

I think of those who lost their lives to remove a thug and a drug dealer from Panama. I think of those who lost their lives in Europe and Kosovo, in that region of the world, to restore stability. And I think how great these American heroes are that not only allow us to live in freedom, with liberty and a system of justice, but to let others have that potential across the globe.

Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it does not, but they have given their full measure and their families have given their loved ones so that others may have even the potential of enjoying the freedoms that we Americans take for granted.

So tonight we have honored three American heroes, and, finally tonight I ask the House to pass H.R. 5147 and name a post office building in honor of Evan Asa Ashcraft.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of a young man, Evan Asa Ashcraft, whose life was cut short serving our nation in Iraq. H.R. 5147, which has been cosponsored by the entire California delegation, would name the post office located at 23055 Sherman Way in West Hills, California the "Evan Asa Ashcraft Post Office."

Evan Ashcraft was smart, talented, and energetic. He represented the very best of American values. From an early age, he excelled in school, first at Welby Way Gifted Magnet School in West Hills, then at Nobel Middle School Magnet in Northridge and El Camino Real High School in Woodland Hills.

Evan was devoted to his family—his wife, Ashley, his mother, Jane, his father, Asa, his younger brother, Drew, his stepmother, Beverly, and his two step sisters, Felicia and Theresa.

By all accounts, Evan was extremely dedicated. Anything he put his mind to, he accomplished in grand fashion, and his service in the military was no exception. He enlisted in the Army at the age of 20, and it did not take long for his superior officers to recognize that he was a gifted soldier. Midway through his basic training, Evan was made a team leader.

Evan enjoyed his time with the 101st Airborne division. As was often the case in his life, however, he sought a greater challenge and volunteered for duty with the elite Army Rangers. Unfortunately, he was injured during training and returned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry of the 101st.

On March 1, 2003, Evan was deployed to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He saw action quickly, participating in the liberation of Baghdad International Airport and the mission that found two of Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Usay.

A month later, the Humvee Evan was riding in hit a land mine and came under enemy fire. Both soldiers accompanying Evan were badly wounded and in desperate need of medical attention. Showing no regard for his own safety, Evan risked his life to pull the two men to safety. According to others on hand that day, were it not for Evan's quick and decisive action, both men would have died.

One of the men Evan saved that day, Sergeant Arcebuze, said, "Evan was always there for his men. He was a natural born leader."

Like so many soldiers in Iraq, Evan had big dreams for his life after the war. He planned

to move back to California with his wife, Ashley, start a family, and join the Los Angeles police force. His reason for doing so was simple according to Ashley: "He was a person who really wanted to help other people, to protect them."

Evan was not able to realize his dreams. He was killed with two other soldiers on July 24, 2003, when his Humvee was attacked during a reconnaissance mission near Mosul.

To the people who knew him, Evan represented hope for America's future. After he died, his mother wrote, "This loss is not just mine, it's the world's loss . . . Evan will always be with us in spirit. He still lives, and will continue to live, in all of us." Evan was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery, and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and the rank of Sergeant.

By naming a post office in Evan's honor in his hometown of West Hills, his community and a grateful nation will always be reminded of the life, the contributions, and the ultimate sacrifice of this extraordinary young man.

I urge unanimous support for H.R. 5147.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5147.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following privileged message from the Senate:

SEPTEMBER 14, 2004.

Ordered, That the Secretary be directed to request the return to the Senate (S. 2261) entitled "An Act to expand certain preferential trade treatment for Haiti.", in compliance with a request of the Senate for the return thereof.

Attest:

EMILY J. REYNOLDS,
Secretary.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the request of the Senate is agreed to, and S. 2261 will be returned to the Senate.

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will recognize Members for special order speeches without prejudice to the resumption of legislative business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Two weeks ago, this House stood idly as the federal ban on assault weapons expired. The House ignored two-thirds of the public, over half of gun-owners, and nearly every law enforcement organization in America in favor of the NRA's leadership's extreme agenda against common sense.

Fortunately, I live in a state that enforces its own assault weapons ban. While the state ban is not as effective a tool as the federal ban was to keep personal weapons of mass destruction out of the hand of criminals and terrorists, it does make it more difficult for them to acquire assault weapons.

However, this week the House leadership, which pretends to be a friend of the sovereignty of state and local governments, will allow a vote on a bill keeping popularly elected officials from banning assault weapons and other guns from their jurisdictions.

This week the House will vote on legislation introduced by a member from Indiana ending the ban on firearms in the District of Columbia. The popularly elected Mayor, City Council, and U.S. Delegate to the House all oppose ending the ban. Federal courts have upheld the constitutionality of the DC ban. In fact, the only support for ending the DC gun ban comes from politicians that do not represent the District.

The District will go from having the toughest gun laws in America, to becoming the subject of a twisted social experiment brought to us by the NRA. Those listed on terrorist watch lists prohibited from boarding planes at Reagan National Airport will be able to purchase a handgun, AK-47, or TEC-9 only blocks away from the White House or Capitol Building. Just today, I received a letter from the House Sergeant at Arms detailing the new security recommendations put in place to keep our offices safe. Passage of this legislation cannot be viewed as anything other than counterproductive to these efforts.

Proponents of this legislation say the DC ban has not been effective, citing the District's crime rates, which are not unlike many other large urban communities in the United States. However, the homicide rate in the District is at an all time low, thanks to the Metropolitan Police Department's efforts to get guns off the streets. The DC ban has been a valuable tool in these efforts, but once again House leadership refuses to listen to those most effected by the ban's end.

Granted, the DC gun ban's effectiveness has been hampered by the District's proximity to gun dealers in Virginia and Maryland, but that is no excuse to make it easier for criminals and terrorists to purchase guns in DC.

And while the House leadership's grasp of basic economic principles has been questionable throughout the 108th Congress, one must acknowledge that once the supply of guns is increased, the prices of these weapons will decrease.

Thanks to this legislation, gang members who could only afford to purchase one gun will most likely be able to get two thanks to increased supply and lower prices.

It is only a matter of time before the first crimes are committed with a gun purchased legally in our nation's capital. When that time occurs, the House Leadership must be prepared to explain to the victims of these crimes

why it is so important that the NRA's twisted worldview must come before DC residents' wishes and safety.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. EMANUEL. 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 Illinois?

There was no objection.

CONGRESS SHOULD NAME POST OFFICES, BUT NOT AT EXPENSE OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

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, on the subject of the marriage amendment, the House majority leader said earlier today, "It is our job to make the laws in this country. And as easy as life would be for us, if the most controversial bills we had to vote on was to rename a post office, that's not what we were elected to do."

I find it ironic that the majority leader used the naming of post offices, especially for this Congress. I have done my own research. As it turns out, this Republican Congress, the 108th Congress, the House and the other body, has been hard at work at naming post offices. In fact, under the Republican leadership, we have named an impressive 92 post offices, and we just did 4 more today.

We have also named 22 Federal buildings, passed 34 resolutions honoring athletic teams, and introduced 35 resolutions creating commemorative postage stamps. That is in stark contrast to when the Republicans first took control of the House in the 104th Congress. They only managed to name 12 post offices. This Congress has done 92.

In the 106th Congress, they only squeaked out a pitiful three resolutions honoring sports teams and sports achievements. Clearly, the 108th Congress, this Republican Congress, has proven to be the most adept at naming post offices and Federal buildings, and honoring sports achievements and conceiving of new postage stamps.

Now, let me tell you something; it takes a lot of time and effort to name a post office. First, you have to decide which post office. Then you have to figure out what name. Then you have to pick a name and build support for it among your colleagues. The final test is to get a vote on the name, which is no small feat when you consider that, historically, only 1 out of every 100 bills ever sees a floor vote. In this Republican-led Congress, however, 80 percent of the post office naming bills introduced in the House have actually passed. That is something to be proud of.

But while we have spent all this time naming post offices, we could have

been dealing with the problems which are facing the American people. After all, while this Congress is busy alleviating the apparent backlog of nameless post offices in America, we have lost 1.7 million private sector jobs. Median household incomes have fallen by more than \$1,500. Household bankruptcies have skyrocketed, and today we see in articles that health care costs in America are rising at close to three times the rate of inflation.

□ 2100

In Iraq, more than 1,000 Americans have been killed. Reconstruction has been pushed to the sidelines. There is mounting violence, and we have not found any weapons of mass destruction or had any oversight hearings in this Congress as to why we went to war on that premise.

Mr. Speaker, today the majority leader quoted former President John Kennedy in justifying the votes we had. So in the same spirit, I will quote President Kennedy: "To govern is to choose." And unfortunately this Congress, the Republican Congress, has made some tough choices. Time after time the Republican leadership has been forced to choose at their own making between naming post offices and using its control in the House, Senate, White House, and Supreme Court to improve the lives of millions of Americans. More often than not the Republican Congress has chosen to name post offices.

Please do not misunderstand. I am not opposed to naming post offices. In fact, I cosponsored a few of them myself. Congress should do these things, but we should not do it at the expense of our other responsibilities.

We should not do it as an excuse not to deal with the health care crisis, not to deal with the access to higher education crisis we have in America, not to deal with the fact that wages and income are stagnant in America, not to deal with the fact that we have a war being waged and we do not have a policy or a President that is cognizant of the fact that it is a burning morass, as three leading Republican Senators said last week.

We have only passed one of the 13 appropriations bills we are required to pass. We have not passed a Transportation bill that we are required to pass that would employ millions of Americans. We have not passed a higher education reauthorization bill as we are required to pass. We have not passed a budget under a Republican Congress. We have failed to reauthorize a series of things we are required to do, and yet we have taken on the responsibility of naming 92 new post offices.

Our Nation and economy rely on the most basic functions of this Congress, yet we have failed in both those activities. We can do better. Congress can name post offices and keep our Nation moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, Election Day is only weeks away. I hope when the American

people go to the polls, it will reflect on the kind of job this Congress has done. The Republican leadership made their priorities clear. The 108th Congress will be remembered for its leadership on the naming of post offices.

PROSECUTING GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

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

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the tremendous job our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines have been doing in prosecuting our global war on terror.

Just recently, I returned from a trip where I visited both the Afghan and Iraq theater of operations. Last year, I made a similar trip to Iraq, and now I can say with some certainty that we have made demonstrable progress.

Americans should not think we are without friends in this region. President Musharraf of Pakistan has been a brave and determined ally in the fight against terrorism. Strong leaders such as President Karzai and Prime Minister Allawi are beginning to emerge in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have put their lives on the line and trusted the word of the United States. We must not let them down, for our security is linked with their success in rebuilding their countries and defeating terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Iraq, U.S. forces are achieving daily successes in confronting terrorists while Iraqi troops and police are starting to undertake the tough everyday work of rebuilding and defending a civil society. In a recent Armed Forces hearing, Army Colonel Michael Linnington, former brigade commander with the 101st Airborne Division, testified that it was not uncommon for his troops to be building schools by day and patrolling for insurgents at night. Or for that matter, it was not uncommon for U.S. troops to be fighting insurgents in one part of a town while helping with elections in another part. The troops believe in their mission and are committed to seeing it through.

Mr. Speaker, our troops have met with daily success in Iraq. However, some observers have not accurately portrayed the results of their efforts. Moreover, it is important to note that we are not the only country suffering casualties in the fight for a free Iraq. In addition to our Coalition allies, hundreds of Iraqi policemen and national guard members have been killed as they fight to ensure the future of their own country.

With respect to Afghanistan, it is quite clear that the Afghan government is progressing in securing modern rights for its people every day. Mr. Speaker, over 10 million people have registered to vote in the upcoming October presidential election in Afghanistan, and 5 million Afghans are now