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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 31, 2006, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

ARMY RECRUITMENT

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the cost of the war in Iraq climbs past \$300 billion, and there are estimates that suggest the total financial cost will far exceed \$1 trillion, there is another cost that is less measurable but no less significant: that is the stress on the military itself and the consequences for our fighting men and women, for innocent Iraqis, and the capacity of our Armed Forces far into the future.

The Pentagon has announced that the Army has met its recruiting goals for the 13th consecutive month, but we are seeing an erosion in the quality of recruits in our Armed Forces as more and more young Americans who disagree with what we are doing in Iraq have chosen to stay away. In order to meet recruiting targets, the Army has relaxed restrictions against high school dropouts and have started letting in more applicants who score in the lowest third on the Armed Forces aptitude test, a group known as category 4 recruits. Since the mid 1980s, category 4

recruits were kept, as a matter of policy, to less than 2 percent of all recruits. But by the end of 2005, the percentage of recruits who fell under this lowest category has reached double digits.

In my district, not only has the Army lowered its standards but recruiters have been pushed to violate the remaining standards in order to meet these recruiting targets. We have had two examples of where autistic young men have been recruited into the Army despite the regulations. As I have discussed on the floor of the House how outrageous this was, indeed, one of these young men did not even know that there was a war going on in Iraq. This all has terrible consequences for our efforts against the global war on terror.

This weekend's papers were full of articles and editorials about the role that our lowered recruiting standards may have played in the recent spate of reports of servicemembers being accused of atrocities in Iraq. What does this tell us about our efforts to eliminate the insurgency and win the hearts and minds of people in the Middle East?

We must also consider the long-term cost to our national security and to the military itself. These lower standards are impacting the Army's capacities and will continue to do so for at least a generation into the future.

There was a RAND Corporation study last fall that showed replacing a gunner who had scored 3A on the aptitude test with one who scored that category 4 that I mentioned a moment ago, reduced the chances of hitting targets by 34 percent. In another study, 84 three-man teams from the Army's active duty signal battalions were given the task of making a communications system operational, what you need to do in a theater of battle. Teams consisting of the category 3A had a 67 percent chance of succeeding. Those with category 4 personnel had only a 29 percent

chance. More than two-thirds to barely more than a quarter.

There is also damage to the reputation of the good name of the United States military. We are intensely proud of the young men and women who have served under such difficult circumstances. It is not fair for their hard work and heroic efforts to be tainted by the action of others or for their job to be made more difficult or more dangerous due to substandard soldiers who are finding their way into the Armed Forces. When we lower recruitment standards or recruit those who have no business in the military at all, the consequences will be felt by our military in Iraq today and by the entire Nation for years to come.

One of the reasons it is imperative to have a sensible plan to scale down and transition our activities in Iraq, handing them over to the Iraqis, themselves, is to stop this erosion of our military capacity that has occurred because of the sadly inept management of the occupation by this administration and the Secretary of Defense. There was never a doubt about our winning the war in Iraq. They just weren't prepared to win the peace.

Our young men and women in the armed services deserve for us to get it right, because their lives are at stake. And we owe it to every American, because there are dangerous people around the world and the integrity of the military is critical to our fight to protect America.

FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006, H.R. 9

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 31, 2006, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the House leadership has agreed to bring to the floor this week the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. I want to thank the Speaker and the majority leader for their willingness to go forward with this debate prior to our upcoming recess.

Madam Speaker, the 1965 Voting Rights Act changed America. It created the opportunity for minority citizens to fully participate in democracy. Prior to the enactment and enforcement of the act, black citizens in the South were disenfranchised, primarily because of the literacy tests and because of the design of election systems that submerged concentrations of black voters into large, majority-white election districts. The result was that African-American communities could not elect candidates of their choice to office.

Why? It was because black voters did not comprise sufficient numbers within the district and white voters refused to vote for candidates who were the choice of the minority community. And so the votes of black citizens were diluted, which is a clear violation of the principle of one-person, one-vote.

The Voting Rights Act permits minority citizens to bring Federal lawsuits when they feel their vote is being diluted. Hundreds of these lawsuits have been successfully litigated in the Federal courts. In my prior life, I was a voting rights attorney in North Carolina. As a result of court ordered remedies, local jurisdictions have been required to create election districts that do not dilute minority voting strength. When I was in law school 32 years ago, there were virtually no black elected officials in my congressional district. Today, I count 302.

The Voting Rights Act also requires some jurisdictions to obtain Department of Justice pre-clearance to any change in election procedure. This, at first blush, may appear to be unfair to those jurisdictions, but the jurisdictions that are covered have a significant history of vote dilution and this requirement of pre-clearance simply assures that the jurisdiction does not intentionally or unintentionally make changes in their election procedures that will discriminate. This is called section 5. Section 5 has prevented many, many election changes that would have disenfranchised minority voters. It serves a useful purpose and should be extended.

A short story, Madam Speaker, and then I will close. In 1953 in my hometown of Wilson, NC, the African-American community worked very hard to teach the literacy test and qualify black citizens to vote. They then organized and elected an African American to the city council in a district with a large concentration of black voters. That was big news. When it was time

for reelection in 1957, the city council, arbitrarily and without notice or debate, changed the election system from district voting to at-large voting which resulted in the submerging of black voters. The change also required voters to vote for all city council seats on the ballot. If not, the ballot was considered spoiled. It was called the "vote for six rule."

Needless to say, that candidate, Dr. G.K. Butterfield, was handily defeated. If section 5 had been in place in 1957, this jurisdiction would not have been able to implement the changes and this community would have continued to have representation.

Madam Speaker, we have made tremendous progress in this country with respect to civil rights and voting rights. We must not turn back. I urge my colleagues on Thursday to vote for another 25-year extension of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act and require covered jurisdictions to get the Department of Justice to analyze the voting change to determine if it will have the effect of diluting minority voting strength.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 12 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

□ 1000

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMANN of New York) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend J. Cletus Kiley, President, The Faith & Politics Institute, Washington D.C., offered the following prayer:

O God, we bow our heads humbly, gathered in this hallowed Chamber at the beginning of a new day. Here, in this place, our faith and our politics meet. Our work is about the just ordering of our society. And so at the beginning of this day we beg a portion of Your spirit that we might fully understand the authentic requirements that such a just society demands.

We beg a fuller portion of Your spirit to strengthen us so that our work is always at the service of love, and thus, in the face of human suffering, we may become a consolation; where there is isolation, we may become community; where there is need, we may become abundance; where there is threat, we may become strength.

Today, O God, stretch us beyond our personal limits that we might fulfill Your divine plan and may serve the common good of our people. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KUCINICH led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

DEMOCRATS HAVE A LACKLUSTER RECORD ON BORDER SECURITY

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, House Democrats have been talking a lot about their agenda lately, but each and every time they fail to mention border security or immigration reform, and I suppose for good reason. With their lackluster record on immigration reform, I can understand why they hesitate to bring up the issue.

After all, Republicans voted to pass a border security bill in December, but Democrats, led by their minority leader, opposed the bill. Republicans voted to pass the REAL ID Act to make sure people who receive driver's licenses are here legally, but Democrats, led by their minority leader, opposed the bill.

Republicans wanted to allow members of our Armed Forces to help perform certain border security protection functions, but Democrats, led by their minority leader, opposed the amendment.

With a record like this, it is no wonder that the Democrats never mention border security as a part of their agenda.

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, 5 years ago today, on July 11, I introduced legislation to create a Cabinet-level Department of Peace and Nonviolence, which would employ the principles taught by Christ, Gandhi, Dr. King, Mother Teresa and others to create a new hope for violence-free homes, schools and communities through peace and character education, a new hope that through peace education we can even challenge the notion of the inevitability of war.

Today, thanks to hundreds of community groups, led by The Peace Alliance, momentum is building. Fifteen