

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

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

NO EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT IN CONGRESS FOR WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, along with a large majority of the House, I voted for a resolution that reiterated our opposition to the acquisition by Saddam Hussein of Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. But I am concerned that some might try, quite inaccurately, to take that large vote repeating our condemnation of Saddam Hussein and our insistence he comply with U.N. resolutions regarding these weapons, that some might mistake this as an expression of support for a war in Iraq.

First of all, we should be very clear: there is no legislation, no resolution that has passed this House, that expresses support for war in Iraq. The post-September 11 resolution was explicitly limited to involvement in the attack on the World Trade Center. And to date, no one has produced evidence, as reprehensible as Saddam Hussein is, as despicable as his regime, that he was in any significant way involved in that.

Many of us, in fact many of us who voted for the resolution, signed a letter to the President reiterating we do not believe it would be appropriate to commit America to a major military action in Iraq or anywhere else in the world without a congressional vote. And I would be, at this point, voting against that.

We did a very good job in Afghanistan. The American military made us proud. And, by the way, that is the American military that President Bush inherited from President Clinton. All during the campaign of 2000 candidates Bush and CHENEY denigrated the American military, claimed inaccurately that Clinton had somehow left it impotent. All of a sudden it got very good in a hurry, because that very military that President Bush inherited from President Clinton showed a great capacity in Afghanistan.

But as good as they were and as careful as they were, innocent lives were lost, property was destroyed, the economy, already in tough shape, was disrupted, food distribution was inhibited. We had a moral right and a moral obligation to go into Afghanistan. But having done that, having unleashed significant military power in that poor country, for good moral reasons, I think it is now an equal moral obligation to show that we can work just as hard to help rebuild the country, to help feed people, and to help reconstruct it.

In the first place, I would say this: until we have shown an equal ability

and commitment and dedication to giving the people of Afghanistan a better life, as we should, to helping them get rid of that terrible regime, then I do not think we have earned the right to go do that somewhere else.

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I do not think that we can simply go from country and oppose destruction, even when it is morally justified to go after some bad people, without living up to the second part that of commitment.

Secondly, an attack on Iraq, unlike the war in Afghanistan, would be almost universally opposed by a variety of others. The Bush administration has learned that going it alone is not the best strategy. I am glad the Bush administration has abandoned the kind of unilateralism that unfortunately marked its early months. But if we now attack Iraq, we would be back in that situation. In fact, any hope of further cooperation with Arab regimes in getting intelligence, in prosecuting terrorists and continuing to go after al Qaeda would be discouraged.

Mr. Speaker, I am no fan of the regime in Saudi Arabia which is lacking in so many respects; I have become increasingly disenchanted with Mubarak in Egypt, but they, at this point, seem to me better than what we would get as an alternative if we were to launch an attack on Iraq that could destabilize those countries. And as King Abdullah, the King of Jordan, in the tradition of his father, seems to be a responsible individual trying to do well, I do not want to see those efforts undercut.

So it would be counterproductive in the war against terrorism to go after Iraq. I would love to see Saddam Hussein out of power. He is a vicious and brutal man, but to attack him militarily at this point, engendering the opposition this would engender in the Muslim world, would be counterproductive to our fight against terrorism.

Indeed, as a strong supporter of the legitimate right of Israel for self defense, which is now under attack from the most irresponsible elements in the Arab world, people should understand, President Bush never said that he was for a Palestinian state until after September 11. The political need to show some connection to the Muslim world moved him in that direction. I fear greatly that an attack on Iraq, with all of the negative consequences that would have in the Muslim world would, in fact, lessen rather than strengthen America's support for Israel's legitimate needs. I fear there would be a tendency to trade-off a little bit of that support for Israel at a time of great crisis because of this.

Finally, they are not analogous. Not only do we not have Saddam Hussein not having attacked us the way the Afghan-supported Taliban allowed al Qaeda to do it, we do not have the same situation. There is no Northern Alliance. One of the things that helps

morally vindicate our effort in Afghanistan was the obvious joy of so many people in Afghanistan that we helped rid them of this barbarous repressive regime.

Saddam Hussein is not a lot better than the Taliban, but I do not see in Iraq the kind of opposition that would allow us to do the same thing. So while to continue to support the sanctions and I continue to say we should work with opposition within Iran, if possible, to launch a military assault on Iraq comparable to what we do in Afghanistan would be counterproductive. I hope it will not be done. Clearly, the resolution we voted offers no support for that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

MORATORIUM CALLED FOR ON VETERAN PRESCRIPTION DRUG CO-PAYS

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I may be the last speaker in this Chamber of this particular session of the House of Representatives. I rise today to say when it comes to the way we treat our veterans in this country, talk is cheap, but actions speak louder than words. Why do I say that?

Mr. Speaker, I have in my hands this afternoon a document from the Department of Veterans Affairs entitled, "Implementation of Medication Co-payment Changes." It is a document that details the changes that will take place in the level of co-payment made available to veterans who get their prescription medications at the VA hospitals. What we are proposing is outrageous in my judgment.

Currently, most veterans who go to VA hospitals and receive their medications as an outpatient pay a \$2 co-pay per prescription. On February 4, according to this document, that co-pay will be increased from \$2 a prescription to \$7 a prescription, a whopping 250 percent increase. An unacceptable increase. Why is this so outrageous? It is outrageous because this House has recently passed a \$15 billion bailout for the huge airline companies, \$15 billion. This House has recently passed a bill that would have provided \$24 billion in tax rebates going all of the way back to 1986, giving profitable companies a give-back of all of the taxes they had paid under the alternative minimum tax since 1986, estimated to be a \$24 billion give-back. And yet at the same time, we are in the process of increasing the co-pay for veterans' medicines from \$2 to \$7.

Mr. Speaker, I serve a veterans hospital in southern Ohio, the Chillicothe VA Hospital. I have been told by administration there that the average veteran who gets prescription drugs at that facility will get 10 or more prescriptions per month. If we take a \$7 co-pay and multiply that by 10, it is \$70, a sizable amount of money for a veteran living on a fixed income. These veterans frequently get not 1-month supply, but a 3-month supply at a time. If we take \$70 times 3, it is \$210. Why is it that we talk so eloquently in this House about our concern for our military, we honor our veterans, and yet when it comes to taking action, we penalize them at the same time we are willing to give huge, huge tax cuts to profitable corporations, many of them multi-national corporations.

A 250 percent increase on our veterans for medicines they need to stay healthy or maybe even to stay alive, and we are doing it at a time when we are passing out money up here like drunken sailors. We have passed so many give-backs and pork barrel spending bills in this session of this House of Representatives, and yet we are penalizing our veterans. It is no wonder that veterans across this country have a right to say when it comes to the actions of this House, talk is cheap, but actions speak louder than words.

On February 4 when veterans go to our VA facilities to get their medicines, and they have been used to pay \$2 per prescription and they are asked to pay \$7 for that prescription, I hope they rebel. I hope they let those of us in this Chamber know how they feel about this outrageous action.

Mr. Speaker, I have introduced a bill to place a 5-year moratorium on any increase for veterans' prescription drugs. My bill is H.R. 2820. I currently have 42 cosponsors. I am hopeful that every Member of this Chamber will choose to cosponsor this legislation, and as soon as we get back here after the first of the year, we will pass this legislation so that we will not penalize our veterans and require them to pay more than they are currently paying for their needed prescription medications.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FIRST SESSION OF 107TH CONGRESS

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

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the accomplish-

ments of the first session of the 107th Congress. I am proud of this House of Representatives and how it has risen to the challenges of this very turbulent year.

We started this session after the closest Presidential election in our Nation's history, with an evenly divided Senate and a closely divided House. We conclude it with an admirable track record of accomplishments in the face of a Nation that has utterly changed in a time of war. The themes we focused on at the beginning—economic security, retirement security, national security, and education—still occupy our attention at the end.

We started this session debating economic security. Should we take the steps necessary to jump-start our economy? The Congress, amid great debate, considered the President's campaign pledge to return \$1.35 trillion of the taxpayers' money to the taxpayers themselves. We started in the House with the principle that it is wrong to penalize married people with a higher tax rate. We passed legislation to get rid of the marriage penalty. We believed it was wrong to tax people when they die, so we got rid of the death tax. We believed that all Americans deserved some tax relief, so we passed broad, across-the-board tax relief, which included a refund check for all Americans who pay income taxes.

We believed that families needed help to raise their kids and to send their kids to school. We doubled the child tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000 to give parents more money at home to take care of diapers and school supplies and braces and all the other things that kids need. We also passed tax-free education savings accounts to encourage parents to save money for their children's education. To improve retirement security, we included monumental IRA/401(k) reform so that people could save more money tax-free for their retirement.

Tax relief is the best remedy for a slowing economy, and there is no question in my mind that we did the right thing by passing the tax relief package early enough to soften what could have been an even greater economic blow to our country. The President signed this legislation on June 7. He kept his promise to the American people, and we kept our commitment to economic security. But tax relief was not our only accomplishment in this historic session of this Congress.

The President promised to work on a bipartisan basis to reform education, to improve our education system so that no child is left behind. As a former teacher and coach, I understand how important education is to our Nation's future and how complicated school reform truly is.

We worked on legislation that would do the following: children from the third to eighth grades would be tested annually in such important subjects as reading and mathematics so that we could make sure that they are learn-

ing. States and school districts will have more freedom to decide the most effective way to spend Federal dollars. And they will be held accountable for their decisions. Federal funds will be put in the programs that have the most positive impact on children, programs, for instance, that make sure that all our kids are reading by the third grade. Parents will be empowered with information about the quality of their children's schools and their teachers so that parents can make the best decisions for their kids' education. And parents with children in failing schools will be able to use Federal funds to pay for private, religious, or community-based after-school tutoring.

Last week, the House passed the conference report and the Senate completed its work and the President will sign this legislation in early January. From the beginning, we planned on tax relief and educational reform. But the Congress showed it was able to respond to an immediate crisis.

On September 11, the American people were deliberately and viciously attacked by terrorists who hijacked four airplanes, crashing two of them into the World Trade Towers, one of them into the Pentagon. The fourth crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after a heroic struggle by crew and passengers that led to the crash of that airplane. Many of us believe that the terrorists planned to crash that plane into this very Capitol of the United States of America. Those people who stopped those terrorists from their dastardly deed did a great service not only to the people who work here, the people who serve here, but certainly to the American people themselves. We hold those deeds in the greatest and highest honor that I think this country can bestow.

This disaster changed the character of Congress and the face of this Nation. I am proud of how this House has reacted. From the moment we sang "God Bless America" on the steps of the Capitol building, we sent the message to the world that we are united in fighting this new war on terrorism. We immediately got to work on a series of initiatives to go after these murderers and safeguard our Nation from future attacks.

Three days after the attack, Congress passed a bill providing \$40 billion to fund September 11 recovery efforts and to combat terrorism. On the same day, we passed a resolution authorizing the President to use force against those who played a role in these attacks.

In the days that followed, we passed legislation vitally important to fighting this new war and in protecting America from further attack:

An airline recovery bill to help those airlines struggling after the attack on our Nation.

An antiterrorism bill to provide our law enforcement officials with the tools they need to track terrorists and bring them to justice.

An aviation security bill to improve safety at our country's airports for travelers and airport employees.