

She served in a variety of leadership positions, including the League of California Cities Board of Directors, Institute for Local Self-Government, the 20th District Parent-Teacher Association, the Monterey Bay Task Force, Quota International, Women in Municipal Government, Friends Outside of the Monterey County, and the Overall Economic Development Committee of Monterey County.

She was also a Volunteers in Action Board Member, a Monterey City Council member since 1983, an alternate in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Advisory Council and a former president of the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, the Monterey Peninsula Concert Association and the Winnie the Pooh Chapter of the Children's Home Society.

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She was involved in various organizations.

Tonight, in paying tribute, I would also like to recognize my colleague, the minority leader of the United States House of Representatives, the gentlewoman from San Francisco, California (Ms. PELOSI).

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I want to join our distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), in paying tribute to Ruth Vreeland. I thank him, as one who admired her on behalf of so many who learned from her over the years, for my colleague's magnificent tribute to her, which I know he has not finished. I will not take a lot of time because I know he needs the time to put the full tribute into the RECORD.

As one who worked with her for over 25 years in the California Democratic Party, I know of her love of country. She was a true patriot. She loved our country. She loved its people. She loved its natural environment. She loved our civil liberties. She was a model citizen.

My daughter Christine, I know, would want to join with me, who worked with her on the platform committee, in expressing our sympathies to her family in saying that we will remember her with great affection, admiration, and respect.

I thank the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) and thank him for his leadership in presenting the very, very excellent credentials of Ms. Vreeland to our colleagues.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) for joining us. I know her family and all her friends and people in elected government will be so touched because she was a big admirer of the gentlewoman. My colleague led the way for women in politics.

Throughout her life, many of these organizations honored her outstanding commitment and service to our Bay community with awards. The Volunteers in Action honored her community service. The Sierra Club honored her for outstanding achievement. Planned

Parenthood named her an Outstanding Woman in Politics. The Monterey Rotary named her an Outstanding Teacher. Furthermore, the Fisherman's Wharf named her the Wharf Rat of the Year in 1995. The California Democratic Party recognized her for outstanding services. J.C. Penney gave her the Golden Rule Award. And the Old Monterey Business Association recognized her for exceptional dedication. The Monterey Civic Club honored her for being a community volunteer. Finally, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments recognized her for 20 years of service.

As I mentioned earlier, and as you can see from this lengthy list of accomplishments, Ruth was always moving, always involved. Her friends wondered if she ever had time to sleep. She adored her family and always seemed to be on her way to visit the next child. In fact, the tragic accident that led to her death occurred as she returned from visiting one of her three daughters, Lauren, Amy and Meslissa. Among the three of them, they have seven of Ruth and Dick's grandchildren.

Ruth and Dick's home blended the elements of Ruth Vreeland's youth in China with Japanese culture that Dick Vreeland picked up in the Army.

She was also involved with various organizations including the Monterey Vista Homeowners Association, Community of Caring, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, California Teachers Association, Monterey Bay Teachers Association, Responsible Hospitality, California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research, Monterey Main Street Program, National Organization of Women, Old Monterey Preservation Society, Sierra Club, ACLU, State Theater Preservation Group, Monterey Civic Club, Monterey History and Art Association, American Association for Retired Persons, California Retired Teachers' Association, and the Unitarian Church.

She cooked Chinese food and raised the children to use chopsticks. A proud naturalized citizen from Canada, Vreeland also instilled civic values in her daughters. "She believed in this country because she was naturalized in it and she taught me what patriotism is," her daughter said.

Vreeland also continued to tackle the large-scale problems that had always energized her. The Sierra Club recognized her in the 1980's for fighting offshore drilling and sewage spills. She traveled to Sacramento and Washington to promote education and local government, rising to leadership roles with the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments and the League of California Cities.

Vreeland was active in Democratic Party politics and was not afraid to bring progressive political causes to Monterey. She challenged the city in 1988 for not having enough women and minorities in management positions, and a decade later she discouraged the council from subsidizing the Boy Scouts because of its exclusionary policies toward gays.

In the months before her death, Vreeland's last big project was saving education and local government in the face of California's budget crisis, a problem epic enough to discourage even the most ardent community activist.

But not Ruth Vreeland.

America will miss her. She came to this country to do good—we are all better for it and will miss her forever.

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

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

FOCUSING CONGRESS' ATTENTION ON THE BASIS FOR THE WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, as we begin this second session of the 108th Congress, there is a great deal of very important work that remains for us to accomplish.

Primarily, among those things that need to be done is simply this: this Congress needs to focus its attention on the basis for the war in Iraq, why we are there; why that war was carried out; and what were the basic reasons behind it.

We were told initially by the administration that there was a connection between Iraq and the attack on our country of September 11, 2001, and that there was a relationship between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. That has proven to be completely false.

Subsequently, this Congress was told repeatedly, even in classified briefings right here on the floor of the House of Representatives, carried out by the Secretary of Defense and others, that the reason we were going to war in Iraq was because of the fact that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, so-called weapons of mass destruction. And as the President put it, Iraq constituted a deep and ongoing threat to the United States; and as Vice President CHENEY put it, Iraq constitutes an imminent threat to the United States because of these so-called weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons, which were alleged to be in Iraq in large numbers.

We have now come to learn quite clearly that that was wrong, that there were no weapons of mass destruction, no chemical or biological weapons in any significant amount held in Iraq by Saddam Hussein or by anyone else. Many of us knew that. Many of us knew that 15 months ago when this Congress voted on a resolution authorizing the administration to carry out a war in Iraq. We knew it, we said so, and we voted against that resolution.

Nevertheless, many others were taken in by what was coming out of the White House and elsewhere within the administration. And they voted for the war in Iraq, many of them, based on the belief that they were being told

the truth about the possession of weapons of mass destruction by the regime of Saddam Hussein. Again, now we know very clearly that that was not the case and that the administration knew it was not the case.

Most recently we have the report from the outgoing head of the American weapons inspection team in Iraq, David Kay. David Kay has now completed his report as he retires from that position, and he has said to us very, very clearly in that report that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, no chemical or biological weapons; that the biological and chemical weapons that were there, many of them were destroyed in the first Gulf War in 1991 and the rest were discovered and destroyed by the ongoing United Nations weapons inspection program.

We also have information from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which has done a very comprehensive study of the issue of so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has set forth in a very detailed report that there were no weapons of mass destruction held by the Saddam Hussein regime not since the end of the first Gulf War, and shortly thereafter they were destroyed as a result of weapons inspection program, the U.N. weapons inspection program.

Again, another clear indication that the premise that was laid forth by the administration to this Congress in order to get a resolution passed authorizing the carrying out of that war was false. It was fabricated. And this Congress was misled.

That leaves us with the very serious problem of finding out why that was done and who was responsible for doing it. That is important because of the situation we currently find ourselves in in Iraq, including the situation we find ourselves in with regard to the war on terrorism.

Our attention has been diverted away from al Qaeda and away from the war on terrorism. And we find ourselves in Iraq in a war that has already cost more than 500 American lives. The lives of more than 500 American servicemen and -women have been lost. Another more than 2,500 American servicemen and -women have been seriously wounded, all on the basis of pretense.

Therefore, we must conduct a complete and thorough investigation as to what happened, and that investigation must commence immediately.

WE NEED MORE MILITARY END STRENGTH

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, last year I stood in this well and called on my colleagues to support an increase in

the Nation's military end strength, the number of people in our uniformed services. I am pleased that my colleagues rose to the challenge and recognized the increased pressures that have been placed on our servicemembers. As a result, Congress last year authorized an increase in end strength of 2,400 soldiers for the Army and 300 airmen for the Air Force.

Unfortunately, this increase is just a small down payment on what the services, particularly the Army, need in order to meet today's increased operational tempo. Nearly a decade ago, Congress heard from the Army leadership about the need for an increase in end strength. The then Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, General Ted Stroup, testified before the Committee on Armed Services that the Army needed 25,000 more soldiers to meet ongoing operational needs. Our ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have only made the need for additional troops more imperative. I think we need an additional 40,000-person end strength increase in the Army alone, not to mention the other services.

Many servicemembers who were sent to Afghanistan to search for Osama bin Laden and defeat the al Qaeda went home after their tours only to be told to pack their bags because they were going to Iraq for a year. Brigades from the 10th Mountain Division and from the 101st Airborne Division were sent to Afghanistan. They returned home for a relatively short duration, and then they were sent to Iraq to prosecute Operation Iraqi Freedom. If we continue these back-to-back deployments, we will literally break the force. That is something we as a Nation can ill afford to let happen.

And now our military is about to embark on the largest troop rotation in the history of our country. I wish I could say that the replacement troops will be fresh, but the hard truth is that many of them will be returning to Iraq for consecutive tours. If we had enough people in the military, back-to-back tours in Iraq would not be necessary. It is important for everyone to understand that in the new force rotation into Iraq, National Guardsmen and Reservists will comprise about 40 percent of the force there.

We are using the National Guard and Reserve as never before, and we have to be careful not to put such strains on these citizen soldiers that they leave in droves or that recruiting suffers.

I was in Missouri recently and met with one wife of a National Guardsman now serving in Iraq. She told me when her husband returns from overseas he will be getting out of the National Guard and as many as one-third of folks in her husband's unit will be too.

This may be anecdotal evidence of what is going on in our Reserve components, but it is certainly cause for concern. The increased demands being placed upon our troops in uniform call into question the ability of our forces to meet its commitments in other

parts of the world. If conflict erupted on the Korean peninsula while these brigades are in southwest Asia, our ability to respond quickly would likely be compromised.

Recently, Lieutenant General John Riggs, a senior Army officer, stated that the Army must be substantially increased to meet its global commitments. Yet the Secretary of Defense continues to maintain that the services have enough end strength already to meet their responsibilities and that the increased demands on the troops is only a spike or temporary increase. As a result, my expectation is that the President's budget will not include any permanent end strength increase but will permit only temporary overages associated with our current deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Department of Defense believes that additional servicemembers are not needed because we proved that our troops can vastly overpower an enemy with speed agility and power in war. The problem is that we are no longer in that type of war. We are rebuilding a Nation from the ground up. That kind of undertaking takes people. And right now we simply do not have enough.

There is simply no substitute for having boots on the ground. To get the job done right I am pleased that a number of my colleagues have recognized the importance of increasing end strength. A number of them have written to the President and the Secretary of Defense calling for an increase in end strength. Others like the gentleman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER) have introduced legislation to this effect.

We must, we can, and we will in this Congress pass an authorization bill authorizing for appropriation additional end strength for the United States Army as well as the other services.

FULL DISCLOSURE FOR CLAIM OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION BY IRAQ

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, let me first of all associate myself with the very thoughtful message of the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) in terms of his very plain-talking message about our military.

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The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and I had the pleasure of visiting a number of them most recently in Iraq and I think a strong debate on this question will be important. Many people believe that those of us who have a difference of opinion for or against the war or for or against the approach that the war took, do not have a total agreement on the necessity of strengthening the young men and women who are in our Armed