

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, just three weeks from the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the battle for Baghdad is drawing to a close. Less than 2 hours ago, amidst the cheers and grateful smiles of the newly freed people of Iraq, the 3rd Army met the 1st Marine expeditionary force at the Tigris River.

Thanks to U.S. and coalition courage and leadership, liberty has reached the center of Baghdad, darkened by tyranny for more than a quarter of a century.

Soon we will turn this body's attention to reconstruction, to interim governments, to the creation of a free and democratic Iraq, and as the President said in Belfast yesterday, the United Nations will play a vital role in helping to stand up our humanitarian efforts.

Despite the fondest wishes of the President of France, I would offer, Mr. Speaker, since the U.N. chose against being central to the war, the U.N. should not and will not be central to the peace.

AMERICA RX

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

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, today, nearly 65 million Americans go without adequate prescription drug coverage, yet drug prices continue to rise, forcing more people to choose between medicine and food.

Today, I am introducing America RX, which uses the power of the free market to negotiate fairer drug prices for Americans. Like the law we passed in Maine, it is a fresh approach that will not cost the taxpayer a single dime. This approach is simple, it is fair and it works.

Everyone has heard of a volume discount. That is exactly what we are talking about when we are talking about America RX. More Americans can afford to buy prescription drugs, which means higher volume, low prices.

The time has come to lower drug prices so that more Americans are not forced to ride a bus to Canada.

I invite my colleagues to join me in moving this initiative forward.

CONGRATULATING MITCHELL HIGH SCHOOL LADY MOUNTAIN- EERS

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

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate North Carolina's 2A high school basketball champions, the Mitchell High School Lady Mountaineers. Led by Coach Bruce Woody, the Lady Mountaineers blazed victory's trail by winning their final 19 games of the season, knocking off the top three ranked teams in the State.

In spite of their winning streak going into the March 15 championship game in Chapel Hill, the Lady Mountaineers were considered underdogs against the previously undefeated and formidable Lady Red Devils of Red Springs High School, but the Lady Mountaineers knew they could win, and cheered on by over 1,100 loyal fans in purple, the Lady Mountaineers fought hard through five lead changes and three ties.

Defense was the name of the game, and every athlete in purple did her part. Coach Woody could not believe his eyes when the final buzzer rang and the score read 61 to 50, with the Lady Mountaineers winning.

North Carolina's 10th District salutes our Lady Mountaineers. We are all inspired by the team's tenacity and winning spirit. Congratulations, Mitchell High School Lady Mountaineers.

NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE

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

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give voice to those who are silent: the many youth in our high schools who are afraid to speak of their place in our society because they are gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Today marks the National Day of Silence in which we celebrate the diversity of our population, but mourn the population's ignorance and intolerance toward that diversity.

I commend my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), for introducing H. Con. Res. 86, which memorializes the National Day of Silence. This resolution encourages each State and local jurisdiction to adopt laws to prohibit discrimination and harassment against persons of alternative sexual orientation or gender identity. This is a goal I applaud and support.

It is hard to believe that in a country dedicated to the principles of freedom and individual liberty that some persons still experience out-and-out harassment because they are not heterosexual. This is especially true of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth who literally fear for their safety at school and on the street, where they are subjected to violence, hatred and taunts.

The National Day of Silence is a way to raise awareness of this issue and to work for the justice of those most vulnerable among us: our youth. I ask you all to support H. Con. Res. 86 and to support the National Day of Silence.

IS RUSSIA OUR ALLY?

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, right after September 11, Russia stood with us as an ally in the war on terrorism, but re-

cent weeks have shown that Russia may have another agenda.

Russian companies have sold military equipment to Iraq, equipment used to harm American soldiers. Russian officials were told about this in June of 2002, but did nothing.

The Russian Government continues to maintain friendly relations with Kim Jong Il of North Korea, a fact that only encourages this regime's dangerous actions.

Russia has also been involved in helping Iran develop two nuclear facilities that are part of a nuclear weapons program. This is in addition to building Iran a nuclear reactor and providing them with low-enriched uranium in 1995.

Russia is deeply involved in arming terrorist-sponsoring countries.

Arming rogue regimes cannot be compatible with being an American ally. We must make it clear that Russia cannot arm America's enemies and call itself an ally. If Russia wants to be an ally, it is time to start acting like one.

MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, last year with the help of Congressman J.C. Watts and many others, we passed a sense of Congress that April should be Minority Health Month.

There have already been many conferences, briefings and other activities to call attention to the poor health, the lack of access and the wide disparities in the health of this country's minority populations. Whether it is heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes or AIDS, just to name a few, African Americans in particular, but all people of color, die and are disabled in numbers far disproportionate to their representation in our country.

No country can achieve its full greatness when it continues to essentially ignore the plight of one-third of its citizens and residents, when the right of health care is denied to so many.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King said that "of all the forms of injustice, the denial of health care is the most shocking and inhumane." As we debate the budget, it would be shocking and inhumane to pass a tax cut of any size while almost 75 million people do not have full health insurance and while hundreds of people of color die every day prematurely from preventable causes.

We are a better country than this. Let us prove it before we go home to face our constituents and celebrate the most important holy days of the Christian and Jewish faith. In health, as in education, no one should be left behind.

HONORING CAPTAIN CHRIS WACHTER

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as coalition forces enter the fourth week of military action to disarm Iraq and liberate its people, we have seen daily reminders of heroic actions. These men and women answering the call to duty have served with distinction as they continue to advance, freeing those long oppressed and removing once and for all the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction.

While I stand here to salute the service of all those now serving, among those is one man whom I had the honor of nominating, along with my former colleague Carlos Moorehead, to the Air Force Academy in 1992. Captain Chris Wachter, who graduated in 1997, currently serves as a pilot aboard a B-1B Lancer, the backbone of America's long-range bomber force.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, following the intelligence reports that indicated a possible sighting of Saddam Hussein, Chris piloted his B-1B to a location where four satellite-guided bombs were dropped on target. It serves as one example of the tireless dedication, determination and professionalism of our men and women in uniform.

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Mr. Speaker, the price of freedom is never free and there are more days and dangers ahead. I stand with the American people united in support of our troops and in remembrance of those who paid the ultimate price in this fight.

A CLEAR SIGN OF DESPERATION

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, our Republican friends are desperate. House and Senate Republicans are so far apart on their tax proposals that GOP leaders are actually considering writing two reconciliation tax numbers into the budget resolution. That is an outrage. It is unprecedented, and it is a farce; and GOP leaders have no one to blame but themselves.

Senator GRASSLEY, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, is quoted as saying: "It's a pipe dream to think you can get above 350 (billion dollars) without dramatic changes of position." In response, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), majority leader, warns that House Republicans may reject the budget resolution that fails to include the President's tax proposal, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) added: "It probably would not be the worst thing in the world to not have a budget resolution." Imagine that. One year after hammering, hammering Senate Democrats for failing to pass a budget, congressional Republicans say that is not such a bad idea after all. Situational ethics. My, oh,

my, how Republicans have changed their tune.

THE 88TH OBSERVANCE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, between 1915 and 1923, the Ottoman Empire systematically murdered more than 1.5 million innocent Armenian men, women, and children; and 500,000 Armenians were compelled to flee their homes and escape into exile. This crime constituted a heinous milestone in modern evil. It was the 20th century's first recorded instance of genocide. This tragedy, this crime against humanity, must be remembered by all people of good conscience, lest only evil men remember and be tempted to repeat this horrific lesson of history. For in fact, while most of the civilized world resisted acknowledging this mass murder, one barbarian at the gate did not; and that is why on the eve of his own paroxysm of mass murder, Adolph Hitler blithely remarked: "Who today remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Mr. Speaker, on the 88th observance of one of human history's greatest tragedies and most savage crimes, we have the vile Herr Hitler's answer. We remember the murdered Armenians. Today. Tomorrow. Forever.

BUDGET IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my dismay at the budget. It is being pushed through this House by Members on the other side of the aisle. The Republican budget resolution cuts over \$90 billion from Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program, the S-CHIP program, better known as Healthy Families in the State of California. This provides 30 million children with coverage in their health care. The cuts will put health care coverage in jeopardy for one in five children under the age of 18.

In California, we already are experiencing a disaster in terms of health care at the fringes. We need to do more to restore that assistance for low-income families, for seniors, for children, especially for services like dental care, physical therapy and diabetes management. None of us would want to go without these services. So why should we force the most vulnerable populations to go through this? The Democratic budget provides \$10 billion in fiscal relief for Medicaid, programs for low-income seniors and children.

I urge my colleagues to pass a real budget before we leave for our break.

UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT OF DR. SALAI TUN THAN BY THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. BURNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on a matter of great importance to my constituents in Athens, Georgia, the unlawful imprisonment of Dr. Salai Tun Than. Dr. Tun Than is a graduate of the University of Georgia and is being held as a political prisoner by the Burmese Government for making a pro-democracy speech. He is 74 years old, in poor health, and may not live through the ordeal of imprisonment. The Burmese Government is a military dictatorship. It does not respect the individual freedoms that we as Americans hold dear. Matthew Daley, the State Department chief for the Bureau of East Asia and the Pacific testified on the conditions in Burma before the House Committee on International Relations last month. He said: "The military dictatorship in Burma severely abuses the human rights of its citizens. There is no real freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, or travel. Patterns of abuse are even worse in ethnic minority areas."

Mr. Speaker, the situation in Burma is unacceptable. We must work to stop this regime from imprisoning political dissidents and work toward a freer nation for all Burmese citizens. I call on the Burmese Government for the immediate release of Dr. Salai Tun Than.

CONGRATULATIONS TO UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HUSKIES

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in celebration of women's basketball and to specifically congratulate the national champion University of Connecticut Huskies for the outstanding job they did last night in defeating the University of Tennessee, an equally great program. This victory underscores the importance of title IX and what it means to women's sports. And on the way, the University of Connecticut has distinguished itself. Coaches Auriemma and Dailey, athletic director Perkins, and the entire program along with the Lady Huskies deserve our admiration for the inspiration that they have provided each and every one of us. They make us so proud in the State of Connecticut.

And by the way, I am happy to collect my wager from the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FORD), a soon-to-be someday President of the United States who I will be able to say at some point lost his wager on Tennessee and had to pay up because of the University of Connecticut.