Improving protection for State and local witnesses will move us one step closer toward alleviating the fears of and threats to prospective witnesses, and help to safeguard our communities from violence.

While we cannot bring back all those who carried a heavy burden of fear due to witness intimidation, we can honor their sacrifice by taking the necessary steps today to fight against that future intimidation.

I urge my colleagues to join me in taking that critical step by cosponsoring, H.R. 908, the Witness Security and Protection Act.

AUSTRALIAN AND COALITION INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to make what might be a shocking announcement, and that is an announcement of something that has not been very available in the United States news media, something that needs to be acknowledged on the floor of this Congress. And that is that one of America's most reliable and possibly historically are the most reliable American ally, an American ally that has been with us in virtually every major conflict throughout the 20th century, and is with us today in Iraq as one of our strong coalition partners, joining together with Great Britain and the other 25 or so coalition partners that are there.

The nation of Australia has doubled their troop deployment to Iraq. They have done so at a time when there are other nations that are looking for opportunities to leave that area. And they have done so at a time with historical moment, when we are seeing people marching in the streets of Lebanon reaching out for freedom, acting upon the Bush Doctrine, standing up for freedom. The Australians are standing with us, as they stood with us in World War I, World War II, Vietnam and Korea and, as I said, virtually every major conflict.

The 900 or so troops that are in there now are there to defend, in an interesting irony, they are there to defend the Japanese, who have also deployed to Iraq to provide engineering and other services there in the country at a time when it is pivotal and significant that we help them continue to grasp the freedom that they did when they reached to go to the polls on January 30.

Now, the reason I make this announcement as an announcement is because I think it is pretty difficult for a regular American citizen who watches television every day and reads the paper every day, and maybe even surfs the Internet every day, to even know this significant piece of international news, a piece of international news that was published throughout a great number of Internet services, as well as mainstream media around the world, but not so well in the United States of America.

So, I looked around and I asked the question, how would a person know this?

I came across it because I picked up the Sunday newspaper in Sydney, Australia, and this is what I found. The countries that refuse to surrender, U.S., Australia and Britain, boost their troop numbers.

Great Britain increased their numbers there, as has the United States, as has now Australia. And the national news media that handled it here in this country were few and far between.

So how would a person go about finding this out?

Well, I will go to Al Jazeera's Web page and see if I can find this little piece of information that I happened to have been coincidentally privy to. And I find on Al Jazeera's Web page dated February 22, Australia to send more troops to Iraq.

I did not find that in major newspaper in America, with the exception of the Los Angeles Times and one other newspaper on the west coast. Not the Washington Post. Not the Washington Times. Not the New York Post, not the New York Times. Not generally available to Americans.

Mainstream media broadcast TV, most of the cable networks had a little story, one blip. But on the mainstream media that was not something that came out on Peter Jennings, Brian Williams and not Dan Rather. But it did come out of Al Jazeera.

These are our tried and true allies. The people that stood with us for over a century have doubled their troop commitments out of Australia, and there is a long list of them standing with us as allies, as has Great Britain, and as has a number of the other coalition partners.

We need to recognize them, Mr. Speaker. We need to acknowledge them. We need to thank them for their service, not just to the support of the coalition troops, but their service to the freedom of humanity. And I challenge the news media to pick this up and try to scoop Al Jazeera next time.

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

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

BUSINESS-AS-USUAL WITH FDA NOT GOOD ENOUGH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 rise today to address the problematic FDA approval process. In recent weeks, we have learned that the Federal Drug Administration has established an independent board to review post-market drug safety issues. We have also learned that the FDA committee issued a recommendation to return Vioxx to the market and keep Bextra and Celebrex on the market.

On the surface, it would seem the FDA has taken measures to address drug safety issues. However, we know all too well the devil is always in the details, and by looking at these details, it is clear that it is just business as usual at the FDA.

Take the committee that issued the recent recommendations on the COX–2 inhibitors. Ten of the 32 drug advisers had ties to the pharmaceutical industry and, in fact, had received consulting fees in the past from the drug manufacturers. I wonder how they voted? Nine to one to keep the drugs on the market.

Without the votes of these industry consultants, the committee would have recommended withdrawal of Bextra from the market and keep Vioxx off the market. We will never know if their votes are the result of an actual conflict of interest.

Yet to stay above the ethical fray, there should not even be an appearance of conflict of interest at the FDA. Their job is too important. With nearly a third of the panel receiving consulting fees from the industry, the appearance of conflict of interest is undeniable.

Unfortunately, the newly-established Drug Safety Oversight Board will suffer from similar problems. Despite the claims that the board will be independent, all but two members of the board will be FDA employees. What is more, the board will include FDA employees from the Office of New Drugs, the entity that approved the drugs in the first place. What incentive would board members truly have to conclude the decisions made by the FDA were mistakes in judgment and should be reversed? Even less likely is the chance that the board members from the Office of New Drugs would vote to reverse their own decisions or those of their closest colleagues when it comes to drug safety.

Mr. Speaker, the makeup of this board is more incestuous than independent, and, unfortunately, this problem pervades the entire FDA approval process, not just approval of pharmaceuticals. We have experienced it in our own efforts to keep silicone breast implants off the market. When the implant manufacturers came before the FDA, 40 percent of the advisory panel was made up of plastic surgeons.

Needless to say, each of the plastic surgeons voted to approve silicone breast implants. There is a conflict of interest if I ever saw one, since plastic surgeons are virtually guaranteed more business if the FDA approves again the use of silicone breast implants.

Despite the panel's recommendation to approve the device, the FDA, thank goodness, recognized the need for additional clinical trials, and rejected that

application. Now, with another advisory panel in the works, we face another uphill battle to ensure that decisions are based on science alone, rather than tainted by conflicts of interest.

Like device approval, the FDA approval process for pharmaceuticals no longer reflects public's use of these products. Whereas the FDA approval process is based on clinical trials with small samples and short durations, the drug industry is now geared to treating chronic conditions, such as high cholesterol and arthritis, that affect millions of Americans for decades at a time.

In a rush to get these drugs to market, the FDA relies on preliminary studies with little insight into long-term risk, telling manufacturers they will get conditional approval as long as they conduct post-market studies. The problem is, the FDA has no enforcement authority to mandate these studies. With the drugs on the market and the profits rolling in, the manufacturers have nothing to gain from conducting the post-market studies.

The statistics paint a crystal clear picture. As of September 2003, drug manufacturers agreed to perform 1,338 post-market studies. The FDA has reported, however, that two-thirds of them have not even begun that agreement from September of 2003. All the while, manufacturers can either market these products to physicians or directly to the public, who equate the FDA stamp of approval with safety.

Mr. Speaker, we need to give the FDA the tools to hold drug manufacturers to their agreement to do the post-market studies. If they are fined for non-compliance or barred from direct advertising until the studies are completed, maybe the manufacturers would have an incentive to get moving on these studies.

The FDA's regulatory authority needs some teeth. Creating this Drug Safety Oversight Board takes us in the opposite direction by simply rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship. If this is how the FDA intends to get back to business, then business as usual is simply not good enough.

CHINA CONSIDERING IMPOSITION OF ANTI-SECESSION LAW ON TAIWAN

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

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to bring an important bit of business to the House floor this evening and to Members of the U.S. House, and that is China's consideration of the anti-secession law that they are about to impose on Taiwan.

The anti-secession law is a slap in the face to the recent progress that has been made across the strait in relations with Taiwan and is a bold move to threaten U.S. interests in the region.

Last month, the two sides agreed on the very first nonstop commercial flight between China and Taiwan in more than 50 years. Now China appears to be laying the legal groundwork to legitimize material action against Taiwan.

China is expected to adopt this proposed anti-secession law within this month. However, as Beijing does not allow its citizens or its media objective involvement in their government, the exact nature and time frame of this legislation is known only by a few within the Communist party leadership as China thought it could seek to approve this law under the radar of international scrutiny.

As the United States begins to voice its concern over China's proposed anti-secession law, curiously enough, North Korea announces it has a nuclear weapons program. I do not view these two events as coincidental, given U.S. reliance on China to engage in diplomacy on North Korea's nuclear weapons.

In recent history, there were two impediments to China taking over Taiwan militarily, the legality of the takeover and the technological ability to defeat Taiwan and its allies' defensive capabilities. The anti-secession law covers the first obstacle and China's effort to end the European Union's arms embargo would cover the second. This body has overwhelmingly approved a resolution condemning a lift of the arms embargo, which essentially would amount to a technology transfer.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a serious issue, and Beijing should make no mistake that the United States Congress is paying attention. We are paying attention on the anti-secession law, we are paying attention on their military buildup and modernization, and we are paying attention to their economic growth, built on currency manipulation and the violation of intellectual property rights.

□ 1945

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this House and this body to stand tall and reach across the ocean and tell the Chinese we will be their friends, but they must be friends and participate in the rules of the rest of the Western world.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 79. Concurrent resolution permitting the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to award a Congressional gold medal to Jackie Robinson (posthumously), in recognition of his many contributions to the Nation.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 2761 of title 22, United States Code, as amended, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, appoints the following Senator as Chairman of the Senate Delegation to the British-American Interparliamentary Group conference during the One Hundred Ninth Congress:

The Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

SOCIAL SECURITY AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to cover three topics this evening with my colleagues and frame them in a way that suggest that we are lacking in our focus on a domestic policy.

So many of us have just returned from our districts and had the opportunity to interface with our constituents. What has to be a driving issue across America is, of course, the preservation, the saving of Social Security. But allow me to take you down memory lane just for a moment because maybe in this debate as we listen to economists, the Congressional Budget Office, the various committees of the House and various spokespersons and the administration about Social Security, we fail to understand its origins.

In 1929 we know that there was a market crash, Wall Street crash. We look at our history books. We know that a number of individuals of great wealth committed suicide. During the course of a very large depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was elected on the concept of restoring our economy, began to think about the whole idea of investment in our domestic policies. The WPA was formed, educational policies were enhanced, opportunities for work were provided, and, yes, Social Security.

At that time, if we look at our statistics, we will find that seniors then were in their forties and fifties and were dying because they were destitute after long years of work. There were no opportunities to be able to protect themselves, provide for their daily needs, and certainly there was no opportunity for children to take care of their parents at that time. The resources were meager. So Social Security became that kind of umbrella, that kind of resource, and it lasted and it was steady through the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Then President Reagan and Tip O'Neill came together in the early 1980s and found a way to shore up Social Security for another 50 years.

We find ourselves now in 2005 in what I call the ''generational divide,'' an unfortunate approach to dividing America over this umbrella for a rainy day. Let me first of all say that Social Security is what it is. It is in fact a retirement benefit, but it is also a survivor benefit for those who lost their