

the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of blame to go around for the mistakes made in going to war in Iraq, especially now that it is common knowledge that Saddam Hussein told the truth about not having weapons of mass destruction and that al Qaeda and 9/11 were in no way related to the Iraqi Government.

The intelligence agencies failed, for whatever reason this time, but their frequent failures should raise the question of whether or not this secret spending of \$40 billion annually of the taxpayers' money is a good investment. The administration failed in making the decision to sacrifice so much life and limb by plunging us into this Persian Gulf quagmire that will surely last for years to come. But before the Congress gets too carried away with condemning the administration or the intelligence gathering agencies. It ought to look to itself.

A proper investigation and debate by this Congress, as we are now scrambling to accomplish, was warranted prior to any decision to go to war. An open and detailed debate on a declaration of war resolution would certainly have revealed that the U.S. national security was not threatened and the whole war could have been avoided. Because Congress did not do that, it deserves the greatest criticism for its dereliction of duty.

There was a precise reason that the most serious decision made by a country, the decision to go to war, was left by our Constitution, to the body closest to the people. If we followed this admonition, I am certain that fewer wars would be fought, wide support would be achieved for the sacrifices, there would be less political finger-pointing when events go badly, and blame could not be placed on one individual or agency. This process would more likely achieve victory, which has eluded us in recent decades.

The President has reluctantly agreed to support an independent commission to review our intelligence gathering failures and that is good. Cynics said nothing much would be achieved by the commission studying the pre-9/11 failures but it looks like some objective criticisms will emerge from that inquiry. We hope for the best in this newly named commission. But we already hear that the inquiry will be deliberately delayed, limited to the failure of the agencies, and may divert into studying intelligence gathering related to North Korea and elsewhere.

If the inquiry avoids the controversy of whether or not there was selective use of the information or undue pressure put on the CIA to support a foregone conclusion to go to war by the administration, the inquiry will appear a sham.

Regardless of the results, the process of the inquiry is missing the most important point, the failure of Congress to meet its responsibility on the deci-

sion to go or not go to war. The current mess was predictable from the beginning. Unfortunately, Congress voluntarily gave up its prerogative over war and illegally transferred this power to the President in October of 2002. The debate we are now having should have occurred here in the halls of Congress on a declaration of war resolution. Indeed, the Congress chose to transfer this decisionmaking power to the President in order to avoid the responsibility of making the hard choice of sending our young people into harm's way against a weak Third World country. This the President did on his own, with Congress' acquiescence. The blame game has only emerged now that we are in a political season. Sadly, the call for and the appointment of the commission is all part of this political process.

It is truly disturbing to see many who reneged on their responsibility for declaring or rejecting war in Congress by voting to give the President the power he wanted are now his harshest critics.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. FEENEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE VALUE OF INVESTMENT

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

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out my comments with a quote. "See, I ran for office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations." President Bush at a fund-raiser in Oregon, August 21, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I believe our national budget should reflect a community's values and priorities. It should reflect the needs of the American people, including good jobs, safe community, quality education, and access to affordable health care.

In my home district in Silicon Valley, we understand the value of investment. This means crafting budgets based on right choices. Do we fund a trillion dollar tax cut or do we provide after-school programs for our children? Do we give away billions to HMOs or do we help seniors afford their prescription drugs? Do we increase tax breaks for the businesses that ship jobs overseas, or do we work to recover the 2.6 million manufacturing jobs lost in the past 3 years?

Unfortunately, the budget submitted by President Bush fails to fund priorities important to middle-class Americans. President Bush's budget has a different set of priorities: budget-busting tax cuts, fiscal irresponsibility, overpayments to HMOs, and reduced funding for important domestic programs.

President Bush's budget lays out \$1 trillion for tax cuts but provides \$9.4 billion less for education than was promised in the No Child Left Behind Act. In California alone, this will result in \$897 million less for school districts through the title I programs and \$105 million less for children with disabilities through the IDEA program. President Bush is eager to make his tax cut permanent and even make new ones. But he cannot seem to deliver the funds promised when he signed the No Child Left Behind Act nearly 3 years ago.

President Bush's budget includes \$46 billion in overpayment for HMOs as a part of the Republican Medicare plan but it does nothing to lower the price of senior citizens' prescription medication.

President Bush has claimed for 3 years that his economic program would create jobs. But in that time the U.S. has lost nearly 3 million jobs. The President asserted in the State of the Union address that additional tax cuts would create jobs, but the numbers do not support this claim. This is not even a true budget because it will miss the costs of ongoing military operations in Iraq.

The budget also avoids long-term reform of the alternative minimum tax, even though the AMT will soon force millions of middle-class families to pay more taxes. And this is in direct contrast to the original intent of AMT. A recent estimate by the Congressional Budget Office put the full price tag of AMT reform at over \$500 billion, a cost not factored in by the President's budget.

If this budget reflects President Bush's priorities, then it is clear where his priorities lie. President Bush has chosen the interest of an elite few over the needs of the many. I urge my colleagues to align their priorities with those of the American people and oppose the budget proposed by President Bush. That budget reminds me of Swiss cheese. It is full of holes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. BLACKBURN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MUSHARRAF'S ROLE IN NUCLEAR EXCHANGE

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