

have the makings of a watershed moment in history, not only for the Middle East, but for the long-term security of the United States.

A democratic Iraq is absolutely essential to winning the global war on terror. Now, more than ever, America's leaders must stand united behind the Iraqi people as they venture forward in the hope for a better future.

IRAQI ELECTIONS

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, what a difference 2 years makes. In August of 2003, I was in Iraq, and every Marine I met wanted to show me the field that Iraqis began digging in as soon as they took control of it. A mass grave was there with 3,000 bodies, part of the 400,000 to 500,000 mass graves around the country. This hopelessness has really driven the Iraqis to embrace the freedom that our brave soldiers have given them the opportunity for. That is why, as we stand here today, millions of Iraqis, Shia, Sunni, Kurds are giving the terrorists the finger, the ink-stained finger voting for the third time this year, and as they do that, they are piercing through the hopelessness that breeds terrorism. They are giving themselves the opportunities for a better life. They are transforming a region. They are making America safer. We applaud the Iraqis. We thank the American troops that have made this possible.

MEDICARE PART D

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to encourage all Americans to talk with their loved ones about Medicare part D, the new voluntary prescription drug benefit available to all seniors.

Now is the perfect time to assist a senior with this important decision. After all, many of us are about to spend the holiday season with several generations of our family, and it is easy to help. In fact, this past weekend, I help my mother, Helen Gingrey, enroll in a Medicare part D plan. Now, my mother is in her eighties, and while she is a sharp lady, she is not very familiar with computers, but together, we visited the Web site www.medicare.gov, and walked through the enrollment process. It took less than an hour, and now starting January 1, my mother will have affordable prescription drug coverage.

If everyone in our community took the time to assist just one senior in this way we could help millions of seniors get access to the prescription drugs they need to stay well. Seniors can choose a plan and enroll by visiting the Web site www.medicare.gov, or by calling 1-800-Medicare.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Americans to help a senior in their lives with this important health care decision.

NEITHER PEACE ON EARTH, NOR GOODWILL TOWARD MEN

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Madam Speaker, today Republicans propose to criminalize those who offer the slightest help to undocumented immigrants—water to the thirsty or food for the hungry. Church members could become felons for their faith, facing 5 years in prison.

So if on some silent night, when all is calm and all is bright, a young man and a clearly pregnant woman from out of town ask if they can rest by your manger, be warned: first verify their visas.

With similar zealotry to preserve the right to torture, cut food stamps and deny aid to abused and neglected children, these same folks publicly preach that it's the rest of us who have forgotten the meaning of Christmas.

But this year the Administration's true Christmas tidings seem to be—“Neither Peace on Earth, nor Goodwill Toward Men.”

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STRONG ECONOMY

(Mr. SHAW asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SHAW. Madam Speaker, with Christmas just around the corner, the latest economic indicators are welcome gifts to the American people. In the last 5 years, this country has endured terrorist attacks, stock market decline and natural disasters. Yet despite all of this, the latest numbers show that our economy is strong and it is getting stronger.

Just in time for holiday travel, gas prices continue to decline and are down nearly 23 cents in the last 4 weeks. Sales of new homes rose 13 percent in October, which was the largest monthly gain in 12 years. Finally, nearly 4.5 million jobs have been added in the last 2½ years. We have even seen an impressive 200,000 jobs per month.

And, State and local revenue has risen 7.2 percent. In fact, in my State of Florida, we expect a surplus of more than \$3 billion.

These positive numbers are the result of Republicans' pro-growth economic policies. The Democrats, however, believe that a good gift is to continue to tax and spend.

Madam Speaker, right now we have a strong, vibrant economy. Republicans remain committed to these policies that will endure and all Americans can realize the American dream and have a merry, merry Christmas.

RESPECTFUL BORDER SECURITY

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, we are all descendants of immigrants—legal immigrants. America is a good and a generous Nation. We open our arms to the world. It is that spirit that makes us unique, inviting and vulnerable.

The world has changed. Our borders must be secure for our Nation to be secure. This week we finally have an opportunity to fulfill our responsibility to our constituents. We have an opportunity to address the issue of border security for the first time in years.

Madam Speaker, if our borders are not secure, our Nation is not secure. A solution to this crisis is being demanded by our constituents. This should be a positive action. It should be one respectful of history and all Americans.

I urge my colleagues to be respectful of the institution, to be respectful of the wonder of the deliberative process, to be respectful of motive, to be respectful of each other. Madam Speaker, it is time we take the honorable steps necessary to ensure that our borders and our Nation are secure.

IRAQ AND IMMIGRATION

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, the world is watching democracy in action today. I applaud our Iraqi allies and thank our men and women in uniform for making this historic election possible. We are reshaping a region responsible for creating terrorism that murdered nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11. Today's election is a step in the right direction.

Madam Speaker, I also want to commend Chairman SENSENBRENNER for leading the House in the effort to get a hold on our illegal immigration problem. In both the 108th and 109th Congresses, I introduced the Federal Contractors Security Act to tackle the problem we have seen, a documented and publicized problem, of illegal entrants working for Federal contractors at critical infrastructure sites.

I am pleased the Judiciary Committee inserted many of the provisions of my bill into H.R. 4437 to implement the worker verification system. Chairman SENSENBRENNER listened to our concerns and his bill will do so much to address the problem of illegal entry into this great Nation.

IRAQI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, today is a historic day for democracy and freedom. Iraqis go to the polls to democratically elect the 275 seats of the new Iraqi Council of Representatives. The newly elected Council will then select a Prime Minister, a Presidency Council, and a Cabinet of Ministers.

By any measure, today's elections are remarkable. In just under 3 years, 26 million Iraqis have gone from brutal tyranny to representative democracy. A ruthless and dangerous dictator has been removed, and the stabilizing influence of democracy is taking root in a region desperately in need of it.

This progress is a fitting tribute to the brave men and women in uniform who have sacrificed so much to see this day realized. There is more work to be done and there will be more setbacks to overcome, but this is tremendous progress. I salute them.

WELCOMING HOME UNITS OF TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Pennsylvania is exactly right. In fact if my arithmetic is correct, the polls in Iraq closed just a little over an hour ago. Of course, we owe the great success of three successful elections in Iraq to the dedication of our troops that have served so well over there. In fact, this past weekend in Waco, Texas, citizens of Texas welcomed back the 56th Combat Brigade, over 2,000 Texans from the Texas Army National Guard who have been serving for 11 months in the country of Iraq.

This is especially important to my hometown of Denton, Texas. Seventy-eight members of the Denton-based Company A, 2nd Battalion of the 112th Army, have returned to their homes in north Texas. This is the first deployment of the Denton-based Texas National Guard since World War II, according to an editorial in the Denton Record Chronicle last week.

The 56th Battalion was not without its casualties. There were six who died in combat, two who died in training accidents, and 58 were wounded. Fortunately, none of the soldiers that left from Denton, Texas, were killed in action in Iraq. Only one was wounded. During that time they performed 7,000 combat patrols, escorted convoys for 1.3 million miles, and built 15 schools.

There is a parade in Denton this Saturday morning. We may not be done voting, I may not be able to attend, but my heart will be with my citizens in Denton as they welcome their sons and daughters home.

NEEDS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to express my strong disappoint-

ment in the misguided priorities of the Republican majority in Congress. As we are preparing to adjourn for this year, we have not addressed the real needs of the American people. In my district in East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley and across this country, more and more families are being forced to make difficult choices. The absence of affordable housing, health care, a living wage for workers and high heating costs are just a few of the reasons that more people are slipping into poverty.

According to the U.S. census, there were 37 million people living in poverty in 2004, an increase of 5.4 million during the Bush administration. In my district alone, 20,000 families live below the poverty line. We are failing the working men and women of our country, we are failing our children, and we are failing the senior citizens as well.

I urge my colleagues today to work together to meet the needs of all American people and let's put their priorities first.

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

(Mr. KING of Iowa asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, today as we celebrate Iraqi Freedom Day, I want to raise a different subject, and that is that we will be bringing legislation to the floor of this House that will bring some enforcement to our immigration laws. It has been a long time coming. There has been a lot of good work done by a lot of people. I am hopeful that this legislation now will also include an amendment that I hope to propose, H.R. 3095, the New IDEA bill. New IDEA stands for the Illegal Deduction Elimination Act.

The IRS is more inclined, I believe, to enforce our immigration laws than DHS has proven to be. I would submit that they can go in and do their regular audits and check the Social Security numbers of the employees through the instant check program that will be renamed the employer verification system hopefully today or tomorrow and then give safe harbor to those employers that do that verification of their employees. Otherwise the expense that is a business expense that will be written off will have to be denied as a deduction so that it becomes taxable if it is a profitable business. That takes a \$10 an hour illegal up to a \$16 an hour and lets the legal person have a job instead of the illegal person.

SALUTING PROGRESS AND MILESTONE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, in October 2002, Saddam Hussein ridiculously reported he received 100 percent support during a

sham election in which he was the only candidate in the race. Three years later due the bravery of American troops and Iraqi security forces, the people of Iraq now have an historic opportunity to select 275 individuals from over 6,655 candidates to serve in their national Council of Representatives.

National elections in Iraq are another symbol of progress and another demonstration of our coalition troops' efforts, including my son who served a year in Iraq, to spread freedom throughout the world. Our brave soldiers recognize that they are fighting in a war that will secure democracy in Iraq which ultimately protects American families from terrorists who would rather attack our citizens.

As the Iraqi people continue down the path of democracy, they should know the American people are proud of their continued successes and believe in the future of Iraq.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2830, PENSION PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 602 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 602

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2830) to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform the pension funding rules, and for other purposes. The bill shall be considered as read. In lieu of the amendments recommended by the Committees on Education and the Workforce and Ways and Means now printed in the bill, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted. All points of order against the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) 90 minutes of debate equally divided among and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce and the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2830 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to a time designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending