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## House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

The prophet Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale. Why is it, then, so difficult to pray enclosed here in Congress?

Lord, at times it seems we are drowning in a sea of confusion amidst contradictory currents. Like the prophet, we seem alive under water, with so much of the world swimming between You and us. Not knowing if we are only treading water, seeing just beneath the surface, or actually afraid of the depths, we survive, but do not know what to pray for.

Content to let the motion of this great Nation carry us where it will, we seem to live within the walls of a false security. The dangers and terror swirling around us cause us to doubt our own power, so we tend to trust outer forces to hold us for another day.

Help us, Lord, to recognize in ourselves Your reluctant prophet. Like Jonah, we need You to prove Yourself our savior. Have Your way with us. Spit us up onto the shores You would have us trod. Make us realistic in achieving Your purposes by addressing the uneasy issues You lay before us today. Show us the way to turn things around, and with repentant hearts become once again Your people.

We ask this, believing in the sign of Jonah, both now and forever. Amen.

### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY) come forward

and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to five 1-minutes on each side.

### IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 800

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

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I rise this morning in a pair of work boots that I have owned for 26 years to express my strong support for H.R. 800, the Employee Free Choice Act.

I wore these boots when I worked for the Poweshiek County Road Department building roads and bridges on the county roads where I grew up. I wear them proudly today as a reminder of the hard work and sacrifice made every day in this country by working men and women who exercise their constitutional right to freedom of association by joining labor unions.

The Employee Free Choice Act provides greater protection to that freedom of association by providing for majority sign-up, first contract mediation and binding arbitration, and tougher penalties for violation of workers' rights.

Protecting the rights of workers has been a long and difficult struggle. Seventy-five years ago this month, Congress passed the Norris-LaGuardia Act, which declared it to be the public policy of the United States that employees be allowed to organize and engage in collective bargaining, free from coercion by their employers. The Em-

ployee Free Choice Act reinforces that public policy for labor negotiations in the 21st century.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this important bill, and I look forward to the day when it is signed into law.

### PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO A SECRET BALLOT

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

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today, the House will take up legislation that will remove the right of Americans to a secret ballot in their union elections. When asked, only 6 percent of Americans supported eliminating a secret ballot, while 89 percent supported keeping their rights.

Eighty-four percent of Americans said that they did not want their choices to be made public. And when asked about this legislation, only 14 percent of Americans said they supported it; 79 percent opposed.

Madam Speaker, we cannot advance the interests of Americans by taking away their right to a secret ballot. Since 2000, Congress has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to improve voting in America. We even support secret ballot elections in places like Poland and Afghanistan, where secret ballots are banned.

Madam Speaker, we know that the union movement has lost over 3,000 dues-paying members alone. But just because only 12 percent of Americans now choose to pay into a union is no reason to attack our rights as Americans to a secret ballot.

### TRIBUTE TO THE LATE USMC SERGEANT CLINTON W. AHLQUIST

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g.,  1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor United States Marine Corps Sergeant Clinton W. Ahlquist of Creede, Colorado, who was killed in the line of duty while serving his country honorably in Iraq.

Sergeant Ahlquist wore his Nation's uniform proudly, and we should all pay tribute to this brave and courageous young man.

Every day our men and women in uniform willingly face unknown dangers as part of the effort to promote peace and democracy throughout the world. Their individual stories of honor and courage must not be forgotten.

Clinton Ahlquist moved to Creede, Colorado, during his freshman year of high school. Clinton touched countless lives during his 3 years at Creede High School.

Ahlquist was killed in Ar Ramadi, Iraq on Tuesday, February 20, 2007, by an improvised explosive device while patrolling a Medivac helicopter. He was 20 years old.

My heart goes out to Clinton's family and friends and those whose lives he touched throughout his service to our country. I am humbled by their strength and perseverance in the face of such hardship.

Sergeant Ahlquist died performing noble deeds, serving and protecting his fellow countrymen. Clinton and his family and friends have exhibited a rare form of selflessness and courage.

Madam Speaker, I submit this recognition to the United States House of Representatives in honor of their sacrifice so that Clinton W. Ahlquist may live on in memory.

#### PENCE EXCHANGE WITH AMBASSADOR RICHARD C. HOLBROOK

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

Mr. PENCE. As many Democrats make plans to cut or restrict funding to our troops in Iraq, yesterday before the Foreign Affairs Committee a dissenting voice came from a surprising place. Richard Holbrook was the former Assistant Secretary of State for the Clinton administration and has worked in diplomatic roles for every Democratic President since Lyndon Johnson.

Yesterday, Ambassador Holbrook appeared before our committee and I asked him directly, Do you oppose efforts to eliminate or reduce funding to our troops on the ground in Iraq? Ambassador Holbrook responded: "I do, I oppose it." When I asked him to elaborate, he went on to say: "I think that if the Commander in Chief has deployed the troops, the ultimate weapon of denying them the resources to carry out their mission only puts them in harm's way, greater harm's way. I would remind you that we cannot cut the troop funding."

I commend Ambassador Holbrook for his storied career in American foreign affairs and his willingness to speak truth to power, even the power of many in his own political party.

As Ambassador Holbrook said yesterday before the Foreign Affairs Committee: "We cannot cut off funding for our troops."

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF GEORGE BECKER

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, as we take a very important vote for organized labor today, I rise to honor the life of George Becker, who passed away last month.

George served as president of the United Steelworkers of America from 1993 to 2001. He started working in a mill in 1944 at the age of 15. He fought in World War II and Korea.

After fighting for his country abroad, he spent over 50 years fighting for working Americans here at home. As president of the Steelworkers, George Becker fought tirelessly for workplace safety, for workers' rights and for fair trade practices.

I wish to express my sincere condolences to George Becker's wife, Jane, my constituent and my friend. Jane shared life with George for 57 years. George Becker will be deeply missed, but his selfless devotion to America's workers will always be remembered.

#### OPPOSITION TO H.R. 800

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

Mr. WALBERG. Madam Speaker, it is clearly and cleverly entitled the "Employee Free Choice Act," but we are about to consider a bill that strips away the very tool that protects the sanctity of a free and open society, the private ballot.

Private ballots ensure workers have elections without fraudulent interference, coercion, or intimidation. Confidence will be lost with a system that forces workers to publicly declare their intentions. The AFL-CIO recognized this hypocrisy by expressing support for secret ballots when workers are presented the opportunity to decertify a union. They have argued that private ballot elections "provide the surest means for avoiding decisions which are the result of group pressures and not individual decisions."

As a former union steelworker, I believe in the merits of unionization, when appropriate. I also believe that every American worker should have the right to choose freely and privately. Congress has a duty to defeat legislation that strips workers of this important right, and I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on H.R. 800.

#### KUCINICH OPPOSED TO ATTACK ON IRAN

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

Mr. KUCINICH. I am totally opposed to any attack on Iran. It would have disastrous consequences for Iran, the U.S., the region and the world. It would put 140,000 U.S. troops in great jeopardy. It would expose Israel to maximum peril. Even the talk about such an attack should be subject to a review not only by Congress, but by an international tribunal. Iran has neither the intention nor the capability of attacking the United States, yet the administration has been preparing for some time for an aggressive war against Iran.

Congress must insist the administration come forward now with facts, not fiction, regarding Iran. We must not allow the President to remain unchallenged while he continues to use the media to create a pretext for an illegal war.

Congress must insist the President come to the full Congress for permission to take any action against Iran. If the President proceeds to attack Iran after an express congressional authorization under article I, section 8, both he and the Vice President should be subject to impeachment.

We must take a stand against aggressive war or we will lose our democracy.

#### TALKS WITH IRAN AND SYRIA

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, the Secretary of State made news this week. During testimony before Congress she announced that the U.S. will join high level talks with Iran and Syria to work towards stability of the Middle East. Madam Speaker, this is a welcomed step in the right direction.

Diplomacy must not be the only option available to us, but it should certainly be one of them. President Reagan understood this principle. In dealing with the Soviets, he never shied away from publicly denouncing their acts of aggression and their disregard for human rights. Even so, he maintained open lines of communication with his Soviet counterparts throughout his Presidency. Reagan did so because he understood a very important principle, when done in the right way, tackling with your enemies is a sign of strengthen, not a sign of weakness. You don't have to give anyone away in order to dialogue.

The same can be true today. Talking with Iran and Syria and continuing to promote stability in the region can go hand in hand if done in the right way. This is the right move, and I applaud the administration for making it.