



# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, March 26, 2003

## *House of Representatives*

### Showing REAL Support for our Veterans

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Mr. FILNER:** Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and I thank them all for being here tonight to stand up for our Nation's veterans.

Our troops in Iraq are being funded at the rate of about \$1 billion every 2 ½ or 3 days, \$1 billion every 2 ½ or 3 days. We want our troops to have the best. We want our troops to have everything they need for success in Iraq. But if we have the money to send our troops to war, we must have the money for them when they come back from war, and that is all we are saying here tonight.

What we are saying is for 2 ½ or 3 days of that war in Iraq, we can fund everything that our veterans need this coming year. That is the amount of money that has been subtracted by the Republicans in their budget, \$25 billion over the next decade.

We have the money. It is a question of the will. We have the resources. It is a question of our priorities. And, ladies and gentlemen, it is time to call the

names and take the prisoners of those who are hurting our veterans.

You hear on Memorial Day and on Veterans Day the words of support, but watch what they do when they come and vote. Watch what they do when they vote on the budget. Watch what they do when they vote on the appropriations. Watch what they do when they take your future away from you. Watch the procedural votes. Watch us, ladies and gentlemen. Because if you just take the words, everybody here supports you, but the money ain't there to make it happen.

Let me say a couple of things that the Republican budget takes away if it goes through. As we heard earlier, a co-payment for a month's worth of prescription drugs, the drugs that you need to survive, is going to double, more than double, from \$7 to \$15. We are going to charge enrollment fees to veterans who are in "a higher priority" but who are veterans and who deserve the treatment, and we can give it to them. We are going to cut 5,000 nursing

home beds so only those veterans with the worst kind of disability will be able to be cared for.

We will abandon our goal of eliminating homelessness amongst our veterans. Every evening, Madam Speaker, 250,000 of our Nation's veterans are on the streets. Can the Members imagine that as a way to pay back what they have given to our country? They are homeless, and we do not seem to have the resources to change it. We give the program \$20 million a year, \$20 million a year. That is nothing in the context of our budget.

Disabled veterans, disabled veterans will be cut from care if this budget goes through. The Montgomery GI bill, which helps our education of our veterans, will not be funded. VA home loans will not be funded. Markers and

flags for deceased veterans will not be funded.

This is hypocrisy, ladies and gentlemen, hypocrisy that comes from saying we are for the veterans and not providing the money.

Madam Speaker and the gentlewoman from California, right now there are 200,000 veterans who have waited more than 6 months for their first appointment. Veterans will die while they are waiting for that first appointment, and yet we say we cannot do anything. Let us resolve to change this.

I ask all the veterans, when we consider the appropriations, come to Washington, surround the Capitol, camp out, bivouac, and do not leave this place until we pass a budget that is worthy of you.

