

order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HOLDING THE ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE U.S. LEGACY IN IRAQ

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, it is past time to hold this administration accountable for its actions in Iraq and for its actions throughout the region.

Our standing in the world and throughout the Middle East is at an all-time low. And our standing in popularity has just about disappeared. The administration's policies have only brought instability and conflict. The strategy of preemptive war has, and we have seen it, been met with disbelief. It has been met with criticism from all corners of the world.

The administration keeps beating the drum of war with Iran, and its inaction in northern Iraq may lead to armed conflict with Turkey. A real leader, an effective Commander in Chief, knows that the use of force should be the very last possible option, not the first. The blame for this sits squarely in the Oval Office.

And what about the people the administration was supposed to be liberating? Many live now without the basic services they had for generations: electricity, clean water, basic health care, education. And at least 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes. Many are displaced within their own country, and millions more have escaped to neighboring Iran and Syria. Despite what the administration has claimed, the fault does not lie on the Iraqi people or the international community. Once again the blame belongs one place and one place only: that's with our administration.

Let's look at our international human rights record, Mr. Speaker. From Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib, a scandal, to the mercenary Blackwater security forces, the face of American policy emerges as goons, thugs, and cowboys.

Or what about torture? The administration says it doesn't promote torture. Yet day in and day out we read news media reports of an administration promoting rendition and "enhanced interrogation methods." These methods allow for everything short of death. The responsibility lies at the feet of one man. Not a general. Not the Justice Department. Not the men and women of the intelligence community.

And certainly not the brave men and women who are serving us in Iraq. One man.

And it does not get much better here, right here at home, where the administration is pushing for more ways to spy on American citizens. They are attacking their political adversaries by questioning their patriotism. They even outed a covert CIA operative. The President at that time said that anyone caught for such an action would be removed from his staff. Now it turns out that Karl Rove, Richard Armitage, Scooter Libby, and Ari Fleischer didn't count and the administration chose to put them above the law.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves who's really to blame. I can only think of one person.

And, finally, most shameful of all, the legacy of this occupation of Iraq has left a generation of men and women with physical and mental wounds that may never heal. And how did the administration thank them for their bravery on behalf of our Nation? Walter Reed. Long waits for necessary medical treatment at local VA hospitals. And in some cases, extended deployments. What kind of Commander in Chief would do that?

Remember the good old days when past Presidents said, and meant it, that "the buck stops here," the buck stops with them? This administration seems to think the buck stops everywhere but 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the President to take the responsibility for his actions and turn the tide around, and he can do that by providing our men and women in uniform the equipment they need to come home safely; by funding the safe, responsible, and timely withdrawal of our troops; and by regaining, in turn, our place as a world leader promoting peace and stability.

Mr. Speaker, hold this administration accountable. Bring our troops home. End this senseless occupation.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME: ROCKSPRINGS, TEXAS

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in the vastness of west Texas, the sky is a brilliant brazen blue and a place where sparse live oak trees fight to even exist. In the stillness of these arid plains is the remote south Texas town of Rocksprings.

The people of this community of only 1,250 had a homecoming Saturday for their favorite son, Deputy Gilmer Hernandez. I was honored to be there. The ceremony, ironically, took place on the courthouse square under the pecan trees and in front of the old limestone courthouse. Ironic because, you see, Mr. Speaker, the town was celebrating the release of Gilmer Hernandez from the Federal penitentiary. He had been sent to prison for, as local sheriff,

Donnie Letsinger put it "just doing his job for the rest of us." The sheriff spoke the sentiments of most of the townspeople that I got to talk to.

The town was decorated with signs and flags and banners in windows of houses and in front of stores. Anyway, the ceremony started off with a lengthy prayer by the local Baptist preacher, and then there was a rousing pledge to the flag. There were tears and speeches by politicians. The mayor, Rachel Gallegos, presented Deputy Hernandez a proclamation from the city as Rocksprings' Favorite Son.

Most of the community turned out, many carrying signs of "Welcome Home, Gilmer." Gilmer's family was there, his wife, Ashley; and his wonderful young daughter. When Gilmer was shipped off to Federal prison, the people of this small town rallied around his family. The town paid the rent on his pickup truck, took his family into their homes, provided food, and took care of his mortgage on his house. They sent him letters while he was incarcerated; they prayed for him; and when he got home, he already had a job with the city and the local phone company.

Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting celebration considering Gilmer was a convicted felon. Gilmer Hernandez grew up in Rocksprings. His family is from there. He became a deputy sheriff for Edwards County. He always dreamed of being a lawman, even though he made a little bit over just \$20,000 a year patrolling a county the size of Delaware.

Here's what happened sometime ago: while this young deputy was on routine patrol late at night, he came in contact with an SUV that ran the red light in Rocksprings, Texas. He pulled the vehicle over; and as he approached it, the truck sped off and swerved to run over the deputy. Gilmer pulled his weapon and shot out two tires in self-defense. The vehicle stopped, and numerous illegals, including the coyote smuggling the illegals into America, took off running. But one of Gilmer's bullets ricocheted in the SUV and hit a passenger as Gilmer fired at the fleeing vehicle. This was the first time Gilmer Hernandez had ever fired his pistol.

The sheriff and the Texas Rangers investigated the incident; and after investigating it thoroughly, they cleared Hernandez.

But upon the assistance of the arrogant Mexican Government one year after the incident, our almighty Federal Government prosecuted Gilmer for a civil rights violation, saying he should not have continued firing at the vehicle after it drove past him. So Gilmer Hernandez was sent off to prison at the behest of Mexico with the United States being the puppet. By the way, all of the illegals got to stay in the United States.

Many of the townspeople told me Saturday they thought Gilmer was right to defend himself. One old crusty Texas rancher called Gilmer a political prisoner.

I and others of this House have asked the President to pardon Gilmer Hernandez, and we hope eventually the President does pardon him. He has, after all, served his time.

But Saturday, as the magnificent sun began to set, the town of Rocksprings came out to cheer and honor and praise and totally support its favorite native son. After all the hoopla, the town went down the road to the fairgrounds for barbecue and homemade desserts. And, by the way, the sheriff gave Gilmer back his badge, hoping some day he will be able to wear it again.

Deputy Gilmer Hernandez is a remarkable person, and the town of Rocksprings is a uniquely remarkable place to be from.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1945

THE IRAQ WAR

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

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush requested an additional \$46 billion war request. This request is on top of an existing \$142 billion request pending from earlier this year.

The President told reporters that the funding was simply for day-to-day military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. He said that the bill provides for basic needs like bullets and body armor, protection against IEDs, and mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles.

The President would lead us to believe that there are only two options in Iraq; Congress must either continue to fund the war indefinitely, or we must choose to pull the rug out from under the troops and strand them in the field without body armor and bullets. This, of course, is a ridiculous characterization of our position. We feel that continuing to referee a civil war in Iraq runs counter to our national security interests.

There is no military solution to the war in Iraq no matter how many soldiers, weapons and dollars you dump into the country. Bombs and bullets have not and will not bring us peace in Iraq. I believe there is only one answer to the war in Iraq: a fully funded redeployment of our troops and military contractors.

I think a reasonable Member of Congress would welcome a plan from the President on how we're going to safely leave Iraq, and we would be happy to fund it. But asking us to continue funding, providing funds for the occupation of Iraq until President Bush decides to change course is tantamount to asking us to just continue to support the war.

The choice is clear; it is time to face the facts: We either provide funds to continue the war or we provide funds to end the war.

Mr. Speaker and Members, I'm bothered by this request. I'm bothered by it

because the President is playing politics with the issue. The President of the United States is saying, "I want this \$46 billion and I want it now, and I want to use it for very necessary armor and equipment," because he knows that the Members of Congress do not like to be seen in a bad light, having folks believe that somehow they're not providing support for the soldiers. And he keeps testing the will of this Congress with these kinds of antics.

We know that the American public wants us out of Iraq. We also know the American public wants to indicate its support for the soldiers who are not there because they've decided that we would go to war, but rather, they answered the President's call because they are patriotic, many of them needed jobs, they needed resources, they needed money, so they're there.

Everybody supports the soldiers, but the President is trying to set us up. He is trying to set us up so that if we don't immediately vote on this \$46 billion it will look as if we are not giving the soldiers the necessary equipment in order to wage the war. This is absolutely ridiculous.

And I don't know how long this President thinks he can get along with mismanaging this war in the way that he's doing. We have 101 questions we ought to be forcing on him. First of all, where are the 190,000 weapons that have been lost? Where is the money we were supposed to have been getting from the oil wells in Iraq? Where are the billions of dollars that they sent over in cash in the beginning of this war? What happened to all of that money?

We can go on and on and on with questions about Blackwater and the contractors and the mercenaries. We can go on and on about this government that they put together that does not function and will not function. We can ask them, whose side are you on, the Sunnis, the Shias? And now you're trying to manage what Turkey does with the Kurds. The Kurds killed Turkish soldiers. The Turks threatened to go over and invade the Kurdish territory, and now we're over there trying to manage that. It is complicated. We have no business there.

This occupation is draining us, not only the lives of young men and women who are there trying to answer the President's call, but the dollars that should be going into comprehensive universal health care, truly supporting Leave No Child Behind, truly supporting moderate and low-income housing, truly being used to rebuild the infrastructure that's falling apart all over America.

Come on, Mr. President, don't challenge us this way. There are some of us who know what we're going to do, and others are going to get wise very soon.

MILITARY DEATH GRATUITIES TO TAX FAVORED ACCOUNTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman CHARLIE RANGEL and the House Ways and Means Committee for their work in putting together a package of legislation called the Heroes Earning Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2007, which is designed to help members of the United States Armed Forces and their families. I'm especially grateful, Mr. Speaker, that the committee has indicated plans to include in this legislation a bill that I first introduced in 2005.

H.R. 418 would permit military families to receive the death gratuity to invest the full amount into certain tax-favored accounts. A death gratuity is a \$100,000 payment paid to survivors of servicemembers whose death resulted from combat-related circumstances.

Current tax law limits the amount that recipients of the death gratuity can place in tax-preferred accounts, such as a Roth IRA or Coverdell Education Savings Account. This legislation would change that to allow recipients to contribute up to the full amount of the gratuity payment to these accounts.

Mr. Speaker, as the families of our fallen heroes try to put their lives back together, they need all the help they can get. The families should not have to worry about saving the death gratuity to pay for health care, college or other expenses and then have the government come in and tax the interest on that savings. This bill would help ensure that does not happen.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this legislation was brought to my attention by Captain Michael Ceres, a constituent stationed at Marine Corps Air Station New River. Captain Ceres, who just returned from serving in Iraq, contacted my office and suggested that Congress should institute this change to ease the burden on grieving military families.

Mr. Speaker, the Joint Committee on Taxation has scored this legislation at no cost, meaning that the actual cost of this proposal is less than \$500,000 over 9 years. Our men and women in uniform serve this Nation with great honor and distinction; many give their lives for this country. We owe it to our fallen military heroes to expand this option of families who receive the death gratuity, families who have paid the ultimate cost with the loss of their loved one.

H.R. 418 has also received the endorsement of The Military Coalition, a group of prominent national military and veterans organizations that represent more than 5.5 million members plus their families.

Mr. Speaker, of the 35 organizations that have voiced their support for H.R. 418, let me name just a few: the Air Force Association, AMVETS, Fleet Reserve Association, Gold Star Wives of America, Military Officers Association of America, Marine Corps League, Navy League of the United States, and there are many others.