

treating troops this way? How long? Not long.

In particular, we ought to remember who the National Guard is. They perform triple duty: homeland defense now in the age of domestic terrorism, which is what Americans are truly afraid of; natural disasters, like the hurricane that is bearing down upon us; and, of course, the regular military duty that so many of them are engaged in now. We had better hope and pray we do not need the National Guard at home, because they simply are unavailable to us at the moment.

The administration changed the rules of the game once these young people were signed up and in the field. Now they find that commanders can decide when and if they will go home. They are getting extension after extension of duty, and they are getting back-to-back service, all of which they were promised would almost never happen.

Where does this spring from? From the go-it-alone attack on Iraq that this administration did, against all of the advice of our allies, indeed, of the whole world. The way in which we have handled Iraq has already wrecked American foreign policy and its relations with its allies.

Yes, I support the Congressional Black Caucus statement of principles. I also believe it is time to do more than ask tough questions. It is time to do more than talk about the troops, as if they were some inanimate body. It is time to come to grips with our duty to protect the troops, not only in the field, but here at home, against policies that could wreck the volunteer forces on which we have become so dependent in an age when we do not use the draft.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the chairman for his leadership.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman and all of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus for participating in this discussion this evening.

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Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I believe that history will be the judge, and I think it will shine a very favorable light on the Congressional Black Caucus for raising the questions that have been raised. These are basic, fundamental questions.

It is interesting that the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) raised the issue of our troops. It just reminded me that one of the first soldiers to die in the war just so happened to live a few blocks from me, a young man who simply wanted to be the best that he could be; and he joined the Marines, and the reason why he joined the Marines was because he could not get scholarship money to go to college. But he joined the Marines and gave the best that he had, and he became one of the best helicopter specialists in the entire Marine Corps.

So we must never forget the young people who are suffering in 120 degree-

plus weather. We must never forget those who have given the ultimate sacrifice, their lives, for this country. We must never forget them, ever. We must never separate them from what is going on here today, for they are the people that we care so much about and we love so dearly.

At the same time, I think we owe them a certain level of support, the highest level of support. We must do that. At the same time, we must be, this country, that is the President, must answer crucial basic questions about the taxes that are paid. I have often said, Mr. Speaker, that one can get Republicans and Democrats to agree on one thing, and that is for sure, and that is that the tax dollars of our citizens must be spent in an effective and efficient manner. I do believe that it is our duty. It is not only our duty; it is our responsibility to ask the questions of how those dollars are spent. It is the duty of every citizen to require of us in town hall meetings, and when they meet us at the supermarket, to be able to ask us the question of how are our dollars being spent.

And as we stand here today and as we look at this total \$166 billion, I promise my colleagues that I do not think that one of us can truly say how they are being spent, because our President has not told us. This Chamber should be packed with Members trying to get answers to those very crucial questions.

#### CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RENZI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the majority in the Congress, I take the well this evening to, of course, celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, to celebrate the independence day for our Central American allies. It is my privilege to be before the House of Representatives today to discuss these important events.

Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15 through October 15. It is a month-long national celebration in recognition of the countless contributions and sacrifices that our Nation's largest minority community has bestowed upon our country over the last 4 centuries. This week we not only recognize Central American independence from Spain, but we also celebrate the common bond of democracy our countries share that allows us all to be here today.

Es gran mes de celebracion porque elogiamos la independencia de cinco paises centro: El Salvador; Costa Rica; Honduras; Guatemala; y Nicaragua. Nuestros amigos y companeros.

As with every July 4th, when we celebrate our Nation's independence from Great Britain, it is fitting to note that while the five Central American na-

tions declared their independence from the Spanish crown on September 15, 1821, the quest for independence actually began 11 years earlier on that exact date when the then Viceroyalty of New Spain, today Mexico, declared her independence from la Madre Patria, the Mother-Fatherland, as Latinos sometimes affectionately refer to Spain.

When independence finally came to Spain's largest American colony in 1821, its vast territory stretched all the way south to the present Costa Rican-Panamanian border and continued northward to the present day California-Oregon border and included the American Southwest.

In addition, the future of the Philippines, Guam, as well as the other Spanish island possessions in the Pacific, which were administered directly from Mexico City before the end of Spanish sovereignty on the American mainland, would also be directly affected by the independence movement that began on this date, September 15 in 1810.

In the years that followed Mexico's independence, which was officially celebrated on the 16th of September, and not on Cinco de Mayo, like some believe, five of the six Central American provinces would also come together in 1823 to form the United Provinces of Central America. Subsequently, Mexico's northern provinces of Alta California, Nuevo Mexico, and Tejas y Coahuila would later come under the Stars and Stripes as a result of the Mexican-American War. Out of these three immense territories, the present-day borders of 10 American States would later be carved out. Hence, there are 10 stars out of the 50 on our national flag, one out of five on our national flag that has a direct tie to this specific date, September 15, the independence day of the former provinces of New Spain. Somos todos hermanos y hermanas.

It is clear that our Nations share many common bonds and values. It is also evident that we stand together, committed to freedom and democracy, proud that all five nations have freely elected governments committed to democracy and the rule of law. There is no better system than democracy, and we in the Republican Congress stand ready to work with the freely elected leaders of our Central American allies to strengthen democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere.

All five nations in Central America are well led by able leaders who again are freely elected. The Republic of El Salvador is President Flores and is represented well here in Washington by His Excellency Ambassador Leon. Republic Costa Rica is well led by a freely elected President, His Excellency President Pacheco and is well served and well represented here in Washington by His Excellency Ambassador Darembum. The Republic of Honduras is ably led by a freely elected President, His Excellency President Maduro

and is well represented here in Washington by Ambassador Canahuat.

The Republic of Guatemala is ably served and well led by a freely elected and democratically elected President, His Excellency President Partillo and well represented here in Washington, Guatemala is, by Ambassador Arenas. And last, and of course equally important, is the Republic Nicaragua, a country that is well led by a freely elected and democratically elected President, His Excellency President Balanos and is well represented here in Washington by Ambassador Marias.

Again, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, all led by freely elected, democratically elected presidents and well represented here in Washington by their diplomatic corps; but they share our values. They share our values and support for democracy.

Last, recognizing that we have a great opportunity, an opportunity to integrate the economies of the five nations of Central America and the United States with the Central American Free Trade Agreement. It is a great opportunity for all of our nations.

Central America represents the United States' largest export market. There are 34 million people who live in Central America, with a combined gross domestic product of almost 57 billion U.S. dollars. The United States exports to Central America total over \$9 billion, which includes such product items as machinery, high-tech goods, motor vehicles, chemicals, energy, food, agricultural products, textiles, apparel, paper, and fertilizer. In fact, it is important to note that the five Central American nations today represent more trade for the United States' trading partners than the trade we currently have with the nations of India, Russia, and Australia combined. Clearly, our allies are a key part of our economy and important trading partners.

U.S. services exports to Central America today total over \$2 billion and include such top services such as aviation, telecom, tourism, banking and financial services. Such exports to the region have grown by 42 percent since 1996. Think about that. Service exports to Central America have grown by 42 percent in 7 years. Every dollar today that we as Americans spend on a good produced in Central America has yielded \$1.36 in demand for American goods from and purchases by our Central American allies and friends.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement offers tremendous opportunity for American workers and businesses, but it also stands to offer a model for a regional trade agreement and will be a key building block for the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. We must align ourselves with our Latin American friends to compete in today's global economy.

Es claro que tenemos gran oportunidad para todos los paises en

Centro America y los Estados Unidos para integrar mas nuestras economias con el Acuerdo de Libre Cambio Americano Centro. Esta semana sus negociadores y nuestros negociadores tienen un reunion en Managua, Nicaragua, para clarificar este acuerdo y para terminarlo para la ratificacion temprano en dos mil cuatro por el Congreso de los Estados Unidos.

Our nations have much to gain by reducing barriers between our economies. We agree that free trade will create jobs and new opportunities for the citizens of all our nations. We agree that CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, must be mutually beneficial and fair to all six nations, ours as well as theirs. We in the Western Hemisphere can and must work together to compete in the global economy.

Again, my colleagues and I extend our congratulations to our Central American neighbors on their independence day and recognize our Hispanic and Latino citizens during this month-long celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. We stand with you in solidarity for freedom; we stand with you in solidarity for democracy; we stand with you in solidarity for trade.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. RUSH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. STEARNS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today after 1:00 p.m. and the balance of the week on account of attending his son's wedding.

Mr. MILLER of Florida (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending a funeral.

Mr. PLATTS (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of attending a memorial service in the district for a soldier killed in Iraq.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. CUMMINGS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DOGGETT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFazio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. BALDWIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. SMITH of Texas) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. KINGSTON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at her own request) to revise and extend her re-

marks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. KIRKPATRICK, for 5 minutes, today.

#### ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 13. An act to reauthorize the Museum and Library Services Act, and for other purposes.

H.R. 659. An act to amend section 242 of the National Housing Act regarding the requirements for mortgage insurance under such Act for hospitals.

H.R. 978. An act to amend chapter 84 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that certain Federal annuity computations are adjusted by 1 percentage point relating to periods of receiving disability payments, and for other purposes.

#### SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 520. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain facilities to the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District in the State of Idaho.

S. 678. An act to amend chapter 10 of title 39, United States Code, to include postmasters and postmasters' organizations in the process for the development and planning of certain policies, schedules, and programs, and for other purposes.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, September 18, 2003, at 10 a.m.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4294. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Control of Emissions From New Marine Diesel Engines [AMS-FRL-7561-4] received September 16, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4295. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Determination of Attainment for the Carbon Monoxide National Ambient Air Quality Standard for the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, Arizona [AZ-094-FOAa; FRL-7561-5] received September 16, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4296. A letter from the Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Federal Plan Requirements for Commercial and Industrial Solid Waste Incinerators Constructed on or Before November 30, 1999 [AD-FRL-7562-1] (RIN: 2060-AJ28) received