

Dr. DeBakey was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom with distinction in 1969 and the National Medal of Science from President Ronald Reagan in 1987. I want to thank Dr. DeBakey and my former colleague, Chris Bell, for initiating the legislation that will allow us to award him the Congressional Gold Medal. He is deserving on his birthday of September 7 when he reached almost 100 years old. He is deserving of this great honor. We in Houston love him and admire him. We thank him for the service he has given and all of the lives that he has served. This is a great day when we have passed legislation to honor Dr. Michael E. DeBakey of Houston Texas, the Texas Medical Center, with a Congressional Gold Medal.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARDOZA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

FREQUENCY OF WITNESS INTIMIDATION

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, this evening I will continue my discussion on a growing and often deadly plague on our society, witness intimidation.

Each day, there is a story reported about civic-minded citizens being threatened with violence or becoming victims of fire bombings or shootings, all of which are designed to prevent them from testifying to crimes that they have witnessed.

Unfortunately, these tactics are working to form what has become commonly known as a "conspiracy of silence." Witnesses are literally afraid for their lives. If you do not believe me, listen to these recent reports: in Newark, New Jersey, for 2 years Reginald Roe was the star and sole witness that prosecutors were relying on in a case involving an ambush gang killing in a parking lot there. Having picked two men's pictures out of a photo array and sworn before a grand jury, he said: "I saw everything, I was there."

But when the case came to trial, with a group of gang members glaring at him in open court, Roe changed his story, testifying that he had heard the shots, but never saw who fired them. The two suspects were acquitted.

In Philadelphia, as the culture of fear continues to deter witnesses from coming forward, a Federal grand jury accused a drug dealer and his girlfriend of conspiring to intimidate a government witness by having the witness's neighborhood plastered with flyers labeling him "a rat and a snitch."

In Parachute, Colorado, Garfield County deputies arrested five teenagers

they believed threatened to beat someone with a baseball bat who planned to testify against them.

In my hometown of Baltimore, a 16-year-old witness in the case of the murder of 15-year-old Christine Richardson was moved from the city by relatives due to mounting threats. Indeed, the teenager was beaten the day after the murder occurred and was threatened by three girls, one of whom brandished a gun.

Mr. Speaker, the current situation is simply unacceptable. We should be making it easier for witnesses of crime to come forward. It should be the norm, rather than an odd occurrence, for criminals to be prosecuted. This issue must be addressed because without witnesses, there can be no justice in America.

Some success stories do exist. On August 31, Baltimore City State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy was able to get a witness to testify, which helped secure the conviction of 39-year-old Joseph Brinkley on two counts of attempted first-degree murder and handgun charges. In November of 2005, Brinkley approached two men as they hailed a cab and shot them in the back multiple times with a 9 millimeter semi-automatic handgun. The victim originally told detectives that he did not see the shooter, but recanted his statement after Brinkley approach him and his 9-year-old son.

Unfortunately, such bravery is rare. Our constituents must know that taking an interest in their community and reporting crime is the right thing to do and that the government will do everything possible to ensure their safety.

This is why I urge my colleagues to become a cosponsor of H.R. 933, the Witness Security and Protection Act of 2007, and to support its passage when it comes to the House floor. Upon enactment, this legislation authorizes \$90 million a year over the next 3 years to assist State and local law enforcement for witness protection while fostering Federal, State, and local partnerships. Priority will be given to prosecuting offices in States with an average of at least 100 murders during the immediate past 5 years; however, smaller entities also have a chance to receive funding.

State and local prosecutors will also be able to use these funds to provide witness protection on their own or to pay the cost of enrolling their witnesses in the short-term State witness protection program to be created within the U.S. Marshal Service.

Mr. Speaker, finally, improving protection for State and local witnesses will move us one step closer toward alleviating the fears of and threats to prospective witnesses and help to safeguard our communities from violence.

CONSTITUTION DAY

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, the Preamble of the Constitution reads: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

On this day, 220 years ago, the 55 delegates to the Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to hold their final meeting and sign a document that would change the course of history. Our Founding Fathers created a monumental plan to govern a sprawling young country dedicated to the idea that citizens were sovereign and should be as free from the tyranny of unchecked authority.

Constitution Day presents us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on what a magnificent job these 55 individuals did in crafting a compromise which has provided us with a unified and stable Nation. In their wisdom, they sought to protect the rights and liberties of individuals by dividing power and authority between States and the national government. The result is a system of shared roles designed to prevent any one element from gaining too much power.

Members of Congress have taken an oath to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and with that responsibility in mind it is vital for us to fully understand this sacred document. That is why today on the 220th anniversary of the signing of our Constitution I am introducing the AMERICA Act: A Modest Effort to Read and Instill the Constitution Again.

The AMERICA Act simply states that Members of Congress, Senators, and their respective staff read the Constitution annually.

Mr. Speaker, we Members of Congress are pledged to uphold this Constitution, to defend this Constitution, write the laws that implement this Constitution and from time to time propose constitutional amendments to change this Constitution. It is my hope that this modest yearly effort will renew and deepen our appreciation for the brilliance of the Constitution and the division and constraints on power contained within it.

The AMERICA Act is meant to be a reminder to lawmakers to stay within our country's founding framework as we conduct our legislative business. To our detriment, we often take the path of political expedience and ignore the limits so clearly written into the Constitution.

Today, I call on all Members of Congress to join me and rededicate ourselves to our founding principles of limited, constrained governance as enshrined in our Constitution. By studying our founding document, we will continue the legacy of these great men and their groundbreaking ideas, as well as develop the habits of citizenship

that keep the Constitution alive and relevant for our new generation of Americans.

I urge you all to join me in cosponsoring the Support America Act and its vital passage.

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

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ NOW

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, the President called for an enduring relationship with Iraq, a relationship that extends beyond his administration. He did not tell us exactly how long this would last, but we have to have a good idea, because the White House and the Secretary of Defense have said that our involvement on the Korean peninsula should be the model for Iraq. That would mean they are planning to occupy Iraq for 50 years or more.

Consider what this means: A lame duck administration is committing the United States to decades of occupation that will cost trillions of dollars and result in the deaths of countless American troops and Iraqi civilians. This is simply, simply, intolerable.

We were also told last week that the next Petraeus report will come in this coming March and we must wait for that report before we act. But we can't sit around and we can't wait. We can't wait for another Petraeus report; we can't sit around and wait for another Crocker report, because we are fiddling while Iraq burns. We have already had a 4½-year sugar-coated spin and TV show from the Oval Office.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. The occupation is damaging America morally, politically and economically, and it must end. The Congress has the constitutional power and the Congress has the responsibility to end it.

It is time to take bold action. It is time to use our power, our power of the purse, to bring our brave troops home. We must pass a bill requiring that all war spending be used for one purpose and one purpose only, to fully fund the safe, orderly and responsible withdrawal of American troops and military contractors. Commanders on the ground would be given what they need to ensure the safe redeployment of all troops. The bill should also set firm and doable dates for the start and the end of the withdrawal.

We can then help the Iraqis by replacing military action that isn't working with the strong regional and international diplomatic efforts that can work, work to bring about reconciliation and reconstruction to Iraq.

By using our power of the purse, the Congress can set the political agenda. We can build political momentum for withdrawal by offering the American people a clear and easily understood plan for ending our involvement in Iraq. And we can change the terms of the debate from the narrow “is the surge working” to “how soon can we get on with the job of bringing peace to Iraq and restoring America's moral leadership in the world.”

If we use our constitutional power of the purse, the administration would surely attack us. They would say we are cutting off funding for the troops. But that would be false. The troops would get every single last dollar they need to come home to their families, come home safe and come home sound.

To those who might have objections to this plan, I would say, is there a better way to end the occupation once and for all? I think the answer is no, there is none.

I ask all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me. Do what the American people sent us here to do: End the occupation of Iraq, and end it now.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT NICHOLAS CARNES

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

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to pay tribute to Sergeant Nicholas Carnes, a citizen soldier who believed in our Nation and acted on that belief to answer the Nation's call to serve.

Nick Carnes was from Dayton, Kentucky. He lost his life on August 26, 2007, in Orgun-e, Afghanistan. Sergeant Carnes served with Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery Regiment in the Army National Guard in Carrollton, Kentucky.

Nick Carnes was a lifelong Kentuckian who grew up in Dayton and graduated from Dayton High School in 2000. Nick joined the Army National Guard at 17 and began working at BB Riverboats. Shortly before his deployment in October 2006, he became a riverboat captain and married his sweetheart, Terri Bernstein Carnes. Sergeant Carnes was due back in Kentucky this month to celebrate his first anniversary with his wife.

I was at the sendoff for Alpha Battery in October of 2006. We saw the families. We saw the motivated soldiers who were ready to go and answer the call of service. I had the great honor and privilege to see Nick, to meet him and talk with him while I was there. And I was impressed with him. The one thing that this old soldier can say is I know a good noncommissioned officer, the backbone of our military, representing the character of our Nation, when I see one, and he clearly showed me that.

A man or a woman is the product of many things. First, Nick's mom, Wray Jean, and dad, Gove, you gave the Na-

tion a great young man. You gave our community a great young man. And that was reflected in a letter that he sent to Terri on November 11, 2006, a few weeks after the unit had activated. He wrote this:

“Dear Terri:

“Hello, beautiful. I hope this letter finds you in good spirits. Also, I hope you are coping well with my absence. You mean the world to me, my beautiful wife. I am so sorry that my decisions in life have forced me to be away from you. Unfortunately, I can't change those decisions. Even if I could, I believe that I would sacrifice time with you to be part of helping another country and defending our own. If the other soldiers who came before me did not stand up for freedom, then we would not have freedom. So I feel that I am obligated to stand up for freedom to ensure that everyone else after me has the same freedoms we do today.”

“I am not going to Afghanistan to kill Afghans. I am going there to help them stand up to the Taliban and regain control of their country. As people, sometimes we need help. Afghans happen to need help. Yes, helping the Afghans may put me in harm's way, but I have been well trained and will continue to receive training for the rest of my military career.”

“Everything will be fine. I feel confident and will do everything within my power to bring myself home safely. You need not worry, baby doll. I will go and do the job that is asked of me and return myself to your arms. I love you. Nick.”

The greatest value of our citizens serving is not simply their military proficiency, but the amazing character of a free people, embodied in the life of a young man like Nick Carnes, who understood the call that he was accepting and saw the higher good and the greater purpose.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I ask that we honor Sergeant Carnes and his service to our great Nation. Sergeant Carnes was a brave soldier, dedicated husband, loving son, who was taken from us all too quickly fighting for a cause that he truly believed in. I honor his bravery. I honor his legacy. My thoughts and prayers are with his friends and family during this solemn time.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting to rise and honor this young man who laid down his life for the defense of our Nation on Constitution Day. As I stand here tonight, we talk about the Constitution as one of the great cornerstones of the form of government that we have as a free people. Yet, its preservation will not occur unless there are young men and women like Nick Carnes to come forward in every generation to answer that call, to be willing, as he said, to place himself in harm's way to preserve the ideals that he believed in.

As we look tonight, I am reminded of the words of Jesus in John 15:13, who