

PREVENTING UNDERAGE
DRINKING

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

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I spent roughly 40 years working with young people, and over those 40 years there was a growing concern about drug abuse. Drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamines were unheard of in 1960 and became more and more prevalent as those 40 years moved forward.

My observation was the primary drug problem that we had with young people really revolved around alcohol. Last week the National Academy of Science came out with a report on underage drinking that I think underscored this observation. The findings were as follows:

Number one, underage drinking results in \$53 billion of costs to the Nation annually; \$19 billion of this is for alcohol-related traffic accidents; 2,339 15- to 20-year-olds were killed in 2000 by alcohol-related traffic accidents.

Number two, availability apparently is no problem. Ninety percent of twelfth graders say obtaining alcohol is easy. Fifty percent of seniors drink each month, and 25 percent of those drink heavily.

Third, underage drinkers drink more than adults do. The report indicates that underage drinkers consume nearly twice as much alcohol on each occasion than adults. In other words, underage drinkers are more likely to drink to get drunk than adults.

Number four, underage drinking is more addictive. Due to psychological and physiological immaturity, alcohol dependency progresses much more rapidly in young people. Sometimes it progresses in a matter of weeks or months, whereas in most adults the disease may progress over a period of years.

It is estimated that there are 3 million teenage alcoholics in our country today, and those that are addicted to other drugs, it could be a fraction of that 3 million, and yet that gets most of the attention.

Number five, the average age of the first drink is decreasing. At the present time the first age of drink is about 14 on the average. Twenty percent of eighth graders use alcohol frequently.

Six, the side effects of adolescent drinking are devastating. Underage drinking leads to violence, suicide, academic failure, date rape, unwanted pregnancy, it can impede brain development, and it is a gateway to other illegal drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin, because all of those drugs usually do not start with the drug itself but rather alcohol consumption.

Number seven, a point that I would like to bring out is why has underage drinking become such a huge problem. I would say parental factors have been a major issue. Many parents subscribe

to the myth, which is false, that if a young person is using alcohol then they will not use other drugs, when the reverse is absolutely the fact. If you start using alcohol early, you are more apt to be addicted to all kinds of other drugs as well.

Oftentimes parents will purchase alcohol for children. And then, of course, there is the issue of lack of parental involvement. A recent study indicated that parents today spend 40 percent less time with their children than they did a generation ago, and of course that leads to some problems in the alcohol area.

Then of course there has been a problem with media influence. Young people are often targeted by alcohol commercials, and those of you who may watch NCAA football this next Saturday will undoubtedly come across a number of beer commercials, and these commercials will not show you an overweight 50-year-old or an automobile accident or somebody whose wife walked out on him. Rather, they will be young, they will be attractive, they will be athletic and they will be having a good time. And so NCAA sports, which should be aimed at improving things for young people, is, I think, in this case part of the problem. Also, much music targeted to young people glamorizes alcohol.

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So some of the solutions provided by this report I think are worth noting.

I think we need to reallocate government resources. Twenty-five times more money is spent on preventing illegal drug use than preventing illegal drinking by young people, and yet if we can keep people from drinking, particularly at an early age, we are going to do a tremendous amount to cut down use of other hard drugs, and our money would be much better spent in that regard.

We need to hold alcohol advertisers accountable for targeting young people. There is no question that many of their advertisements are aimed directly at people, and some of those are underage drinkers. We need to hold the recording industry, the motion picture industry and the television industry accountable for ratings. Many of these ratings are rated G or PG and have heavy alcohol content in them.

We need to enforce regulations banning the sale of liquor to underage drinkers. Many times people who violate these rules just get a slap on the wrist. It has been proposed, also, by the NAS study that we raise the excise tax on alcohol to promote a campaign to reduce underage drinking, much as we have to reduce smoking.

So all of these things I think are worth considering, and I certainly urge the membership to take a hard look at the NAS report.

LETTERS FROM CONSTITUENTS
CONCERNING IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 165 years ago the U.S. House of Representatives passed a rule to ban discussion, debate, printing of any information or discussion of the issue of slavery. As a result, former President John Quincy Adams, who was elected to the House of Representatives after he was President, came to the House floor night after night, week after week, hoping to change the minds of people and debate the issue of slavery.

Adams, one of the Nation's leading abolitionists, one of the Nation's strongest believers in giant social justice, as a result, because he was prohibited from talking about slavery, came to the floor and read letters that he received from constituents in Massachusetts and constituents around the country. He believed that Congress should discuss slavery and debate slavery, so he allowed citizens to speak through him as the microphone, citizens through using these letters to speak directly to Congress, directly to the American people.

In a similar way, many in this Congress are unhappy that we are failing to investigate what our role in Iraq was. My friend from Texas (Mr. PAUL), Republican from Texas, has joined with many of us in questioning and asking for an independent commission to investigate the Bush administration's distortion of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, saying that we need to know more in order to deal with the problems at hand more, and as a result, I would like to read letters from petitioners from Ohio, from my District most of them, from all of Ohio, received from Ohio literally thousands of letters questioning, asking that Congress investigate, questioning what we are actually doing in Iraq.

From Jay from Richfield, Ohio, While listening to the speech of the President regarding Iraq last Sunday, I was struck by the fact he is asking for \$87 billion for Iraqi reconstruction. What is magic about \$87 billion, Jay writes. If we assume there are 290 million men, women and children in the U.S., that means that every man, woman and child will be contributing \$300 to the reconstruction of a country we will never visit and whose welfare would never have affected us but for the lies of our President.

When the President sold America his enormously wasteful tax cut a few years back, his cornerstone was \$300 for every family. He was full of stories regarding what a family could do with an extra \$300. Jay of Richfield, Ohio, writes.

Sue of Elyria, Ohio, writes, Rather than admitting the shortcomings of his failed policy and plotting a course to get us out of Iraq, President Bush used the Sunday speech to the Nation to repeat his lies in the hopes that people will believe them if they are said often

enough. There was no mention of weapons of mass destruction. Bush continued to equate Iraq with al Qaeda terrorists even though there is no factual basis for the charge. Then he asked us for another \$87 billion to bail him out, and I am sure this is only the beginning. President Bush will be back asking for more.

How much is \$87 billion, Sue writes. For that amount of money, America could solve the school budget crisis in every one of our communities and provide health insurance for every uninsured American child for 15 years, provide food for all six million of the children who die from hunger around the world for the next 7 years. Sue from Elyria, Ohio.

Ted from Lorraine, Ohio, where I live, asked about the \$87 billion more for the invasion of Iraq. He writes, What happened to the \$69 billion he spent already? Was it all given to Haliburton, the "no bid" contractor and friend of the President's? Why does not Congress write into the law giving him money that no contracts be let without fair and open bidding? His concern for the people of Iraq is heartwarming, but what of us, Americans who pay him and are suffering from a terrible loss of jobs and income? What of our schools and our roads and our bridges and constitutional rights under the Bill of Rights? Not a word from the President on that.

Jack from North Royalton, Ohio, writes, I believe that we, the American public, were manipulated by misleading statements by President Bush in order to gain support for a war in Iraq. This war is costing the American people billions of dollars. More importantly, it is costing the lives of American military personnel. This war has cost America the friendship and respect of law-abiding Nations. This is a sad period for America and for Americans. The Bush administration should be held accountable. President Clinton's lies were about a personal sexual matter. President Bush's lies are about an international issue.

Matt from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, writes, The costly war, which has not ended, has cost thousands of civilian lives and hundreds of American military lives. It has not improved national security. It has weakened it. It was evident, Matt writes, as the administration danced around looking for reasons to attack Iraqi men, women and children that there were conflicts of interest between members of the administration and the possible reasons for going to war.

These are five or six of the literally the thousands of letters, hundreds of thousands around the Nation that we are receiving questioning what we are doing in Iraq, wanting a plan on how we are going to get out.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would like to remind all Mem-

bers to avoid personally offensive references to the President of the United States.

REPORT ON IRAQ

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago I had the privilege of visiting Iraq with the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS), the Committee on Government Reform chairman. I am not a member of that committee, but he kindly let me accompany them.

Mr. Speaker, when I returned to this country I will have to tell my colleagues I wondered if I had gotten off a plane on the wrong planet or if my jet lag was particularly bad. I turned on the evening news and listened to one of the national news anchors, and his comments about Iraq were such that I did not recognize the country that I had just left.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my colleagues tonight about what I did see while I was there. It is a good story, and it is a story the American people need to hear, and unfortunately, it is a story the American people are not hearing as we have heard evidence tonight by the comments on the other side.

General Conway of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Babylon told our group that what has happened in Iraq is a vivid success story. The Iraqis are not concerned that we will stay too long; they are more concerned that we will leave too soon.

Mr. Speaker, when we flew into Baghdad that first morning, I was struck by how normal life is in Baghdad. The markets are full. There are cars on the street. In fact, we encountered a couple of traffic jams. Satellite dishes have appeared on the rooftops of the apartments and houses in Baghdad, and Mr. Speaker, bear in mind that 4 or 5 months ago, possession of a satellite dish was punishable by a year in prison, and now 25 to 30 percent of the homes have satellite dishes. These are people who are hungry for knowledge, who are hungry for information.

The schools completed their school year. Agriculture in this country, in spite of the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Just at the end of August, they had completed the wheat harvest up by Tikrit, an area that looks very similar to Kansas for all I could tell. Perhaps the Kansas of 150 years ago, but nevertheless it looked very similar to Kansas.

From a military standpoint, the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom was prosecuted brilliantly, and Mr. Speaker, I would point out probably more humanely than any other military exercise in the history of the world. There is no remaining strategic threat, that is to be sure Iraq is still a dangerous country, but the Iraqi military is not going to reconstitute under Saddam Hussein and attack our forces.

Stabilization is currently the goal of our military operation, to find, contain and kill those who would hurt our troops or harm innocent Iraqi citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out a picture that I took while I was over. This was actually taken in Tikrit in one of Saddam's old palaces. The men and women of the 4th Infantry Division, that is a Fort Hood division out of Texas, had this graphic up there to illustrate how 42 of the 54 most wanted of the former Iraqi regime are no longer a threat to the Iraqi people or the American people: Saddam's regime is gone and will not be back, can you hear me now.

Mr. Speaker, as far as the police force in Iraq is concerned, we are just now 2 years and 5 days after the 9/11 disaster, and many of us got to know Bernard Kerik on our TV screens, the police commissioner from New York City who presided over the New York Police Department during 9/11. He has been a miracle worker in Iraq. He has gone from zero to 35 precinct stations in a mere 14 weeks' time. He has stood up 37,000 Iraqi policemen and expects to have 65,000 more by next May.

Mr. Speaker, to sum up, I would like to just illustrate the 90 days of progress that have happened in Iraq. The schools have completed their academic year and completed testing and indeed will be starting, if they are not already started, a new school year this September. Over 90 percent of the major cities and towns in Iraq have functioning city councils and town councils. Over 500,000 Iraqis are contributing to their own security and border security. Prisons are on the verge of reopening, and the judicial system is up and functioning. Food distribution occurred throughout the combat phase and afterward. No humanitarian crisis grew as a result of the combat in Iraq.

Hospitals remained open and functional. To be sure, they leave a lot to be desired, but nevertheless, they remained open and most importantly to me, four and a quarter million children have been immunized since last May.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out in this 90 days of progress, none of these things were in place in Kosovo a full year after that major military operation ended.

I would like to point out some of the things that I saw within the health care industry in Iraq, which was particularly important to me as a physician. There has been no health care infrastructure improvement in Iraq for over 30 years. Pharmaceuticals manufactured in Iraq were useless, and we juxtapose this with the opulence of the palaces and the poverty of the hospitals. Mr. Speaker, this was a man who needed to be removed and deserved to be removed.