

official objectors for the Private Calendar for the 108th Congress are as follows:

For the majority:
 Mr. COBLE of North Carolina;
 Mr. CHABOT of Ohio; and
 Mrs. BLACKBURN of Tennessee.
 For the minority:
 Mr. BOUCHER of Virginia;
 Mr. SCHIFF of California; and
 Mr. GRIJALVA of Arizona.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

(Mr. PEARCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of entering into the RECORD how I would have voted on issues before the House on which I was unavailable to vote on Wednesday, October 29; Thursday, October 30; and Friday, October 31.

On Wednesday, October 29, on rollcall No. 577, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 578, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 579, I would have voted "yes."

On Thursday, October 30, on rollcall No. 580, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 581, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 582, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 583, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 584, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 585, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 586, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 587, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 588, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 589, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 590, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 591, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 592, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 593, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 594, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 595, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 596, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 597, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 598, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 599, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 600, I would have voted "no." On rollcall No. 601, I would have voted "yes."

Mr. Speaker, the reason for my absence and for not voting on these important issues was because I was a member of a congressional delegation that went to Iraq to visit our troops and to personally observe conditions there.

We were able to visit our troops in Landstuhl, Germany, who have been injured bringing freedom to Iraq. We saw the excellent job our forces are doing, simultaneously setting up a free and fair democracy while bringing evildoers to justice and establishing peace in Iraq. We saw the people working together regardless of ethnicity or religion, to restore businesses and hope to a country formerly under control of despots. Because of our troops and the freedom they are establishing in Iraq,

the people there have hope, which they have not had since Saddam Hussein became dictator.

Mr. Speaker, while the business before this House is important, we must also realize that the foundation for all of our actions in this Chamber is the freedoms granted to us in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Our presence in Iraq is allowing the Iraqi people to, for the first time, establish a Constitution where the Iraqis will have the freedom to vote for a representative government, where the rule of law will prevail, where citizens will not fear for their lives, their property or their freedom. Let us not forget why we are able to participate in this body, and let us not deny that freedom to Iraq.

PEACE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I simply want to talk about the issue of peace for a very brief moment.

Just a few minutes ago, this House passed the defense authorization bill. As a strong opponent of the initial entry into Iraq of our troops in 2002 when the resolution was on the floor, my opposition stems from the fact that there was a question as to whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction and whether we were under imminent attack. I rise today to say that there is a very important role that our troops around the world can play. The United States has always had the high moral ground on the question of peace.

I would like to turn our attention in this Nation and this administration to the idea beginning to formulate plans for peacekeeping. That is not what is occurring in Iraq today. Primarily as we see the loss of life accelerate, we need to begin to work steadfastly to draw out collaborators and allies around the question of peace.

We were successful in Kosovo and Bosnia because we had the NATO allies. We were successful in Liberia because we had the work of President Obasajno of Nigeria and his peacekeeping efforts. It is imperative that this Nation begins to formulate a strategy for peace and utilize our troops to lift up peace in this world.

DISCOUNT DRUG CARDS

(Mr. FOLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, the Medicare conferees are about to wrap up their important work on providing a prescription drug coverage plan for America's seniors; and I am excited about the impact it will have on my district, the 16th Congressional District of Florida, which has the fifth

largest population of Medicare-eligible seniors in America. Legislation I have worked on over 4 years with Senator HAGEL includes the drug discount card which is part of this historic landmark legislation which will provide for over 40 million seniors the opportunity to receive up to a 25 percent discount on their prescription drug costs.

This is good news for seniors, welcomed good news for our seniors in the 16th Congressional District, and I am hopeful as we continue our bipartisan negotiations that when we conclude our work on Medicare, it will not only be reformed, it will become cost effective, and it will also contain the vital new programs necessary to modernize for the first time in over 35 years this vitally important safety net, a medical delivery system for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the drug discount card, I applaud the White House for their leadership in taking the idea of Senator HAGEL and myself to make it permanent law, and we welcome the opportunity to reach out to seniors with this good plan.

VETERANS ISSUES

(Mr. BALLANCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLANCE. Mr. Speaker, next week we will honor our Nation's military veterans for their dedication and service to the Nation, and I take great pride in this day of remembrance. A little more than 30 years ago, I had the privilege of serving in our National Guard of North Carolina, and so it is with distinction today that we remember the veterans: the veterans of the allied engagement in the Persian Gulf War, the brave men of the 7th Cavalry at the battle of Ia Drang, the airmen of MiG Alley in Korea, the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, and so many others deserving of the highest honors. They all are brave men and women who are our United States veterans, and I am proud this morning to stand in honor of our veterans.

Next week we will honor our nation's military veterans for their dedication and service to the nation, and I take great pride in this day of remembrance.

A little more than 30 years ago, I service in the North Carolina Army National Guard, during the conflict in Vietnam. Times were uncertain then, soldiers were leaving the nation in droves, coming back seasoned veterans of a war. We did not honor our veterans in the way they deserved those many decades ago, and we have learned since that time.

And so it is with distinction today that we remember the veteran; the veteran of the allied engagement in the Persian Gulf War, the brave men of the 7th Cavalry at the battle of Ia Drang, the airmen of MiG Alley in Korea, the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, and so many others deserving of the highest honors. They all are our brave men and women who are the United States Veteran.

I am of the belief, Mr. Speaker, that the men and women who served our nation should be

honored every day, not merely once a year, and I believe that America should fully honor the debt we owe to our veterans.

Right now, more than 250,000 troops are stationed in Iraq, all of whom will come home as war veterans. America's military veterans are there for us, wherever and whenever duty calls. It is our turn to stand up for them.

Through the "Salute to Veterans and Armed Forces Act," House Democrats are fighting to preserve and protect the health care and financial future of our nation's veterans.

As we speak, disabled veterans are prevented from collecting both their retirement pensions and disability compensation because of the unfair Disabled Veterans Tax.

Five hundred sixty thousand disabled military retirees see their retirement pension reduced one dollar for every dollar of disability pay.

They sacrificed their well-being for the Nation, and should receive their full disability pay. Every dollar.

In the 1st Congressional District which I am proud to represent, which encompasses rural eastern North Carolina, nearly 1,500 veterans lose benefits every year to the Disabled Veterans Tax, costing each veteran approximately \$5,664 in lost benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the working families in my district are already hard hit by tough economic times and widespread plant closings. The veterans in eastern North Carolina barely get by as it is.

This unfair tax on their rightfully earned income, translates into a total loss in benefits for the 1st Congressional District of almost \$8.5 million for an economically devastated area.

Mr. Speaker, my Democratic colleagues and I are fighting for an additional \$1.8 billion in veterans' health benefit that have been recently cut from the budget.

It is nothing less than shameful that military veterans have to wait as long as six months for a doctor's appointment.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if your child fell ill, and yet, you had to wait six months to get them help. This unacceptable scenario is a reality for 60,000 American Military Veterans every year in this country.

We are fighting to expand veterans' job training, higher education and housing programs. If we have money to send them to war we must also provide for their full benefits when they come home.

This is the call for true shared sacrifices. We were able to spend \$1.3 trillion in tax cuts; we should be able to spend for our veterans.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

END PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION

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

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, 2 days ago the President of the United States signed into law a historic piece of legislation, a bill that

would end partial birth abortion, a law that will now end this heinous and truly gruesome, barbaric act of killing innocent little boys and girls.

But as was all too expected, a lawsuit was immediately filed and a court immediately prevented this life-saving law from going into effect. Most appalling is the fact that the court did so not on any sound basis of law, but on what is becoming all too often the case with courts in this Nation, a decision by the court to simply impose its feelings on the issue over the findings of a legislative body, this United States Congress.

As has been reported in the press, the U.S. Department of Justice asked the court, as courts should do, to give deference to the finding of fact by Congress. Instead, the court replied to that request that it could find no record of any doctor who performs abortions in the last trimester to testify before Congress. The court stated: "Isn't that important if Congress was really interested in knowing about this procedure?" Indeed, if this court was truly being honest, it would realize that no abortionist would ever want to testify before Congress because in so doing, the awful truth about this heinous act would be revealed before the opponents of this act, before this House. It is telling that no abortionist of such late-term abortions would want to testify about such horrific acts that they do.

It is so patently clear that the court here was searching for a way to impose its personal view instead of abiding by the law of the land, a law which is supported by the vast majority of the people of this Nation, as well as most State governments. The court simply refused to abide by the findings of this Congress that a health exception was not necessary. The court stated: "While it is also true that Congress found that a health exception is not needed, at the very least it is problematic whether I should defer to such a conclusion when the Supreme Court has found otherwise." Problematic, court?

If the court was indeed wanting to uphold the law of the Nation and not its personal views, it would have recognized that the Supreme Court's holdings were not its own, but were the opinions of a lower court that the Supreme Court simply did not have sufficient legal basis to overrule.

Congress, however, very clearly and upon substantial hearings and evidence set out its findings of fact of no need for a health exception. This court, however, as past Supreme Courts have stated, should have abided by the findings of facts by this Congress. This court has failed to uphold the findings of this Congress. This court has failed to abide by the precedent of the Supreme Court in granting due deference to such findings of fact. And most tragic of all, this court's actions may well result in more deaths to innocent little children.

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.)

LIGHT RAIL IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

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 of Texas. Mr. Speaker, many times I have come to the floor of the House to express what I believe should be the chief responsibility of the Federal Government, problem solvers, working with local communities to enhance the quality of life of all of our citizens throughout America.

So today I take the special privilege of saluting my local community in Houston, Texas. It has been a 30-year journey, 30 years of trials and tribulations, of misrepresentations of the facts, and yet we have overcome it.

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But I do not fault those who opposed rail in totality because I do believe in democracy, and a vigorous debate has occurred in Houston, Texas on the question of implementing a light rail system. Those that hear my voice might say that that is probably not one of the more serious issues that we have in our community and in our Nation, but all of the long work of my community leaders, the Metro board, the City of Houston, deserve the tribute because in Houston it is a serious matter.

I do want to thank the mayor of the City of Houston, Lee P. Brown, and I am delighted to have been one of the strongest stalwarts and supporters of the Metro system over the last 30 years. One would not like to count those long journeys that we have had to take and the stark and strong opposition that we have had. And so I pay tribute to the members of the Metro board, former Ambassador Arthur Louis Schechter, the chairman; Mr. Thomas E. Whitson, vice chairman; Mr. Jackie Freeman, secretary; Mr. James E. Cumming; Dr. Samuel J. Gilbert, Sr.; Dr. Carol Lewis; Mr. Art Morales; Ms. Janie Reyes; and Mr. Don Wang. I also pay tribute to Metro's political action committee, Citizens for Public Transportation, led by Mr. Ed Wolfe; Community Outreach and Governmental Affairs Division led by Mr. Frank Russ and Mr. Tom Jasien; and most importantly the people of the Houston communities, all of the Houston communities and Harris County in the Metro service area who will benefit from this tremendous victory, all of my constituents in the 18th Congressional District who came together to cast a total of almost 400,000 votes and the majority of those supported the implementation of a Metro system.

What does it mean? It means that we will have a 50 percent increase in Metro's existing bus service. We will have