

Americans can tell the difference between a photo op in the Rose Garden and a reality check in Iraq. Things are not getting better. At every opportunity to talk straight to the American people, the administration has chosen to sacrifice credibility in hopes of perpetuating its story. Trouble is, the real story about Iraq is every night on the news. The administration can try and change the rhetoric, but the American people are not changing the channel. They know what they see and read. They know it is not what the administration claims. They know that only new leadership will solve the crisis in Iraq and revive the economy at home.

The administration had its chance, again and again and again and again. The rhetoric got better, even as the reality got worse, and even as we went further into debt, and even though the debt is the biggest we have ever had in our history in 1 year. That is the choice facing America. Believe the administration's rhetoric about Iraq and the economy, or elect JOHN KERRY to take care of reality.

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

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

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, last week, a number of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, myself included, addressed the issue of upcoming elections, with particular attention going to voter intimidation, oppression, and suppression. I congratulate

the Congressional Black Caucus, and particularly the leadership of our chair, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), for making Americans aware of this very serious issue.

The sad truth is that in every election since reconstruction, in every election since the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, voters, and particularly African Americans and other minorities, have faced calculated and determined efforts at intimidation and suppression, both above and below the Mason-Dixon line, indeed throughout the Nation.

It appears that the upcoming national elections will not break that pattern. In an article on the op-ed page of Monday's Washington Post, former President Jimmy Carter states the following: "The disturbing fact is that a repetition of the problems of 2000 now seems likely, even as many other nations are conducting elections that are internationally certified to be transparent, honest, and fair."

President Carter cites two significant requirements for free and fair elections. First, standards that the State of Florida still fails to meet. The first is a nonpartisan electoral commission or a trusted and nonpartisan official who will be responsible for organizing and conducting the electoral process. And the second requirement is uniformity in voting procedures so that all citizens, regardless of their social or financial status, have equal assurance that their votes are cast in this same way and will be tabulated with equal accuracy.

Madam Speaker, as many of my colleagues know, President Carter is not speaking off the cuff when it comes to election monitoring. The world renowned Carter Center has monitored more than 50 elections around the world, many under difficult and dangerous circumstances. When it comes to certifying that elections are free and fair, the Carter Center is the gold standard. People listen and they take note.

They listen and take note, it appears, everywhere in the world but here in the United States.

President Carter is dead-on target in stating that "It is unconscionable to perpetuate fraudulent or biased electoral practices in any nation. It is especially objectionable among our Americans, who have prided ourselves on setting a global example for pure democracy."

That is why I introduced House Resolution 793, a sense of Congress resolution, condemning all efforts to suppress and intimidate voters in the United States and reaffirming that the right to vote is a fundamental right of all eligible United States citizens.

□ 2000

The resolution also urges States to replace decade-old election machinery with less error-prone equipment before the November 2004 national elections; calls upon all States to institute a

moratorium on the erection of roadblocks or identity checkpoints designed to racially profile voters on Election Day, and calls upon the Attorney General to vigorously monitor all credible allegations of voter intimidation and suppression and to expeditiously prosecute all offenders to the full extent of the law.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 793 is a simple resolution that reaffirms the most basic right of every American, the right to vote and have their vote counted. This is not a partisan issue. It is not a Democrat or Republican issue, and I would note, however, that not one single Member on the other side of the aisle has cosponsored this resolution.

Can anyone take comfort in conducting elections under flawed circumstances that depart from the principles of fair and equal treatment? Can anyone condone an election that perpetuates fraudulent or biased electoral practices? I certainly hope that our Nation's noble experiment in democracy has not.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to briefly address another issue of voter inequity. This past weekend I held a voter awareness workshop in my congressional district for ex-offenders. It is a model for the rest of the Nation, and I would hope that we would look to letting ex-offenders exercise their right to vote after they have served their time and paid their debt to society.

Last week, a number of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, myself included, addressed the issue of the upcoming elections, with particular attention given to voter intimidation, oppression, and suppression. I congratulate the Congressional Black Caucus, and particularly the leadership of our Chair, Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS, for making Americans aware of this very serious issue.

The sad truth is that in every election since Reconstruction, in every election since the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, voters—and particularly African-Americans and other minorities—have faced calculated and determined efforts at intimidation and suppression, both above and below the Mason-Dixon Line, indeed throughout the Nation.

It appears that the upcoming national elections will not break that pattern. In an article on the op-ed page of Monday's Washington Post, former President Jimmy Carter states the following, and I quote: "The disturbing fact is that a repetition of the problems of 2000 now seems likely, even as many other nations are conducting elections that are internationally certified to be transparent, honest and fair."

President Carter cites two significant requirements for free and fair elections—standards that the State of Florida still fails to meet: The first is "a nonpartisan electoral commission or a trusted and nonpartisan official who will be responsible for organizing and conducting the electoral process"; and, the second requirement is "uniformity in voting procedures, so that all citizens, regardless of their social or financial status, have equal assurance that their votes are cast in the same way and will be tabulated with equal accuracy."

Mr. Speaker, as many of you know, President Carter is not speaking off-the-cuff when it

comes to election monitoring. The world-renowned Carter Center has monitored more than 50 elections around the world, many under difficult and dangerous circumstances. When it comes to certifying that elections are free and fair, the Carter Center is the gold standard; people listen and take note.

They listen and take note, it appears, everywhere in the world but the United States.

President Carter is dead-on target in stating that "It is unconscionable to perpetuate fraudulent or biased electoral practices in any nation. It is especially objectionable among us Americans, who have prided ourselves on setting a global example for pure democracy."

That is why I recently introduced House Resolution 793—a sense of Congress resolution condemning all efforts to suppress and intimidate voters in the United States and reaffirming that the right to vote is a fundamental right of all eligible United States citizens.

The resolution also urges States to replace decade-old election machinery with less error-prone equipment before the November 2004 national elections; calls upon all States to institute a moratorium on the erection of roadblocks or identity checkpoints designed to racially profile voters on election day; and calls upon the Attorney General to vigorously monitor all credible allegations of voter intimidation and suppression and to expeditiously prosecute all offenders to the full extent of the law.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 793 is a simple resolution that reaffirms the most basic right of every American—the right to vote and have their vote counted. This is not a partisan issue. It is not a Democrat or Republican issue. I would note, however, that not one single member on the other side of the aisle has cosponsored the resolution.

Can anyone take comfort in conducting elections under flawed circumstances that depart from the principles of fair and equal treatment? Can anyone condone an election that perpetuates fraudulent or biased electoral practices? I certainly hope that our Nation's noble experiment in democracy has not.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to briefly address another issue of voter inequity. This past weekend I held a voter awareness workshop in my congressional district for ex-offenders. In many States around the nation, ex-offenders' right to vote is either restricted or banned. This week the Sentencing Project released a study showing that African American men in Atlanta were 11 times more likely than non-African American to be disenfranchised. Nationwide, an estimated 5 million Americans are affected by felony voting restrictions. African-American males account for about 8 percent of the U.S. population and 40 percent of the prison population.

The high numbers of disenfranchised African American males casts a pall on voting. Why should any State have the authority to restrict the right of persons to vote who have paid their debt to society? This is fundamentally unfair and unjust.

Mr. Speaker, the credibility of our Nation is under attack from around the world. We cannot afford to witness another election debacle like the one we experienced in 2000. It is time for the American public and this body to sit up and take note of a potentially serious crisis facing the United States.

MARRIAGE PROTECTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). Under the Speak-

er's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I thank the body for allowing us to speak tonight on this extremely important issue.

The state of a society is an ongoing process. We tend to want to think that we can pass along our values and the rights and freedoms that we have in a current age to those in the next generation. For instance, I just think that I can pass along the right to my daughter, who can pass along to our grandson and granddaughter the rights to own a business or the rights to a public education, or maybe even the right to understand exactly what society is about, the good parts and the bad parts.

Well, the Nation is involved right now in a discussion about what is best for America when it comes to marriage. The Massachusetts Supreme Court made a decision a couple of months ago that began to cause us all to think about what is the right definition for marriage, how should we change it, why should we change it, or should we change it.

We have several Members here on the floor tonight to help present this discussion to this body, and I yield to the gentlewoman from Colorado (Mrs. MUSGRAVE) who is the sponsor to the amendment to the Constitution that would declare marriage as simply between a traditional man and woman.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman to explain her ideas.

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Madam Speaker, the best gauge of whether the American people want the definition of marriage to be a union of a man and a woman is to look at elections in recent activities in the States on this subject.

Madam Speaker, voters in 7 States have gone to the ballot box to enact either a State Defense of Marriage Act, to pass State marriage amendments, or to permit the State legislature to define marriage, thus preventing a State court from doing so. Each time the initiative passed overwhelmingly.

The people of Hawaii voted with 69 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment. The people of Alaska voted with a 68 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment. The people of California voted with 61 percent approval to pass a State defense of marriage statute. The people of Nebraska voted with 70 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment. The people of Nevada voted with a 70 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment. The people of Missouri voted with 71 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment. The people of Louisiana voted with a 78 percent approval to pass a State marriage amendment.

Madam Speaker, 44 States have recently enacted laws that provide that marriage shall consist only of a union of a man and a woman. These 44 States

constitute 88 percent of the States, well more than the three-fourths required to approve a constitutional amendment, and they include 86 percent of the United States population. The American people have spoken on this subject. It is time that Congress send to the States the marriage protection amendment so that States can decide for themselves whether to ratify the policy that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. Marriage is what really matters to the American people, to the American moms and dads, to the American children. It is just common sense.

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Colorado (Mrs. MUSGRAVE) for cosponsoring this amendments.

We hear a lot of discussion in this Nation about tolerance and about diversity and we should hear all sides of the discussion, but I will tell Members that the same people who shout loudest about tolerance and diversity have been the same people who have attacked the sponsor of this amendment to the Constitution. She has had threats made on her life. She has had slurs and insults thrown into her face, and she has tolerated abuse no one should have for simply speaking in America.

I worry in this same discussion about what the marriage is and what the family is and what it consists of, I worry that the opponents in this argument really do not want free speech, they do not want a public discussion. And that is what we are saying on this side of the aisle, that the discussion should be taken to the American people, that judges who are not elected should not make this decision; and that is exactly what is going to happen if we do not have the courage to make a stand and to identify what we think is the language which should amend the Constitution of the United States.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for having the courage to withstand the death threats from the people who disagree with her, and for standing tall and for defining the moment in American history that is before us right now.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) to talk about this issue.

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) for leading this Special Order tonight. I thank him for his courageous leadership as a freshman.

Madam Speaker, I associate myself with the remarks about our previous speaker. While we address the Speaker, we are nonetheless cognizant at times many millions of Americans look into our deliberations on this floor, and I think it is altogether fitting to recognize that a freshman, the gentlewoman from Colorado (Mrs. MUSGRAVE), arrived in this institution and brought her support for traditional marriage to the floor of this Congress, and has turned her face like flint against the