

I also know how much new equipment and technology means to the first responders of the Eleventh Congressional District of Georgia, and we in Congress are working hard to continue to provide it.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the privilege of visiting with the volunteer fire department in Woodland, Georgia, in Talbot County, to inspect their new fire truck; and I left very impressed with their operation. I was also struck by how much of a difference a piece of equipment like a new fire truck can have on a great community like Woodland.

So whether it is a fire truck, HAZMAT equipment for biological threats, or a communications network upgrade in northwest Georgia, I remain committed to doing everything I can to ensure that Georgia's first responders receive the necessary funding to ensure the safety and security of our communities in Georgia.

We must never take for granted the bravery and commitment of our true first responders. We in Congress must provide them with the tools necessary to conduct their vital service.

Mr. Speaker, the eleventh district's first responders are on the front line every day, and they deserve our support and appreciation. I want to take this opportunity tonight to thank each of them as we approach the third anniversary of 9/11 for their work to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia and the Southeast.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN MUST NOT EXPIRE

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, over 200 days ago I started speaking about September 13. That is the day when the assault weapons ban that we have in place now is going to expire.

Over the last couple of years, and then even this week when we saw the tragedy that happened in Russia, we saw what terrorists could do when they put their minds to having destruction. They do not care about human life. We are told that we have terrorists here in this country waiting to do their destruction on us as American citizens. We are told that when they can, they will do as much destruction as possible.

Come September 13, at midnight, your local terrorists, the gangs that are in our streets, the drug dealers, will be able to buy assault weapons at your local gun store.

I do not understand this. We hear the rhetoric all the time that the assault weapons bill has not worked. Well, you talk to the police officers that are coming down here tomorrow to try to convince the President to expand the bill. We have seen a 60 percent drop in killings with the guns that have been banned.

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Our local police say they are not prepared for this. The bulletproof vests that we give our police officers are no match to the guns that are going to be back out on the streets. The large-capacity clips, right now we hold it at 15, 10, and yet in our States when our hunters go out shooting for deer or hunting, they are only allowed 6 bullets. But we are going to give people anywhere like the killer today in Ohio that used 50 rounds. Where is the common sense?

We have the majority of the American people wanting to keep this ban in place. We have 56 percent of gun owners, NRA members that say, keep the ban in place. Yet there is total silence here in this House. The bill is not going to be allowed to be brought up even for a vote. But by the way, on Monday there will be a suspension vote to allow guns back into the D.C. area and not to punish anyone that is carrying an unlicensed gun.

Is this where we as Americans want to be? The rhetoric that we hear constantly, as if this is a slippery road, we are out to take away everyone's right to own a gun. Well, that is not the slippery road. We are trying to save lives.

Ten years ago we put this bill in place because too many of our police officers were being killed and outgunned. Come Tuesday morning of next week, September 14, when our kids are going back to school, our police officers are going to be in harm's way once again. The President of the United States has said that he would sign the bill if it got on his desk. Well, you cannot have it two ways, Mr. President. You have to make the phone call here. You have to tell DENNIS HASTERT, we want the bill up here. And like your father before you, make phone calls to say, get this bill passed, as Ronald Reagan did, as President Carter did, and as President Clinton did.

We cannot save every life. There is no bill in the world that is going to be able to do that. But when we have something in place that has saved lives, why would we just let it go? The NRA, are they that strong? Where are the voices of the American people? Where is this House, and where is this President? Whose side are they going to be on? The police officers that we talk about that are so heroic from 9/11 and through the convention and through all of the terrorist threats that we have, where are the voices that are going to protect those police officers? We are just going to let it go? Who is going to face the families? Who is going to talk to the surviving families when the first police officer is mowed down? Who is going to do that? It always seems that I am the one who has to talk to the victims' families.

We have several days left. We have all of the police and the police chiefs coming in tomorrow. Mr. President, I am begging you, get on the phone. Make this happen. We can pass it in

the Senate, and we can pass it here in the House, but we need your help. Mr. President, I am begging of you. You talk about our police officers. How about protecting them now?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KING of Iowa). Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair rather than to the President.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

SMART SECURITY AND ELECTIONS

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, in November of 2000, America witnessed the breakdown of its electoral system. Four years later, as far as I can see, nothing that was broken has been fixed. Many Americans believe the same injustices to democracy that we witnessed 4 years ago could occur once again this November.

The very security of our democracy is at stake. For all of the Bush administration's talk about securing our Nation from the threat of terrorism, no discussion of security would be complete if it did not address the need to secure our national election system.

After the controversial election in 2000, one would think President Bush would do everything in his power to ensure the integrity of America's election system. I know that is what I would have done had I become President of this United States, particularly after having lost the national popular vote by more than half a million votes. But unfortunately, despite some Democratic efforts here in Congress, this administration has failed to win back the trust of our Nation's voters.

The Help America Vote Act, which was signed into law in the year 2002, was designed to assist States in upgrading their fragile election systems. I supported this legislation because it took steps in the right direction to make our election system secure. While some improvements have been made because of this act, its most useful reforms, the reforms that would actually ensure security, will not be in

place by the November election, and that is because this administration refused to release most of the Federal dollars promised by the Help America Vote Act until June of 2004, 2 years after it became public law, delaying what could have been a secure election this November.

With 32 million voters in 19 States using punch-card ballots again this November, millions of voters will walk away from the polls not knowing for certain whether their votes were tallied correctly.

The emergence of electronic voting systems, I believe, is a good thing, but not without verifiable technology. Sadly, Republicans have refused to allow for paper-verified voting trails to ensure that each vote is counted correctly. Without a paper trail, there will be no way to conduct a recount should an election be contested.

Why have Congress and the Bush administration failed to produce vital changes since the drawn-out election of 4 short years ago? Some would say it is in the administration's best interests not to change the system.

Mr. Speaker, there is an even greater threat lurking quietly below. That is, the possible disenfranchisement of voters due to inaccurate registration methods and the shady control of voting lists. A recent Caltech/MIT study concluded that 4 million to 6 million votes were lost nationwide in the 2000 election. Half of these were traced to registration problems. In the year 2000, thousands of Floridians were deprived of the right to vote because they shared the same name with someone who had been convicted of a felony. This type of disenfranchisement and the physical intimidation of some voters is no better than the practices used to prevent Southern blacks from voting in the 1950s and 1960s. It appears we have not come very far since then.

We need to be smarter. We need to be smarter in order to secure our elections. I have introduced H. Con. Res. 392, the SMART Security Resolution, to address both foreign and domestic threats to our Nation. SMART stands for Sensible, Multilateral American Response to Terrorism. SMART security emphasizes the need for the United States to act as a leader and a model for other less sophisticated, less democratic nations. This means shoring up the credibility of our own election system, including the development of new, verifiable technology, to ensure that our Nation's poor and aged are not disenfranchised. It means avoiding a system where our own citizens are forced to cry out for international observers to ensure the fairness of our elections. SMART security means fully and quickly implementing the reforms stipulated in the Help America Vote Act.

Mr. Speaker, how can this country ever hope to be a true democratic model for the rest of the world when its own elected leaders have failed to ensure that our election system is truly

democratic? Let us be smarter about the way we elect our national leaders, because until we do, our election system will remain one accused of fraud and riddled with doubt, and we will not stand as an example of democracy in the rest of the world.

HONORING OUR FALLEN HEROES WITH A MEMORIAL IN THE CAPITOL ROTUNDA

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today, nine more Americans gave their lives in Iraq, nine more families are going to be without their loved ones this holiday season, and nine more American families are grieving.

Out of those nine, two soldiers and seven marines, perhaps your neighbor, and they are our neighbors, because they are always going to be America's neighbors, holds the distinction of becoming the one thousandth American casualty in Iraq. We salute our soldiers, marines, airmen, sailors, reservists, and guardsmen who are called to duty. We thank them deeply for their service, their valor, and their sacrifice for this country.

The one thousandth casualty in Iraq is a milestone and one we must acknowledge as we continue to reflect on the cost of the war on our Nation's families and the American people. We must honor the service of our troops and pay tribute to their heroism.

For that reason, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), a veteran, and I have written a letter to the Speaker of the House asking him to arrange a temporary memorial in the Capitol Rotunda to our fallen troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, explaining the pictures of each fallen soldier, along with biographic information, which would also provide an opportunity for visitors in the Rotunda of the people's House to write notes in honor of those soldiers to their families, their loved ones, their brothers, their sisters, their mothers and fathers, and husbands and wives.

Throughout its history, the Rotunda has been used for public viewing for fallen heroes, bestowing upon them one of the Nation's highest honors. After World War I, we saluted the fallen soldiers in the Rotunda. After World War II, Korea, Vietnam, we did the same. It is only fitting that we use the Capitol Rotunda of the people's House to honor those who have fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The war in Iraq is not over, and there will certainly be more lives lost, but this tribute is for all Americans to show its respect for the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice as well as to their families. In honor of those lost soldiers, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, "He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die, that freedom might

live and grow and increase its blessings. Freedom lives and through it, he lives in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men."

Just as President Roosevelt honored the fallen of World War II, we believe this tribute would honor our most recent heroes and their families.

Mr. Speaker, since this Congress has begun, we have found time to name, I think at last count, 65 post offices, including 2 tonight. I think we can, and, indeed, it is our duty and our responsibility, to find the time to properly honor those who have sacrificed everything in Iraq and Afghanistan. I hope that we do this as an institution, as a Congress, to use the people's House to pay tribute to those families and allow all those families to know that for everybody who comes here who writes a card, a note, a tribute, that those families who have lost their loved ones will know that they will always be in America's prayers and in America's thoughts.

A colleague, a Republican colleague, outside of his office has that memorial put up. I think it is a great idea. I have asked the Speaker to take that idea and now make it an institution rather than an individual's decision. Regardless of politics, regardless of where you were on the idea of going to war in either Iraq or Afghanistan, we use the people's House, put on that memorial, and let the families know as they get the letters from everybody who visits it, the cards, the letters, the notes, the tributes, they will always be a part of America's family, and they will never be forgotten.

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And they will always be in our prayers and our thoughts. I think this is something we owe these families. And I hope we can accomplish this, unlike other matters, in a bipartisan fashion. It is an idea I saw one of our colleagues had done outside his office, and I am hoping now the institution will take it up and make it its own in a proper tribute; and it would be a temporary tribute for all those families and to all those who have fallen in both the theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan.

BREACH OF THE COMMITMENT TO MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KING of Iowa). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, when President Bush took office, he assured seniors he would honor the Nation's commitment to Medicare. He said Medicare is the binding commitment of a caring society. He did not say temporary commitment. He did not say faltering commitment. He said binding commitment.

By any standard, raising the Medicare premium by 17.4 percent, that is more than five times the projected increase in Social Security benefits for