

PRIVATIZATION OF IRAQI OIL— SPOILS OF WAR TO BUSH ALLY?

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

Mr. KUCINICH. The recent oil deal between the U.S.-based Hunt Oil Company and the Kurdistan Regional Government raises questions since Hunt Oil, a privately held oil company based in Texas and its founder, Ray Hunt, have close ties to Vice-President CHENEY and are large donors to President Bush. The deal also appears to undercut the goal of oil revenue sharing but is predictably consistent with the administration's attempt to privatize Iraqi oil assets. Both Hunt Oil Company and Kurdistan are strong allies with the Bush administration.

As I have said for 5 years, this war is about oil. The Bush administration desires private control of Iraqi oil, but we have no right to force Iraq to give up control of their oil. We have no right to set preconditions for Iraq which lead Iraq to giving up control of their oil. The Constitution of Iraq designates that the oil of Iraq is the property of all Iraqi people.

I am calling for a congressional investigation to determine the role the administration may have played in the Hunt-Kurdistan deal, the effect the deal could have on the oil revenue sharing plan and the attempt by the administration to privatize Iraqi oil.

EARMARKING THE SWAMP

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, after we Republicans lost the majority in last year's elections, the new majority promised that they would "drain the swamp." The new majority seemed to recognize that the political cost of earmarks far outweighed the benefits, and modest reforms were instituted to make the process more transparent.

However, it soon became clear that the earmark reform rhetoric was not matched by reality. The old majority seems just as mired in the mud as the old.

Still, it was with some excitement that I recently discovered in the House-passed Interior appropriations bill a \$750,000 earmark for the Great Swamp National Wildlife Preserve in New Jersey. Predictably, this earmark was not to drain the swamp, but to preserve it.

This begs the question: If we can't stop passing earmarks to preserve swamps, how will we ever drain the earmark swamp?

Mr. Speaker, our constituents and this institution deserve far better. Let's follow up on our promises for earmark reform with actual reform.

THE NEED TO INSURE MORE OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, the news about health care in our Nation continues to get more discouraging, especially when it comes to health insurance for children. New Census data shows that the number of children without health insurance in the United States has grown over the last year by 700,000, to nearly 8.7 million children. This means that now one in nine American kids do not have health insurance.

To try and reverse these unacceptable trends, the Democratic Congress voted last month to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program. Our legislation will provide an additional 5 million low-income children with the health insurance they need to live healthier lives. These kids are already eligible but not enrolled.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush has threatened to veto this legislation, despite bipartisan support it received in Congress and from our Governors. In the face of these discouraging new Census numbers, it is time for the President to end his veto threat and pledge his support for this legislation that will provide 11 million children with the health care coverage they need and deserve.

OH NO! ANOTHER TAX INCREASE

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, as air travel increases, revenue to airports, of course, increases as well. Much of that money is from hidden taxes passengers pay. But now this increased revenue isn't enough for some. They want to tax flyers even more to fly.

Right now, if a citizen buys a typical round trip ticket, the fare is about \$230. But additional taxes raise the fare another \$45. So the passenger is now really paying \$275.

Airports now want to collect more Federal taxes from each passenger by increasing the passenger facility charge, another word for tax, to \$7 per passenger per segment. What that means is a family of four that flies from Odessa, Texas, to Washington, D.C., with a stopover in Dallas, is going to pay another \$112 in more taxes.

Airports already get plenty of money. They sell bonds; they get millions in Federal, City and State taxes; they charge airlines for gates and the right to land; they get taxes off rental cars; and they lease airport space to businesses.

Airports should make do with the abundance of revenue they already get from the taxpayers. Don't raise taxes any more on passengers.

And that's just the way it is.

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HUNT OIL

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

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, while President Bush is asking Congress and the American people to give his failed policy in Iraq more time, even some of the President's closest allies don't believe the strategy will work.

Last week, it was reported that Hunt Oil Company of Dallas, Texas had signed an oil exploration and production deal with the Kurdish Regional Government. That Hunt Oil Company is owned by Ray Hunt, major campaign supporter of President Bush and a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. His decision to bypass the Iraqi Government in Baghdad and negotiate directly with the Kurds shows his lack of confidence that Iraq will develop a functioning government in the near future, and it undermined important efforts for the Iraqi oil sharing law, which collapsed last week.

While President Bush is asking our Nation to sacrifice more of our brightest young soldiers and to spend hundreds of billions more in taxpayer dollars in pursuit of his Iraq strategy, one of the President's closest allies and advisers is betting that his strategies will continue to fail and, in fact, is looking to profit from it.

VETERANS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, as I travel throughout my south-central Michigan district, I have learned over the past few months in town hall meetings, small group meetings, or coffees, that virtually all Americans believe we owe a great debt of gratitude to those who have worn the uniform in service to our country.

Unfortunately, Democrat leadership in both Chambers appears willing to make the veterans appropriations bill, which funds our Nation's veterans health care, become part of political gamesmanship in Washington.

It appears Democrats may withhold sending this bipartisan veterans funding bill to the President in an effort to ensure greater spending levels for their pet projects. There is a chance Democrats will hold off on final passage of this legislation so they can include it in a massive budget-busting spending bill at the end of the year.

Let me be very clear. The funding of veterans should not be a political issue. Congress should swiftly pass this important legislation, and Republicans and Democrats should jointly celebrate when it becomes law.