charges that the President of the United States wants to impose on our children, because that is the generation that will actually be paying this. If it is not so rosy and we are there through 2008, it will be \$104 billion in interest charges.

One of the reasons Congress needs to engage in a debate about how to handle this situation is we do not believe we should put those interest charges on our children. It is unconscionable to put \$80 billion of debt on our kids of interest for which they get no teachers, no cops, no sailors, no soldiers. This is the biggest item of waste, fraud, and abuse probably in the Federal budget, this interest charge that they want to sneak by the American public so they do not know about it. And they do want to sneak it by. And do my colleagues know why they want to sneak it by? Because the President did not tell us about this when they started this war. I do not remember him saying, this is going to cost \$80 billion in interest, and I can borrow it from the Social Security Trust Fund.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, in contrast to what the gentleman has just offered about how we are spending on this war, in the Bush I war, if you will, the Gulf War, the total expenditures were about \$62 billion, \$63 billion. Because of the coalition, whatever one's opinion was on that war or this war, because of the approach that was utilized, a coalition effort, in fact, they were going in to liberate Kuwait, we spent only \$7.5 billion. The American people are willing to make sacrifices, but we did it as a coalition.

Right now we are standing postured to spend \$150 plus billion, \$79 billion and \$87 billion, and then possibly another \$75 billion, which speaks to the question of layering this country and layering our children with enormous debt and getting nothing for it, and our soldiers and our veterans and our families having no school aid, no impact aid, no mental health aid, nothing for what we are doing. We need to have full oversight of this Congress on behalf of the American people.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to note also that the projections that the President has given us are assuming that he is going to go with his tin cup to the rest of the world and get another \$50 billion to \$60 billion from the rest of the world. I do not see that money coming in in the next 10 days.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And today, from the reaction of the United Nations, it was clearly that \$60 billion from the rest of the world is a pipe dream.

In addition to that, earlier we heard from our Republican colleagues, and they were making the comparison with FDR and how he excited the American people and made a commitment to peace. And yet what a difference, because FDR asked the American people if they would accept a war tax. And yet we have this administration doing exactly the opposite, creating deficits that are looming so large that all economists, from the right to the left and in between, are saying we are on the cusp of real economic danger. We are looking at a

bleak economic future if we continue down this road. So any comparison between President Bush and the conduct of FDR, I dare say, is not apropos.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that point. It is very well taken.

We have about 2 minutes left this evening in our Iraq Watch. I would summarize my thoughts based upon what all of us have said, and the President's speech today, it is clearer than ever before that the President needs to do three things. First, he needs to level with the American people about the costs, about the timetables, about what we are getting into. Secondly, we need a plan on how he is going to internationalize the reconstruction and the security challenges in Iraq, and how he is going to get Iraqis back in charge of Iraq; how long will it take, when will we know it is going to happen. The third thing we need is an exit strategy. We cannot leave until these other things happen, or until the United Nations steps up in a real way to do it. If they do not step up, we have to stay and do it. How will we judge our progress? When will we know when it is time for us to leave?

We have 1 minute left, I think. Any comments from my colleagues?

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I just want to offer and hope that we can separate the vote. We are united behind our troops, and to be able to have a deliberative, studied approach to the operation, rebuild, that will allow us to have accountability and an exit plan, and all the remarks that the gentleman said.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I think in conclusion it is important for us to reiterate that what we must avoid is equating support for a political agenda with support for our troops.

To the degree or extent that that is deliberately confused in people's minds by politicians who are attempting to associate their political policies with support for the troops that has to be resisted. That has to be pointed out. That has to be applied and dissected, and so I think that it is important for us to continue to meet, to continue to urge the media to do more than simply take press releases and speeches at face value and to perhaps follow a little bit more analytically what is taking place and most certainly for all of us to stand up and make sure that everyone in this country understands that political agendas and support from the troops and for the troops are two different things.

I do not think anybody recognizes the full degree of anger that is building in this country as a result of trying to confuse those two points.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) for everything he has done. This is, I think, our 11th week; and as has been said over and over again, there will not come a week when we are not here to ask those questions because it is our responsibility, it is our patriotic duty; and I thank the gentleman.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for the promotion they have given me this evening, but we are all equal in the Iraq Watch, and we will be back next week; and I thank the Speaker for his cooperation.