

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

goods they need, but now they will have to pay higher prices, a difficult prospect when even doctors only make an average monthly salary of \$25.

Mr. Speaker, this is one more example of Castro's attempt to impose sanctions on the Cuban people, all while blaming the United States and essentially playing the martyr. This should be an example to all of my colleagues on why we need to continue the embargo. Opening our markets to a regime that uses its people as economic and political pawns and has no interest in a market economy, rather, works only to funnel money into the government and its wealthy leaders, is not an example of an honest business partner.

This, Mr. Speaker, is how Castro treats the average Cuban citizen. Let us not forget the countless situations Castro has committed against pro-democracy forces, throwing pro-democracy advocates in prison or independent journalists, many of whom have been jailed in the last year.

So I simply ask my colleagues to join with me and take notice of what happened with these dollar stores as an example of how Castro treats his people. And I think it also should make us reconsider whether we want American companies doing business with this kind of a regime. I do not think we should.

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

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

#### DESPITE THE WRONGS OF A FEW, THE MISSION IN IRAQ MUST CONTINUE

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I, along with many of my colleagues, had the opportunity to view the photographs of the prisoner abuses in Iraq this past week, and I have had many of my constituents calling me and questioning me about these issues. I certainly agree with all of those who express outrage to see this kind of abuse going on, perpetrated by Americans. However, I disagree strongly with many of those who look at these recent developments and assert we should never have gone into Iraq in the first place, considering these great problems that are developing over there.

I continue to feel very strongly the President did the right thing in using force against Iraq, and that Iraq was a serious threat from a terrorist perspective. And I think Tony Blair expressed this most clearly and most succinctly when he addressed the House of Representatives and the Senate in joint session right in this very Chamber. The

reason we went into Iraq was because if you ever had the joining of weapons of mass destruction with the terrorist elements of al Qaeda, instead of 3,000 dead, as we had on September 11, we could have 30,000 or 300,000 killed.

We went into Iraq for the right reasons. And to those who would say that the war in Iraq is unwinnable, I would assert that we have won the war in Iraq. The challenge that we face today is winning the peace. And clearly winning that peace is critically important.

By taking the war against terror into the Middle East, there are many of our detractors, supporters of totalitarian regimes in that part of the world who would like to see us fail in establishing democracy in Iraq and would like to see some sort of totalitarian regime re-emerge in that country.

I will say this. If we cut and run as some people are proposing, there will be tens of thousands of Iraqis who will die unnecessarily. I was in Iraq in November of last year, and many Iraqis are cooperating with us. They want to see a democratic institution established that can govern their country, and many of those people will be imprisoned, tortured, and executed if we see a regime resume in Iraq similar to Saddam Hussein's regime.

Now, many are questioning as to how this could have happened and are raising questions about Americans' character. How could it be that Americans are guilty of these kinds of terrible things? And, indeed, many of our detractors in the Middle East are trying to assert that we are no different from Saddam and his henchmen in that they torture people, and here we were, torturing people.

I think if we look at the brutal execution that we saw recently where an American was executed in front of video cameras, we can clearly see there is a difference between us and them.

The American people are rightly outraged, and they demand these abuses stop and that investigations be conducted. Well, in reality, the U.S. military responded appropriately months ago when they recognized this problem. Investigations have been underway for a while, and the abuses stopped long ago. Indeed, all we are seeing right now is a media and public reaction because the photographs were made available.

The American people are good people, the American people are a moral people, and we are reacting appropriately. The perpetrators of these deeds will be brought to justice. Indeed, as I understand it, court marshals are underway almost now as we speak. The real question is why could a small few be driven to such terrible deeds? And that is a legitimate question for us to ask.

Clearly, one important thing is a breakdown of command and control of authority, and we need to seriously investigate what happened here with the brigade commanders and the company commanders. How did we have breakdowns in our military intelligence op-

erations where standard Geneva Conventions were ignored? But those investigations were underway, and we will find out. And that is how America is different. That will play out in the eyes of the public.

To compare the United States to Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime, where this was business as usual, indeed it was official policy of the regime, is just totally inaccurate and totally distorted.

What struck me most about viewing these photos was the simple fact that many of these photos were pornographic. How could it come to pass that American servicemen and women are perpetrating these kinds of acts and recording them all on camera? Certainly we need to ask those questions in this country today. But I do not think we can escape asking the question of whether or not this is an impact of all the availability of pornography in our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, we have too much pornography in this country, and this body needs to act more and our court system needs to act more to try to stop it. We need to ask the questions of how could a small few carry out such morally reprehensible deeds.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### SMART SECURITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the administration's war in Iraq has failed. It has failed to make the world safer from terrorism. And, actually, it has made the world less safe and more susceptible to acts of terror. Who should be held accountable for this mess?

The war is not going well. Over 740 brave American soldiers have already lost their lives as a result of this deadly conflict, not to mention the innocent Iraqi civilians who have been killed and the thousands of troops injured.

The Pentagon just released a report that 18,000 American troops have been evacuated from Iraq for medical reasons. That is 18,000, or one-seventh of the number currently stationed in Iraq. This speaks to a systematic failure of leadership, Mr. Speaker. And, sadly, examples of this failure are widespread and easily recalled: the failure to secure Iraq's borders; the failure to prevent postwar looting; and the failure to provide the security necessary for reconstruction.

In fact, the recent abuse of POWs at the Abu Ghraib Prison is yet another