

OFFERING HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO THE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES REGARDING THE HORRIFIC VIOLENCE AT VIRGINIA TECH AND TO STUDENTS, FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED

SPEECH OF

HON. THELMA D. DRAKE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, this has been a very somber week for the Commonwealth of Virginia as we have watched tragedy unfold on one of our proud universities.

As Virginia's largest University, the Virginia Tech family extends into every corner of our Commonwealth and we have all been affected by Monday's events.

Unfortunately, we are not able to explain such unthinkable tragedies. Furthermore, mere words seem small under the weight of such a heartbreaking event. However, I express my deepest sympathy for the victims and their families and I offer a prayer of support and condolence for the Virginia Tech community.

As Virginia, and indeed the entire Nation, grieves so many young lives being lost, it is important to remember the grace, love and goodness exhibited by those who survived this horrible tragedy.

I was inspired by the ability of students, alumni, faculty, family and neighbors to come together driven by a sense of community and compassion to support others in their time of need.

As I took part in yesterday's convocation at Cassell Coliseum, I was encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by Gov. Tim Kaine, President George W. Bush and the numerous dedicated educators at Virginia Tech.

The coming days, weeks, and months will continue to be difficult ones as the Virginia Tech community comes to terms with what took place on a dark day in April. But it will also be a time of healing and I am confident that Hokie nation will be able to come back stronger because of the compassion and character that has been displayed since this tragedy.

Just as the heinous actions of one troubled individual so obviously filled with hate has left us grasping for answers, the reaction of the Virginia Tech family gave reason to make all Virginians proud and demonstrate the tremendous promise of our future generation.

COMMEMORATING HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY AND REFLECTING UPON THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2007

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, last Sunday marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, which honors the memory of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust during World War II. We are now in the midst

of the Days of Remembrance established by the United States Congress as our Nation's commemoration of these victims. We remember the Holocaust so that the lessons and responsibilities left from this tragedy are not lost.

Always, but especially now, it is imperative that we remember and take action against the genocide that is currently taking place in Darfur. As we look to the past to remember those that perished at the hand of Nazi Germany, we must not forget the 2,500,000 Darfuran civilians targeted and displaced because of their ethnic or racial identity or the more than 300,000 people killed thus far. Tragically, over 1,600 villages have been destroyed by Sudanese government soldiers and government-backed militias. The growing number of destroyed homes and lives is a testament to the fact that simply remembering is not enough.

Madam Speaker, as you know, children are among the most helpless victims of any genocide. One million of the six million Jews that were killed in the Holocaust were children. Jewish children were targeted by the Nazi regime, and now the children of Darfur suffer the brutal effects that burning villages, shootings, rapes, and the search for refuge have on the youngest victims of this tragedy.

My heart is warmed by the work of grassroots organizations in South Florida and across the country that bring attention to the crisis in Darfur. We must heed the lessons of Holocaust Remembrance Day and make sure that another Holocaust never happens again. Racially inspired hatred has surfaced many times in the decades since the Holocaust, and it is our duty to stop the disaster in Darfur and make it the last genocide of the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TAX EXEMPT QUALIFICATION FOR FEDERALLY GUARANTEED WATER, WASTEWATER, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY FACILITY LOANS

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise to inform my colleagues of legislation I have introduced today to assist some of our Nation's most underserved communities in funding essential infrastructure.

The legislation that I have proposed will permit interest on federally guaranteed water, wastewater, and other essential community facility loans to also qualify to be tax exempt. I introduced similar legislation in the 109th Congresses.

Rural communities throughout America continue to face challenges in accessing basic needs. We can improve this situation by supporting the development of necessary infrastructure such as dependable water and wastewater systems, and essential community facilities like schools, hospitals, and police and fire stations.

Unfortunately, many of these same communities struggle to acquire sufficient funding to support local development projects. Increased access to federally guaranteed tax exempt loans would provide significant assistance in these efforts.

I believe the incentives offered in this bill will allow small and rural communities better opportunities to receive increased credit to finance community facility projects.

I urge my colleagues to consider supporting this bill.

IN HONOR AND IN MEMORY OF STAFF SERGEANT HARRISON BROWN OF PRICHARD, ALABAMA

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a young man from the First Congressional District of Alabama who recently made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of his country while helping to spread freedom abroad.

Army Staff Sgt. Harrison Brown, formerly of Prichard, was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, based at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was killed in combat earlier this month while bravely serving and protecting this great nation in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Duck," as he was known to his friends, joined the Army 13 years ago to provide for his wife and children. During his career in the Army, including multiple tours of duty in Iraq, Sgt. Brown set a standard of excellence and displayed the qualities of discipline, devotion, and dedication to country that are the hallmarks of men and women throughout the long and distinguished history of the American military.

A 1994 graduate of Blount High School, "Duck" played baseball and basketball and was a standout wide receiver on the varsity football team. Blount won the state 5A high school football championship while "Duck" was on the team. He went on to play one year of college football at Tuskegee University on scholarship before he joined the Army.

Madam Speaker, at this difficult time, it is only appropriate for us to pause and give thanks to God that there are still young men like Harrison Brown. His life and actions personify the very best America has to offer. I feel certain his many friends and family, as well as his comrades in the United States Army, while mourning the loss of this fine young man, are also taking this opportunity to remember his many accomplishments and to recall the fine gift they each received simply from knowing him and having him as an integral part of their lives.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to take a moment and pay tribute to Sgt. Harrison Brown and his selfless devotion to not only our country and the freedom we enjoy, but to a people who are in the demanding but important stages of a new life—a new freedom—in their own land.

We should also remember his wife, Delisha Brown; their three children; his mother, Chris Ann Brown; his sister, Mary Dozier; and his other relatives and many friends. Our prayer is that God will give them all the strength and courage that only He can provide to sustain them during the difficult days ahead.

It was Joseph Campbell who said, "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself."

Make no mistake, Harrison Brown was not only a dedicated soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice serving in the uniform of his country, but he was also a true American hero. May he rest in peace.

HONORING M.J. ROSENBERG AND THE SENTIMENT OF HIS ARTICLE "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS"

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 19, 2007

Mrs. CAPPS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend the sentiments expressed in the following article by M.J. Rosenberg, the Director of Israel Policy Forum's Washington Policy Center, and a tireless advocate for peace in the Middle East. In the column, entitled "Blessed are the Peacemakers," he skillfully highlights the need to engage in aggressive diplomacy if we are to achieve peaceful results in the region. I applaud Mr. Rosenberg for his bold stance for peace and would encourage my colleagues to inform themselves of his valuable insights.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

You know what they say: no good deed goes unpunished.

That is certainly the case with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and her visit to Syria.

At a time (the Easter-Passover recess) when dozens of House members and Senators are visiting foreign capitals and discussing policy with foreign leaders, Pelosi is being skewered for, in the words of the Washington Post's editors, "substituting her own foreign policy for that of a sitting Republican President."

The Post accuses Pelosi of "try[ing] to introduce a new U.S. diplomatic initiative in the Middle East."

Heaven forefend! Things are going so swimmingly in the Middle East that the last thing anyone needs is for the 3rd highest official in the United States trying to resuscitate diplomacy.

The specific objection is to her meeting with the Syrian leader, Bashar Assad. Of course, few could object to what she told Assad—that he should stop trouble making in Iraq and Lebanon, that the Israeli government is ready for negotiations, that Israel has no bellicose intentions toward Syria and that Syria should use its influence to free Israeli prisoners.

In fact, David Hobson, a Republican from Ohio who accompanied Pelosi, said that the Speaker did not stray very far from Bush administration policy. Hobson said Pelosi "did not engage in any Bush bashing she did not . . . bash [Bush] policies as they relate to Syria."

Instead, Hobson said, Pelosi urged Assad to curb the number of suicide bombers who cross the Syrian border into Iraq to "murder our troops and the Iraqi people."

Republican House leader, John Boehner, admitted that there was nothing wrong with legislators in general visiting Syria. "It's one thing for other members to go," Boehner said, "but you have to ask yourself, 'Why is Pelosi going?'"

The answer isn't that hard. She went for the same reasons as Tom Lantos (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as Henry Waxman (D-CA), the most senior Jewish Member of the House, as

Keith Ellison (D-MN), the first Muslim-American in Congress, as Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Rules Committee Chair, as Nick J. Rahall II (D-WV), the senior Arab-American in Congress, and Senior Defense Appropriator David Hobson (R-OH). She went to advance US interests in the Middle East, believing that we can perhaps get more out of Syria by engaging it than by shunning it.

The critics are feigning outrage because they don't like Pelosi (CNN, in particular, seems to have a problem with a female Speaker) and because, by visiting Syria, Pelosi has revived one of the Baker-Hamilton Report's prescriptions for ending the Iraq war: engaging Iran and Syria.

Baker-Hamilton recognizes that Syria and Iran can do more to impede the extrication of our soldiers and marines from Iraq than any other countries on the planet (with the exception of Iraq itself).

On the other hand, if they choose to, they can ease our way out of Iraq and help prevent that country's further descent into chaos and civil war.

The Israeli government added to the Pelosi controversy by saying that Pelosi did not carry any private messages from Jerusalem to Damascus. But the Israelis have been using intermediaries to convey information to the Syrians for a long time. It is inconceivable that the highest ranking American in memory to visit Damascus would visit Israel, en route to Syria, and not be asked to convey a message to President Assad from Prime Minister Olmert.

One can only hope that she was carrying messages from Israel. Why wouldn't the Israelis seize that opportunity?

Pelosi's visit strengthened America's position in the region, and likely helped Israel on prisoners, on Hezbollah, and in its effort to avoid another war like last summer's. It was a gutsy move by the new Speaker and one that deserves commendation, not criticism from those who are committed to the whole litany of failed policies of recent years. One would think that some of these pundits would look at the sheer carnage they delivered in Iraq—the 3200 American dead and the hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqi civilians—and be shamed into shutting up. But no such luck.

In this context, and on this Good Friday, it is worth recalling Jesus' words in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God."

That is not exactly what the critics are calling Pelosi. But, the New Testament notwithstanding, peacemakers are rarely praised in their own time while the cheerleaders for unnecessary wars are never, held accountable for them.

Pelosi is too smart to expect plaudits for trying to deter war rather than simply standing firm behind a status quo that will inevitably produce the next one.

Readers of this column know that I like to harken back to the great missed opportunity of 1971. That was when Prime Minister Golda Meir rebuffed Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's call on Israel to pull back from the Suez Canal. Sadat said that in exchange for a pullback of just a few miles—which would enable Egypt to re-open the canal—he would begin negotiating a peace agreement with Israel.

This week Yediot Achronot revealed new information about the missed opportunity. Zeev Tzahor reports that then-American Secretary of State, William Rogers, was so disturbed by Golda's rejection that he enlisted Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, to try to persuade her to, at least, seriously consider the offer.

Let the Yediot columnist, Zeev Tzahor, tell the rest of the story:

"The 85-year-old Ben-Gurion was retired . . . His relations with Golda were poor, and

he was not particularly eager to speak with her. Rogers implored him. The Egyptian initiative is a one-time opportunity, he said, but Golda has taken a dismissive, supercilious view of it. She admires you, maybe she'll heed your advice. Ben-Gurion acquiesced, and asked his aides to put him in touch with Golda in Jerusalem.

"The brief conversation between them was acerbic. The people present in the room heard Ben-Gurion repeat why she ought to begin negotiations with Egypt. . . . While the people present in the room could not hear what Golda was saying on the other side of the line, it was clear to them that she was not interested in promoting the Egyptian initiative.

"Ben-Gurion lost his patience, lambasted Golda and said she was leading Israel to catastrophe, and terminated the conversation. For some reason, he placed the receiver down on the table and not in its cradle. The people present in the room heard Golda calling, "Ben-Gurion, Ben-Gurion," but he refused to pick up the telephone again. He just kept repeating, "war is going to break out soon, war is coming."

It did. Israel lost nearly 3,000 men. Ben Gurion died a few weeks later. Israel ended up relinquishing not just the west bank of the Suez Canal, as Sadat had demanded but every last inch of the Sinai peninsula.

Until this week, I had never heard that Secretary of State William Rogers tried so hard to help Israel avert catastrophe. All I recalled about him was that the pro-Israel community despised him because he was thought to have applied pressure on Israel.

Little did I know that the pressure was in the form of the wise counsel of David Ben-Gurion, the founder of the Jewish state.

I hope Pelosi is not daunted by the criticism emanating from all the usual suspects. Her delegation's visit to the Middle East advanced America's interests and Israel's too. As they like to say in that region: the dogs bark but the caravan moves on.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Democratic Budget Resolution.

In the face of a burgeoning national debt, I want to commend Chairman JOHN SPRATT for drafting a budget that reflects the commitment of our new Democratic majority to restore fiscal integrity, and shift Federal budget priorities to reflect key American values.

This Budget Resolution will balance the Federal budget in 5 years by requiring that any new expenditure be offset. This is a fiscally responsible policy that turned deficits into surpluses in the 1990s.

The Democratic Budget Resolution also stands in contrast to Administration policies that have undermined long-term investments in areas that help to improve the quality of life of Americans. This Resolution addresses the shortfalls of past budgets, and reflects key American values by increasing funding levels to enhance health care for our Nation's children, and for our men and women returning from combat.