EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

ETHANOL’S POSITIVE ENERGY BALANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to again set the record straight regarding one of the persistent urban myths about ethanol and other renewable fuels. Yet, in the past couple of weeks I read about another study that contains faulty and outdated assumptions, analysis and conclusions about the net energy balance of producing renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel.

Whether produced from corn or other grains or biomass, ethanol production has matured into an extremely energy-efficient process. As you would expect with any developing industry, technological advances have greatly improved these efficiencies over the years. Unfortunately, some academic studies choose to ignore these improvements.

Farmers are much more efficient today than they were in years past. They harvest more bushels of corn from an acre of land than we did 25 years ago. Some areas have seen yield improvements of 45 percent or more. Moreover, they do it using far less energy. Farmers today use precision and no-till farming to greatly reduce tillage trips and chemical applications. The efficiency of fertilizer and pesticide production also has greatly improved over the years.

What is more, the process of turning this corn into ethanol has greatly improved labor and biological advances in the process mean that we get more ethanol from a bushel of corn than we used to. All of these developments have a significant and positive impact on the net energy balance of ethanol production.

This fact has been confirmed by countless analyses. A recent study by the Department of Energy’s Argonne National Laboratory found that for every 100 BTUs of energy used to produce ethanol, 135 BTUs of ethanol are produced. That is because corn plants are extremely efficient solar panels. USDA analysis has found that corn farmers use about half the energy to produce a bushel of corn than they did just 25 years ago.

And the industry is not resting on its laurels. Research continues to improve the yield and quality of corn and the stillage. The transition should bring pride to all Americans because they realized that their mission was larger than partisan politics and acted accordingly.

They completed this undertaking with determination, clarity, and vision. On behalf of a grateful Nation, we pledge to continue to work to make their entire vision reality.

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Tribute to the Solidarity Trade Union in Poland

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHAYS. A year ago today, the 9/11 Commission released its report. This report outlined 41 recommendations to protect this Nation from future terrorist attacks.

It is crucial we ensure the implementation of these recommendations.

The 9/11 Commission produced what I feel is a sacred document. Their conduct should bring pride to all Americans because they realized that their mission was larger than partisan politics and acted accordingly.

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Things began to change in 1979 when Pope John Paul II, in his first official visit to his homeland, encouraged the people of Poland to be not afraid. Empowered by the Pope’s words, Poles soon began standing up to their commissar’s commandments.

On August 14, 1980, at the Lenin Shipyard in the Baltic port city of Gdansk, 17,000 workers staged a strike under the leadership of Lech Walesa. Initially formed as a response to increases in the price of fuel and a dismissal of several popular workers, the strike soon evolved into a broad demand for workers’ rights.

In mid-August, 1980, an interfactory strike committee was established in Gdansk to coordinate rapidly spreading strikes there and elsewhere. Within a week, the committee presented the Polish Government with a list of 21 demands ranging from the right to join independent unions and an increase in the minimum wage to broader issues such as censorship.

On September 22, 1980, Solidarity was formally established and became the first independent labor union in any Soviet bloc country. By early 1981 the trade union had a membership of about 10 million people and represented most of the workforce in Poland.

In the early 1980s, Solidarity was forcibly suppressed by the Communist government and Solidarity was declared illegal. Although the union was formally dissolved, it continued as an underground organization. Solidarity reemerged in 1988 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a post-Soviet bloc nation since the 1940s.

The case of Solidarity, the movement that ended communism in Poland without bloodshed, inspired other nations under Soviet control to do the same and led to the end of the Cold War.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the strikes in Poland. Let us remember the sacrifice, democracy in Poland. We must recognize democracy in formerly inhospitable places.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KOLBE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 4, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, today we face a great national security challenge, many challenges in fact. As we wage a war on terror, we face an enemy that kills indiscriminately in its campaign against freedom, democracy and political pluralism. The brutal attacks in London just a couple of weeks ago and, of course, the other tragic news that we have gotten from London this week are a tragic reminder of the nature of the enemy that we face. But I believe that the true sign of our times is not the carnage of suicide bombers. It is the image of millions of Iraqis waiting in line to cast their first free votes, and millions more in Afghanistan, the Ukraine, Lebanon, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and on and on and on around the world.

Democracy is sprouting in places that seemed unlikely and that has been the case for quite a while. The worldwide terror campaign that is being perpetrated and the rise of democracy in formerly inhospitable places are not unrelated. Just the opposite, in fact. The war that is being waged against political and economic freedom and our unwavering resolve to defeat it is pushing oppressed people to a tipping point. They are demanding the right to determine their own futures. And as President Bush has so clearly articulated, the spread of freedom is not just a consequence of the global war on terror. It is our best defense. That is, the spread of freedom is the most important thing that we can do for our national security. Those who deny the universal principles of liberty, opportunity and tolerance do not resort to terrorism. Aiding the establishment of democratic and free societies is squarely within our national interest.

To that end I have had the great privilege of working with our distinguished Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), in the establishment of the House Democracy Assistance Commission. I have joined my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE) who is the ranking member of this task force.

The House Democracy Assistance Commission provides a forum for this body to play a significant and proactive role in establishing the strong, independent, transparent legislatures that are essential to a vibrant and healthy democracy. Our commission was established precisely because we realized that spreading freedom throughout the globe is as critical to preserving it right here at home because we realize that we cannot abandon anyone to tyranny.

Just a short time ago most of us could not have imagined millions of Iraqis turning out to vote. But there they were on January 30, defying the terrorists and the world’s expectations. But would the voting have taken place?

Those of us who have been engaged with Central America over the past 2 1/2 decades have been amazed by the transformation that has taken place there as well. Like their Iraqi counterparts, the people of Central America have made the journey from violence and oppression to democracy and freedom. Many of my colleagues will remember just how difficult that process was.

Two decades ago the people of Central America had this body were deeply concerned about the threat posed to the United States by the communist expansion and civil war that existed in our own backyards. As the Cold War neared its end, our Central American friends played a vital role in our foreign policy.

Stability, let alone democracy, seemed absolutely unattainable.

But today the region is just as important, Mr. Speaker, to our national interests. But rather than a threat, Central America is an ally and a partner in trade, counter terrorism, drug interdiction, and migration control. Our Central American friends play a vital role in the security and well-being of the United States of America.

Again, for those who remember the struggle of the 1980s, this transformation is no less astounding than the one taking place in the current moment in Iraq. And our commitment to solidifying and strengthening the democratic institutions that are taking root there should be no less firm today than it was a decade and a half ago when this process began.

The people of Central America have embraced democracy, but they now expect concrete results from their democratically elected leaders, and rightly so. They must find new opportunities for prosperity and a higher standard of living or they will question the democratic institutions that have only recently brought peace to that region.