

REGARDING THE HOUSE ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM

(Mr. THOMAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, among my duties in my capacity as chairman of the Committee on House Administration is to oversee the officers of the House and the Office of the Clerk. In the 105th Congress, we changed our voting devices. Many folks have known that for years we have used electronic, as they say, voting cards, with the board visible behind us. The old system was an analog one in which the cards were physically punched and a reader read the holes in the cards. In the 105th Congress, we installed, going from an analog, as the world is going, to a digital system. The new cards have a chip embedded in them. Since the 105th Congress, we have cast almost 1 million votes, and there have been no concerns or problems or anomalies, as we say, about the votes.

It is my institutional responsibility to inform the Members that on Wednesday, June 21st, an anomaly occurred. A Member who was not here, who had possession of their voting card, was recorded as voting. It is not analogous to any of the situations in the past about the confusion of "I didn't think I voted" or as we found, unfortunately, the potential of someone else using the card. It is a true anomaly. Members might imagine the concerns that the staff and we had about this. It was the fact that a 64-bit string of digital numerals was somehow at a particular terminal read wrong, and ironically the wrong reading coincided with another set that was in fact a card set.

You may have heard of the analogy of an eagle carrying a fish flying over the Sahara, they drop it and it hits you on the head. A billion to one, but it happened. Since Wednesday, we have tried to re-create the event in terms of dirtying up the cards, playing with the boxes, repeating a process. We have now gone through 500,000 cycles. We will continue as a fallback to cycle this to see if we can re-create the anomaly.

It is one of those situations in which you really have to say it is a statistically improbable anomaly, but it occurred. As this majority has done from the very beginning, instead of not talking about it, instead of just letting it slide, we feel it incumbent upon us to come to the floor and announce there was a statistically improbable anomaly. We cannot explain it at this time; we will do everything in our power to explain it if it is explainable. Obviously, everyone is on the alert to make sure that notwithstanding that statistically improbable anomaly, we will make sure that every vote that is recorded is recorded accurately.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BONIOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for the purposes of inquiring about the schedule for the remainder of the week and next week.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the House has completed its legislative business for the week.

The House will next meet on Monday, June 26 at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and at 2 p.m. for legislative business. We will consider a number of measures under suspension of the rules, a list of which will be distributed to Members' offices later today. On Monday, no recorded votes are expected before 6 p.m. As agreed last night, we will return to CJS appropriations at 4 p.m. on Monday. Members should expect to work late on Monday until we finish that appropriations bill.

On Tuesday, June 27, and the balance of the week, the House will consider the following measures:

H.R. 4717, the Full and Fair Political Activity Disclosure Act;

Energy and Water Appropriations Act;

H.R. 4680, the Medicare Rx 2000 Act;

H.R. 4461, Agriculture Appropriations Act, 2001;

H.R. 1304, the Quality Health-Care Coalition Act.

We also expect that the conference report to Military Construction Appropriations Act will be ready for consideration in the House next week.

Mr. Speaker, we have just completed another very productive week in the House. I want to thank my colleagues for all their hard work. Next week will also be a very busy week on the floor, so I would advise my colleagues to be prepared to work late nights throughout the week.

I wish my colleagues a restful weekend back home in their districts.

□ 1400

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, if I might inquire of the distinguished majority leader what day he anticipates bringing the prescription drug bill to the floor of the House.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for that inquiry. It is a very important piece of legislation, and we would expect that to be on the floor Wednesday morning.

Mr. BONIOR. Wednesday morning. Let me just also ask the gentleman if it will, indeed, be the case that the minority, fully within their rights in this institution, will have the ability to offer a substitute with waivers to this bill as outlined in the letter that the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) sent the Speaker?

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that inquiry. The Committee on Rules has already announced they will meet at 5:00 on Monday, and I am sure that they will, if not already be in receipt of that letter, will have it made available to them as will

the requests that will be formally presented before them at that time.

Mr. BONIOR. Having heard the answer, let me be just very blunt and honest with the gentleman this afternoon, and tell the gentleman in a heartfelt way, but in a very strong way, how seriously we regard our opportunity to offer a substitute on this bill.

We consider this issue, as many on your side, as being one of the most important issues that we will have debated in this Congress; and if rumors are accurate and true that we will not get a substitute, there will be a serious, immediate angry reaction on our side of the aisle.

This is an issue that deserves a full debate by this House with adequate time. I know we are in an appropriation period, and it is difficult to finish these bills within a time frame, but this issue I think, above many that we discuss here in this Congress, deserves the full attention of the membership, the full options at least of providing us with the opportunity to offer our proposal in a substitute form.

I say again with respect, but also with concern, that we need to protect the rights of the minority here; that we will look very, very negatively and very seriously and react in a very negative and angry way if, in fact, we were shut out from having an opportunity to discuss this issue next week.

Mr. ARMEY. The gentleman's point is well made, and I want to thank the gentleman for that.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague, and I wish him a good weekend as well.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, if I might ask the majority leader, I noticed that H.R. 4717, the political disclosure measure has been added to the schedule since your original tentative schedule was posted at noon. I am so very pleased to see the leader honoring the pledge that he made to the House in June that that matter will be scheduled.

Can the gentleman give us an approximate time when he thinks that will be reached on Tuesday?

Mr. ARMEY. Again, if the gentleman from Michigan will yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding and to the gentleman from Texas, I would say that the only thing I can say with any certainty right now is that it will be on the floor. As soon as we have made a scheduling decision, we will inform the minority.

Mr. DOGGETT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, we can count, as the gentleman said in his words, with certainty that it will be up on the floor on Tuesday. Has the Committee on Rules made any announcement about when it will convene on that bill?

Mr. ARMEY. If I might be very careful here, it will be on the floor next week. I would not say right now whether exactly it would be Tuesday or Wednesday.

Mr. DOGGETT. It could be as late as Wednesday?

Mr. ARMEY. There will be an announcement regarding that. If the Committee on Rules has an announcement regarding that, I would expect them to make that on Monday.

Mr. DOGGETT. Would it be the gentleman's recommendation that there will be an opportunity to consider an amendment on a substitute to the bill as it was reported by the Committee on Ways and Means?

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman from Michigan continues to yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I continue to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ARMEY. Let me just say, I will have to participate in a discussion on that. At this point, I am not prepared to even make a recommendation myself. We will have some series discussion on the matter, and I will just have to report back later how that discussion goes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Does the gentleman expect to have a recommendation or does the gentleman have one at this time concerning approximately how much time we will have to debate a matter of this importance?

Mr. ARMEY. Again, if the gentleman continues to yield, let me just say that I have just in the last day or so not had the time to focus on this; I must get focused on it. We will have that meeting, and at that time I will inform you.

Mr. DOGGETT. Let me just say, that despite our differences on arranging matters, I want to be quite sincere in expressing my appreciation for your assurance today that we will have an opportunity next week to consider this matter, and I wish the gentleman a good weekend; and we will get ready for that vigorous debate.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2000

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

SENSE OF CONGRESS WITH REGARD TO IRAQ'S FAILURE TO RELEASE PRISONERS OF WAR

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 275) expressing the sense of the Congress with regard to Iraq's failure to release prisoners of war from Kuwait and nine other nations in violation of international agreements, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 275

Whereas in 1990 and 1991, thousands of Kuwaitis were randomly arrested on the streets of Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation;

Whereas in February 1993, the Government of Kuwait compiled evidence documenting the existence of 605 prisoners of war and submitted its files to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which passed those files on to Iraq, the United Nations, and the Arab League;

Whereas numerous testimonials exist from family members who witnessed the arrest and forcible removal of their relatives by Iraqi armed forces during the occupation;

Whereas eyewitness reports from released prisoners of war indicate that many of those who are still missing were seen and contacted in Iraqi prisons;

Whereas official Iraqi documents left behind in Kuwait chronicle in detail the arrest, imprisonment, and transfer of significant numbers of Kuwaitis, including those who are still missing;

Whereas in 1991, the United Nations Security Council overwhelmingly passed Security Council Resolutions 686 and 687 that were part of the broad cease-fire agreement accepted by the Iraqi regime;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 686 calls upon Iraq to arrange for immediate access to and release of all prisoners of war under the auspices of the ICRC and to return the remains of the deceased personnel of the forces of Kuwait and the Member States cooperating with Kuwait;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 calls upon Iraq to cooperate with the ICRC in the repatriation of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, to provide the ICRC with access to the prisoners wherever they are located or detained, and to facilitate the ICRC search for those unaccounted for;

Whereas the Government of Kuwait, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 686, immediately released all Iraqi prisoners of war as required by the terms of the Geneva Convention;

Whereas immediately following the cease-fire in March 1991, Iraq repatriated 5,722 Kuwaiti prisoners of war under the aegis of the ICRC and freed 500 Kuwaitis held by rebels in southern Iraq;

Whereas Iraq has hindered and blocked efforts of the Tripartite Commission, the eight-country commission chaired by the ICRC and responsible for locating and securing the release of the remaining prisoners of war;

Whereas Iraq has denied the ICRC access to Iraqi prisons in violation of Article 126 of the

Third Geneva Convention, to which Iraq is a signatory; and

Whereas Iraq—under the direction and control of Saddam Hussein—has failed to locate and secure the return of all prisoners of war being held in Iraq, including prisoners from Kuwait and nine other nations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) the Congress—

(A) acknowledges that there remain 605 prisoners of war imprisoned in Iraq, although Kuwait was liberated from Iraq's brutal invasion and occupation on February 26, 1991;

(B) condemns and denounces the Iraqi Government's refusal to comply with international human rights instruments to which it is a party;

(C) urges Iraq immediately to disclose the names and whereabouts of those who are still alive among the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other nations to bring relief to their families; and

(D) insists that Iraq immediately allow humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the living prisoners and to recover the remains of those who have died while in captivity; and

(2) it is the sense of the Congress that the United States Government should—

(A) actively and urgently work with the international community and the Government of Kuwait, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 686 and 687, to secure the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other prisoners of war who are still missing nine years after the end of the Gulf War; and

(B) exert pressure, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, on Iraq to bring this issue to a close, to release all remaining prisoners of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, and to rejoin the community of nations with a humane gesture of good will and decency.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for H. Con. Res. 275, and I commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) for his leadership on this issue.

I extend my appreciation to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER), who successfully had an amendment during our committee's consideration of the resolution.

During our markup last week, the amendment of the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) calls on our government and those in the international community to resolve the case of U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Michael Speicher, who was shot down over Iraq in January of 1991.

Mr. Speaker, during the Gulf War, thousands of Kuwaitis were randomly arrested during the Iraqi occupation. The government of Kuwait compiled evidence documenting the evidence of 605 prisoners of war and submitted its files to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which passed these files on to Iraq and to the United Nations.

U.N. Security Council Resolutions 686 and 687 call for Iraq to cooperate with the ICRC in releasing all of those prisoners of war and facilitate the