

FRANK, from page 9

\$51 billion in the president's budget in the coming year for the wars in the Middle East. That should be cut way down, probably to \$10 billion. It won't happen right away, you have to phase these things out.

So we can stop protecting Western Europe, we can stop these wars, which are very expensive – and trying to impose order there, we can scale back the thermonuclear deterrent, and we can stop these very expensive new weapons systems.

Yes, I want to have more weapons in America and at a greater capacity than China, but we have an enormous advantage over them already, and we increase it every year. I do not know why we need to build an increasingly large number of nuclear submarines. Unfortunately, nuclear submarines do not defeat terrorists. If they did, it'd be over, we have a lot of nuclear submarines, and they don't have any. We have the kind of weaponry we needed for the Cold War.

I want America to be the strongest nation in the world, and we can be the strongest nation in the world at about 80 percent of what we're now spending.

E.G.: *Why do you think so few members of Congress are speaking out against our massive defense spending?*

B.F.: We were getting somewhere, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton were starting to scale it back, and then what happened was Dick Cheney and other neocons, very intelligently from their standpoint, managed to persuade people that terrorism was as big a threat as Communism and the Nazis.

What the Conservatives did was persuade people for a while that these terrorists were equal in the amount of threat they presented. And they never were. They are terrible people, and I am happy when some of them are killed, but they are not of the order of the magnitude of the Soviet or Nazi – a threat to our very existence – and don't require a similar level of spending. And I think that the public understands that, but it's too bad that George W. Bush started building things up. Because it's just been a build-up of the military and it was, unfortunately, accompanied with tax cuts.

For the first time in American history we were fighting these wars while cutting taxes, which is a major factor in the explosion of the deficit, and the recession made it worse.

And then for a few years now, we're thinking, "OK we've got to go to war against these people at the same level of spending as we needed behind the Cold War." The American people now understand that it's not the case, and you know an example of that is the fact that the Republicans – John McCain, Lindsey Graham – the ones that want to go back to into Afghanistan, back into combat, aren't pushing for that in Congress.

It's interesting, they're telling the president, "You go do that without us." These are the people, the Republicans, who are screaming at the president because he's not going to deport the mother of a 5-year-old who was born here on the grounds that he's doing it without Congressional authority. But when it comes to ordering American troops into battle, they want him to do that without Congressional authority, because they're afraid to vote on it. Because they know the public finally understands that terrorists are terrible people, but we can combat ISIL by air. Having America take responsibility for them having a stable and coherent government in Iraq or Afghanistan, and maybe

even in Syria, makes no sense.

E.G.: *The Employment Non-Discrimination Act was a long-held effort of yours. And now we're approaching a Supreme Court decision on marriage equality. What do you think needs to happen in Congress before gay rights will finally be fully realized?*

B.F.: We need a Democratic president, House and Senate. I wish that weren't the case. People say, "Oh, you're being partisan." I'm being realistic.

The Republican Party has seriously lagged the country. In 1976, 40 years ago, the country was just beginning to get a little better on LGBT rights. I filed the first gay rights bill in 1972, and almost no one voted for it, and we've been building ever since.

What's happened since the late 70s is that there have been three trend lines in America on LGBT rights: The country is always getting better, the Democrats have gotten better, and at a faster pace than the country, and the Republicans have gotten worse in many ways. So as long as you have Republican control of the presidency or the House or the Senate – if the Republicans control any one of those branches – nothing good will happen.

There is now a broad recognition on the Democratic side of the importance of this issue and there's a public acceptance of it, so we'll get marriage equity from the Supreme Court.

The Non-Discrimination Act is only going to come when you get a Democratic president, House and Senate. The next time we get that, I think we will win it, but the problem is we've only had that situation of a Democratic president, House and Senate for four years since Jimmy Carter was in office. We had two years when Bill Clinton was in office and two years under Barack Obama. The last time we had a four years of a Democratic president and both houses of Congress Democratic was with Jimmy Carter, and the country wasn't ready for that yet. We were pushing, but we didn't have the votes, so we are now at the point where that could win, but only if you have a Democratic president, House and Senate. I'm not being partisan. The Republicans were the ones that made this an issue and continue to oppose it.

E.G.: *When you started in politics, you didn't think you would ever be able to come out, which meant you decided early on to put your career above your own private life. It wasn't until many years later that the political climate changed, and you were able to come out without sacrificing your career. Looking back, was this choice of self-sacrifice, to put your political career above your personal happiness, for so long, ultimately worth it?*

B.F.: Yeah, because it worked out well for me, but I wouldn't advise people to do it – well, I guess I'm glad that it's not a choice people have to make anymore.

The notion you can make a very satisfactory public life a substitute for a healthy emotional private life, in my experience, is just wrong. That's just in my experience. I can't compare my experience to others.

It worked out well for me – I lived long enough – I spent 15 years in elected office in the closet, and if that had been my whole electoral career, no, it wouldn't have been worth it. But the way things worked out, I had 25 years after to make up for it, and I am able to feel good about both my job and my personal life.

On the Importance of Blankets

By J. McCurdy

If I give you one of mine
It isn't because I'm cheap
It's because
I trust you
With the parts of my soul
I left between the stitches
And I trust it
To shelter you
The way it sheltered me
I trust it to hold your tears
Your laughter and your fears as you huddle under it
Understand this
There are a thousand sent up prayers
Hidden in between sleep and dreams
And where I'm from
A blanket
Can mean the difference
Between life and death
So when I
Offer you
A blanket
I'm offering you life

The Strength to Defeat

By Simran Sahota

I stand on this platform,
With no pain or happiness.
No sorrow, no desperation,
Just a strong defeat.
It was in God's hands,
But I did know I would lose.
May my competitor be the winner today,
But someday my loss will be beneficial.
Regardless of who or what,
To be a true winner one must learn how to lose.
This platform is not a defeat,
Rather it is a platform to a vigorous win.
When, why, how will be answered with time,
But there will be a consequence.
Someday I will learn to accept,
that there is no such thing as a win or a loss,
Rather it is God's decision, that decides what happens next.