Americans have a right to safe, gun-free classrooms, and this bill will help make that happen.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS

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

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, a preceding speaker noted the supplemental bill just passed. I want to speak about an aspect left out of this supplemental bill because of the actions of the majority.

Any assistance for farmers outside of the gulf region who suffered disaster losses in the 2005 production year were left out of the disaster bill. Supported by a bipartisan majority in the Senate, left out on a party-line vote in the House.

Our Nation's farmers have provided this majority and this President with plenty of help over the years, and they certainly deserve better than to have the President of the United States issue his first veto threat on a disaster bill that helped farmers when natural disasters took their crops.

They, instead, provided just for hurricane, farmers who lost during the hurricane. Well, look, maybe a drought does not have a name, maybe a flood does not have a name, but when you have a natural disaster and it wipes out our farmers, they deserve help from our government. That is how you keep family farmers in business, and it is a darn shame the Republicans stopped it in this bill.

STARK DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTIES IN APPROACH TO WAR ON TERROR

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there is a stark difference in the way the Republicans and the Democrats approach this war on terror. There are many of the liberal elites who want to disengage and would like to leave broad swaths of this planet to terrorists. This course of action would lead to a lot of pain and suffering for future generations, for our children, for our grandchildren. It also would embolden the terrorists who are watching everything that we do and would lead to more strikes on U.S. soil.

After 9/11, our country made a decision that enough was enough and that it was time to fight back after two decades of terrorist strikes. It was time for us to protect our national security, and yes, indeed, because of our men and women in uniform, we have, and they are doing it brilliantly.

Is every day in this battle a victory? No. Is it easy? No. Is it very difficult? Incredibly so. But the important thing, it is a necessary fight and we are winning.

STUDENTS SHOULD CONSOLIDATE TO AVOID RATE INCREASES

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, graduation season is in full swing, and all across the country eager college students are walking across the stage and entering into the workforce. While many wonderful experiences no doubt lie before them, one factor will quickly dampen their spirits, the reality that they are now saddled with unmanageable debt they accrued while obtaining their college degree.

The debt will grow even more daunting if they miss an important deadline that is fast approaching. That is why I came to the floor today, Mr. Speaker, to encourage all college graduates and their parents who are carrying debt to consolidate their Federal college loans before July 1. If they do not, interest rates will rise by 7 percent for students and 7.8 percent for their parents. Consolidating this month will allow them to lock in a low rate of 4.75 percent, drastically reducing the overall amount they will have to pay.

Mr. Speaker, the Republicans refuse to join us in making college affordable for many, many young people. In fact, they actually made college more expensive for American students when they passed a $12 billion in higher education cut earlier this year.

I urge strong support for our students and parents.

MAKING U.N. DUES ASSESSMENTS MORE FAIR

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the assessment of member dues at the United Nations has always been something of a joke. Japan pays 19.5 percent of the U.N. budget and does not even get a chance to sit on the Security Council. By contrast, Security Council members Russia and China contribute only 1 percent and 2 percent respectively to the U.N.'s multibillion dollar budget. We pay over 22 percent.

Currently, the U.N. bases assessments on gross national income figures, the proper measure of which cannot be taken when currencies are not convertible. The United States recently proposed that assessments be calculated the World Bank way, using data on purchasing power parity, to better reflect what states can afford. This would raise Russia's share of the budget to about 2.5 percent, China's to 13.7 percent, leaving America's mostly unchanged.

Should they not want this recognition, under the new accounting method, China's share of world gross domestic product rises to second place from seventh, just as Russia's rises to 10th place from 16th?

GOP IS THE CUT-AND-RUN CONGRESS

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, Karl Rove has said that the Democrats want to cut and run on the war in Iraq. Well, let us talk about cutting and running.

When we were told this would be a quick war and turned into a long war, this Congress cut and run from its oversight responsibility.

When we were told 130,000 troops would be enough but more were clearly necessary, this Congress cut and run from doing its oversight responsibility.

When we were told this would be a conventional war and it turned into an insurgency, this Congress cut and run from its oversight responsibility.

When we were told oil would pay for reconstruction, but the taxpayers were left with a $480 billion tab, this Congress cut and run from its oversight responsibility.

When we were told we would be greeted as liberators but had become treated like occupiers, this Congress cut and run from its oversight responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans want to portray the greatest foreign policy challenge of a generation as simply a choice between staying the course and cutting and running. Democrats look forward to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, oversight requires the vigilance and patriotic determination of every Member of Congress to do the job we were sent here to do and ask the questions that their constituents want.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for new priorities in Iraq and here at home.

BETTY BRADY'S RETIREMENT

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Betty Brady for nearly 30 years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community, most recently as the city clerk.

Betty's retiring from public service this year, and I know the whole city will miss her enthusiasm and her dedication.

Betty has worked with the City of Powder Springs since 1977, and in 1992, she was appointed city clerk. Over the past 14 years, Betty has worn many hats, accomplishing administrative, organizational and public relations duties for the mayor and city council.

As a native of Powder Springs, Betty brought a passion to her role as city clerk. Never one content to sit on the sidelines, Betty gave her time and energy to almost every aspect of city government.

In retirement, Betty will have more time to spend with her husband Aubrey, her three sons and her seven grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me and all my colleagues in thanking Betty Brady for her years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community.

LEAK OF SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, the leak of the sensitive personal information of millions of veterans and active duty military personnel by the Department of Veterans Affairs is a disgrace.

The information, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth and disability was taken from the VA to an employee's home via his laptop. When the laptop was stolen from his residence, the private, sensitive information of more than 26 million veterans and active duty troops were stolen with it, making them all potential targets for identity theft.

No employee of the Federal Government should have the ability to walk out of their office with that amount of personnel data on their computer. The administration needs to make sure that something like this never happens again.

The VA must also work with Congress to provide assistance to the millions of victims of this leak without affecting veterans' benefits. Veterans should have the resources made available to them free of charge to monitor their credit reports for suspicious action.

If any of our veterans or troops become victims of identity theft because of the security breach, they should not be held responsible. After all, it was by no act of their own that their personal information was compromised.

Last night, I introduced H.R. 5588, a bill that would ensure the veterans are protected in case of their stolen identity.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES GAINING GROUND IN IRAQ

(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, as the House prepares to consider a resolution for victory in the global war on terrorism, I would like to congratulate U.S. troops and coalition forces for training Iraqi security forces.

In 3 years, coalition troops have transformed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi volunteers into battle-tested Iraqi security forces. The Defense Department's quarterly report recently stated that there are more than 263,400 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces. Additionally, the Iraqi Army now controls 30,000 square miles of territory, an area roughly the size of my home State of South Carolina. Nearly two-thirds of combat operations are now conducted by Iraqis alone or jointly with coalition forces.

Day by day, Iraqis are defeating terrorists and gaining control over their country. Progress in Iraq is helping to ensure security in America, and we must remain committed to completing this critical mission protecting American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

REPUBLICAN RAID ON STUDENT AID INCREASES LOAN COSTS

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, with tuition costs rising and the availability of financial aid declining, many parents in our country are finding it harder and harder to afford the cost of college education for their sons and daughters. However, these families know the importance of having a college degree in today's economy. We really cannot underestimate the importance.

Therefore, large numbers are relying on student loans to help meet tuition costs. While these loans can be a great resource to make college accessible to more students, they can also cause great financial hardships for the borrower when they graduate and the payments are due.

The administration has supported making paying for these loans even more difficult by enacting their raid on student aid and cutting $12 billion from the higher education budget. Because of these drastic and devastating cuts, interest rates on student and parent loans for college will increase significantly July 1.

To avoid this dramatic increase in interest rates, I encourage all Federal student loan borrowers to visit www.loanconsolidation.ed.gov to consolidate their loans before July 1.

KATRINA BILLS

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, this week several of my colleagues and I are circulating a chart listing 176 Katrina bills, out of which only a dozen have become law to date. As we sit here today, dozens of survivors are protesting the injustices suffered at the hands of FEMA. Hurricane season is upon us again, and FEMA continues to deny housing assistance to tens of thousands of needy families, many of them now rendered homeless.

New Orleans remains a toxic disaster zone that still looks much like it did the day after the hurricane. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent on no-bid, sweetheart contracts, much of it wasted.

Will the 163 Katrina bills sitting in committee also go to waste? Or will Congress address the ongoing specific needs of the survivors by moving existing legislation and checking fraud and abuse by providing real oversight of appropriations?

The choice is ours.

□ 1230

HOUSE REPUBLICANS TURN BACKS ON MIDDLE CLASS; ECONOMIC INSECURITY GROWS

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have turned their backs on the middle class, and that is one of the main reasons an overwhelming majority of Americans want Congress to move in a new direction. Our constituents want us to work on behalf of all Americans, not just the wealthy few. But for 5 years now the Bush White House and Congressional Republicans have showered millionaires with large tax breaks while ignoring the economic conditions of the middle class. This year, while middle-class families received an average of a $60 tax break, America's millionaires received a whopping $65,000 gift from the Federal Government. And Washington Republicans call this fair?

It would be one thing if both the wealthy and middle class were both benefiting in today's economy, but again many of our constituents are facing uncertain times. Today, wages are stagnant, family debt is on the rise, health care benefits have either disappeared or increased dramatically, and savings levels have plummeted.

These are the economic conditions many of our constituents face today, but this House Republican majority seems content with the status quo; and it is time this House listened to hard-working middle-class Americans.

WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 6(a) OF RULE XIII WITH RESPECT TO CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 862, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 862

Resolved, That the requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported on the legislative day of June 13, 2006, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5576) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.