

House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK GULF TRIP

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I am taping or putting up here a Web site that will help to pay tribute to over 200 students, professors, and other citizens from Ohio's universities, schools, and just citizens interested who traveled to the gulf in our country on an alternative spring break.

Called Rockets on the Road to Compassion, the University of Toledo's alternative spring break directed the efforts of over 200 Americans in helping the hurricane-ravaged areas of the gulf. To learn more about what they did and are doing, go to the Web site www.UTalternative.springbreak.utoledo.edu. I will keep repeating that tonight.

From March 3 through March 11, these magnificent Americans traveled to Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, and Georgia. The UT chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ sent 65 students to Pass Christian, Mississippi, where Katrina's eye made landfall.

The UT's Catholic Student Association sent 20 students to help build homes in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. Donovan Nichols, a University of Toledo graduate student and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, led coordination efforts for 104 participants spread across five locations devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Bay St. Louis, Mississippi; Bayou LaBatre, Alabama; Orange, Texas; Lake Charles; as well as Metairie in Louisiana.

Organizers and chaperones included Dr. Celia Regimbal, tenured University of Toledo professor in health sciences, and Reverend Dee Baker, the director of the Toledo Campus Ministry on the campus. America thanks all of them.

The world can learn more about their journey by looking at their Web site, www.UTalternative.springbreak.utoledo.edu. Some of the hundreds and thousands and stories from the gulf are reflected by what they did.

We recall with them the words: America is only as great as she is good. I know that their goal is to help follow through on this journey, to tell other Americans what happened so they can follow suit and to help us as we continue relating to these communities.

Let me just read some of the excerpts on this blog. From Dr. Celia Regimbal, University of Toledo professor, assigned to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. She says, it has taken 21 of us 3 days to

remove siding and get felt paper up. How long would it take one person? How long would it take to replace your neighborhood?

There is not a house in Bay St. Louis and Waveland that has not suffered some damage. We are guessing that 30 percent of the homes are totally gone. It will take years to rebuild the coast. We cannot forget that the folks here will continue to need our help.

Terrance Teagarden, who was assigned to New Orleans, wrote: between the two crews we have got operating right now down here, we look to have two houses gutted and a decent start on two more. Three houses gutted by crews of about 10 in 4 days' time. At this rate, he says, it will take years to get things back to normal here.

I saw President Bush and his escort fly over on a helicopter yesterday morning before we began our work. I heard the President say at a press conference awhile back he would love to bring his family here. Not in this condition he would not. Mr. President, he says, please come down to the 9th Ward and work with us, or any crew of volunteers for one day. I guarantee you will think differently of the progress made.

Then the young man says, honestly, pointing fingers will not help anyone anymore right now. We need thousands, droves, of Americans staying in tents and parks and churches all over the gulf region just helping to gut, prepare for inspection, and rebuild houses.

Through all of this, it has been the efforts of grass-roots organizations that have really gotten things done. Right now there is a need for playground items such as Hula-Hoops, balls. Schools and churches also need supplies to rebuild.

Donovan Nichols, who was assigned to Lake Charles, Louisiana, said, prior to Hurricane Rita, this town of Cameron had a population of roughly 2,000 people clinging to the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. Now, aside from relief workers, the community is deserted. While working on the roof at the house in Starks, two separate individuals dropped by asking us for help.

They described how they were not eligible for any FEMA money, but they really needed help. They sent them to some local churches for help.

Mary Ellen Edwards in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, says: our group here in Bay St. Louis spent part of yesterday and today helping a family of five who were trying to get their uninhabitable house cleaned up.

Madam Speaker, I know my time is expired, but I would like to place all of the remarks in the RECORD and ask the American people to look at www.UTalternative.springbreak.utoledo.edu. Please help Ohioans rebuild the gulf.

Today we also helped out the whole community by cleaning the debris off of the beach. The community gets a reduction in the loans it has gotten from FEMA to help out the people in Hancock County for each hour of work volunteers do in beach clean up. Celia Re-

gimbal set this up through the environmental staff person from Congressman GENE TAYLOR's office.

If the role of the government is to provide for the common good, the Federal Government just cannot seem to get much of a handle on this problem. Perhaps it is too worried about the media spin, its image, and pointing fingers than really working on solving the problem.

Imagine, by Neda Archie in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi:

Actually seeing the devastation has humbled me. The first day we drove through town I had no words. I felt every emotion possible to feel therefore I just looked with a kind of blank stare in disbelief. You don't know anything until you actually see it with your own eyes.

Imagine what is now trash and rubble used to be your prized possessions, your family photographs, your favorite pair of shoes, an old staircase from the house your family grew up in, and not your roof but your neighbors roof. Imagine trying to salvage and dry out a little piece of your life that existed before the devastation.

Imagine your schools you graduated from, the bridges you used to cross, the trees you used to climb, and the flowers that used to bloom are non-existent. Imagine losing some of your friends and loved ones. Imagine 75 percent of your town is gone.

Reflections by Danselle in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi:

These past few days have taught us all a valuable lesson, humility. This street was once where beach houses, mansions, and beautiful summer homes once dwelled. Now there's nothing but the Gulf. I expected to come down here and see at least a house fixture, but that's barely possible even 6 months later.

Most of the homes have been here for over 100 years, passed down through generations. These homes are extremely too expensive to replace, so most people have to settle with a home that's a lot cheaper.

The residents here in Bay St. Louis have experienced the absolute worst in wind damage, and were basically forgotten all about. We have been described as elephant biters. Katrina was like a big elephant dropped onto the entire coast, and we are here to bite chunks out of this elephant until it's completely gone.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to persons outside the Chamber.

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

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

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE IRAQ WAR

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, this weekend will mark the third anniversary of the Iraq war, and I am still

wondering, more importantly the majority of the American people are wondering, why we went there, and what we are still doing there.

Remember, we were told this was going to be a walk in the park, in and out in a flash. A few thousand troops and a few million dollars, no sweat. Well, now it has been 3 years, and if we are not out by the end of this year, 2006, our troops will have been fighting in Iraq longer than their grandparents fought in World War II.

More than 2,300 Americans dead; tens of thousands wounded; tens of thousands, maybe even hundreds of thousands, of Iraqi civilians killed; over a quarter billion dollars spent, and for what? So we can lose all stature and credibility around the world? So we can give rise to an insurgency that shows no signs of abating? So we can inspire even greater hatred of the United States among violent jihadists in the Muslim world? Or so we can throw gasoline on the fire of sectarian strife in Iraq and further ignite a civil war?

Yesterday's Washington Post reports at least 86 bodies found in Iraq, many of them in a mass grave, many of them having been strangled or tortured. And today the biggest air offensive since the beginning of this mistake.

When is enough enough, Madam Speaker? How many more Presidential speeches? How many more half-baked platitudes about the march of freedom?

Just two days ago at George Washington University, the President said: "The work ahead in Iraq is hard." But it was his administration that assured us 3 years ago of just the opposite, that this was going to be easy. "We will complete the mission," he said yesterday. But in May 2003, he was declaring "mission accomplished," in fact, draping an aircraft carrier with those very words.

The real tragedy is that our Nation will be living with this disastrous fallout from this war for generations. The money we have spent on this war is money we do not have and will not have for investments in our people, their health care, their education, their retirement, their job training, and, yes, their security.

The unspeakable, despicable acts of torture that took place at Abu Ghraib have robbed us of our moral authority. The very foundations of freedom have been threatened by the PATRIOT Act and the President's defiance of the rule of law on domestic surveillance.

The trumped-up weapons of mass destruction intelligence and the fabrication about an Iraqi link to 9/11 have damaged the trust between America and its leaders, trust that is critical to a thriving democracy.

And on a very basic human level, what about men and women who come back from Iraq shattered by the experience? Even if they make it home with all of their limbs functioning and intact, what about the psychological demons that come home with them?

These brave patriots need medical help if they are going to lead a productive civilian life, but according to a recent study by the military, they are not getting it.

□ 1915

Although one-third of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seeking mental health services, the great majority of those who are diagnosed with psychiatric problems are going untreated.

A lot of damage has been done, Madam Speaker, and there is a lot of work ahead: work to repair our troops, our principles, and our reputation. But there is one thing we could do right now to stem the tide, to contain the damage, to literally stop the bleeding. We could and we should bring our troops home now.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX 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 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 Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BISHOP of Utah 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 Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

SAVING LIVES THROUGH LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Madam Speaker, I came here to Washington to do everything I could to reduce gun violence in this country; and unfortunately, the atmosphere that is here is preventing me from doing that.

There are many out there that say I am out there to try to take away the right of someone to own a gun, and yet I have never introduced any kind of legislation that would do any such thing.

What I am trying to do is save lives. What I am trying to do is certainly try

to keep medical costs down. We have come to an agreement, many Members in this Chamber, on legislation I introduced a couple of years ago. The reason behind this legislation was because, unfortunately, there was another shooting in my district and two of my parishioners were killed. And the sad story is it could have been prevented.

Peter Troy, who is someone that had a very long mental health background, and he also had a restraining order from his mother against him because of his violent acts, was able to go into a store and legally buy a gun. He was able to do this because the State, my State of New York, did not put the information into the State system that was supposed to go into the NICS system.

This is happening every single day across this Nation. We looked into it and figured how can we change this. So we started looking at the different States. We saw that some States hardly had any records in the NICS system that had anything to do with domestic violence. We saw also that many States did not put anything in on those that were convicted of felonies. So we came up with legislation that we thought would help to reduce crime in this country.

We came up with legislation that we knew if we could keep guns out of illegal hands, those that should not be able to buy a gun, we could save lives. And if we could save lives, we are hoping also we could save injuries, and this way it is a win-win situation for everyone in our community.

I am hoping before the Memorial Day recess that I will be able to get my legislation back on to the floor for a vote. It did pass in 1997, and we had it on a voice vote because everybody agreed with it.

Now, I know our time down here is very short. We are going on another break this very week. For the 10 years that I have been here in Washington, we have never had a break in March. I wish we could be staying so we could continue to work to do the people's work.

I guess what I want to talk about is that we could have reasonable laws that could help people, save people's lives and make a difference in someone's life. We can do this without certainly infringing on anyone's second amendment rights.

The NICS bill that I am proposing would help our States bring their data up to speed. We all know that computers and the Internet are moving very rapidly, but a computer is only as good as the information in it. What I propose, and what had been accepted here in this House, would give the States the money so that when someone is convicted of a crime that would make them ineligible to be able to buy a gun, that would immediately go into the system. This is a win-win situation for everyone.