

Here are a couple things that it did, just to let you know. It was endorsed, by the way, by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Businesses. I don't hear my colleagues on the other side talking a whole lot about this. I think they should. It would be a good one for them to talk to their constituents about.

It extends a tax provision that lets small business owners write off more equipment each year for use in their trade or business, understanding that small businesses have a need for the infusion of capital purchases and things that they need to get started with their business, making sure they are able to write those off. Absolutely appropriate, absolutely the right use of the Tax Code, and absolutely a sense of investment in the future.

If we give these tax cuts, and some of them are pretty substantive, about \$4.84 billion total, it ensures married couples who jointly own a small business both receive credit for paying Social Security and medicare taxes.

I am at a loss to understand why over the last 12 years of Republican control that was never fixed. This is a pretty important fix, and it is one that small businesses understand is important. It includes enhanced tip credit to ensure employers don't lose current tax benefits when the minimum wage goes up; S Corp provisions to keep tax benefits of being a small business even as they grow and expand; and extends the Work Opportunity Tax Credit through August of 2011.

These are things that are going to impact positively on small businesses. Seventy percent of our jobs are created in small businesses, employers with 50 or less employees. Those are the things that we have taken to do.

So those who would say nothing positive is being done, this Congress is not moving anything forward, would be remiss to look at the facts, what the facts have been. The most significant increase in veterans care that we have seen in the 77-year history, probably I think it is safe to say in this Nation's history; an ending of a 10-year period without a raise to the minimum wage for millions of American workers; a small business tax package that is going to enhance their ability to compete in the world; an ethics reform package that independently has been hailed as one of the most significant since Watergate, to bring back the dignity, to bring back the trust of the American people in this institution.

You heard some of the things about energy, focusing on energy independence. We have got a farm bill that is going to be one of the best we have seen. And when the President decides he is going to choose our farmers over foreign companies that avoid paying taxes, we are going to get a great farm bill.

We have got a Water Resources Development Act that is going to enhance our ability to compete in the world while adding billions of dollars in investments to our infrastructure.

We are going to clean up the Rail Safety Act. We have seen packages to education to make college more affordable, the most significant increase to Pell Grants. We have cleaned up what has been an absolute debacle in private lending, moving away from government-subsidized, low-interest loans to get our children through college by saying, gee, we have this vast pool of American kids who need to go to college to compete. Why shouldn't we profit from that? Why shouldn't we let private lenders make a whole bunch of money of them? That would be a good thing to do.

Now, that is quite a difference from what she said when I went to school, when future generations invested in me and said we are going to keep college as affordable as possible. We are going to make sure we use grants as much as we can, and we are going to make sure that the GI Bill can be used by these young people who are willing to sign up and they are able to get their education. That was wisdom. That was vision. That was nonpartisan.

Many of those accomplishments can be attributed to ideas coming from the Republican side of the aisle. Unfortunately, for the last few years, that hasn't been the case. But we have got a new direction. We have got a new optimism.

As I started speaking today, I talked about the changes each one of us have seen. We have been here for 8 months. In my home State of Minnesota, I am happy to tell you that I think I have witnessed change that all us want to know.

On August 19, as we talked a little bit about it, my district saw some of the worst flooding that they have ever seen; 17 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. We had entire towns wiped out, towns of 2,500 to 3,000 people. I went into that town riding on a boat as people were leaving their second story windows as people were picking them up. We have seen catastrophic displacement of large numbers of people.

As I said, on Sunday, the rains were falling, and I was there with a Republican Governor. On Monday, a Republican Senator and a Democratic Senator, a Republican Governor and a Democratic Congressman toured together and promised to do everything that was possible. On Tuesday, a Republican President was in Minnesota pledging to the help of the U.S. Government. On Wednesday, a Republican Governor requested that help. And on Thursday, the administration delivered on that. By Sunday, FEMA was in the district caring for our people, taking care of the needs, and showing that, you know what? When we work together, there is nothing this Nation can't accomplish.

I am proud to be a member of this new class. It has been 8 months of change. The new direction we are going in is one that the American public wants.

□ 1815

#### SITUATION IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIRE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tone and the statement of our colleague who just completed his hour and was talking about what our country can do when we pull together. Over the next hour, I believe that several Members of the Republican Conference here in the House of Representatives will come down and share their perspectives gained, many of them from physically going to Iraq or Afghanistan, or both, during the recent August district work period when Members were back in their district and allowed to travel to give firsthand accounts of what they learned and their meetings with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker and others, and a real up-to-date report on the situation in Iraq.

But I do agree with the gentleman in his closing comments that we must as a Nation take ownership again of certain things not even in a bipartisan way but in a nonpartisan way because these are America's problems. They are not Republican or Democratic problems. And frankly, as much as some people would like to say it or believe it or use it for political purposes, this is not President Bush's war; this is America's fight. President Bush and Vice President CHENEY will be gone in just a little over a year. The problems will not go away. The threats will still be here. The challenges of this generation to answer our patriotic call to this Nation, to answer our responsibility in sacrifice and service will continue, I believe, for some time.

I did not go to Iraq in August, but my nephew did. Specialist Jeffrey Watts is now serving his country as a soldier in Iraq for the next 15 months as part of the 1-181st Field Artillery Brigade. I heard the gentleman from Minnesota talk about the deployments. What I was fascinated by when I was with the 1-181st earlier this summer as they shipped out to Fort Bliss to train to go to Iraq, is how many members of the 1-181st, and this is a National Guard unit, also deployed with the 278th from our Tennessee National Guard a year and a half ago and came back and redeployed with the 1-181st. They didn't have to but did; and how many vice versa went before, many of them because they are volunteering to serve their country in harm's way. In harm's way, big harm's way, because they love the opportunity to serve their country. They are incredibly selfless patriots of the highest order, and I do think this House comes together in praise of these valiant Americans who understand that freedom is not free and that somebody has to stand between a real threat and our civilian population, and that is what they are doing.

General Petraeus will be here next Monday with Ambassador Crocker to give us an update. Everybody is anticipating that, and you have this review and that review and these stats and those stats. And even the Government Accountability Office is heavily involved, as if they somehow supervise the Pentagon. But I think it is important for us all to prepare to listen objectively next Monday because I think you are hearing in a bipartisan way, Members like the gentleman from Washington State from the Democratic side who recently came back and clearly said much progress has been made. This Petraeus plan is working.

The guy who understands this insurgency threat more than anyone in our military and therefore anyone in the world is leading a new approach in Iraq. And the report will come beginning next week. And if we are objective, I think we will support his recommendations. If we are not objective and we have a political bias or an agenda, we may reject it.

Some of his words in anticipation of next week are already out. He talks about the extraordinary progress in the Anbar Province. General Petraeus says that was the result not of military actions certainly alone, it was the result of really a political shift where the population, led by the sheikhs of major tribes, decided to reject al Qaeda and its Taliban-like ideological behavior and the extremist behavior that they have come to associate with it.

He said: "That is what brought the level of violence down so dramatically, because al Qaeda no longer finds a hospitable place in the Euphrates River valley the way it certainly did in the past. We have been banging away at al Qaeda for years, but until we could hold them off with the help of the local population and local volunteers, those operations were never as meaningful as they have been in recent months. That is what we are trying to do in other locations in Iraq. That has also led to a rise in the detainee population over the last 6 months as more al Qaeda operatives have been caught. And while there is always a concern that they will gain strength, the pool of potential recruits has actually shrunk. Their sanctuaries have shrunk considerably so they don't have the ease of locations and movements where they are safe the way they were before. Clearly there is real progress being made. War is an ugly thing. It is always an ugly thing. It is not perfect, but great progress is being made."

Now, I am going to take the time before I introduce the gentlelady from Virginia and others that will come to read an opinion from a German journalist about Iraq that was in the Wall Street Journal last Monday and then submit it for the RECORD. Josef Joffe. He says:

"In contrast to President Bush's dark comparison between Iraq and the bloody aftermath of the Vietnam War last week, there is another, comforting

version of the Vietnam analogy that gained currency among policymakers and pundits. It goes something like this:

"After that last helicopter took off from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon 32 years ago, the nasty strategic consequences then predicted did not in fact materialize. The 'dominoes' did not fall. The Russians and Chinese did not take over, and America remained number one in Southeast Asia and in the world.

"But alas, cut-and-run from Iraq will not have the same serendipitous aftermath, because Iraq is not at all like Vietnam.

"Unlike Iraq, Vietnam was a peripheral arena of the Cold War. Strategic resources like oil were not at stake and neither were bases. In the global hierarchy of power, Vietnam was a pawn, not a pillar, and the decisive battle lines at the time were drawn in Europe, not in Southeast Asia.

"The Middle East, by contrast, was always the 'elephant path of history' as Israel's fabled defense minister, Moshe Dayan, put it. Legions of conquerors have marched up and down the Levant, and from Alexander's Macedonia all of the way to India. Other prominent visitors were Julius Caesar, Napoleon and the German Wehrmacht.

"This is not just ancient history. Today, the great Middle East is a caldron even Macbeth's witches would be terrified to touch. The world's worst political and religious pathologies, combined with oil and gas, terrorism and nuclear ambitions.

"In short, unlike yesterday's Vietnam, the greater Middle East is the central strategic arena of the 21st century, as Europe was in the 20th century. This is where three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa—are joined. So let's take a moment to think about what would happen once that last Black Hawk took off from the Baghdad International Airport.

"Here is a short list. Iran advances to No. 1, completing its nuclear arms program undeterred and unhindered. America's cowed Sunni allies—Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the oil-rich Gulfies—are drawn into the Khomeinist orbit.

"You might ask: Wouldn't they converge into a mighty anti-Tehran alliance instead? Think again. The local players have never managed to establish a regional balance of power; it was always outsiders—first Britain, then the U.S.—who chastened the malfeasants and blocked anti-Western intruders like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.

"With the U.S. gone from Iraq, emboldened jihadi forces shift to Afghanistan and turn it again into a bastion of Terror International. Syria reclaims Lebanon, which it has always labeled as a part of 'Great Syria.' Hezbollah and Hamas, both funded and equipped by Tehran, resume their war against Israel. Russia, extruded from the Middle East by adroit Kissingerian diplomacy in the 1970s, rebuilds its

anti-Western alliances. In Iraq, the war escalates, unleashing even more torrents of refugees and provoking outside intervention, if not partition.

"Now, let's look beyond the region. The Europeans will be the first to revise their romantic notions of multipolarity, or world governance by committee. For worse than an overbearing, in-your-face America is a weakened and demoralized one. Shall Vladimir Putin's Russia acquire a controlling stake? This ruthlessly revisionist power wants revenge for its post-Gorbachev humiliation, not responsibility.

"China with its fabulous riches? The Middle Kingdom is still happily counting its currency surpluses as it pretties up for the Olympics, but watch its next play if the U.S. quits the highest stakes game in Iraq. The message from Beijing might well read: 'Move over America, the Western Pacific, as you call it, is our lake.'

"Europe? It is wealthy, populous and well-ordered. But strategic players, those 27 member-states of the E.U. are not. They cannot pacify the Middle East, stop the Iranian bomb, or keep Mr. Putin from wielding gas pipelines as tools of 'persuasion.' When the Europeans did wade into the fray, as in the Balkan wars of the 1990s, they let the U.S. Air Force go first.

"Now the upside. The U.S. may have spent piles of chips foolishly, but it is still the richest player at the global gaming table. In the Bush years, the U.S. may have squandered tons of political capital, but then the rest of the world is not exactly making up for the shortfall.

"Nor has the U.S. become a 'dispensable nation.' That is the most remarkable truth in these trying times. Its enemies from al Qaeda to Iran—and its rivals from Russia to China—can disrupt and defy, but they cannot build and lead.

"For all the damage to Washington's reputation, nothing of great import can be achieved without, let alone against, the United States. Can Moscow and Beijing bring peace to Palestine? Or mend a global financial system battered by the subprime crisis? Where are the central banks of Russia and China?

"The Bush presidency will soon be on the way out, but America is not. This truth has recently begun to sink in among the major Democratic contenders. Listen to Hillary Clinton who would leave 'residual forces' to fight terrorism. Or to Barack Obama, who would stay in Iraq with an as-yet-unspecified force. Even the most leftist of them all, John Edwards, would keep troops around to stop genocide in Iraq or to prevent violence from spilling over into the neighborhood. And no wonder, for it might be one of them who will have to deal with the bitter aftermath if the U.S. slinks out of Iraq.

"These realists have it right. Withdrawal cannot serve America's interests on the day after tomorrow.

Friends and foes will ask: If this superpower doesn't care about the world's central and most dangerous stage, what will it care about?

"America's allies will look for insurance elsewhere. And the others will muse: If the police won't stay in the most critical of neighborhoods, why not break a few windows or just take over? The U.S. as 'Gulliver Unbound' may have stumbled during its 'unipolar' moment. But as giant with feet of clay, it will do worse and so will the rest of the world."

[From the Wall Street Journal, Aug. 27, 2007]

IF IRAQ FALLS

(By Josef Joffe)

In contrast to President Bush's dark comparison between Iraq and the bloody aftermath of the Vietnam War last week, there is another, comforting version of the Vietnam analogy that's gained currency among policy makers and pundits. It goes something like this:

After that last helicopter took off from the U.S. embassy in Saigon 32 years ago, the nasty strategic consequences then predicted did not in fact materialize. The "dominoes" did not fall, the Russians and Chinese did not take over, and America remained No. 1 in Southeast Asia and in the world.

But alas, cut-and-run from Iraq will not have the same serendipitous aftermath, because Iraq is not at all like Vietnam.

Unlike Iraq, Vietnam was a peripheral arena of the Cold War. Strategic resources like oil were not at stake, and neither were bases (OK, Moscow obtained access to Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay for a while). In the global hierarchy of power, Vietnam was a pawn, not a pillar, and the decisive battle lines at the time were drawn in Europe, not in Southeast Asia.

The Middle East, by contrast, was always the "elephant path of history," as Israel's fabled defense minister, Moshe Dayan, put it. Legions of conquerors have marched up and down the Levant, and from Alexander's Macedonia all the way to India. Other prominent visitors were Julius Caesar, Napoleon and the German Wehrmacht.

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In short, unlike yesterday's Vietnam, the Greater Middle East (including Turkey) is the central strategic arena of the 21st century, as Europe was in the 20th. This is where three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—are joined. So let's take a moment to think about what would happen once that last Blackhawk took off from Baghdad International.

Here is a short list. Iran advances to No. 1, completing its nuclear-arms program undeterred and unhindered.

America's cowed Sunni allies—Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the oil-rich "Gulfies"—are drawn into the Khomeinist orbit.

You might ask: Wouldn't they converge in a mighty anti-Tehran alliance instead? Think again. The local players have never managed to establish a regional balance of power; it was always outsiders—first Britain, then the U.S.—who chastened the malfasants and blocked anti-Western intruders like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.

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labeled as a part of "Great Syria." Hezbollah and Hamas, both funded and equipped by Tehran, resume their war against Israel. Russia, extruded from the Middle East by adroit Kissingerian diplomacy in the 1970s, rebuilds its anti-Western alliances. In Iraq, the war escalates, unleashing even more torrents of refugees and provoking outside intervention, if not partition.

Now, let's look beyond the region. The Europeans will be the first to revise their romantic notions of multipolarity, or world governance by committee. For worse than an overbearing, in-your-face America is a weakened and demoralized one. Shall Vladimir Putin's Russia acquire a controlling stake? This ruthlessly revisionist power wants revenge for its post-Gorbachev humiliation, not responsibility.

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Nor has the U.S. become a "dispensable nation." That is the most remarkable truth in these trying times. Its enemies from al Qaeda to Iran—and its rivals from Russia to China—can disrupt and defy, but they cannot build and lead.

For all the damage to Washington's reputation, nothing of great import can be achieved without, let alone against, the U.S. Can Moscow and Beijing bring peace to Palestine? Or mend a global financial system battered by the subprime crisis? Where are the central banks of Russia and China?

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I think that says it pretty well from a German journalist about our commit-

ment in Iraq, what the stakes are, what will happen if we are to, as our Democratic colleague said, precipitously withdraw from Iraq.

We all want our troops home. I want my nephew home, but not until it is in our national interest for us to draw down troops on the timeline that secures our liberty and protects our people and our place in the world. And that is what is at stake.

I want to yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the gentleman from Tennessee for having this hour this evening where we can come and tell you what our observations are about Iraq. And also, I would like to thank his family for the service of his nephew. I know he is in our thoughts and prayers for his safe return. I would also like to thank really the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have loved ones who are serving. I would like to thank the very brave men and women who are serving around the world for us today.

□ 1830

They truly understand the threat in the world, and they understand the consequences if we were to just pull out, and I think this is one of the most overwhelming things.

When you do make a trip like ours this year, it was my third trip into Iraq, and this year was my first trip into Afghanistan, but when you arrive in these Nations, the most overwhelming feeling immediately is that every single one of the young men and women that you're looking at serving in the U.S. military have volunteered to serve our Nation, and that is an incredible feeling.

The first thing that we did on our trip, it was very early August, we went into a neighborhood north of Baghdad. There was six of us on the trip, and we had the opportunity to meet with four Iraqi sheiks, two Sunni and two Shia. Now, like most Americans, I think I was of the impression that Sunni and Shia would never even speak to each other, much less work together to rid Iraq, their neighborhood, of the enemy. Well, they were in that room together and they sat Sunni, Shia, Sunni, Shia, as they talked to us about what they've done.

And the reason for what they've done, of course, is the incredible amount of violence that is taking place in Iraq against Iraqi civilians, executions, torture, and it's brought those sheiks into a position to join together for their neighborhood, for their region and, as they told us, for Iraq, that they did what they did for Iraq. They joined with our military. They worked together for 2½ months, and when they were ready, combined with our military, these four sheiks and their citizens ridded that neighborhood of the enemy in only 4 days' time. They were so proud of themselves.

They told us repeatedly how their children could go out and play. Our military told us that this was the most dangerous street in northern Baghdad, the most IED attacks of all of Baghdad. They told us that they can go out and walk to the store now because of what's taken place.

What the incredible change that you're seeing in Iraq right now is that our military is helping local leaders to develop the capacity to govern at that very local level, the most important area, and to work on a regional level to bring that about.

Now, those sheiks are a little bit disappointed in their national government. I asked them about the Sunni members who had walked out of the government. Their answer is my favorite quote of the entire trip, and the quote was, they won't be reelected. I thought that's quick that they learned that.

They're extremely concerned about the involvement of Iran and Syria. Our military knows full well of the involvement of those two governments and weapons that are coming in and help that's being provided. They need services. Our military brought in the governor of Baghdad to look at their neighborhood and to see what could be done differently.

They also were very clear that they want their government to succeed, and they were very clear in telling us that they need our help and they want our help.

We also met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Shala, who is a Kurd. The Iraqi Government, and we don't ever talk about this, is set up, when your prime minister is the Shia, your two deputies, one's a Kurd and one's a Sunni. Your president is a Kurd, so your vice presidents are Sunni and Shia so that you bring in all three together to be able to have the involvement of all three sects within the country. It's not just one person telling you what to do.

Of course, the Deputy Prime Minister expressed a little bit of disappointment in how far the national government had come. There were meetings that were taking place even while we were there. He was very clear, and I thought this was very important, that he said their focus is to establish the institutions of government so that their government would continue, regardless of who was in power, and that no one would be able to just grab power and do something different in Iraq, but that they form a stable government just like here in the U.S.

When we had a shift in January from Republican control to Democrat control, there was no change in the way our government functions. Our courts functioned, and actually, Admiral Fallon, in addressing the Senate just recently, made the same types of comments, how important it is that we set up a rule of law, that we protect human rights.

So I was encouraged to hear him talking about that. He did stress that it was going to take time, and I asked him, because it's been very important here to us in America and our benchmarks, that there are pieces of legislation that we want the Iraqi Parliament to pass. And I asked him if it was true that he actually had the votes to pass that legislation. His answer surprised me. He said, Oh, yes. He said, I have 75 percent approval for the legislation. I reminded him that in America we pass major pieces of legislation with one vote.

But he looked at me and said something critically important. He said, if I pass this legislation with 75 percent, it means I've cut out the Sunni from the government. They would feel they had no power and they would feel they had no voice.

Now, just today in the Armed Services Committee, we received the GAO report on Iraq and the status of these 18 benchmarks. About six of the benchmarks deal with legislation that we'd like to see passed, and we failed on that, that that legislation has not passed, as we all know. But there was another benchmark that was stressed in it, that there be political involvement of minority parties and minority rights be protected. Now, we've passed on that benchmark, but I would say to the gentleman from Tennessee, to you, Mr. Speaker, that if we had passed that legislation against the wishes of an entire group of people, that we would have failed in meeting the benchmark that minority parties be included.

He talked to us about Anbar and about how it's been stabilized. Our trip was due to go there, and we weren't able to because we were detained here in Washington for that extra day. But he talked to us as well about the \$10 billion that's been appropriated by the Iraqi Parliament for reconstruction efforts. That joins with the 60 countries that have joined with America in our reconstruction efforts there. There is \$200 million that's been appropriated to use just in Anbar province, and those contracts are now being let because the security level there will allow those construction projects to go forward.

I'd also like to add that we do have a policy in Iraq, and that's called Iraqis First. Whether you're an Iraqi company or you're an Iraqi civilian, that if you're able to be hired by us, that we want to hire Iraqi first.

The Deputy Prime Minister was clear that they are a country in transition, and he did caution us that they would not meet their benchmarks by September 15, but I would really want us to focus on not did we meet 18 benchmarks but what are the goals and what are the objectives and how do we develop a fully functioning Iraqi Government and how do those benchmarks play into that, how do they make responsible decisions there like I think they just did in not forcing legislation that would have cut an entire section of their country out.

I think that's critically important. We all support benchmarks, but we want those benchmarks to reflect achieving the goals that we've set, and we want to show where are those positive developments, and people are frustrated when they don't hear them, when American people don't hear of the progress that's being made or four sheiks coming together to stabilize their own region and asking that we not leave them and that we give them their help.

We did meet with General Petraeus. We met with Ambassador Crocker. We will receive their report on Monday. I know you have others who are here to talk. I just wanted to close by talking about the last thing we did that day.

We met with Iraqi security forces, and they were actually special ops. They were so impressive that I would have thought I was here in the U.S. watching special operation forces do a demonstration. Our military was very clear that they are very easy to train, and the good news that we haven't heard is that these Iraqi forces are able to train their new recruits that are coming in. I want you to know they were so proud of themselves.

Think of the risk to those men who are serving in Iraqi security forces. In our country, we know our men and women are in harm's way. That's painful for us as Americans, to have our men and women in harm's way defending this Nation. But in Iraq right now, anyone who joins the Iraqi security forces is in harm's way simply for joining, not in the threat of battle but simply for joining.

So I want to thank you for letting me tell you about them, tell you about what I saw on our trip to Iraq. It was critical for me to see Afghanistan for the first time because there's a lot of similarities in Afghanistan. We're doing the same thing.

We are looking at the local level now. We understand that that's the way we need to win this fight, but the change that's come about is like you have seen in Iraq, where local leaders join with us. Remember, they have to make a choice. Are they with us and their national government or are they with the Taliban in Afghanistan or with the al Qaeda in Iraq.

And they have to make the right choice, because if they make the wrong one, they're dead. And what's the message that we've sent to the world is that we're going to leave? How do you choose us if we're going to leave and you would be left there with an enemy? It's critical that we establish political, economic and security measures in Iraq so that this nation can function, can establish a government that will take them into the future and not just short term.

I did ask one question, and your article made me think about it, in armed services not long ago. We had witnesses come and talk about the National Intelligence Estimate, and my question to them was what would be the impact

on America if we were to leave, if we were to have done everything that we've done but if we were to leave before that government can govern itself, secure itself and develop itself economically? What would be our standing in the world? Would we be a paper tiger? What would our allies think of us? And would anyone ever trust us in the future?

The answer to me was we haven't studied that issue. Well, I think not only do we need to study the issue. We need to make sure that Iraq has made such progress that I've seen in my three trips. We need to make sure that these people aren't the victims of the violence that will take place. The Deputy Prime Minister pointed that out to us. He told us the consequences that would happen if we were to leave. He told us that Iraq is the heart of the Middle East and that everyone is watching what we're doing.

So thank you for letting me join you tonight and thank you for the service of your nephew.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her service to the Commonwealth of Virginia and to this great Nation of ours on the Armed Services Committee and for going and bringing us that unique insight.

As I prepare to yield to the gentleman from Georgia, let me say I think part of the equation for the Congress in a responsible, objective way in the days ahead is to remember that this is not all about Iraq. It is about the bigger picture with the global threat of the jihadists, the most radical elements of Islam, and the way that they are spreading their influence around the world outside even of the Middle East. I think we have to really understand that to know what the stakes are associated with the precipitous withdrawal or anything that is perceived to be a retreat.

These are real problems. It's easy to say, oh, George Bush got us into this war with flawed intelligence. It's also easy to forget that over half of the Democrats in the United States Senate voted to remove Saddam Hussein by force and almost half the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted to remove Saddam Hussein by force based on the very same knowledge and understanding that the executive branch had about what the threats were, and we made that decision as Americans.

It is really unfortunate today that decisions and responsibility for those decisions now end up being peeled off as partisan issues instead of, we do these things together, we stand together, we stand behind our troops together, we stand behind their mission together.

We had Members like RALPH HALL of Texas come back and say to a person the men and women in uniform told him while he was there that we should stay and finish what we started and not leave until we can successfully complete this mission. And you say, well, what is that and when will we know?

Objectively, you're getting that report and it's much more positive than it was, and the stakes for leaving are incredibly high.

If you don't believe the influence of the radical Islamists around the world, I would encourage you to read Mark Steyn's book, "America Alone," where he lays out what's happened in Europe and the influence with the global sharia, which is a call to Islamic law, and the intimidation and the threat around the world, or even this new book called "Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World," by J. Miller Burke. He wrote this book exposing the connection between the Saudi royal family and terrorism through these charities that they set up and funnel money.

It reminded me of the Oil-for-Food scandal at the United States where Saddam Hussein corrupted the United Nations.

□ 1845

All of the corruption that exists through this radical effort, because this book that lays all this out can't be bought today. It has vanished from all of the Amazons. It has vanished from the availability of Barnes & Noble to find the book. What happened to it?

Well, through intimidation and money, they have taken this information out of circulation so the people can't see these connections.

They literally tie him, this man, Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, to the charity that he set up to fund bin Laden with Saudi royal family money, and then when they published the book, it vanished. You can't get it. You can't go buy it.

Mark Steyn lays out, this is the kind of work that the radical Wahabi sect, the al Qaeda operatives, are doing in the world. They have infiltrated and corrupted, and we are like boiling frogs if we deny any longer how this threat is overtaking the free world. America Alone's premise is they've already got Europe and frankly Australia is really the only nation standing with us like they need to.

This is a growing global imminent threat. If we pull out, it will rapidly deteriorate in the world. Our credibility will be lost for generations. We may never regain it. Those are the stakes. That's bigger than Iraq. Iraq is one chapter in this long-term generational struggle for our freedom. The sooner we realize it, the better we are.

I went and spoke to kids in schools in August, and they asked the question about, well, Afghanistan and the Taliban attacked us, but Saddam Hussein in Iraq didn't attack us. Why did we go there?

The lesson of history is Germany didn't attack us, either. Japan attacked us. Germany didn't attack us. But did we ignore the threat of Nazi Germany? No. Our men stormed the beaches of Omaha and liberated Normandy and Omaha Beach, and liberated Europe, so that our way of life could be

preserved. Sometimes they forget that, but that's American leadership. This is very, very similar to that.

Are we going to exert it in a world in what this editorial calls the caldron, you know, of the worst political and religious pathology in the history of the world in the Middle East? This is the central stage. We cannot retreat from this without us really, really taking a global hit.

The next president is going to inherit the responsibility of doing this, of carrying this forward.

I want to yield to the statesman from Georgia, a physician, a healer, a man with a great heart but a strong back, also a member of the Armed Services Committee, Dr. PHIL GINGREY.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Tennessee, ZACH WAMP, for, first of all, conducting this special order hour, leadership hour on the Republican side, and for allowing me and my colleague and great friend from Virginia, THELMA DRAKE, for being part of that. DOUG LAMBORN, the gentleman from Colorado, I think, has joined us.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the trip with THELMA DRAKE from Virginia when we visited Iraq and Afghanistan, and I am not going to repeat everything that she said, but I want my colleagues to know that this was my fourth trip to Iraq, my first opportunity to go to Afghanistan.

But this was a necessity that I go this fourth time. I think some 40 or 50 Members of the Congress during the so-called August recess spent 5 to 7 days in the Middle East and the combat zone in 120-degree weather.

Those of us on the Armed Services Committee, I am sure, felt duty bound to do this, particularly as we approach the report from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker that's going to be delivered to the House on next Monday, September 10.

I have been four times, but this was the most meaningful visit, because I came to a realization, really, actually, it emboldened my feeling that we need to give victory a chance. Again, I want to thank ZACH WAMP, the gentleman from Tennessee, for the passion that he brings to this issue. I thought he was just an expert on energy, but he is also an expert on national defense, more important, the global war on terror, as he so passionately explains this issue.

I was on the floor last night during some of our special order time, 5-minute speeches and the two sides, the Democratic majority has an hour and the Republican minority has an hour. I heard one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, a gentleman from Maryland, talking about losing a soldier, a 22-year-old brave patriot in his district, and he talked with the mom and was trying to, of course, console her.

The gentleman said on the floor last night, you know, it was sort of ironic, the mom of the fallen soldier said, isn't it ironic, I am here planning my son's

funeral and the Commander in Chief is planning a wedding.

That's not the kind of commentary that we need on the floor of this House to suggest that the Commander in Chief doesn't care, that he has got his head in the sand and that each and every one of these 3,700 or so KIAs and 18,000 of our best and bravest that have sustained, in some instances, massive injuries, if you don't think that the Commander in Chief goes to bed every night with this on his heart, then you are just flat wrong.

I think the gentleman, on more reflection, would agree with what I am saying. This President cares. This Commander in Chief cares. He wants to give victory a chance.

It's not a matter of staying the course and same old same old, the Iraq Study Group, the gentleman from Indiana, the long-serving distinguished Democrat, 37 years in this body, and Ambassador Baker, Secretary Baker, served under three Republican Presidents, you have got two people that made some suggestions. One of the main suggestions that they made was we need a surge, we need more troops, especially in and around Baghdad, and those four provinces, where all of the violence, most of the violence, 95 percent of it, is occurring. This is exactly what the President responded to.

What did we hear from our friends on the other side of the aisle? Oh, well, you know, too little, too late.

Yet, you know, 3 or 4 years ago it was, well, you're not putting enough troops in there to do the job, you didn't listen to General Shinseki, it's a constant pulling the rug out from under the combatant commanders, and we see 435 people that want to be Commander in Chief. It just doesn't work that way.

In the Democratic special hour last night, after we talked about our experience in Iraq and these recent trips, the team on the Democratic side said, you know, we can't afford to spend this money. We've almost spent \$1 trillion trying to win this global war on terror, and we need to be spending this money to repair bridges, to give more money to the gulf coast, to maybe even give more money than a 300 percent increase in the SCHIP program to cover every man, woman and child from cradle-to-grave with universal health care.

Even if I were for some of those things, I will tell you this, you spend that money on those things, and you don't protect our people from global terrorism, then you will see, in a New York minute, how quick that money would go down the toilet as these people blow up this infrastructure, just like they did 9/11, almost 6 years ago now, and killed 3,300, almost the same number, that we have lost in Iraq and Afghanistan over a 4-year period. They killed them within a period of 45 minutes.

Mr. WAMP. That reminds me, today, yet another terrorist plot coming out of Germany, preparing to attack our Air Force base in Germany and soft

targets of just public places in Germany where Americans are known to hang out was foiled, thankfully. The German authorities were on top of it.

That is a major, major terrorist attack again. We see this over and over again, thankfully, you know. God has spared us, our intelligence is working, we are listening. Because of FISA, we are able to listen to foreign terrorists talk to each other. We've taken the precautions.

Then I have this theory that they don't want to strike us right now because they don't want our country to pull back together again and be resolute against this threat, so that those things, combined, have kept our country secure and safe at home while we are fighting these insurgents and these terrorists in the Middle East.

We're going to be fighting them somewhere. If it's not in Iraq, it's going to be Somalia, Northern Africa. I can go through a list of the troubling places in the world where we're going to face these kinds of problems and activities, and there are 20 countries that are at risk around the world for big-time terrorist actions like the Taliban came out of Afghanistan, and we can either basically stand against this threat today or face it globally and more at home tomorrow. That's not a threat. It's reality. In Germany today it was proven again they are trying to hit our targets wherever they are.

Mr. GINGREY. I am so glad the gentleman brought that up, because what he is talking about, and I commend to all my colleagues, read the article, these were three, in one case, I think, a citizen of Germany, maybe of Islamic descent, but a German citizen, and not only were they planning on attacking Frankfurt, where most people fly into when they go into Western Europe, certainly from this country, but also, and I know the gentleman is aware of this, their plan was to attack Ramstein Air Force Base and the Landstuhl European Army Medical Center where every one of these troops, our troops, that are injured so severely, and our great physicians on the battlefield are able to save their lives to get them through Ramstein Air Force Base to that Landstuhl Army Medical Center there just a few miles away, and that's what they were going to attack.

Mr. WAMP. The lowest of the low who would attack your wounded and injured.

Mr. GINGREY. The lowest of the low. Of course, I know we want to yield to our friend from Colorado, and we will hear from him in just a second, but as I conclude my remarks, I just want to say, and Mrs. THELMA DRAKE, the gentlewoman from Virginia mentioned this a little earlier, we had a report today in the House Armed Services Committee, a report that was requested by Congress in our last emergency supplemental, from the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, on these benchmarks, and the Comptroller General talked about the

progress. Really, he talked mainly about lack of progress, and it was ironic that even though several of those benchmarks, we had made some progress, he pretty much gave the Iraqi government a failing report card.

I think that is disappointing here, just a matter of a few days prior to General Petraeus' report.

He even suggested that while General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker are highly professional and we would get a professional report from them, we would not get an unbiased report. The only unbiased report was coming from him and from the Government Accountability Office.

I suggested to him, during that hearing, you know, you might be unbiased, but your ability to interpret what you see on the ground certainly militarily may not come even close to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. So let's wait for the report, let's give victory a chance. That's what I want to say to all my colleagues. Let's button our lips for the rest of this week, and let's see what the report says.

I would suggest that the President is going to listen to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, and I would suggest that yes, indeed, the Iraqi government is making progress, that they are not making as fast of progress as we would hope, but we would continue to put pressure on them, but let's give victory a chance.

Mr. WAMP. I thank the gentleman for that commentary, especially the update on the hearing today from the GAO and Mr. Walker.

I will be a little more pointed to tell you as the ranking member of the appropriations subcommittee that funds the GAO, and funds Mr. Walker's organization, that unfortunately many times, whether it is government spending or oversight in Iraq, a lot of what happens in his office revolves around him and not us.

□ 1900

It is all about him, and again today, it's all about him. He's the only one that somehow can be unbiased, and he's the only one that can do this. And there's a little kingdom over at the GAO and he's the king. And we need to remember that and put it in perspective this week before we hear from the absolute expert on counterinsurgency in modern world history, David Petraeus, the best we can put in charge. He's the best we can offer to this situation. And let's listen to him objectively and not get caught up in an ego matter, frankly, involving Mr. Walker.

And I yield to the gentleman from Colorado, a distinguished member of our Veterans' Affairs Committee, a relatively new Member, but a very experienced and seasoned Member, DOUG LAMBORN.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, like many of my House colleagues, I traveled with a Congressional delegation to Iraq during the August recess, and I



rise now to speak about the successes that I saw and experienced firsthand while in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the members of our armed services are working tirelessly each day and night in Iraq to rebuild this country and to ensure our national security. While in Iraq, I had an opportunity in Fallujah to meet with marines from Colorado Springs who were upbeat about the progress in Iraq and were certain that their accomplishments during the surge had produced a truly positive result. They were also equally concerned that people at home in the United States did not understand how successful they have been.

After my visit to Iraq, I am pleased to say that I am even more sure than ever that their mission has not been in vain. They truly are making a difference for the Iraqi people and for the communities in which these people live.

During our visit, we met with GEN David Petraeus who had many positive things to say about the progress that has been made since the surge began. For instance, he mentioned the elimination of safe havens for militia forces and al Qaeda, continued progress in Anbar province, progress in the operation and training of the Iraqi Army and encouraging signs of tactical successes in Baghdad. I look forward, like my colleagues here who've just spoken, to reading General Petraeus' report on the surge with great scrutiny when it is released this month.

I'm also delighted to hear that some of my Democratic colleagues have realized and acknowledged that the surge is working. I plan to continue to work with all of my colleagues, as well as the military and the administration, to ensure that the sacrifice our brave men and women are making in Iraq is not abandoned before the mission is completed.

Mr. WAMP. I thank the gentleman, and at this time I want to yield to the ranking member of the Oversight Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Missouri, TODD AKIN.

Mr. AKIN. It's a pleasure to be able to join our discussion tonight on the subject of Iraq. I approach the subject this evening from several perspectives; one, as a father of a marine who is now a captain who has been in Iraq; also as someone who has visited Iraq a number of times myself, but particularly, and more recently, as the ranking Republican on the Oversight Committee of the Armed Services Committee. That is a committee that we have been hearing now, for quite a number of weeks, of witnesses, Republicans, Democrats, all kinds of different positions and people with ideas that are supposedly experts about what we should be doing in Iraq.

Now, one of the things that has jumped out, after having to sit through hours and hours and hours of testimony, is a certain pattern. Every single witness, conservative, liberal, Re-

publican, wacko one way, strange the other way, anybody, every single one of them, there were two things that they always said, and that was, the first one was, if we pull out rapidly, it will be, first of all, a huge blood bath of Iraqis killing Iraqis. We're talking about millions of people dying, which will, of course, all be reviewed in all the gory detail on the media. And second of all, the region will become extremely unstable. Both of those, regardless of who they were, political party, anything else, those were the two common themes.

And what emerged after weeks and weeks of listening to all these experts was, there is no gracious, easy way for us to try and tuck our tail between our legs and quit. We're like the bear that's going through the woods. We're more than halfway there.

The most logical, the most common sense, the most economic, the least loss of life course for us is to proceed forward logically and win this war. And there is even reason to believe that we can.

And the strategy is becoming more and more obvious as to how that has to happen. The first basic principle is that our troops are doing a very good job in Iraq. The second basic principle is that we've fallen into this sort of belt line, beltway mentality thinking that America's greatness all came out of Washington, DC and therefore the problems have to be solved in Baghdad, and that's just wrong. The political solution in Baghdad is not working properly. Where we are having success is the very way that America was built 300 years ago, and it's being built in local communities and local cities, local towns and various states as they built this great Nation and the same way. That's what's happening over in Iraq.

We are having very good success on the local level working with local sheiks, giving them a sense that it's their country, they can shape it, and what we need to be doing is aggressively giving those local governments authority and limiting the Baghdad authority to certain very specific items. We call that federalism in this country, and that's where we need to be going. We can win this, and it is the most inexpensive, the lowest loss of life and the very most positive results we can expect by just using the same principles that we found that built America. So I think that's where we need to be going.

The Democrats are wrong. You can't pass a constitutional amendment that says everybody's going to get along with each other. Even if you put a gun to the head of the Iraqi Baghdad Government, they couldn't do that. They couldn't succeed in that.

They're wrong in being against the surge. The surge is proving to be effective. It is helping us to build local governments. And they're wrong in the sense that everything is lost and we ought to quit. That's not true, and

none of the witnesses suggested that it's wise for us to pull out precipitously.

I thank the gentleman for yielding me some time, and I appreciate the comments of my colleagues that understand the importance of this and understand terrorism.

Mr. WAMP. I thank the gentleman from Missouri and his distinguished leadership as the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

Let me say, before introducing the gentleman from Texas, one of the biggest changes that I see, not just in Iraq, but globally, is that finally moderate Muslims are standing up against the radicals. We're seeing that in country, we're seeing that in other parts of the world. Up until a few months ago when they saw American resolve coming forward, they literally were so afraid and intimidated and harassed, and the radicals were seizing the moment.

Now, finally, and let me tell you, because of the sheer numbers, if we're ever going to really permanently throw this threat back, the moderate people in Islam have to lead and help us, and that's beginning to happen.

A gentleman who's been to Iraq six times, Dr. BURGESS from Texas, another physician, a healer, a member of the Commerce Committee with extraordinary perspective from six separate visits to Iraq in country. I yield him such time as he may consume, hoping to get the other gentleman from Texas in at some point in the next 7 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. And I appreciate the gentleman for yielding.

Indeed, I did take my sixth trip to Iraq in July, a weekend trip. And believe it or not, it is possible to make a weekend trip to Baghdad.

I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was concerned. The 10 months prior to my going, we've had just a litany of one bad story after another come out of Iraq, and I was concerned about what I was going to find.

The story is a mixed story. I suspect next week when we do hear the report from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, we'll get a mixed report.

But I've just got to tell you, it was a vastly different condition on the ground that I saw than what I had been led to believe I would encounter with reading the stories in the paper.

Now, just over a year ago I was there. There's a lot that's changed in Iraq. There's a lot that's changed here at home since that year's time. Concerned about what I would find, and again, made the trip over a relatively condensed time frame, we left for Baghdad really early in the morning out of Kuwait City on a C-130.

And Mr. Speaker, you always hear people criticize us on these trips. They say, well, you just saw what they wanted you to see. They just trotted out the dog-and-pony show for you and you bought it.

But the reality is you get on a C-130, 3 or 4 or in the morning, it's already 90,

95 degrees. You're put in the back of a C-130 with troops being moved into one theater or another. And they don't pick the guys that happen to show up at the airport that morning. You go with whoever is going in or out of the country.

Now, when you're on the plane, it's just too noisy and hot and dark to talk. But as the plane landed when we got to Baghdad and they bring the engines down and you can actually hear again, the soldiers that were around became anxious to talk to me when they found out who I was and why I was there.

Most of them, it was their second or third rotation. Their deployments had been extended to 15 months, and most of the guys that were on that plane wouldn't see home again for almost a year.

Since February, there's been a big change in how they do their job. They're placed alongside Iraqi soldiers in smaller groups, both in Baghdad and out in the provinces, and they're no longer attached to this larger and more protected military base. And clearly, they're seeing a greater amount of activity and, to a large degree, that concerned them.

The fellow that was just right across from me I actually spoke with in some depth, and he'd been reading a book all during this hot plane ride for 2 hours from Kuwait City into Baghdad.

He obviously voiced a concern. He wondered if the General Officer Corps even knew what they were up to, even knew what they were doing. He wondered if they knew what they were up against. He did complain about the long hours. He complained about the heat. He complained about being separated from his family.

Mr. Speaker, he'd been reading a book intently while we were on the plane. And I asked him about this. I said, What book are you reading? And he said it was a book about philosophy. So I naturally assumed that at the end of his deployment he'd be coming home to perhaps finish school, or maybe he had a job waiting for him, and I asked him about this. And he looked at me very strangely and said, I just signed up for five more years.

You know, it's that kind of ambiguity, it's that kind of enigma that confronts you when you're in Iraq. Things just don't add up the way you think that they might.

Now, we got off that plane and we all went our separate ways. We were taken into the town of Ramadi. And a year ago, there would have been no way to go to Ramadi. We visited with the mayor.

And again, as Mr. AKIN just alluded to, the good news story coming out of Iraq is the building up of those institutions of local government just like we have here in this country, county governments, city governments that are doing the really hard work. They're doing reconciliation at the city level, at the provincial level. If it takes the central government a while longer to

catch up with them, I've got a lot of hope based on what I saw on the ground.

But what really gives me hope is what I saw in the market in Ramadi. Look at the faces on these two young guys. We were just out there walking in the market just in an area that a year ago it had been so dangerous no one in their right mind would have taken us there.

Let me just show you this other picture that gives you some idea of the types of thing for sale in the market. Again, it looks like a typical marketplace anywhere you'd find in the Middle East, Jordan or Saudi Arabia. A lot of stuff for sale. I don't know where the stuff comes from, but a lot of stuff for sale. And again, clearly the people who were there did not look to be particularly stressed or aggrieved. They looked half curious and happy to see us. In fact, the kids were starting school in a couple of weeks and would come up to us and ask us for pens and quarters. Apparently our military had given them a good deal of coaching on the kinds of things you can get from a codel as it walks through town.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude here and leave the remaining time to my friend from Texas. I will say I do believe it is in America's interest that we finish the job. The next 30 years will look starkly different if we're successful versus if we're a failure.

I will yield back to the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. WAMP. I'd like to yield our final minute to Mr. HENSARLING of Texas to close.

Mr. HENSARLING. I certainly thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for leading this hour. I want to thank the other members of the Republican Study Committee, the House's conservative caucus, for lending their voice here.

In the remaining time, I just want to make a couple of points, and that is, we see every night the cost of fighting this war, and it is a heavy cost. It's a heavy cost in terms of money and, much more importantly, lives. But we need to again remember the cost of losing this war and what that could mean and how serious the threat is.

I was home during the August recess, got to spend time not only with my wife and children, but with my parents. My mother reminded me of something that she said from time to time, and that is, sometimes life is full of lousy options. And yes, fighting this war is costly. But losing this war could be even costlier if Iraq becomes what Afghanistan once was, under the Taliban, a breeding ground, a training ground for terrorists that are bent on hurting our country.

And we have to remember these are people who have said they have the right to kill 4 million Americans. Two million of them are children and two of those 2 million are mine. We have to remember what the cost of defeat is.

So we finally have signs for cautious optimism. We all need to have an open mind when the report comes in.

□ 1915

#### MOURNING THE PASSING OF THE LATE JENNIFER DUNN, FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIRE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. REICHERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, today I join my colleagues and friends and the entire State of Washington in mourning the loss of former Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn. She was my predecessor here in the House of Representatives, represented the Eighth District of Washington State. I'm shocked and saddened by the news of her death today, and my condolences go out to the family: her husband, Keith; her children, Bryant, Reagan, and Angus; their wives; and the grandchildren, who meant so much to her.

And today as we were on the floor voting, Mr. Speaker, the news was presented to the Members of this body by a good friend, a longtime friend of hers, Doc Hastings is his nickname, from Central Washington. He had known Jennifer for over 30 years. And as Doc Hastings announced the news of her unexpected death, you could hear the sadness. You could hear the sadness. You could hear the gasp as the air went out of this room.

Jennifer Dunn served this House for 12 years. She was a well-respected Member of this body. She was in leadership in the Republican Party, one of the first females in leadership in this House. She was one of those Members who reached across the aisle; who worked with all; who had a dedicated, compassionate drive to represent the people of the Eighth District. She served with passion and the heart of a servant.

I first met Jennifer Dunn back in 1997 as I became the first elected sheriff in King County, Seattle, Washington. And I had the opportunity to travel back and forth between Washington State and Washington, D.C. to meet with our delegation. And Jennifer Dunn was always so gracious in allowing me time as the sheriff to come in and present the issues that were facing us in King County law enforcement.

She was very proud of the fact that she helped start the school resource officer program with grant funds. She was very proud of the fact that she helped acquire funding for the so important fight against methamphetamines that really are the scourge of this Nation today. She helped plant the seed of an effort in Washington State that still goes on today in the form of the Washington State Meth Initiative, people meeting today, deciding how to spend the money the Federal Government still provides as a result of her efforts in fighting the deadly addiction that meth causes in our communities.