

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MRS. ROSA AGUIGUI REYES

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mrs. Rosa Aguigui Reyes, the first woman to win election to public office on Guam. Her precedent setting election broke through the “marble ceiling” present on Guam at that time. In doing so, she paved the way for other women—including me—to serve as elected leaders of our island’s community. Mrs. Reyes, elected to the Guam Congress’s House of Assembly in 1946, passed away on January 29, 2007, at the age of 91.

Uniformed officers of the Department of the Navy were appointed by the President of the United States to serve as Governor of Guam for the period immediately following the liberation of Guam from enemy occupation. The bicameral Congress on Guam served at this time as an advisory body to the governor. Members of the Guam Congress were bona fide representatives of their constituents but possessed no legislative powers.

Mrs. Reyes, by standing for election to Guam’s Congress, defied convention. Governance on Guam was considered a male prerogative. Mrs. Reyes, to her credit and to the benefit of all of us who came after her, stood for office so that the voices of Guam’s women could be heard, and they were. Mrs. Reyes served with honor and distinction. Her service remains as an inspiration for me and so many other women on Guam.

Mrs. Reyes, born in the village of Merizo on February 7, 1915, was not only a politician. In fact, she was among the first group of teachers trained at the College of Guam. She graduated with an associate’s degree in education in 1954. Mrs. Reyes, however, possessed significant experience as a classroom teacher well before her earning of her degree. Mrs. Reyes began teaching at Merizo Martyrs Elementary School in 1933. She taught there for 31 years. She also served for 11 years as principal of F.Q. Sanchez Elementary School in the village of Umatac before retiring from the Guam Public School System.

Mrs. Reyes also worked as the principal research assistant to the late Dr. Laura Thompson, an anthropologist who authored studies about Chamorro culture and history before and after World War II. Dr. Thompson returned to Guam shortly after the war to conduct continued research on Guam’s culture and to determine what effects and impacts the years of occupation during the war had on the Chamorro people. Mrs. Reyes and Dr. Thompson enjoyed a joyful reunion in 1987, when Dr. Thompson made her final trip to Guam.

Mrs. Reyes was enrolled in the Guam Educators’ Hall of Fame in 1983, in recognition of her legacy as an educator, her contributions to the study of Chamorro history and culture, and her courage and leadership in teaching us that women can rightfully and ably serve in elected public office. She remained committed to serving her church and its community activities throughout her life. Her interest in cultural preservation and in traditional arts also never waned. Mrs. Reyes, as evidence of the

strength of her character, remained humble despite having established a prominent, diverse, and precedent setting legacy for herself in the history of our island and in the hearts of our people. Mrs. Reyes is an admirable role model and her life will inspire future generations of leaders on Guam.

I join the people of Guam in mourning the passing of Mrs. Rosa Aguigui Reyes and I offer my condolences to her husband, Mr. Ignacio Reyes, a former commissioner of Merizo, and her children and grandchildren. I thank them for supporting her efforts to contribute to the betterment of Guam. They can be proud of her achievements, and we share in their pride for her legacy.

HONORING PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SHAWN FALTER

HON. MICHAEL A. ARCURI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

Mr. ARCURI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to PFC Shawn Falter, who gave his life in service to our Nation on Saturday, January 20 in Karbala, Iraq.

Shawn grew up in the town of Homer, NY, and was a dedicated and loving son, brother and friend to many. As a student at Homer High School, Shawn excelled both on the field and in the classroom. He was a hard-working student, a natural leader, and a selfless friend who could light up a room with impeccable timing.

Shawn enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 2005, following in the footsteps of his three older brothers. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division deployed out of Fort Richardson, AK. Sadly, Shawn was killed during an ambush in Karbala, Iraq earlier this week in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Shawn was truly an exemplary American who served his country bravely. Our Nation is blessed to have dedicated, talented men and women like Shawn Falter fighting to protect us and others around the world.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring PFC Shawn Falter, along with all of the other brave Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

TRIBUTE TO MR. LOU FALCONI

HON. JASON ALTMIRE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, Mr. Lou Falconi, who recently retired after 33 years at Farrell High School. I wish to recognize Mr. Falconi for his service to the Farrell Area School District both as a teacher and a football coach.

Mr. Falconi took over the high school football program at Farrell in 1980. Over the course of his legendary career, he led the team to three appearances in the State finals, winning two State championships. Amazingly, he has been honored eight separate times as

“Coach of the Year.” In total, Coach Falconi led the high school football team for 27 years and ended his coaching career as the second winningest coach in Mercer County history.

On Friday, February 9, 2007, the friends, family, and colleagues of Mr. Lou Falconi will come together to celebrate and honor his life’s achievements and his commitment to the community. I plan to join them in thanking him for his service and the positive impact he has had on hundreds of kids in Farrell and throughout the Fourth Congressional District of Pennsylvania.

INTRODUCTION OF THE IRAQ POLICY REVITALIZATION AND CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act. This bill is a modified version of H.R. 5630, the Iraq Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act, which I introduced on June 16, 2006, during the 109th Congress.

H.R. 744 expresses strong, continued support for United States military and civilian personnel deployed to Iraq and serving worldwide in support of the mission in that country. We owe these individuals a debt of gratitude that is simply un-payable.

Section two of H.R. 744 provides a select catalog of major events that have shaped Operation Iraqi Freedom. This section of the bill is not operative but is important to the context through which this bill should be reviewed.

Section three of this bill provides a comprehensive set of policy statements that would express grave concerns with the fact that the Government of Iraq, at the present time, appears to be incapable or unwilling to govern in a unified manner in the interest of all Iraqis. That is, the bill would express Congress’s concern that representatives of the various, prominent parties in Iraq use their government offices, public resources, ministry employment opportunities under their control, and certain units of Iraqi Security Forces, in addition to their political militias, vigilante, and criminal groups, to seek to achieve their party’s individual, parochial, biased, and competing political, economic and security objectives, in order to bolster their party’s political, economic, and military power in and influence throughout Iraq. This bill would express grave concern that the inability or unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to govern in moderate terms contributes to violence against United States servicemembers and Coalition forces, creates barriers to national reconciliation in Iraq, and impedes the expeditious completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the return of our servicemembers to their peacetime duty stations. Section three of the bill raises significant

issues regarding the reliability of the Government of Iraq that should be reviewed and considered as Congress proceeds in its review of current United States policy toward Iraq.

H.R. 744 also would enhance our ability to engage in more detailed, coordinated, and

better informed oversight of activities with respect to Iraq. The provisions of section four of this bill would first consolidate existing, overlapping congressional reporting requirements. Section four of H.R. 744 would provide for a unique, comprehensive and focused analytical model around which future reporting to Congress by the Administration can be organized. That is, this bill would require from the President a single, regular, consolidated and comprehensive report that more exactly defines the political, economic, security, infrastructure, and governance capacity building benchmarks that are necessary and possible for United States military and civilian personnel to achieve at the various levels of government in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom. The information contained in such a report also would include whether programs and projects that are essential to achieving those benchmarks are being executed; whether those programs and projects are successful toward achieving those ends; and whether gaps exist. The report pursuant to section four of H.R. 744, moreover, would include a comprehensive intelligence assessment of Iraq. Furthermore, and notably, the report would include sections that provide the President the opportunity to justify why he did not adopt and implement any of the recommendations made by the Iraq Study Group.

Section five of H.R. 744 would require that the President utilize—to the extent possible—the benchmarks he reports to Congress as a foundation for a multilateral agreement between the United States, Coalition countries, the Government of Iraq, regional countries, where appropriate, and relevant multilateral organizations to help stabilize Iraq. Countries in the region and the international community need to be more fully engaged and participating in the effort to stabilize Iraq. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey and others among the international community should have a strong interest in a stable Iraq and we should welcome and encourage their further involvement in the process of stabilizing Iraq. Engaging Syria and Iran with regard to Iraq policy is a serious issue. It is an issue that requires vigorous and thorough debate. A wide range of opinions on the issue of engagement with Syria and Iran with regard to Iraq may exist. For this reason, an effort toward reaching consensus on this issue should be pursued. It is because of the lack of consensus on this issue that I have written into H.R. 744 the conditioning phrase—“(where appropriate)”—in the provisions that would direct the President to engage regional countries.

H.R. 744 would not set a timeline or deadline for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bill also is silent on whether the President should increase the numbers of troops in Iraq or should initiate a phased withdrawal of forces from Iraq. But H.R. 744 would express grave concern that prolonged commitment of United States Armed Forces to Iraq may adversely affect the overall readiness of our military and hamper its ability to provide adequate resources to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and to other contingencies around the world. Lastly, H.R. 744 does not dictate to the President the terms of completion for the mission in Iraq.

The war in Iraq is approaching its fourth year. The year 2007 will be perhaps the most challenging and critical year to date for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 110th Congress,

which was recently elected, will be the third consecutive Congress responsible for providing oversight of this war. Recent commentary notes Congress's record of oversight of Iraq is not one with which we should be satisfied. Our oversight of Iraq must be improved, and soon.

We are leaders with the responsibility, authority, and ability to act. We are leaders whose actions or inactions will have impacts—either positive or negative—that will span not only two-year election cycles, but also decades and possibly generations. We are leaders who history will judge not just by the power of our words, but also by the wisdom and courage of our actions. The seriousness of the situation in Iraq should compel this body to place a renewed emphasis on revitalizing United States-Iraq policy and enhancing Congressional oversight of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Support for H.R. 744 will go far toward achieving these objectives.

H.R. 744 recognizes the complex and interdependent nature of the challenges Coalition forces, civilian personnel and the Government of Iraq face today. That is, each level of government in Iraq—national, national capital city, regional, provincial, provincial capital, and municipal—experiences both shared and unique, and both isolated and interrelated political, economic, security, infrastructure, and governance capacity development challenges. The fact that, in some cases, difficult, contentious, or inefficient relationships between the central government in Baghdad and the regional and various provincial governments exist adds an additional level of complexity to establishing good and effective governance in Iraq. Iraq also is home to individuals of various ethnicities—such as Arabs, Kurds, Turcoman, Assyrians, and others—who ascribe to various religions—such as Sunni or Shia Islam, Christianity, Yezidi, and others—and who speak a variety of languages—such as Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Armenian. Some of Iraq's provinces are largely homogenous, such as Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Basra, or Anbar. Others contain a combination of demographic groups such as Kirkuk, Nineweh and Babil. Still others, such as Baghdad, contain a mix of all of the groups. This ethnic, religious, and cultural variety creates complex political, economic, security, governance, and social challenges on the ground in Iraq. And it is within these levels of government in Iraq, in these cities and communities and among these diverse ethnic groups, and against these political, economic, security, governance, and social complexities and challenges that our servicemembers and civilian personnel serving in Iraq work to develop that country politically, economically, and infrastructure and security-wise, as well as work to build governance capacity at each of the levels of government in Iraq. Their mission is a difficult, varied, and complicated one. It is one that is vastly more complicated and complex than recent congressional debate and congressional oversight efforts would reveal. And both must be brought more into line with the realities that our personnel on the ground in Iraq face daily.

It is not within our capacity to solve all of Iraq's problems, nor is solving all of them necessary to honorably and expeditiously complete the mission in Iraq and to bring our troops home. Solving the key problems, however, is essential to completing the mission in Iraq. H.R. 744 would require the President to

identify specifically which problems at and between each level of governance in Iraq and among the various pillars of our activities there are necessary and possible for us to solve in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill also would require the President to identify the programs, projects and activities utilized to achieve these vital measures and other benchmarks. Moreover, H.R. 744 would require the President to provide regular, consolidated and comprehensive reporting to Congress on the progress toward achieving these benchmarks. But while requiring this specific information H.R. 744 also provides the President flexibility to adjust or modify the benchmarks should events on the ground necessitate that such adjustments or modifications be made. Under the provisions of H.R. 744, however, the President would be required to provide detailed justification material to Congress to support adjustments or modifications made to the benchmarks.

As I noted in my introductory statement for H.R. 5630 in the 109th Congress, three legislative initiatives of the immediate previous Congress have required reports along these lines. These reports, provided to Congress by the Secretary of Defense, contain useful information. But, when taken together, the requirements and the content of these reports may not be sufficient for this Congress to fully exercise its oversight responsibilities pertaining to this war. A single report to provide a clear and full account of what is necessary and possible for the United States to achieve in Iraq—at the various levels of government within Iraq; what the United States Armed Forces and civilian personnel are tasked with in order to achieve those objectives; and where they are in the process of achieving them, would go far toward ensuring Congress has the information it needs to best fulfill its Constitutional responsibilities. H.R. 744 would consolidate the existing reporting requirements into a single reporting requirement of this nature.

The setting of benchmarks is not an easy task to accomplish. But it is one that must be accomplished. The setting of benchmarks alone, however, is not enough. Programs and projects must be implemented to achieve them. H.R. 744 would require the President to use these benchmarks as the foundation for a multilateral agreement to further provide for the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom. An international agreement of this kind is needed because some of Iraq's key problems are undeniably international in nature; and they become more so—not less so—as each day passes.

An international agreement as urged by section five of this Act will help bring renewed focus to and enhanced international cooperation toward resolving Iraq's problems. Second, it will help reaffirm the existence of a united front against elements that seek to destabilize Iraq, and thus bring added pressure to bear on those actors. Third, this agreement would provide for the formation of a forum in which current and future regional security, political, and economic issues regarding Iraq's continued development can be discussed and addressed. The establishment and maintenance of conciliatory relations between Iraq, its neighbors, regional states and the international community is essential to stabilizing Iraq internally. The agreement called for by this legislative proposal, if successful, could be

utilized and expanded to form the foundation—or beginnings—of a lasting regional security arrangement. H.R. 744 would require the President to report regularly on the progress toward implementing such an agreement.

As I noted in my introductory statement for H.R. 5630 in the 109th Congress, I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services and I have traveled to Iraq eight times since taking office in 2003. These trips have allowed me to observe our operations in Iraq and to personally speak with our commanders, servicemembers, and civilian personnel in the field. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Iraqi leaders during these visits. As a result, I have learned a great deal about the accomplishments made in Iraq to date. I have also learned of the many challenges that remain there. This legislation would provide us the information we need to make better informed decisions on policy with regard to Iraq.

I believe that an honest and open exchange of views on the substance of what our country

and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraq Freedom is needed. I also believe that our service in this body is never more consequential than it is when our troops are in harm's way. Debate regarding issues of war and peace deserve sober reflection, reasoned thinking, critical focus, and balanced perspective. Having this debate and conducting oversight in this manner is an institutional responsibility for the House of Representatives. But it also is a personal responsibility for each of us as representatives of our constituents. The continued sacrifices made by our military and civilian personnel serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, those made by Coalition personnel, and those made by Iraqi patriots only further reinforce the need to elevate our discussion on the merits of and the challenges associated with what remains of the mission in Iraq.

I do not have the privilege of a full vote on the floor of the House of Representatives. And I represent American citizens serving in the United States Armed Forces who, because

they are residents of Guam, cannot vote for their Commander-in Chief. Introducing legislation to revitalize Iraq policy and enhance Congressional oversight of Operation Iraqi Freedom represents a good faith effort on my part to fulfill my obligation to serve those who are serving us in defense of our freedoms.

Finding an achievable, expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In doing so we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy future generations of Americans will inherit and the one we will have to defend to history. I am confident that the provisions of H.R. 744 will help toward achieving these ends. I respectfully request that my colleagues review and consider the provisions of this legislative proposal.