

AMERICAN PARITY ACT

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to 67 of my colleagues who have cosponsored my bill, the American Parity Act. They join me in supporting a funding boost for health care, education, and public safety by the same amount we have pledged to rebuild Iraq.

We are in the process now of beginning to spend down the \$1.7 billion we have dedicated to the housing, the education, the health care, and the infrastructure of rebuilding Iraq; and yet here at home our schools are closing, athletic programs are shut down, summer school activities are being shut down, hospitals are not being able to provide the health care they need, projects for economic growth and economic investment in local communities are being delayed. Yet we are in the process of being about to rebuild Iraq.

Let me give an example. The other day I pulled an RFP from USAID. Two million dollars has already been designated for Iraq and another \$70 million will be spent next year for desks, computers and supplies. Schools in Basra and Umm Qasr have already been given kits containing enough supplies for every student for the next year.

Yet here in America 59,000 kids will be eliminated from Head Start. Our teachers in our schools must buy books and supplies out of their own wages and then eventually maybe get a tax credit or be reimbursed later on. Up to \$94 million is now today being spent to give 13 million Iraqis, half the population, universal health care and maternity care for 100 percent of the population in Iraq. Yet Medicaid will be cut; 14 million Americans will be denied access to health care in this country. Up to \$680 million will now be spent over the next year and a half repairing six airports in Iraq, 100 hospitals, and 6,000 schools. Another \$5 million is pledged to complete the only deep water port in Umm Qasr, Iraq. Yet we are cutting housing here in America. We are cutting our ability to invest in local infrastructure. In fact, the Corps of Engineers is facing a cut of 10 percent in its budget. Chicago will be directly affected in the projects there.

I will support the reconstruction in Iraq, as others in this Chamber have. Yet I will not support the deinvestment in America. When President Kennedy said we will bear any burden, pay any price, he did not mean it would come at the expense of the American Dream here at home. We can only be strong overseas as long as we come together and are strong here at home.

In the last 2 years, 2.5 million Americans have lost their jobs. Five million Americans have lost their health care. Nearly \$1 trillion worth of corporate

assets have been foreclosed on, and 2 million Americans have walked out of the middle class into poverty. Those are the economic facts that our country faces.

I do not think when the American people said that they were willing to do what they needed to do in Iraq that it would come at the expense of their unity, their dreams, and their security here at home. The children of Iraq should not be provided a safer, more secure and more generous future than the one we are welcoming our GIs home to. The GIs who fought there, the people here that support the reconstruction in Iraq, who are paying for the reconstruction of Iraq, deserve the type of education, health care, and housing and economic investment that we envision for Iraq's future.

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I believe that we are on the wrong road when it comes to balancing our priorities. The American people have proven over the last 50 years that they will be a very generous people, willing to help others on their path to a more democratic and more healthy and more economically promising future. But they will not do it and pay that price when they think their dreams for their children, the security of their communities, are less than what they are providing for other people. Nor should they.

Again, I will support, as others will, the reconstruction of Iraq but not the deconstruction of America. So I am pleased I have the support of my colleagues, 67 of them, for the American Parity Act. I will continually come down to the floor to talk about what we are doing in Iraq as it compares to what we are doing here at home, because the American people I think expect us to not only have our commitment to Iraq but to fulfill our commitment to them here at home.

They cannot have 59,000 American children kicked out of Head Start, yet the children of Basra be supported by the American people for a full year of great education. We cannot have 14 million Americans kicked out without healthcare from Medicaid, yet have 13 million Iraqis get universal health care. Those are the not the choices we should be providing, and we should not have it be an either/or, and that is the choices the American people are facing today.

UNCOVERING A GOVERNMENT COVERUP

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

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are here tonight to discuss a very chilling issue, the intentional destruction of evidence by a government agency and the subsequent stonewalling and coverup by the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, as has been discussed here previously, Members of the Texas State Legislature recently properly excused themselves from the floor of the Texas statehouse in order to break a quorum, a proper procedure provided for by the House rules and by the Constitution. This angered partisan Republican interests in Washington, and thereafter the Homeland Security Department, charged with fighting terrorism in this country, used Federal Government assets for political purposes, trying to track the plane of former Democratic Speaker of the House Pete Laney.

Embarrassingly, Secretary Tom Ridge and the Department of Homeland Security has now been forced to admit that they have an audiotape and a transcript of communications between Homeland Security and Texas law enforcement; and, despite that admission they were forced to make, the Department of Homeland Security has said they will not release the tape, thus taking part in this improper coverup.

This morning, further disturbing news came out of Austin, the State's capital. As I mentioned earlier, there is an admission of communication between Homeland Security and law enforcement in Texas. When the Department of Public Safety learned that inquiries were being made to obtain this information, they went into high gear, presumably at the direction of higher-ups, because, Mr. Speaker, as we were all shocked and dismayed to learn, the information held by the Department of Public Safety was intentionally destroyed, another part of the coverup.

Here is the quote from the DPS Commander of Special Crime Service, Tony Marshall, in an e-mail uncovered by the Fort Worth Star Telegram under an open records request. The DPS got caught with this e-mail. "Any notes, correspondence, photos, et cetera, that were obtained pursuant to the absconded House of Representatives members should be destroyed immediately. No copies are to be kept."

In an attempt to cover up this coverup, DPS exacerbated the problem with this statement. "This is why DPS destroyed the records. We are prohibited under the Code of Federal Regulations, 28 CFR part 23, from keeping intelligence information that is not related to criminal conduct or activity," and it goes on.

There are only two problems with that statement. First, it simply is not true. Nothing in the regulations suggests, demands or requires the destruction of evidence. Secondly, it is improper and in violation of the law to collect this information in the first place.

You see, as with most cover-ups, they failed to tell you the whole story, and each new story makes the last story worse, because the truth is the very regulation that the DPS incorrectly cites as the reason to destroy this evidence states that there must be "a reasonable suspicion that the individual is

engaged in criminal conduct or activity as a condition precedent to entering this information in the data bank in the first place."

In other words, to even collect this information, there must be a reasonable allegation that a crime has been committed.

This data is for tracking criminals. The regulation specifically mentions crimes such as drug trafficking, loan sharking, trafficking in stolen property, gambling, extortion, smuggling, bribery, corruption.

Homeland Security and DPS, in one of their many stories, claimed that they were merely looking for a plane that they thought was missing or may have crashed. Now, of course that is not true either. But missing planes are located through the FAA and law enforcement, not by using criminal databases improperly in violation of the law.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

Homeland Security, produce the tapes. Homeland Security, produce the transcripts. Department of Public Safety, do the same.

We respect DPS in Texas. They are a great agency. We know they were not doing it independently. They were doing it at the direction of others. They were following orders.

You know, Sharon Watkins blew the whistle on Enron. Arthur Andersen got caught shredding documents. Cover-ups just do not work.

Is this a serious problem, or is it just a third-rate burglary, as we learned about in our history lessons? Mr. Speaker, only time will tell.

DEMOCRATIC TEXAS LEGISLATORS TRUE HEROES

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with what the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SANDLIN) was talking about with the people that decided to stand up against such an egregious process, where they felt left out and had no recourse in Texas but to go away from the legislative process long enough to slow things down and let it cool off. Because none of us like to be excluded from the development of legislation.

There it affected many different kinds of legislation. It had to do with school finance reform. It had to do with what we have been talking about as redistricting. But the redistricting issue was just one small piece of it. It by itself was an egregious process, where people literally were locked out of the capital building in the State and not allowed to attend hearings.

We do not have a closed government in the United States of America, whether it is at the Federal level, whether it is in the State of Texas or any other State in this Nation. We

have fought, we have died, we have shed blood to have a government that is open, where we are free, where we can do the kinds of things that we believe in.

So when legislators are pushed to the point where they have to take extraordinary measures to get their message across, they ought to be treated as heroes, the heroes that I certainly believe that they are.

I found it interesting the other night, Saturday night, the weekend of Armed Forces Day, a gentleman came up to me at an event where I was speaking about Armed Forces and the wonderful military people who have sacrificed themselves, their families and sometimes their lives fighting for the freedom of those of us in the United States to make sure that our government is free.

This gentleman came up and thanked me, or praised me, I guess, for not being a Member of the Texas legislature and not having gone off to Ardmore, Oklahoma. I said, "David, I must strongly disagree with what you are saying." I said, "I do so largely because I look at you and see the commitment that you made to the United States of America by being willing to put on that uniform and to go and potentially sacrifice your life for my freedoms, for what I believe in for my government." I said, "But, you know, we can lose our government from within as well as from without, and we have to be vigilant in making sure that the process that we set up is one that all of the people of our country can be comfortable with, can trust, can believe in, and know that our interests are going to be addressed."

So here we have recently sent men and women of this Nation off to fight in a country that is far, far away from us, and it was the same ideals that we are talking about that they went off to another area.

The Armed Forces answered our call, and some of them gave their lives to free the people of Iraq. So we went to war in Iraq to free a people from a government that abused its powers.

Iraqis were unable to question the actions of Saddam Hussein. So are we unable to question the actions of the leaders of the State of Texas. That is wrong. We were successful in Iraq with a war, but now the abuse of power is happening right here at home, by the most unlikely of agencies in the United States Government, the Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary Tom Ridge has stonewalled efforts by Members of Congress and the press to learn why the Department of Homeland Security used its equipment to track down former house Speaker Pete Laney's airplane to find the Texas Democrats who went to Oklahoma in opposition of an unfair, unconstitutional redistricting plan. That is repressive government. We sent our military to bring free and open government to another Nation. We need to do the same in the United States of America.

On the day that we called for an investigation of these happenings in Texas, the Department of Public Safety ordered documents regarding the misuse of Federal law enforcement for political purposes to be destroyed. Secretary Tom Ridge and the Texas DPS have failed to answer questions about their involvement and what happened exactly. They are trying to cover up an abuse of power.

Our Nation is facing a Code Orange level of terrorist alert. The resources of the Department of Homeland Security should be focused on that. Instead, they were ordered to skirt Federal statutes and had their manpower diverted for purely political purposes.

In this country, the people have a right to question the actions of their government, and the government has a responsibility to its citizens to be forthright and to give them an answer. This is an abuse of power of the most egregious kind.

It is time for Secretary Ridge to turn over the tapes, open up our government, tell the people in the United States of America what we are doing, and please do not pass on the divisiveness of the United States House of Representatives to the State of Texas.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, at the end of this month, millions of unemployed Americans will begin to lose their benefits under the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation program. In my State, the State of California, 150,000 people will run out of benefits and still not have a job on May 31. Congress needs to act to extend these benefits.

During a recession, unemployment insurance is one of the most efficient ways to help Americans and to keep the economy moving. Unemployment insurance puts cash in the hands of people who need it most, people who will spend the money on rent and groceries, rather than put it in the bank.

Unemployment insurance is cost-effective. Unlike the Republican budget, the Federal Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund currently has a surplus of more than \$21 billion. That money can easily meet the needs of America's unemployed until we can get the economy moving again.

Instead, the President and the Republican Party have spent their time and energy trying to pass tax cuts for wealthy investors. This House has passed a tax cut totaling more than \$500 billion. That is money that will not go to unemployed working families but, instead, to the President's wealthy political supporters. In fact, if we were to take all the money that the Republicans have set aside for their tax cut, we could create high-paying jobs for all