

kind of action in the United States of America, whether it happens to Texas or Louisiana or Michigan or any other State in this Nation, and we truly ought to be outraged and stand up and say we are not going to stand for that secrecy anymore. Let the agencies that exist as a part of our government give us the information that we need to know that our government is working in our behalf and not working against us; that we are not having some kind of a political soiree in this country that is going to allow power to be held by a few at the expense of so very, very many.

We even had destroyed documents over time. What is there to hide? If there is nothing on the tapes that is incriminating to anyone, then make it public and let us see them. If there is something there, as certainly the indication is starting to be—why else is there a cover-up—then perhaps there may be criminal activity. Something is wrong with this picture and something is going wrong with our government. It is time for us to begin to ask the questions and demand the answers from all of the agencies that can tell the citizens of this country that we are not going to be living in a police state, that we are going to be able to all participate in making the policy of this Nation and the policy of our States, and that we are not going to have to fight our way through the darkness of night in order to play the role that we so rightly deserve.

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE CONTROVERSY AND POSSIBLE FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT

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

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, we are calling today on Secretary Ridge to uncover the cover-up. What have you got to hide?

On May 11, 2003, Mr. Speaker, a number of Democratic members of the Texas House of Representatives absented themselves from the floor of the State House in Austin, Texas, in a proper procedural move to defeat a quorum in that body. Subsequently, on that same date, the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, Tom Craddick, ordered the Texas Department of Public Safety, the troopers, to locate the absent legislators and return them to the capitol. The DPS thereupon took steps to locate the lawmakers and contacted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, charged with defeating terrorism, and asked for Federal assistance. They have now had to admit and acknowledge that they contacted the Air and Marine Interdiction Coordination Center, a department within DHS, seeking information; and they acknowledge they used Federal resources to respond to this request in spite of the fact that it is a State political matter. In fact, in vio-

lation of the law, a criminal tracking system was used. The Department of Homeland Security has now admitted that the department has in its possession certain audiotapes, transcripts, and other documents concerning its contacts with Texas DPS officials. In spite of this admission, the department has failed and refused and still fails and refuses to release this information.

Disturbingly, Mr. Speaker, now the Secretary of Homeland Defense has admitted that there is an ongoing criminal investigation into this matter. But it only gets worse. Now we learn the FBI has been involved. Initially the FBI denied involvement. Now they have admitted otherwise. On May 13, the Houston Chronicle reported, "Spokesmen for the Justice Department and the FBI indicated those agencies likely would have no reason to assist the State officers in apprehending the Democrats." On that same date, "A Justice spokesman said Tuesday he knew of no role for the department." Later on that date, "FBI spokesman Bill Carter said he was unaware of any request for that agency to assist. 'I don't know of any authority that would allow us to even contemplate getting involved.'"

But, Mr. Speaker, the story begins to change. A couple of days later, on June 5, the FBI denied participation but they did not know what was about to come out, because State Representative Juan Manuel Escobar reported he got a cellular phone call from Corpus Christi-based FBI Special Agent David Troutman asking whether State Representative Gabi Canales was with him.

"The FBI was conducting no surveillance at all," said Special Agent Bob Doguim. But listen. He said, "I'm not saying no call took place." Later they said, "An FBI spokesman said agency action was nothing really uncommon." Dallas Morning News, June 6.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we learned that phone records for Deputy Attorney General Jay Kimbrough show a 5 minute 16 second phone call at 4:24 p.m. May 12 to an Ardmore, Oklahoma, FBI office. That is after State officials learned that the Federal Aviation Administration had tracked the plane of one of the missing lawmakers. A half hour later the records show a return phone call, 2 minutes 16 seconds, from the FBI office to Mr. Kimbrough. Mr. Kimbrough is head of Homeland Security in Texas. After the FBI saying they had nothing to do with it, now we have got the phone records. Now we are getting to the truth.

Additionally, at the State level, on May 14, the Texas DPS ordered the destruction of all notes, photos, correspondence and other records relating to the members of the House of Representatives and the order specifically contained the words "retain no copies."

In brief, it is our position that any effort to use Federal law enforcement or Homeland Security resources to participate in a State political matter is

improper and illegal. Further, the destruction of records by DPS, which limits the ability to determine the extent of Federal involvement, coupled with the refusal by the Department of Homeland Security and Tom Ridge to produce its records, are matters of great concern.

Mr. Ridge, stop the cover-up. Release the information. We want full and complete audiotapes of all conversation, full and complete copies of all communications, tapes, videotapes, recordings, letters, notes, documents, schedules, summaries, indices, written records of every sort, full and complete copies of all communications, full and complete original files, full and complete records of telephone calls and contacts, full and complete records of any and all persons, Federal officials, State officials, law enforcement personnel, agencies or entities that have contacted or been contacted by Homeland Security.

Mr. Ridge should be advised further that the U.S. Congress may request the production of additional information as a result of his testimony. We will expect him to acknowledge under oath that no records have been altered, deleted, destroyed, redacted or otherwise withheld in whole or in part. It is critical that we request a subpoena and a subpoena duces tecum be issued forthwith and this information be brought before the United States Congress.

The Department of Public Safety destroyed records. Homeland Security has admitted to possessing and withholding audiotapes and other information. They have now admitted that a criminal investigation is ongoing. The FBI claimed to be not involved in any way. Now we learn of telephone calls to and from the FBI.

Mr. Speaker, is this just what we might call another third-rate burglary? Mr. Ridge, stop the cover-up. Release the information. Come clean with the United States Congress and the American public.

ANOTHER TERRORIST ATTACK IN JERUSALEM

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

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, the news from Jerusalem today is horrifying. Another terrorist attack on a civilian bus. So many dead. Many more are injured and even more are bereaved. Today's atrocity follows and may have been in response to an attack yesterday on a Hamas leader in Gaza which injured its target but killed innocent victims. When will this cycle of violence end? Not even a week has passed since the President received the commitment of Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen to do everything in their power to stop the killing and pursue the path of negotiations. Instead, we have terrorist attacks, attempted assassinations, horrific retaliations and more

bloody reprisals. Last week's optimism has yielded to this week's despair.

I urge President Bush to make it clear to both sides that the United States will continue to insist on the terms agreed to at the Aqaba summit, an end to the violence, the dismantling of the illegal outposts and the resumption of security cooperation. Clearly, Abu Mazen must do much more to stop terrorism. But it is obvious that he cannot stop the murderous Palestinian extremists without help from Israel. And Israel will never succeed in vanquishing terrorism through military force and continued occupation. A political solution is the only answer.

The road map to peace has hit a tremendous obstacle. But we have no choice but to persevere. If this initiative is destroyed, Israelis and Palestinians may be doomed to a life of violence and suffering forever. Such a fate is not what these two peoples deserve, and it is surely not what America can afford.

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

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

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RUBBER-STAMPING TAX LEGISLATION

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we are going to have another session of the rubber stamp Congress. There is an old song by Tennessee Ernie Ford that goes, "You load 16 tons, and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt."

This Congress at a Committee on Rules meeting tonight, the Committee on Ways and Means chairman did not even show up. The bill was all greased. We are going to pass \$80 billion more of debt out of here tomorrow.

Now, the Democrats offered a bill that would have cost \$3.5 billion to take care of those people earning between \$10,500 and \$26,500.

When the Republicans got this bill, they said, Oh, boy; Let's go, and so they have crammed everything in it that President Bush wants. They are going to come down here, and we will have about an hour's debate, half an hour on the Democratic side, half an hour on the Republican side; and they will stamp that baby and out she goes. That is how this Congress is operating. Not one single hearing will have occurred on this bill, not one single hearing. \$80 billion in a half-hour.

Think about it. That is why my colleague, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), came out here, to show the almost—\$1 trillion in debt that has been accumulated over the last 2 years

under this administration. Well, tomorrow we are going to add another layer of frosting on the cake, and everybody will come with their stamp in their hand and do it.

Now, we also had a discussion here with one of the gentlemen from Georgia who said next week we are going to deal with the issue of Medicare. There has been no bill put in the Congress for the single largest program in the Congress that the government runs, and that is the Medicare program. The Committee on Ways and Means that I sit on has had not a single hearing on the proposal that is being brought in here. It is being greased somewhere to take up to the Committee on Rules and run down here on the floor, and, in a couple of hours, everybody will bring their stamp out and go, Boom, I approve of everything George Bush does.

That is what this Congress is about, approving whatever George Bush does. Nothing else. There is no thinking going on in here. They just wait for their orders from the White House, go up to the Committee on Rules, slap the bill together, bring it to the floor, and stamp it "approved."

Now, that is no way for the United States Congress to operate. We were made in the first section of the Constitution because the founders of this country believed that the Congress was where the basis of our government should derive, that there should be discussion among the 535 Members of both bodies as to what is going to happen in this country.

But this time we are in a one-party government. It is a parliament with a fixed-end, and this party is President Bush, the Senate and the House; and they run them down here and run them through and stamp them, and that is the end of it.

Now, there is a serious problem in that kind of government, because it makes it very partisan. I was told that the Medicare bill is written, but that you have to ask the chairman to go up to a room and sit there and read it in the room. You cannot take it out; you cannot take it to your office. I am a Member of Congress. I was elected by 690,000 people, and so was every other Member. But I am not allowed to read the bill until the day they drop it up here in the committee and ram it through the House in 24 hours.

People I go home to, they say, What is in the bill, Jim? What does this do, what does that do?

I do not know. And it is not because I will not read or I am not smart or I will not work or I will not do what has to be done, but this is the way this place is being run. People are not being given a chance to discuss this.

We have got an even bigger issue, and that is the whole issue of how we got into war. Everywhere in Great Britain right now the belief is that Tony Blair is toast. The liberals are calling for an inquiry. And this House will not do it, because the Republicans have rubber-stamped what we did. "I approve of Mr. Bush."

SHORTCHANGING VETERANS

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am a new Member of this body, I was just sworn in in January, and as a new Member there is a certain awe to this Chamber, a certain awe to the legislative process and the idea of priorities. You come into this body with the notion of certain priorities that are not Democratic, they are not Republican but they are priorities of the American people.

Unfortunately, it did not take very long for me to recognize that we all do not share the same priorities. We can talk about tax cuts, and we can talk about deficits, and we can talk about our debt; but you just do not have tax cuts without some reaction somewhere down the line in the budget, and I wanted to speak tonight to share with the American people and share with my colleagues my own personal experience that I had over the last few weeks, really since Memorial Day, back in my district, which is northeastern Ohio, Youngstown and Akron, Ohio, and everywhere in between, the cities of Niles and Warren, where there is a strong concentration of veterans.

The reason I rise tonight is to share for the record the feelings, the emotions of the people back in my district. Let me just say, quite frankly, that they are tired of the public relations gimmicks, they are tired of the press conferences, they are tired of the salutations to the veterans. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, their budgets are being cut for the veterans, we are not able to service all the veterans that are beginning to move into the VA system, and we are spending our tax money, and borrowing more money, to give back, when we are cutting short what the veterans deserve.

About 3 months ago or so we passed a resolution out of this body saying that we have unequivocal support and appreciation for our troops. Unequivocal. But for the veterans, we are going to cut your budget.

We just had a Committee on Veterans Affairs meeting. I have been fortunate to serve on the Committee on Veterans Affairs. Here are the President's recommendations to save money at the VA: first, annual fees for some Category 7 veterans; annual fees for all Category 8 veterans; the co-pay went from just a couple of dollars to \$7 for prescription drugs, and now it is going to go, I believe the proposal is, from \$7 to \$15.

Mr. Speaker, I think in this country we are beginning to recognize that the leadership down here is not addressing the problems of our veterans. We are not taking care of those people who we sent to hell, where they lost limbs, had their health damaged for the rest of their lives. And now one proposal is to say if your disability is service-related under 30 percent, that we are no longer going to cover you.