

pro-war speech by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and a concert on the National Mall by Clint Black, whose lyrics implicitly accuse war protesters of standing with Saddam.

Sunday was supposedly about honoring our troops. The problems is, Mr. Speaker, most of our currently deployed troops are on a mission that has nothing to do with 9/11. It has long been established that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the murderous plot executed by al-Qaeda 4 years ago.

Ironically, Sunday's march, which was supposedly about celebrating freedom, took place in the most tightly controlled circumstances imaginable. March participants were required to pre-register. Tall fencing encased the marchers throughout. The media was kept at bay. Helicopters flew overhead. The Park Police issued a public threat that they would arrest anyone who joined without the proper credentials. And what were those credentials? Enrolling 2 days in advance to be checked out to ensure that participants were what? Pro Bush? Pro war? Pro propaganda? Pro continuing the lies of 9/11 linking to Saddam Hussein? And, for good measure, a Pentagon spokeswoman declared that protesting the march would be the equivalent of protesting our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, this was nothing more than mere propaganda, a transparent attempt to shore up the President's dwindling poll numbers, especially his poor marks on Iraq.

For the umpteenth time, they are trying to use the national unity inspired by 9/11 to justify a divisive, controversial and immoral war in Iraq, a war that has cost us nearly 2,000 American lives, thousands of severely wounded veterans, and thousands upon thousands of Iraqi civilians killed and maimed.

If we want to support the troops, the best thing we can do, the only thing we can do, is to bring them home, out of Iraq, where their very presence is animating the insurgency and giving rise to more intense anti-Americanism than ever.

For some time now, I have been calling for hearings on Iraq. But having received no satisfactory response, I am convening my very own hearing scheduled for this Thursday, September the 15th, from 10 to 1 p.m. in Room 122 of the Cannon Office Building.

We will hear from respected Middle East experts and military leaders about how we might achieve military disengagement while still playing a constructive role in the rebuilding of Iraq. We hope to break the silence on Capitol Hill, help fill the policy vacuum and spark a broader public debate about our policy options in Iraq.

Bringing the troops home, Mr. Speaker, and ending this occupation should be the beginning, not the end of a complete reassessment of our national security priority. National security means more than the use of mili-

tary force which, as we have seen in Iraq, can have the appearance of strength but can undermine our national security rather than enhance it.

To that end, I propose a new approach. It is called SMART security, which stands for a Sensible Multilateral American Response to Terrorism. SMART is based on the belief that war should be an absolute last resort, to be undertaken only under the most extreme circumstances.

But that does not mean that SMART is not serious and smart about protecting America. It is vigilant about fighting terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, but it does so with stronger multilateral alliances, improved intelligence capabilities, vigorous inspection regimes and aggressive diplomacy.

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SMART would reshuffle our national security budget. No more billions thrown at outdated Cold War weapons programs. That money would instead be invested in energy independence and other efforts that are truly relevant to the modern security threats that we face. SMART Security protects America by relying on the very best of American values, our capacity for global leadership, our dedication to peace and freedom, and our compassion for the people of the world.

TEXAS RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMAN of New York). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GENE GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to again update my colleagues on the effort of Houston's and Texas' response to Hurricane Katrina evacuee relief efforts.

From attending daily morning emergency operations meetings in Houston, I can bring a firsthand account of our progress. The city of Houston, which has a Democratic mayor, Bill White, and a Republican county judge, Robert Eckels, has produced an amazingly successful relief effort, hand in hand with out partisanship or jurisdictional bickering.

I have always held Texas politics up as an example of the principle that puts people first and politics second. While we have not always upheld that principle recently, our response to Hurricane Katrina shows the best in Texas government, a single-minded focus on getting things done.

The Harris County Housing Department at Reliant Astrodome Complex has been doing an incredible job of moving evacuees out of cramped, uncomfortable shelters and into secure, medium-term housing situations. The Harris County Hospital District, our public hospital district, created a clinic almost overnight to treat our guests from the storm.

The University of Texas Health Science Center has also been a key asset at the George R. Brown Convention Center, where they are providing on-the-ground health care support to evacuees with all varieties of health care conditions, from children to the elderly to the disabled.

We have had our problems too. FEMA's communications capability has been slow. We have not been able to process people over the Internet or over the phone as fast as we would like. Faster FEMA registration is not just a matter of convenience. The faster we can register people for assistance, the faster we can get them out of that shelter which reduces the threat to public health from infectious disease.

Housing right now is our number one concern. We have over 40,000 evacuee residents already in hotels and motels in the Houston area. We have moved 228 families into housing over this past weekend while I was in Houston. As a result of our efforts in Houston, the numbers of evacuees at shelters are going down dramatically, which is good. Sharing a cot on the Astrodome floor with your family is not what I would call a long-term solution. It is very short term.

However, FEMA's reimbursement certainty is also necessary for housing. The city and the county have been trying to get a master hotel contract with FEMA to speed the payment. We do not have the financial reserves to pay hotel bills for tens of thousands of people indefinitely. We understand that this situation is unprecedented, but we cannot let red tape hold up the need of the folks that are there.

I am glad that FEMA now says the public assistance to Houston is expected to start flowing soon, within the next 1 or 2 weeks. Our reserves are running thin and help cannot come soon enough.

Texas generosity has been displayed from the businesses to individuals, but our local tax base cannot absorb the additional 400,000 people in the State or the 200,000 people in the Houston area. Red tape must be eliminated. Houston is still waiting on reimbursement from expenses from Tropical Storm Allison, which hit Houston over 4 years ago. We will be watching and calling and meeting with FEMA representatives repeatedly over the next 2 weeks on these reimbursement issues.

We cannot afford to wait until 2009 to be reimbursed for the sheltering, housing, transportation, feeding, clothing, and medical expenses of tens of thousands of these evacuees. This situation is unprecedented since the Civil War, which is the last time we had such a large number of out-of-state evacuees.

Our laws and regulations very well may need to change to adapt to our new situation, and they should. The next mass dislocation like this could very well be the next hurricane that could hit Houston or a terrorist attack that could hit any city in our country. That is why Medicaid legislation that I

had introduced gives the executive branch the authority to fully reimburse the State's Medicaid share it would otherwise have to pay for out-of-state evacuees.

For every evacuee, that is a resident of Texas who cannot afford to be put on Medicaid now, who must survive without health coverage. That is not acceptable. This is a national disaster and a national public health emergency, so the Federal Government should bear the responsibility.

On the plus side, I am pleased to see the announcement by Secretary Leavitt freeing up funding for the four new federally qualified health centers that were scheduled to receive funding in December. While this funding will be a big help, it does mean that we will have to serve more people for a longer period of time than expected. HHS should have the ability to reimburse federally qualified health clinics' costs for serving the uninsured evacuees.

In addition to housing and medical care, childhood education is also a concern. Our local schools have taken thousands of students impacted by Hurricane Katrina, seven school districts that provide education in my own congressional district of Houston. They have taken over 5,000 students in the last week, and we see more students coming every day.

Even though our schools are already at capacity, we are meeting the challenge of educating the children in the gulf coast impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Estimates by the State show this may cost Texas over \$450 million to serve the children that have come to Texas. Currently, FEMA will offer some assistance for these costs, and the Department of Education is unsure of what assistance they can grant. This issue is calling out for a solution by Congress, and we must step up.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say enough about the efforts of our Mayor White and County Judge Eckels in Houston; but more importantly, their leadership has been more than matched by the efforts of government workers and individual volunteers on the ground. As a result, Houston is showing its best side to the Nation. And I am proud to be part of our relief effort, but our effort is unsustainable without Federal financial assistance.

Hurricane Katrina has devastated Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. The ability of our local governments to provide vital services is now at risk of devastation as well. We need Federal help in this natural and national disaster.

ANNOUNCING THE AMERICAN PARITY ACT

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, the clean-up efforts along the gulf coast are now fully under way. The flood wa-

ters of New Orleans are receding, and we are shifting our focus from saving lives to restoring lives.

In the past 2 weeks, Congress has allocated a little over \$60 billion in disaster relief. It is the right thing to do; yet some here in Washington have questioned whether it is money well spent. Others even question whether we should rebuild New Orleans at all. And even after witnessing the horrors of Katrina's aftermath, some say they want to proceed with the tax cut for the wealthiest 1 percent in this country, all the while cutting Medicaid, educational programs, and environmental programs.

Ironically, many of these are the same individuals who have vocally and unequivocally supported aid and the funding requests for rebuilding Iraq. We should be responsible with the people's tax dollars; but we cannot have two sets of books, two sets of priorities, one for the United States and for Iraq.

Here is what we need to do to begin to restore the lives of the people in New Orleans and the rest of the gulf coast:

These Americans need health care, housing, education, clean water. And yet what is the President's budget for this year? A \$60 billion cut in Medicaid, a \$4.3 billion cut in educational programs, a \$1.6 billion cut to police and firefighters, a \$330 million cut to the Army Corps of Engineers, a \$450 million cut to the Environmental Protection Agency.

So the very initiatives that we need right now to help New Orleans and the rest of the folks on the gulf coast are the ones that the President's budget sought to cut back dramatically, and in some cases even eliminate entirely.

At the same time they want to do this, we are spending billions of dollars rebuilding Iraq in the very same areas of education, housing, health care. Here is a listing of Iraq reconstruction projects according to USAID: 2,500 schools have been rehabilitated; 32,000 teachers and administrators have been trained; over the next year up to 100,000 additional teachers will receive in-service training; 84 primary and secondary schools have been established as centers of excellence; we are provided universal health care for every Iraqi; 110 primary health care centers have been renovated; 10 water treatment facilities have been constructed; the Sweet Water Canal System was rebuilt, including the repair of breaches and the levee system; wetlands are being restored; ports are being rebuilt; and the entire transportation program is undergoing a massive renovation and construction program. All the while some are questioning whether we should do this for New Orleans in our backyard.

All the while the President's budget called for cuts in these very areas that we are now spending, appropriately in some cases, for Iraq.

Let me be clear, I am not against spending this money to help restore

the people's lives in Iraq. But we have a budget that was passed with opposition from Democrats to cut educational spending, cut Medicaid spending, cut health care spending, cut education spending, environmental clean-up.

In the coming weeks, I plan on introducing a piece of legislation to ensure that every dollar we spend in helping Iraq restore the communities, help restore the lives of the people there we will spend here in the United States, because we need to do that for New Orleans, we need to do that for the rest of America. But we cannot have two priorities, two sets of books, two sets of values, one for Iraq and one for the rest of America. Those are the wrong values.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are the most generous people in the world. We can do both. We can build America and Iraq. And it is important and imperative that as Americans remain the most generous people in the world, that they cannot think that their kids have less of a future than other countries around the world.

We need to ensure that we invest in America, that the roads and the bridges and the health care and the education and the environmental protection that we have on the laws, that we are investing in those areas. If anything, the horrors in the aftermath of Katrina showed us that America needs today to stand as one, to be invested in as one, that those communities need the same assistance. We cannot pass this budget that calls for cutbacks in the Corps of Engineers, cutbacks of \$60 billion in health care, cutbacks in community health care, all the while singing our own praises about the 3,200 schools we are building in Iraq, the teachers we are training, the universal health care we are providing.

Again, I will remind you, I am not against providing those. I am against the cuts in areas, in the very areas, that we are advocating and investing in in Iraq, cuts in those areas for America. This is the time when the country looks to its fellow citizens, to the government to ensure that they can both restore communities, restore lives, and rebuild those communities.

We need to invest in that area, and like the rest of America, build in America and make sure America stands strong going into the future. It is high time as we talk about our investment in Iraq, which is now close to \$350 billion, that that investment in Iraq, that we look here at home and say, what do we need to do in the areas of health care, education, schools, environmental protection. Because if we build Iraq, we have got to ensure that America stands strong.

METHAMPHETAMINE CRISIS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for