

HUNGER CRISIS IN AMERICA

(Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, when Americans think about hunger, we usually think about mass starvation in faraway countries. But hunger too often lurks in our own back yards.

In the United States, over 33 million people live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. In many homes in my State of Oregon, an estimated 720,000 people ate meals from emergency food boxes at least once last year.

Children comprise nearly 40 percent of those receiving emergency food, yet this administration is considering making changes to the verification process for the free and reduced-price school meals that could eliminate more eligible low-income children.

Today, four of my Oregon colleagues and I sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman asking her to reconsider making such costly changes to the system until we better understand the potential consequences of these changes.

It is my hope that the administration will continue to work to remedy the hunger crisis in our Nation without using costly and ineffective measures that will impede our children's access to nutritious and low-cost school meals that they need to grow and learn. I am committed to finding a solution to the problem, and I ask my colleagues to come together and find effective solutions and show that hunger does indeed have a cure.

AMERICA IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES

(Mr. FOLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, in picking up the USA Today's money section: "Economy: Good News, Prices Tame, Jobless Claims Down." Coca-Cola's earnings up 12 percent. IBM earnings rise 3 percent, will add jobs. Apple swings to a quarterly profit based on back-to-school sales. Intel sees quarterly profits soar. Harley Davidson cruises to record profits.

These are as a result of this administration and this Congress's passing tax relief for American families. The Committee on Ways and Means will be considering additional tax relief for corporations to keep domestic employment higher than it is currently to save jobs in America.

Now, despite the pessimism you have heard from the nine Presidential candidates on the other side of the aisle, we are winning the war both in the economy and we are winning the war in Iraq. I wish the nine people running for the high office of President would be more supportive of this administration,

more supportive of our troops in Iraq, and more supportive of the economy.

America's best days are yet ahead, not behind us; but the other side would lead you to believe the worst is yet to come. Let us be positive. Let us be optimistic. This is a great Nation. We have great opportunities.

SMART DECISIONS FOR A STRONG FUTURE

(Mr. SHERMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the last speaker. America's greatest days are yet to come. But not if we make a bunch of stupid decisions here in Washington.

The great debate today will be whether the \$18 billion going to build Iraq is going as loans or as gifts. But first we will take up H.R. 198, which I know leadership plans to pass by unanimous consent. Well, I will reserve the right to object.

H.R. 198 is being brought up at this time as is a bizarre and inadequate fig leaf designed to say, well, it is okay if we give away \$18 billion of the taxpayers' money, as long as on the same day we make a request that Germany and France renounce the debts that are owed to them by Saddam Hussein.

If we need a Marshall Plan for Iraq, remember, the first step in the Marshall Plan was that Hitler's debts were renounced. Promissory notes signed by Hitler were never paid. And we can make an \$18 billion loan to Iraq if it renounces its Saddam debt.

SOUTH CAROLINA VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding efforts of the South Carolina Victims Assistance Network led by Public Policy Coordinator Laura Hudson, CEO Veronica Swain, and VIP Director Nicole Goodwin.

This group tirelessly works on the victims of crime that are often forgotten by the public after their trauma no longer merits headlines. The Victim Assistance Network advocates on behalf of all victims and witnesses of crime, establishes a communications network, enhances public awareness, facilitates research and evaluation, serves as technical support, provides quality training, educates and coordinates policy development while encouraging citizen and victim participation.

As we recognize President Bush's Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October, I ask all my colleagues to join in support of organizations like the South Carolina Victim Assistance Network. These groups serve as a wonderful example of a community reaching

out with compassion to offer hope to victims of crime.

In conclusion, God bless our troops.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN FOR OUR SENIORS

(Mrs. CAPITO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, we most certainly today are going to be making very important decisions concerning the situation in Iraq. But Friday is the self-imposed deadline of the Medicare conference. We all need to make a concerted effort to work towards pushing this important legislation of a prescription drug plan for our seniors through Medicare through this Congress.

This is an opportune time for movement forward to improve our Nation's Medicare system. With the rising price of prescription drugs, preventive care and innovative medical technologies, we need to make sure that our seniors are able to access these privileges. Medicare needs to be reformed now so that these seniors who need assistance paying for prescription drugs will receive it.

I urge my colleagues serving on the conference committee to rise above partisanship so we can deliver to America's seniors a prescription drug benefit. The time is now. We are closer than ever. It is time to deliver the prescription drug plan to our seniors through Medicare.

IRAQI GRANT NO GIFT TO AMERICA'S CHILDREN

(Mr. ROHRBACHER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, today we will be discussing a supplemental which provides \$87 billion for Iraq, \$18.6 billion of that going as a reconstruction package.

The gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) was right when he suggested this is the pivotal decision that will be made today. The American people should pay close attention to what their Representatives are doing and should contact their Representatives if they believe that if we are going to give \$18.6 billion away, it should be in the form of a loan which will be repaid once Iraq, which could be one of the richest oil producing countries in the world, gets back on its feet. It should repay that \$18.6 billion. We should not just be giving it as a gift.

The Rohrabacher amendment insists that it be given as a loan instead of a gift and that it be repaid. And if the Rohrabacher amendment is not permitted, if it is ruled out of order, I will move the next Rohrabacher amendment, which would be to cut that \$18.6 billion from the request. And within a matter of days, the administration will

come back with it in the form of a loan.

If you do not want to give away this money, if you want your children not to have to repay this money that we are borrowing in deficit spending, vote for the Rohrabacher amendment.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT FRANCE, GERMANY, AND RUSSIA CAN BEST CONTRIBUTE TO RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ BY FORGIVENESS OF OUTSTANDING DEBT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 198) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that France, Germany, and Russia can initially best contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq by the forgiveness of outstanding debt between both Iraq and France, Iraq and Germany, and Iraq and Russia, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

□ 1030

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I shall not object, I rise to support this important resolution, H. Res. 198.

(Mr. COLE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, this resolution encourages France, Germany, Russia and other countries to forgive the debt owed to them by Saddam Hussein's regime; to make generous pledges for Iraq's reconstruction at the forthcoming Madrid donor conference; to work with the Paris Club on debt forgiveness issues for Iraq; to acknowledge the role that Iraq's current debt has in hindering reconstruction efforts; and to educate their populace about the importance of debt forgiveness in Iraq's reconstruction.

France, Germany, Russia and other countries have all been vocal about opening up Iraq's reconstruction contracts. If they wish to participate in this process, they should have the generosity and decency to contribute positively to the reconstruction effort by forgiving the debts.

Mr. Speaker, it is unconscionable for nations to expect the Iraqi people to repay the debts contracted by the terrorist and despotic regime of Saddam Hussein, particularly when those people were in part the victims of that regime and had no say in the loans in question. H. Res. 198 will assist the public debate in these issues going into the Madrid conference of donors and will put this House on record for sup-

porting debt forgiveness on this significant issue.

Mr. Speaker, America's given its most sacred resource, the lives and blood of its soldiers, as well as billions of dollars, in order to rid Iraq of Saddam Hussein and begin the difficult task of reconstruction. It is only right that other nations should forgive their debt and begin to participate in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the right to object. This is a good bill if it came up at any other time, but today, it serves a unique purpose, and that is, to deal with the great debate that is the big issue that will come up today as the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) pointed out. That issue is whether the \$18 billion, not to rebuild Iraq but to build Iraq as it has never been built before, whether that money will go in the form of a loan or some other collateralized instrument, perhaps an advance payment on the purchase of oil, or whether, instead, it will go as a gift.

What are we told? We are told that we cannot make it a loan because the Iraqi balance sheet is already in such terrible shape. I would first point out that the American balance sheet is not in great shape either, and we will be adding \$500 billion to the debt side of that just this year.

But why is the Iraqi balance sheet in bad shape? It is in bad shape because Saddam borrowed \$100 billion, and the people who hold the promissory notes signed by Saddam want to be paid, and for reasons I cannot figure out, the administration feels it is a critical national priority that those who lent money to Saddam get repaid. Promissory notes were signed by Adolf Hitler; they were not repaid. Promissory notes were signed by the Imperial Government of Japan; they were not repaid. Why is it that this administration believes that we cannot burden Iraq with \$18 billion in debt because we must preserve their ability to pay the \$100 billion of debt that Saddam Hussein borrowed?

Follow the money. Because in 2008 and 2010 and 2012, Iraq, a country with the second largest oil reserves in the world, will be exporting more oil than it needs, the revenue to finance its on-going operations. It will be able to pay debt service. It has collateral. That is why these folks lent Saddam \$100 billion. It will have that money.

Where will that money go? If none of it comes to us, the first claimant for \$25 billion is Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are not content with the revenue from their own oil. They want \$25 billion to be paid by the new Iraq because they have a loan made to the old Iraq. Who is second? Kuwait is in for only \$17 billion, except they claim that they are also owed reparations for the invasion.

Okay. That is interesting. The new Iraq should pay for the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam.

So we are told by the Kuwaitis that not only, not only did we have to spend our treasure and our blood to liberate them, not only do they have more oil than one can imagine per capita, but that they should have a high claim on Iraqi oil and that the American taxpayer should be at the back of the line.

I would say that we must do more today than give \$18 billion to Iraq and then have this resolution saying, oh, please, pretty please, these other creditors should forgive their debts. First of all, the resolution identifies as the main creditors France and Germany and Russia when, in fact, the major creditors of Saddam are Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Second, they do not have to forgive the loan. What incentive do they have? It is not like we are saying forgive your loan and this will happen or we will make our efforts contingent upon yours, but rather, today, we are going to be asked to give \$18 billion to Iraq to eliminate any possibility of adding an incentive for others to forgive their debt to enshrine the debt signed by Saddam while denigrating the American taxpayer.

We will be talking about more of this in the rest of today, but no one should believe that the passage of H. Res. 198, a mere plea to the wrong people that they forgive debt that they have no intention of forgiving so that we can give away American taxpayer dollars, that we do not have to give away, this is the smallest fig leaf for the biggest problem.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHERMAN. I yield to the gentlewoman from New York.

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I rise in support of the resolution and thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE) for his work.

This resolution is a good start but I believe the House must do more to promote debt relief for Iraq. The sense of Congress states that France, Germany and Russia should recognize the role that Iraq's current debt could play in hindering its reconstruction. I strongly agree with this language but we should move beyond France, Germany and Russia on this issue.

While total debt figures are difficult to gather, Representative Coalition Director Paul Bremer has put the number at roughly \$200 billion, and actually, the debt of France, Germany and Russia is just a fraction of the total debt. Russia's estimated to be owed between \$9 and \$12 billion. The amount of Iraq's debt to France ranges from \$1.7 to \$4 billion and Germany is owed \$4 billion. Iraq owes its neighboring countries far, far more money than it does Germany and Russia and over \$4 billion is owed to the United States.