Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman of the

Congressional Black Caucus for organizing this Special Order and I too

commend him for taking so much of his time to organize us to come to

this floor to help shed light on what is going on in this Congress and

in this world. I look forward to every opportunity that he affords me

to participate.

The massive costs of the war and how they will affect Americans in

their everyday lives is an incredibly important issue that we must

continue to discuss. This past Monday, the President sent his fiscal

year 2005 budget to Congress. We found out that under this President's

guidance, the Nation's debt has grown to record numbers. This year

alone, the deficit is expected to be at least $521 billion. And the

national debt has grown by $1.7 trillion since 2001. Yet instead of

taking the necessary steps to bring our fiscal house into order, the

President has proposed more of his failed policies.

I am having an interesting time, Mr. Speaker, discussing this with my

friends. They say to me, Maxine Waters, I thought that you were the one

that has been accused of being one of those tax-and-spend liberals but

now your President has outdone you. He is spending money like a drunken

sailor. How can you explain it?

I say to him, I cannot explain it, but it falls into that category of

misdirection, of tales that are being told that just do not hold up

when you place them under scrutiny.

The President's budget is extremely dangerous. It calls for

eliminating 38 education programs and cutting funding for dozens of

others. It does virtually nothing for the 43 million Americans who have

no health insurance. It cuts $1.6 billion from HUD's section 8 voucher

program and an additional $130 million from public housing. The

President's budget even cuts, by 7 percent, programs designed to

protect our drinking water, keep our air clean and other important

environmental programs.

The budget even calls for imposing copayments and enrollment fees for

our veterans in order to receive health care for their injuries

sustained while protecting our Nation. I find it appalling that our

President would require our veterans to pay up to $250 enrollment fees

in order to receive the care they need. But these are just a few

examples of the administration's policies that penalize working

Americans. The war in Iraq is a continuation of these policies. It is

the working American that is fighting, dying and paying for this war.

The wealthiest of Americans, on the other hand, are not being asked to

make any of these sacrifices. None are serving themselves, and few if

any have sons or daughters in the U.S. Armed Forces. And they are the

beneficiaries of hundreds of billions of dollars in tax cuts which

makes it increasingly difficult to pay for this war.

To date, the President has asked for and received $157 billion for

this war in Iraq. Amazingly, recent press reports suggest that the

President will ask for another additional $50 million shortly after the

next election for military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. This

will bring the total to $206 billion. What is so disappointing, though

not surprising, is the difference between what we were told the costs

would be for this war and what the costs are turning out to be.

Throughout the buildup to the war, and even during the early stages,

the American people were assured that the costs would be minimal. Who

can forget Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz' statement in March of

2003 when he said, ``We're dealing with a country that can really

finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon.'' But the sad

reality is that it is the American people who are paying for this war.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this administration and this war, we

cannot help but now understand why the American people are finally

waking up to how they have been misled and misdirected by this

President and this administration. Of course, we heard references

tonight to the reason we were told we were going into this war and we

must say it over and over again; we did a preemptive strike because

Saddam Hussein and Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and we were in

imminent danger. We were told this over and over again and Colin Powell

even had some maps. He pointed to some sheds where chemicals were being

made and the weapons of mass destruction were being developed.

But we have been misled on many things by this President and now we

find ourselves in a terrible situation in Iraq. We are not in control.

Our soldiers are dying, being picked off one by one. Suicide bombings

are taking place. Soldiers are losing their lives. I am sure their

families are asking, why? Or what does this all mean? Not only are they

losing their lives, we were told after the President could no longer

support or justify the weapons of mass destruction that we really

needed a regime change, that we had to be about the business of

creating democracy in Iraq. Now we are at the point where our President

has said they are going to turn over governance to the Iraqis, only to

find out that this President does not want free and fair elections, he

does not want free and fair elections because, oh, somebody may win

that he does not like. And I want you to know that the protests are

growing in Iraq about the fact that this President now wants to select

and choose who will be in charge of Iraq. He wants to put in a council

through some kind of caucuses to avoid the Shiites being in control,

because they may be the ones that get elected in this war as opposed to

the Sunnis that they would like to have elected. But whether we are

talking about Iraq or Afghanistan, we really did not have a plan. We

really thought we could just bomb everybody into submission, take over

the oil fields and chop up the spoils. And are we disappointed.

My goodness, how much more insult do the American people have to take

from this administration? Here we have the Vice President of the United

States of America, Mr. Dick Cheney, who is still receiving paychecks

from his old company, Halliburton. And what have we found out about

Halliburton? They are cheating us right and left. Not only have they

overcharged us for the oil they are importing from Kuwait to Iraq, we

find out they are cheating us on the amount of the food that they are

serving to our soldiers. They are giving us extraordinary numbers, only

to find out that they are not really serving the numbers that they

represent.

I talked about some of this last night, but it goes on and on and on.

We are paying for a war that we should not have been in in the first

place. We are paying contractors who are cheating us like Halliburton,

who are getting no-bid contracts, and there is no end to all of this.

This administration is going to have to pay a price for what it has

done. I am glad that we are here talking about it this evening.

Mr. Speaker, the administration's rhetoric does not support the

situation we find ourselves in today. We were not welcomed as

liberators, there are no weapons of mass destruction, hundreds of U.S.

soldiers are dying, and taxpayers are paying billions of dollars for a

war that need not be fought. Meanwhile, our responsibilities here at

home are being neglected.

The Senate's ricin scare yesterday reminds us that our homeland is

not as secure as it should be. Our schools continue to be in disrepair

and hundreds of thousands of workers are losing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we need to reassess our priorities. Unfortunately, this

budget does not do any of these things. There is so much more we can

say, but I am going to yield my time to our leader here so that he can

wrap this up tonight. But we have more to say and we will be back again

because the American public wants to hear from us.