

May God bless you, Mr. Larson and his wife. He is a true American hero and many Americans owe him a debt of gratitude.

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

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

BHOPAL TRAGEDY

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss the tragedy of the Bhopal disaster in India. This is an event that the Congress and the world remember vividly. Unfortunately, we have forgotten that many of the victims and their families that remain in Bhopal still remain without much reparation.

On that horrible December day in 1984 when a Union Carbide plant leaked 40 tons of lethal gas in Bhopal, India, about 4,000 people died within hours, more than 20,000 were injured. And since then the death count has risen to over 14,000 as a result of exposure to the gas. According to victims rights groups, over 150,000 people are suffering from the after-effects such as reproduction complications, loss of ability to perform physical labor, rare cancers, severe respiratory problems, and the list goes on.

Not only are there countless trials and tribulations regarding health status, but in addition there are tremendous environmental injustices such as polluted groundwater, toxic waste, and contaminated soil that have largely remained unaddressed.

Mr. Speaker, Union Carbide is the company responsible for the Bhopal disaster. But when Union Carbide and Dow Chemical merged in 2001, there was no doubt that Dow Chemical as a successor company was also responsible for the disaster. Dow Chemical has the resources to deal with the health problems and to provide reparations for the people of Bhopal that were devastated by the tragedy.

To date, Mr. Speaker, there are four basic outstanding demands that the victims and their advocates are tirelessly working toward. Dow Chemical has the responsibility to meet each of these demands, and I would like to express my commitment to seeing that these basic demands of justice come to fruition.

First, Mr. Speaker, there must be acknowledgment that Dow inherited criminal liabilities and accordingly should face a criminal trial for poisoning people, animals, and the environment. At the time, Union Carbide blamed the disaster on a disgruntled worker. But whatever happened to him?

At the time, Warren Anderson was the CEO of Union Carbide. Whatever happened to him? And more importantly, where is he now?

Second, Mr. Speaker, the health of survivors must be monitored and medical care must be provided to them as well as the second and third generations that have already and undoubtedly will continue to inherit health complications due to their family members' exposure to gas in 1984.

Third, there must be adequate funding and some type of safe, workable design and infrastructure for removing 5,000 tons of waste and chemicals in the soil and water. There are over 20,000 people drinking contaminated water thoroughly diffused with mercury. And this example of endless environmental atrocities is simply unacceptable.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, compensation for injuries must be addressed. Any victim reparations thus far have been woefully insufficient; and in fact, over half the death claims have been rejected. People have no choice but to rely on financial retribution and that is because there have been minimal numbers of jobs since the disaster, and those sickened from exposure have lost the ability to perform simple tasks. In addition, care for the overwhelming number of orphans is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the struggle of the people of Bhopal has been long and has reduced most to living without dignity. Americans deal with environmental injustices as well. However, we have public health laws that protect our citizens' Federal right-to-know legislation that, in fact, came about in the aftermath of Bhopal.

In an effort to restore basic human rights to the people of Bhopal, my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH), and I are circulating a letter to the CEO of Dow Chemical asking that Dow take responsibility for the disaster inherited in 1984 and that it cooperate in meeting the demands of its victims. I encourage all of my colleagues to sign on to this important letter.

In addition, I plan on circulating an amicus brief on behalf of the Bhopal victims who have year after year tried their cases in the U.S. court system and who have been subjected to unfair treatment due to corporate favoritism.

At that time, I will also ask my colleagues to join me in sending a message that the injustice cannot continue and that there is support in Congress for holding accountable those that are liable for this horrific tragedy.

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

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

AMERICANS NEED THE TRUTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 160-or-so years ago, Congress passed a rule prohibiting Members of Congress from debating the issue of slavery. The issue of slavery, the greatest blemish on our Nation's history, was actually not debated in Congress for many years because conservative leaders of this body simply said it could not be, and passed a rule prohibiting it.

John Quincy Adams, former President and later Member of Congress in the 1830s and 1840s came to this Chamber of the House of Representatives and collected letters from his constituents. He called them petitions from mostly women's group in Massachusetts. Women in those days were not allowed to voted, as most of us know. He brought these petitions from women who were opposed to slavery and read them on the House floor.

While the rules said he could not debate slavery, he was simply a mouthpiece, a conduit, was a megaphone for the concerns of the people in his district about a great national problem.

Fast forward the clock to 2003. We now have a legislative leadership which is again saying no to debating issues of what really happened with the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program. While the President may have made, perhaps we are not really sure quite what happened, but we want to investigate. We want to know more. There has been no avenue to do that in this body.

So as a result a group called Moveon.org has gathered online hundreds of thousands of petitions and tens of thousands of American citizens including dozens, dozens, dozens in my district, thousands in the State of Ohio, tens of thousands around the country, speaking out about what they think.

So I am going to share in the next 3½ minutes or so, Mr. Speaker, what people in my district are saying when they sign this petition saying that Congress should support an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program.

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John Ciraldo of Akron, Ohio, in my District, "It seems to me that the evidence of deceit led by the Bush administration is becoming more and more prevalent."

"I feel that it is becoming more of an issue to the American people. As part of a democracy, we believe that we have a right to know."

"Please take a stand," Mr. Ciraldo writes, "for what I believe you know to be right. Be fair to our Nation and show a true patriotism, investigate. All of America has the right to know." Mr. Ciraldo from Akron.

Thomas Spalding, also from Akron, Ohio, shorter letter, "Please pursue an

open investigation of the rationale for war that was used by the Bush administration to assuage public doubts about preemptive, unilateral action against Iraq." Mr. Spalding from Akron, Ohio.

From Elyria, Ohio, Linda Mitchell writes, "As an American and one of your constituents, I want to know the truth behind what led up to the grossly unjust 'war' in Iraq. It is time for Congress to shed light upon what I believe we all know was the administration's misuse of the tragedy of September 11 to meet their own greedy need for oil." Ms. Mitchell from Elyria, Ohio.

From Strongsville, Ohio, John Regetz, Junior, "I strongly urge you to vote for the establishment of the commission to investigate the validity of the evidence that the present administration used to start the Iraq war. It appears to me that, for the first time in our history," for the first time in our history Mr. Regetz writes, "we unjustly started a war without first being truly provoked. I think the American people need to know the true facts about this whole mess we now find ourselves in."

Elizabeth from Akron, Ohio, "There is little argument that the past three years have been the saddest in our Nation's history. A nonelected President and his staff callously made critical decisions that deeply affect us all today and for generations to come. One such decision," she writes, "was to end the weapons inspection program and preemptively strike Iraq, supposedly before we were struck by weapons of mass destruction.

"Now, countless civilian and soldier deaths later, yet still no evidence of weapons of mass destruction, the administration is willing to admit that the intelligence leading to this mess was flawed. At the same time, they are talking about sending even more of our military personnel into the chaos that they have created."

Susan Clements, also from Akron, Ohio. Ms. Clements writes, It really is of crucial importance that we find out the truth in the matter. Lying to the American people about anything is troubling, but to lie about something like this is outrageous. Support for this war was lukewarm at best. Even that was a result of that argument. To date, thousands of people have died, a country has been devastated, a region thrown into turmoil simply to allow Bush's cronies to make a fortune by cleaning up the mess that he made. This is unconscionable. Please support the American people and hold them accountable. Thank you.

The last letter I will share with my colleagues as my time runs out is from Ron Collins of Barberton, Ohio. Mr. Collins writes, I am certain that you, like many of us here were frightened by the statements made in public back in the State of the Union and earlier by the Bush administration. If those statements were false, we must know of this Mr. Collins writes. Please show

America that you are not afraid to stand up for the rights of the people who put you in office. Despite any pressures you may have been placed under to ignore these issues, those of us in your district implore you to live up to the oath of office you took when you were sworn in.

I thank those people in Ohio that have shared their concerns with me and, most importantly, with the members of this body and with the American people because their concerns do indeed, Mr. Speaker, need to be heard.

IN MEMORY OF SPECIALIST JEFFREY MATTISON WERSHOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory of Specialist Jeffrey Mattison Wershow. A member of the Florida National Guard, Specialist Wershow served admirably before his life was tragically ended by an assailant in Baghdad a little over a week ago.

Jeffrey was the son of Jonathon Wershow and Ann Marie Mattison. At 22 years old, this young man managed to create a long list of accomplishments. After graduating from High School, Jeffrey enlisted in the Army and served for three years in the 82nd Airborne at Ft. Bragg. Upon fulfilling his obligation as an active duty soldier, Jeffrey received an honorable discharge from the Army and returned to Gainesville, Florida where he began pursuing his degree at Santa Fe Community College.

Everyone who knew Jeffrey recalls his vast knowledge of history and his lifelong desire to be a soldier. One of the most impressive things about this young man is that he had enough wisdom at such a young age to pursue both of his dreams. While continuing his education at Santa Fe and becoming actively and successfully involved in local politics, he also passionately served in the Florida National Guard.

Specialist Jeffrey Wershow was a soldier, a son, a brother, and a friend. He was also a proud American who we can all remember as an example of why this country is so great. I would like to offer my most sincere condolences to his family and friends.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

MISUSE OF FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES

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

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, it is an old truism that the best defense is a

good offense. We have seen that here this afternoon in a quite effective way because Republicans, unable to defend their misuse of the United States Capitol Police against Democrats meeting in the Ways and Means library, have taken the offense in what I consider a very offensive way against our colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK).

After the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) was told to "shut up" by another member of the committee, he responded with an insult, perhaps not appropriate, but certainly after significant provocation. To suggest that the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK), a man of 72, surrounded by 20-plus Republican colleagues of lesser age, posed any threat to anyone is ludicrous on its face, and though it is not ordinarily done, since it has been done and incompletely by my colleague, the transcript uncorrected though it is, of the Committee on Ways and Means reflects that after the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) was told to shut up and he insulted his colleague who made that comment, that he then proceeded to say, come on, come on over here and make me, I dare you.

The transcript then reflects that laughter occurred and that thereafter, after additional comments by the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) that the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) declared recess is over, the classroom has been resumed.

Now some Americans and undoubtedly some commentators will be inclined to trivialize this entire incident as being mere childish behavior, with wrongs on both sides. There were no wrongs on both sides today.

The Capitol Police were not called out, as the transcript indicates, as the gentleman from California's (Mr. THOMAS) silence indicates, because of anything that the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) did, said, or implied. To suggest otherwise, indeed the suggestion of my colleague from Texas (Mr. BRADY) that the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) instigated this incident is an outrageous slur on the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) who is a person of integrity, even though sometimes of sharply worded comments.

The Capitol Police were targeted not on the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK), but Officer Spriggs, who came into the library, indicated they were asked to clear the library where the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) was not even present.

We cannot allow our Federal law enforcement resources to be diverted for partisan political purposes such as occurred today. Even at this very moment, the Inspector General to the Department of Justice is investigating the misuse of the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Marshal's involvement in tracking down courageous Texas State legislators who