Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding

me this time. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be a Member of the

House of Representatives. I represent the great State of Ohio, 11th

Congressional District, city of Cleveland.

The first constituent whose family I stood with after his death was

Brandon Sloan. Brandon was 19 years old. When I had an opportunity to

talk with his dad, Reverend Tandy Sloan, he was miffed by the fact that

his young son, 19 years old, over in Iraq as a part of the 507th

Maintenance Group was there without equipment at the end of a long line

of some 600 vehicles, without an artillery group around him and was

required to try and hold onto a truck that he was driving. Young

Brandon was killed at 19, at the height of his life, having graduated

from Bedford High School. The list goes on.

There was a Sergeant Robert Toudy, part of the 507th Maintenance

Group over there, trying to speak on behalf of the people of America,

fighting for his country, over there trying to work for the freedom of

the Iraqi people. The reality is, here we stand in September 2004 with

so many young men and women. Disproportionately represented among this

group are minorities and low-income folks who went into the National

Guard, who went into the service hoping to get a college education,

being required to give full-time service to our country in an Army, in

a war that really they cannot figure out why they are over there.

As we stand here this evening as Members of Congress saying to the

American people, why are we there? What is it that put all of us in

harm's way? What is it that put 1,000 young American men and women in a

war that we still cannot figure out; no weapons of mass destruction, no

real reason to be over there. The whole couching of the terms of a war

on terrorism is not what should have been said, but that we are there.

What do we do now? How do we protect the young men and women in the

Armed Services?

They are fighting, and they will say, we are fighting for America. We

are there fighting for freedom, but behind all of that, and we know

they are standing up and I am so proud of the young men and women I

have met over there doing what they believe our country wants, but the

reality is, it is time for a wake-up call. It is time for the people of

America to say, is this the best thing we can do? Do we have an exit

strategy?

Even more interesting is the people who are working over there for

private companies who are being kidnapped, beheaded. Why does this

President not have a way for us to get out and for us to get out

without feeling like we have deserted the people of Iraq? The people of

America need to ask the right questions, make this administration tell

us what is the resolve for us to get out of Iraq.

Earlier today, on another note, we voted on another tax cut. I admit

I voted for the tax cut, but I was concerned about the people of Ohio,

some 60,000 who have lost their jobs since President Bush took office

in the city of Cleveland alone. In East Cleveland, there is a 14.3

percent unemployment rate while the national rate is 5.7 percent. Jobs

are going overseas. What are we doing in the tax relief bill to help

the working poor making less than $10,000 who are working for a minimum

wage of $5.25 that keeps them in the poverty range?

What are Members of Congress doing? What is Congress doing to help

those who work every day with no health care and with children in

poverty? My own city was recently named as the number one city of

poverty in the United States of America. It is time for a wake-up call

for the people of America to say, in this election, what are we going

to do?

I know people are saying, I cannot make the connection. My vote does

not count. There are many who want to suppress our votes and say, like

our Secretary of State, Kenneth Blackwell, who issued a ruling this

past week saying to the people of Ohio, I am going to have a more

restrictive ruling on how voters can use a provisional ballot than I

had in the primary. It is voter suppression.

I am pleased to join my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr.

Meek) to say to the people of America, join the family plan. What

family plan? Not a health care plan. Not a dental benefit plan. But a

plan to get all of your family out to vote on election day. Make sure

everyone is registered. Make sure everyone has an absentee ballot who

cannot be in town. Make sure everyone gets out on election day. This is

the most important election of our lifetime.

This election is going to impact what happens with children in Head

Start, in public schools and private schools. It is

going to impact Pell Grants, a diminishing number of dollars available

to college students. What is going to happen to the children who decide

not to go to college? Are there training opportunities for people who

decide not to go to college? What about mothers on welfare who want to

go to work but do not have the income and the type of job that allows

them to be in a position to pay taxes?

I am asking all those who are listening to say this is the most

important election and our vote is our voice. It is time to step up and

speak up and say to the people of America and the people of the world

that we are going to be heard. Our voices are not going to be silenced.

Our voices are not going to be suppressed. We are going to voice our

concern about what is happening in the world.

We have 435 elected Members. Americans have an opportunity to be

heard in November. Do not sit back and say, I am not going to be heard.

My voice is going to be heard. I am going to let the people of America

and the people of the world understand that I wanted to be a part of

this. I am America. My face is America. I am part of this whole effort

that is going on in this Nation, and I want to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, the Louis Stoke's Veteran Facility

is right around the corner from my house in my congressional district.

I was over there the other day talking with the administrator about the

new programs that are going to go into this veterans' facility.

But the reality is we have not treated our veterans like they ought

to be treated. We have not given them the benefits that they deserve.

We have not given them the health care that they deserve. We have not

given them the opportunity to engage in a new business when they come

out. We have not given their families the kind of support that they

deserve.

And I am thinking back, my dad, Andrew Tubbs, 84 years old, served

back in World War II. And my son Mervyn had an opportunity to interview

my father about his service. And my dad told him things that he had

never even discussed with me. And I said, Dad, why did you not tell me

about this? He said, Because it hurt. Every time I talked about it, it

hurt me. I did not want to talk about it. I did not want to tell you

about it, but there came a time in life when I was much more

comfortable.

Today, my dad has got dementia, is suffering from Parkinson's, and I

think about what are we going to do for veterans who have come after

him. Are we going to give the benefit to the Vietnam veterans who have

posttraumatic stress syndrome, who suffer from Agent Orange? And we are

talking about young people across this country about how we want them

to join up with the service. What I am worried about is what is going

to happen to the young people right now. Are we going to have a draft

that is not an official draft? Are they going to be forced to go into

war in Iraq, as the President, as has said, that after the November

elections, should he be successful, he is going to call them up? He is

going to call more troops to go into Iraq and to possibly lose their

lives.

The people of America need to understand that. They need to know the

possibility of that fact. They need to know that the National Guard,

who are overtaxed, overworked, are working very hard, doing double duty

on behalf of America, when they really never anticipated that they

would be any more than a part-time armed services.

And what about the people that are in full-time service? I have a

cousin who told me, Stephanie, we are working 48 hours, not 24 hours in

a day; 48 hours.

So I am just saying to the American people it is time to wake up.

Remember that old song, ``Wake up, everybody, no more sleepin' in bed,

no time for backward thinkin', time for thinkin' ahead''? The world has

changed so very much from what it used to be. There is much more hate

and war and poverty. So we need to understand the dynamics that are

coming to play in these next 40 days and be ready to step up to the

plate and voice our opinion about what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to

yield, the interesting thing is this whole discussion about security

right here in the United States and what has this administration done

to secure us. I would ask the people of the United States of America to

contemplate this: the COPS program, we were supposed to give money to

cities to increase the number of police officers available in cities,

first responders. That amount of money has been reduced. I think about

the first responders, the law enforcement, the firefighters, the EMS.

The money that was supposed to go to cities across this country is

locked up in State capitals across this country, not going into the

neighborhoods where they deserve it.

We are still trying to figure out about what do we do about the

tankers or the freighters coming over into our country that are not

being perused. We are still thinking about the number of things that

are on the planes. The other day I was flying from Cleveland into D.C.

I mean, the woman frisked me, totally frisked me. The TSA person. They

were trying to be in place because of what happened with the Russians.

But what about all the things we are not doing? And this President

talks about securing America, and people are talking about how this

President has done all these things to make sure we are safer.

I bring to the American people the reality that those things are not

happening right here in the United States of America. There are so many

things that have not been funded by this administration that would make

us more secure. So we should not get fooled by believing that this

President has done enough to see that we are secure at home.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further,

I want to say this, that I am so excited and privileged to serve in the

House of Representatives with this fine young man, the gentleman from

Florida (Mr. Meek). He comes from great stock, my former colleague,

Carrie Meek, serving on the Committee on Armed Services, serving on the

Committee on Homeland Security, and he is talking about what he knows.

He is not just speculating. He has the opportunity to be on the

committees that know about all of these issues about Iraq, about all

these issues about National Guard, the Armed Services.

I am just so pleased and proud to be able to stand with the 30-

Something

Group here on the floor of the House, having celebrated my double

nickel birthday just last Friday of 55. I am pleased and privileged to

stand here, to be a part of the House, to have an opportunity to be

heard.

I just want to salute the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Meek) for all

the great work that you are doing. I am just pleased to be in your

aura.