

happen to agree in this specific case. But try to square that with their rhetoric in which they are talking about activist judges and unelected officials.

What they are implicitly acknowledging here is that there are times when they very much want unelected and lifetime-appointed judges to overturn what local officials did, because the case here of eminent domain is a case not of the Supreme Court taking anything aggressive. As I said before, the Supreme Court does not use eminent domain. That building across the street has not gotten one inch bigger since I got here. What the Supreme Court did was to allow the local officials' decision to stand. That is the kind of lack of activism that my Republican colleagues deplore.

REPUBLICAN POLICIES PROVIDE ECONOMIC SUCCESS

(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. Mr. Speaker, in October, our office attended numerous ribbon-cutting ceremonies at new businesses in the second district of South Carolina. These exciting events demonstrate economic growth in our community.

President Bush and House Republicans are dedicated to decreasing taxes and eliminating government regulations, and we continue to witness positive results from these economic policies. Last Friday, the Commerce Department reported that the economy grew 3.8 percent in the third quarter, exceeding analysts' expectations. Americans entrepreneurs have created more than 4.2 million new jobs over the last 28 months. Homeownership is the highest level in history. Today's unemployment rate is 5.1 percent, which is lower than the average rate of the last 3 decades.

As American families continue to profit from the Bush tax cuts, I am confident the economy will grow larger and new small businesses will continue to pop up in communities throughout our country.

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

NEED FOR INTELLIGENCE ANSWERS IN LIGHT OF LAST WEEK'S INDICTMENT

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

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve to know if the Bush administration hyped faulty intelligence to win approval to go to war in Iraq. This Republican-led House refuses to even explore these issues. At least the Senate conducted an investigation last year. It concluded the intelligence was suspicious and outdated. The second part of that investigation

was supposed to examine why this faulty intelligence was presented to the world as a slam-dunk.

It has now been exactly 1 year since the investigation was scheduled to begin, and the Senate Republicans have refused to move forward. What are they afraid of?

Fed up with Republican stall tactics, the Senate minority leader, HARRY REID, moved for the Senate to go into a rare closed-door session to demand the investigation proceed. Thanks to Nevada's Senator HARRY REID, the Senate Republicans were shamed into restarting this investigation. Let us hope it now moves forward so the American people can finally determine if the Bush administration knowingly misled this country into war.

Mr. Speaker, the indictment of Scooter Libby shows that the Bush administration was willing to go to any length possible to silence its critics and cover up the intelligence that contradicted its claims for the war in Iraq.

CHECK ON SUPREME COURT DECISION

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, Thomas Jefferson said that "the true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen in his person and property," and the fifth amendment to the Constitution states "nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation."

Thanks to a recent Supreme Court ruling on eminent domain, the fifth amendment has been vastly expanded so that it now means "for the bottom line." Public use has been redefined to say simply that tax revenues are more important than neighborhoods.

The Founding Fathers did not mean "public use" to be defined as potential future economic development to increase tax revenues. Private property rights of our citizens are now competing with tax revenue and private developments. The Constitution is meant to protect the rights of our citizens, not compete with the bottom line, and certainly not to provide the government with an excuse to seize our property.

Our system only works with appropriate checks and balances, and this week Congress should exercise its check on a wayward Supreme Court decision and pass legislation that will demonstrate that increasing tax revenues should not trample the rights of private property owners.

THE VOLCKER COMMITTEE REPORT

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the recent release of a report from the Independent Inquiry Committee into the U.N. Oil-for-Food Program, also known as the Volcker Committee, has once again brought the issue of U.N. mismanagement to the forefront.

According to the Volcker Committee, \$1.8 billion in kickbacks and illicit surcharges were paid to Saddam Hussein's government by nearly 2,200 different companies in widespread abuse of the Oil-for-Food Program. As we can see, the Oil-for-Food Program lacked proper accountability and oversight, and thus caused massive fraud and abuse.

Unfortunately, this lack of accountability and oversight is nothing new at the United Nations. As the largest U.N. donor, the U.S. has the responsibility to ensure that the dollars of the American taxpayers are not being wasted. Until such accounting reforms are made, no United States money should be sent to the U.N. Only after such reforms are enacted will the United Nations begin its return to relevancy.

PUSHING FOR SAFER CYCLING CONDITIONS IN MEMORY OF JEANNE MENARD

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

Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the bicycling community in Greenville, South Carolina, and my own office had a tragic loss this week. Jeanne Menard was a bicyclist and an enthusiast in Greenville who was struck and killed by a car. Maybe it was the fact that the sun was low in the sky, maybe it was a dirty windshield, maybe it was inattention, maybe it was all of those things. In any event, somebody who had given her time very recently to distributing helmets to school children in one of our parks was killed in our town.

As a society, we want to promote a healthier lifestyle. We want people to ride bikes in order to relieve congestion on our streets, in order to make them healthier and just to have some fun.

The problem is that we are not all attentive to those bikes. In South Carolina, there were 21 bicyclists killed in 2004; so far this year, 10. Nationwide, 600 bicyclists have been killed yearly in crashes with automobiles.

I applaud groups like the League of American Bicyclists, the Palmetto Cycling Coalition, the Spartanburg Free-wheelers and the Greenville Spinners, of which Jeanne Menard was a part, in their efforts to promote bike safety; and I hope that all of us will take the opportunity to spread the word in our own districts.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PUTNAM). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule

XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

ONLINE FREEDOM OF SPEECH ACT

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1606) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to exclude communications over the Internet from the definition of public communication.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1606

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Online Freedom of Speech Act".

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF DEFINITION OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION.

Paragraph (22) of section 301 of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (2 U.S.C. 431(22)) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: "Such term shall not include communications over the Internet."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I seek to manage the time allocated for the opposition to the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentlewoman from California support the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Michigan?

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I do.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts will control the 20 minutes reserved for the opposition.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1606.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the advent of the Internet Age has brought about a host of new ways for citizens to participate in the political arena. Web sites, e-mail, and blogging have provided new avenues for political activists to reach out to potential voters, to raise issue awareness, to solicit contributions, and to mobilize the get-out-the-vote efforts.

The Internet has also generated a more widespread flow of news information through not only mainstream media sources but also independent Web sites and blogs. Most importantly, it has created a completely new opportunity for all citizens to exercise their right to free speech by opining on the most important issues of the day as they see them, as the citizens see them.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, all of this activity is actually under attack today. When Congress passed the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act in 2002, the law apparently was unclear on what impact it would have on political speech on the Internet. The Federal Election Commission interpreted the law to say that Congress did not intend to regulate the Internet when it passed BCRA. The bill's sponsors disagreed, and they sued the FEC in the courts.

A recent appellate court decision will force the FEC to implement a rule that would cover Internet communications. If the Congress does not act now and make it clear that it does not want the Internet to be regulated, the FEC will adopt a new rule to regulate the Internet; and by passing H.R. 1606, also known as the Online Freedom of Speech Act, Congress can prevent this from happening.

H.R. 1606, introduced by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), amends the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to exclude Internet communications from the definition of "public communication," thus exempting Web sites, blogs, and online advertisements from Federal Elections Commission, FEC, regulation.

This bill has very, very strong bipartisan support. In testimony before the FEC and before the Committee on House Administration, both liberal and conservative bloggers expressed their support for this exemption. Senate minority leader REID has introduced a companion bill in the U.S. Senate and written to the FEC to express his belief that the Internet should not be regulated.

The regulations proposed by the FEC could limit the ability of online activists to talk to campaigns, to give discounts on advertisements, to spend money maintaining their site, to link to candidates' sites, to advocate the election of a candidate, or to send political e-mails.

The FEC would potentially grant some bloggers and online publications what is known as the "media exemption," which would allow these bloggers to operate free of FEC regulation like any standard newspaper or news program. However, the rules were very unclear about how the FEC would determine who qualified for the exemption. Potentially, the FEC's rulings could become content-based restrictions on speech and on free speech.

As we consider this legislation, Mr. Speaker, we must remember that the Internet is not like traditional forms of

media. Unlike television and radio, activists do not require large sums of money to post their message on the Internet. Also, the number of people reached and the success of communication are not directly linked to the amount of money that is spent.

In addition, the Internet is not an invasive medium. In other words, the recipients of communication are exposed to the communication only after they take deliberate and affirmative steps to find a particular Web site. Further, the Internet has generated a surge in grassroots involvement in the political process.

Mr. Speaker, historically, Congress has regulated political speech only where it has the potential to cause corruption or the appearance of corruption. There has been no demonstration that the growth of the Internet has had a corrupting influence on politics. There is, however, ample evidence that the Internet has had a positive effect on our political system by encouraging young people, a whole new generation of people, to get involved in our political process.

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Any Internet regulations would be complicated and difficult for a lay person to understand. Bloggers and other online activists should not have to worry about accidentally running afoul of campaign finance laws when they are expressing their own opinions on the Internet.

Regulatory proponents claim regulations are necessary to reduce the influence of wealthy interests. In fact, Mr. Speaker, these complex regulations, if enacted, would actually increase the influence of big money and politics, because then only the wealthy could afford to hire election attorneys to be certain that they were abiding by these very complicated regulations.

The Committee on House Administration, under Chairman NEY's leadership, had a hearing on this topic back last September; and, at that hearing, several Members of Congress and of the committee, including myself, actually suggested that the Congress needed to step into this process to clarify Congress' intent on this issue instead of leaving it up to Federal agencies and the court system.

Congress began this discussion by passing BCRA. By debating and voting on this bill today, the House will clarify once and for all its intent on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to House bill 1606. This legislation, under the guise of protecting bloggers, actually undercuts the progress made by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and reopens the floodgates of corrupting soft money in Federal elections.

I also rise in opposition to this legislation being considered on the suspension calendar when it is so clearly a