

ability to give their country a new lease of life. For such sceptics, the Iraqi prisoners issue triggers a two pronged painful question.

On the one hand, this controversy raises the issue of the treatment of Afghan prisoners, whose fate remains hidden from the world.

It is only the word of the US military and other authorities which suggests that living conditions for Afghan prisoners remain acceptable. But there's absolutely no way to independently verify such claims.

On the other hand, the Iraqi prisoners' issue reinforces not only the message that the US remains—fundamentally—a country which is hostile towards the Muslim world, but also one whose actions only aggravate global crises rather than provide solutions for them. At a global level, the fallout from the Iraqi prisoners issue would be hard to pacify without a clear-cut demonstration of political consequences through steps such as US President Bush asking Rumsfeld to step down.

Without a clear message which suggests that this case has sparked enough urgency in Washington that heads are beginning to roll, the bitterness across the Muslim world will not even begin to pacify.

On the ground, in a country like Afghanistan, there's a great urgency to quickly establish new parameters to ensure transparency surrounding prisoners in different jails, be they those in the custody of the US or those being held by one of its allies. Apart from taking such vital measures regarding the treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan, Washington also needs to move decisively towards beginning to resolve the issue of prisoners incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay.

Simultaneously, Washington's determination to build a new political order in Afghanistan dominated by its handpicked leaders also needs to be fundamentally reviewed.

While there may not appear to be any direct clash between the prisoners issue and the political future of Afghanistan, the two issues are not entirely unconnected. For many sceptics who look upon the US as an invading power, both trends appear driven by the determination to enforce brute authority. The prisoners on their own, suspected to be living in sub-human conditions, may not be able to challenge Washington's military authority. But there are many others who would continue to be bitter about the US, drawing inspiration from Washington's controversial action.

Through time, such bitterness and anger will only translate into hostility towards the US. To make matters worse in Afghanistan, Washington's failure to pour billions of dollars once expected by most Afghans will only begin to lay the basis for frustration with the US as a problem solver. Tragically though, Afghanistan may be fated to live through one of its worst periods of recurring turmoil between now and the end of the year, ahead of the US presidential elections.

In its zeal to quickly solve the security problems central to Afghanistan's past profile as a terrorist state, the US military, with or without Washington's tacit direction, may well intensify its search for so-called terrorists.

In doing so, it's likely to run up against one wall or another.

Perhaps, the search for terrorists may intensify the urgency to step up the so-called interrogations of prisoners caught in the Afghan war.

The worst in the saga surrounding prisoners in the US military's captivity may not be over yet.

The BBC asked viewers and listeners to comment. From South Africa came

this: "The U.S. Secretary of Shame should just do the honorable thing and resign."

From Switzerland: "Rumsfeld is the apex of an arrogant military lobby in the U.S., a bunch of people who have no concern for human rights, freedom, liberty and moral values which were seen as the inseparable ideology of the United States."

From England: "Bush's administration has brought anarchy not democracy."

In Iraq today, Secretary Rumsfeld called himself a survivor as he spoke to the soldiers. This is the typical administration technique. Say something over and over and over and hope the people will begin to believe it. Fly a banner, take a picture, hope it all goes away.

The Secretary of War should have been talking about how America's credibility can survive this administration. Secretary Rumsfeld should have been talking about how America's leadership can survive the neo-cons. The Secretary should have been talking about how our men and women in Iraq can survive the new dangers they face.

It is too much to ask, I know. The PR machine cannot grasp anything as obvious as worldwide outrage. They call it a focus group. Meanwhile, they will do everything possible to prop up Rumsfeld, even as he comes to symbolize a disastrous foreign policy.

Today, Secretary Rumsfeld runs the DOD, but it no longer stands for the Department of Defense. Under this administration, under this Secretary, DOD has come to mean "divert or deny." The world sees it. The world knows it. The administration just does not get it yet. November 2 is coming.

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

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

#### EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the 5 minutes of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER).

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

There was no objection.

#### IT IS TIME TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO

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

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, over the last generation, Congress has acted with good intentions; but it has resulted in bad consequences. We have

developed, through policy here on the floor of the House over the past generation, policies that have driven jobs offshore. We have forced costs on employers that they are unable to control, and they do not even get a vote, and the result, a loss of jobs and a loss of the American dream for those who want those jobs and a successful career.

I was speaking recently with the CEO of Raytheon Corporation in Wichita, Kansas; and we were talking about a wire harness shop. He had worked with his machinists union and tried to develop a way to keep that shop within the Raytheon Corporation. He realized after several tries that even if wages were at zero he would still be forced to move these jobs overseas in order to remain competitive. The reason these costs were driving jobs overseas was not because of the wages. It was because of the higher cost imposed by Congress over the last generation through their policies.

I spoke with the CEO of Convergify. He told me that it was about the same to build a building in New Delhi or in Manila or in Wichita, Kansas. Overhead, in other words, is about the same around the globe.

So if it is not wages and it is not overhead, Mr. Speaker, what is it that is driving up costs that CEOs have no control over and is forcing our jobs overseas? Well, we have looked at these costs, and we have decided it is time to change this environment that is keeping jobs from coming back to America. It is time we changed the status quo.

We found out that these costs can be divided into eight separate categories, and we have developed eight issues; and for this week and the seven weeks that follow, we are going to attempt to change that environment, and I believe the change is coming.

The first of these issues is health care security. These are costs that are driven by an increase of regulation, increase of lawsuits, increase of mismanagement from the Federal level; and the result has been a 12 percent increase in the growth of health care costs just this past year. This is now the sixth year where we have had double-digit growth in health care costs, and it has forced health care costs to double since 1999.

It has raised the number of uninsured in America. So this week, we passed association health plans which allowed associations to gather together and lower their health care costs by bargaining with a larger number of people.

We passed flexible savings accounts so that employees could save money for health care costs and become more involved in health care decisions and shop around for health care services, reducing the cost and increasing the number of people on the insured rolls.

We also limited medical malpractice costs by medical malpractice reform. That alone will increase the number of insured by almost 4 million Americans.

We also found out there is a second issue, and one we are going to be addressing next week is the costs that are

associated with bureaucratic red tape. We are going to try to reduce the amount of bureaucratic red tape next week by dealing with OSHA, but we know now from reports from the National Association of Manufacturers that 12 percent of the cost of any manufactured item in America is due to the cost of paperwork compliance.

The Kansas Hospital Association has told me that for every hour of health care they provide, they also have to have an hour to just comply with the paperwork. An hour of health care now equals an hour of paperwork compliance. If we could reduce that to just half, we would make our companies more competitive. That alone would help us bring jobs back to America.

Our energy policy needs to be addressed. We now are facing \$2 gasoline in America, much of it driven by boutique gasolines demanded by the EPA. Blends that are designed for winter and summer in our limited number of refineries and limited number of pipelines cause temporary shortages and drive gas up. We should pass the energy bill that addresses and encourages ethanol and biodiesels, renewable resources that cannot only help lower the cost of energy but also raise the cost of commodities for farmers.

We also need to produce more energy. If we could pass the energy bill, it would create 700,000 jobs in America. Our tax policy needs to be addressed, but it is buried into the cost of our products. The loaf of bread that costs a dollar is increased by 2 cents just by taxes.

We also need to address lifelong learning, trade policy and litigation reform. We can change the status of these, status quo and bring jobs home.

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

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

#### HEALTH CARE SECURITY

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

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, there really is a medical liability crisis in this country. Americans realize there is an urgent problem, but I think many are unsure of how to solve that problem.

In my view, they need to look no farther than California for an answer as to what to do about this medical liability crisis, because in the early 1970s in California we faced a medical liability crisis very similar to the one that is spreading across the Nation now; and at that time, Governor Jerry Brown teamed up with members in the State Senate and members in the State Assembly and passed the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act, which is referred to as MICRA.

As health care costs hammer our citizens and limit the jobs available, it is imperative that the Nation follow California's example and bring structure and stability to the medical liability system.

I say that because Californians enjoy a very secure competitive liability system. MICRA limited noneconomic damages to those injured, while ensuring full compensation for lost wages and for medical costs. Doctors have the benefit of some of the lowest medical liability premiums in the Nation. Since MICRA was enacted, medical liability premiums across this Nation have increased by 750 percent. In California, the increase is less than half that number, less than half the Nation's average. That means that we are doing something right, and let me give my colleagues some other facts.

Disputes in California are settled 26 percent faster, and health care costs are 6 percent lower. That saves the patients in our State \$6 billion per year, and I think it speaks volumes as to our system's capabilities.

Yesterday, the House passed H.R. 4280, and by doing so we took the California model, and we applied it to the entire Nation. This is about common-sense reform, reform we know will work because we have tried it.

Health care costs have skyrocketed over the last decade. Advanced medical technology, advanced therapy, increased use of prescription drugs, all of these paired with inadequate cost containment have led to runaway prices; but, Mr. Speaker, I do not think we want to stand for this. I do not think my colleagues want to stand for this. It is not acceptable to stand by and watch our constituents unfairly carry the burden of a lacking system.

Systems like MICRA allow for patients to recover from their health care costs. State hospital associations estimate that every hour of care requires an hour of paperwork. One hour of doctor-to-patient care surely does not require the cost of that hour plus an additional hour of an administrator filling out forms. It is inefficient, it is clumsy; and thankfully we will no longer stand for it because by a 30-plus margin we have moved in a strong, bipartisan way to take our country towards medical liability improvement.

Employers, large and small, have struggled to keep their businesses up to the phenomenal speeds set by racing costs.

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Finally, we have introduced a way for businesses to provide health coverage because they care about their employees, without compromising the integrity of their businesses and products that they produce.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for passing this much-needed legislation to preserve access to quality health care costs, not just for Californians, but now for all Americans. We passed this legislation yesterday, the

bill is currently pending in the Senate. It is my hope that the Senate will act expeditiously so that we can get this legislation to the President's desk quickly.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). The Chair will remind all Members to refrain from improper references to the Senate.

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

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

#### CASTRO CLOSES DOLLAR STORES

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss a disturbing chain of events on the Island of Cuba this week. On Tuesday, Cubans awoke to find the Island's dollar stores, stores that accept U.S. dollars and provide Cubans with basic hygiene and food items, were closed.

The Castro government called this a reaction to new sanctions placed on Cuba by the U.S. Castro said that this was because of new limits being placed on remittances given to Cubans from their families in the U.S. Cubans were not given a date or time when the stores would reopen, simply left to read signs posted on the front door that read "closed until further notice."

Mr. Speaker, to explain to the average American what these stores mean to the Cuban people, a monthly ration covers eight eggs, about a pint of cooking oil, six pounds of rice, a half pound of ground meat/soy mixture, and other goods each month. Everything else has to be purchased for higher prices at either state-run stores, in pesos, or the dollar stores, in dollars, obviously.

Essentially, the Cubans are being told by Castro that the closings were the result of a new American policy, keeping Castro clear of any responsibility in the matter. So, not surprisingly, there was a run on basic necessities at the state-run stores. Mind you, the state-run stores carry bare minimum products. Even still, Cubans rushed to buy up shampoo and dishwashing detergent, worried that "closed until further notice" could mean closed for weeks, months, or even years to come.

Castro has since realized the error in his plans. News was released this afternoon that the dollar stores were suddenly reopened this morning, and the Castro regime is now saying that the stores were simply closed for inventory and to allow for price increases. So now the Cubans have regained access to the