

Indeed, the most important step President Uribe could take to end terrorism within Colombia's borders is to investigate, prosecute, and punish all those responsible for violations of human right and international humanitarian law, including the paramilitaries and their military allies.

It is impunity, not human rights defenders, that is eroding any prospect for peace, democracy and the rule of law in Colombia.

Sadly, U.S. policy is complicit in aiding and abetting this serious state of affairs in Colombia.

SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, since I came to Congress in 1993, I have been very concerned about the future of Social Security. Because when I was chairman of the Senate Taxation Committee in the State of Michigan, it was brought to my attention that Social Security was running out of money. It seemed like an easy challenge to convince, if you will, America and Congress that something needs to be done if we are to save this important program that has been so helpful to so many senior citizens.

We talk about \$87 billion that the President has now requested for additional help in fighting the war in Afghanistan and Iraq and for homeland security, but retirement security is just as important. And the retirement security in this country is in great risk, and if we keep putting off a solution to the problem of Social Security, then the solutions are going to be more drastic as we wait years and years. And that is what I have found out over the last 9 years as I have introduced additional business.

Let me give some figures, dollar figure, Mr. Speaker, on how short of keeping our promises on Social Security we are. The actuaries estimate that it is going to estimate that it is going to take \$120 trillion, \$120 trillion over and above what we are taking in in the Social Security tax to keep our promises of benefits for Social Security over the next 75 years. And why are we unwilling to deal with this? So discouraged that there has only been on my count, 26 Members of either the House or the Senate that has ever been willing to sign on the bill to keep Social Security solvent.

There are two global forces coming to hit head on, not only in the United States but throughout most of the world. One force is the fact that our seniors are living longer we are having an aging of society. And that does not mean you are growing older. It means the number of old people in relation to young people is growing very rapidly. And the other force is the birth rate is going down.

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Most countries in Europe and the United States have a birth rate that does not propagate and replace the mother and father of those children, so fewer children and more people living longer, and since we have a pay-as-you-go program, where current workers take their tax dollars and send it and immediately the next week it goes out to current retirees, the program is unsustainable.

Here is my challenge and my warning. If we do not do something, we can have the same kind of problem that countries like France and Germany and Italy and Spain and Japan are facing now. The payroll withholding tax in France is 51 percent for their senior citizens. Fifty-one percent out of every dollar they make is deducted to pay for their senior citizens in that country, and that is because there are so many senior citizens in relation to the number of people working.

In Germany, it is approaching 42 percent payroll tax deduction. Just think of the pressure on business because the only way they have to make up this money is to charge more for their product or to reduce what they are paying for their employees, and therefore, they are going to be less competitive.

Let us not let that happen in the United States. Let us not allow a program like Social Security that has been so helpful to so many of our seniors, that so many of our seniors in this country depend on.

Right now over 80 percent of our seniors depend on Social Security for over 90 percent of their total retirement income. It is a huge challenge. We need to deal with it. I ask my colleagues to examine this problem.

Mr. Speaker, I would just ask all Americans in the next election to ask the candidates that are running for office what is their solution to save Social Security.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

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

There was no objection.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

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

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, along with many of my colleagues in the New York delegation, tonight we remember September 11. Nearly 2 years after September 11 the shock, pain and trauma on that day lingers with my constituents in New York. While we resiliently cleaned up the site ahead of schedule and have begun to rebuild, no New Yorker can walk past a fire house or police precinct or gaze at downtown New York without an empty feeling in the pit of their stomach.

In my own District, 25 different fire stations lost people in the terror attacks, and more than 500 of my innocent neighbors who did what most Americans do every day, simply woke up and went to work, lost their lives in this terrible attack.

The hijackers chose two of the most prominent symbols of American prosperity, enterprise and strength. By taking down the symbols of America, the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, they hoped to show the weakness of American resolve. Instead, the opposite happened. America showed that in times of adversity ordinary people become heroes.

New York is the most diverse city in the world, but on that day, and I would say every day in our rebuilding effort, we were united as one.

Tomorrow, along with the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), we will be presenting on this floor and hopefully passing the True American Heroes Act, which will award the Congressional Gold Medal to the brave rescuers who perished helping others after the attack, the police, the firefighters, the emergency medical. Our bill lets us honor the men and women who died so that others could live.

We must also remember that the World Trade Center disaster was one of the greatest rescue efforts of all time. Because of the heroic efforts of the rescue workers, the final death toll was less than 3,000. This is truly remarkable when we consider that more than 20,000 people may have been in the buildings when the planes hit, not to mention the 10s of thousands in adjacent buildings, subways and streets.

9/11 not only united New Yorkers, it united the Nation. Americans recognized that the attack on the World Trade Center was not an isolated event, experienced in Washington or Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, or in New York. This was an attack on all of America, and Americans were unified in their response.

All over the country people joined together to send food, clothing, blood and prayers. To this day, everywhere one goes in the city of New York, in hospitals, fire stations, police stations, even stores there are messages of support and hope sent from around the country to help New Yorkers through this terrible period.

New Yorkers are standing with me tonight as I thank my colleagues in this Congress on their behalf. Within days of the tragedy, Congress appropriated \$40 billion for disaster relief

and increased security. We truly and deeply appreciate the swift show of support.

It is ironic that an event that generated much love and support was based on an act of unexplainable hatred, expressed in violence. Our country united in spirit to combat terrorism and those who support terrorist activities, but it was New Yorkers who bore the brunt of the attack.

I urge my colleagues to join me tonight in honoring the resourcefulness of the residents of the greatest city in the world. New Yorkers should be proud of the way they handled the most devastating attack on American soil. They showed strength of character and generosity of spirit.

9/11 has left its devastating imprint on my city, and we will always remember the horror of that day, but the recovery process is underway. We will rebuild Manhattan in a way that honors the fallen and celebrates the living and all Americans will celebrate the spirit of renewal that New York embodies.

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE POWER CENTER AND PYRAMID COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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, I come today to honor the wonderful work of a premier facility in Houston, Texas. This facility is known as the Power Center. It will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary this week.

Mr. Speaker, the Power Center is a center of commerce and part of a community's revitalization. Through its creation and ongoing success the people of Harris County and Houston are able to not only see but also to be a part of what happens when a community comes together. One of the leaders of this great success that I wish to pay tribute to today is Reverend Kirbyjon Caldwell of the Pyramid Community Development Corporation.

It was the Pyramid Community Development Corporation, under Reverend Caldwell's leadership that gave life to the Power Center. What were once a vacant lot and a decaying former Kmart retail store is now a vital and valuable part of the Harris County-Houston community. The Power Center has led to the conservation and redevelopment in an area of southwest Houston and surrounding neighborhoods by improving housing conditions; assisting minorities, disadvantaged, and low income families to obtain home ownership. The Power Center has also provided other important public services to its neighbors and to the people of Houston.

Mr. Speaker, having hosted a very successful homeownership fair in my district, at which there were thousands of attendees, I am honored to have this opportunity to recognize an organization that understands the importance of that part of the American dream. The homeownership fair that I speak of, held in the 18th Congressional District of Texas, was sponsored in part by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the Houston Real Estate

Association. It was part of an ongoing effort entitled, "With Ownership, comes Wealth" (also known as WOW) of which I am a true proponent. Mr. Speaker, WOW is an important initiative from which I believe many people can benefit; individuals, families, and communities.

Currently, African Americans are underrepresented in homeownership rates. Forty-six percent of African Americans own their homes, compared to 67 percent of the Nation as a whole. Furthermore, in the state of Texas, the homeownership rate is only 63.8 percent. Unfortunately, in the 18th District, the homeownership rate is even lower at 55.3 percent. That is 8.5 points behind the state average and nearly 11 points behind the national average.

We have quite a bit of catching up to do. In fact, of the homes owned in the Houston area, only 13.2 percent of them have African American owners, and 5.1 percent have Hispanic owners. That is a terrible disparity and it must change. The WOW initiative and the homeownership fair are wonderful agents to accomplish that change. The Power Center through Pyramid Community Development Corporation and the development of Corinthian Pointe, Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell, and the Windsor Village United Methodist Church are also agents of change committed to increasing homeownership in the Southwest Houston community.

Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell has facilitated the creation of the Power Center and the revitalization of a community with the help of that community and of many individuals. I would like to thank just a few of those individuals at this time. Particularly, I want to recognize Suzette Caldwell, the wife and partner of Reverend Caldwell, Ginger and Jack Blanton, Deborah and Gardner Cannon, and Nancy and Rich Kinder. I also want to thank Audrey and Rev. Bill Lawson, Beth and Charles Miller, and Beckie and Gasper Mir for all of their hard work. In addition, Bobbie and John Nau, Katie and Patrick Oxford, Anita and Gerald Smith, Rosie Zamora and Kay and Fred Zeidman and the dynamic Board of Directors deserve our thanks for the work they have done to strengthen the Power Center and the Pyramid Community Development Corporation. Mr. Speaker, there are countless others who were it not for their dedication and direction, we would not be celebrating such a joyous 10th anniversary of Houston's Power Center, and I want to thank them also.

With that, I say congratulations to the Power Center, to its leadership and to the community that it serves. We offer our respect and thanks for all that you do to provide an improved quality of life for all Houstonians.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

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

There was no objection.

WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am here as a member of the Washington waste watchers group, and I am here to focus on irresponsible spending on funds that miss the beneficiary and then go elsewhere.

Today's Washington waste watch, Mr. Speaker, highlights the taxpayer dollars that are sent to people other than those who they are intended to go for, and those are dollars that are supposed to go for certain beneficiaries of certain programs.

Americans should and would be shocked to know that their tax dollars are being sent to Washington, that they are funding benefits for dead people or prisoners and millions of people that simply lie on their applications in order to receive benefits that they do not qualify for.

The Washington bureaucracy, for example, is throwing away benefits that taxpayers spend their hard-earned money to fund and money that they send to D.C. Mr. Speaker, for example, 23 percent of all students whose loans were discharged due to disability claims are actually holding jobs, and many borrowers who receive death discharges are found to be clearly alive, Mr. Speaker, and in many cases, earning wages, 23 percent.

Medicaid, for example, paid \$1.6 million to a Wisconsin transportation company for multiple round trips to, among others, dead people that they clearly were not transporting.

Mr. Speaker, there are some good things going on, though. The Veterans Affairs Inspector General is using computer technology to identify individuals who may be defrauding the VA by receiving benefits that, again, for people they are receiving benefits for people that have already died. More than 5,500 possible cases have been identified and they have actually recovered \$4.7 million, but over the past 5 years, for example, law enforcement has arrested almost 7,000 fugitives who were illegally receiving food stamps. They included 1,500 accused drug offenders, Mr. Speaker, 31 murderers, 45 sex offenders and child molesters, hundreds wanted for assault and robbery.

Mr. Speaker, more than 25 percent of free and reduced price school lunches are being consumed by children whose families' income is way above what they should be to qualify for those programs, and then yet we do not have enough money, some people will say, for those that do qualify.

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The Veterans Affairs Inspector General estimated that roughly 13,700 incarcerated veterans have been paid