

CONGRESS SHOULD REJECT
DEMOCRATIC PLAN ON IRAQ

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, in January, President Bush described his plan to win the war in Iraq, and last week Speaker PELOSI described her plan to end the war in Iraq. The only problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is, as George Orwell said, the quickest way to end a war is to lose it; and I believe the Democrat plan to micromanage our war in Iraq with benchmarks and deadlines for withdrawal is just that, a prescription for retreat and defeat.

But common sense and the Constitution teach us that Congress can declare war, we can fund or choose not to fund a war, but Congress should never attempt to conduct war. In fact, this is a broadly held view by some of the leading arteries of America's traditionally liberal media. The L.A. Times yesterday said: "Congress can cut funding for Iraq, but it shouldn't micromanage the war." In The Washington Post today, the lead editorial entitled "The Pelosi Plan For Iraq" said: "In short, the Democrat proposal is an attempt to impose detailed management on a war without regard to the war itself."

I commend these American newspapers for their sensible reasoning. Common sense and the Constitution demand Congress should reject the Pelosi plan.

CBO SAYS PRESIDENT'S BUDGET
WILL NOT REACH BALANCE IN 2012

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

Mr. Sires. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a primary analysis of the President's fiscal 2008 budget and found that the administration would fall short of its claim of balancing the Federal budget by 2012 without raising taxes. This contradicts comments made by the President when he unveiled the budget last month and claimed that his budget will be balanced by 2012 without raising taxes.

According to the CBO report, the President's budget will run a \$9 billion deficit just 5 years from now. That report also concludes that the President's budget will lead to higher taxes for millions of middle-class Americans. First, his budget only includes a 1-year tax fix for the alternative minimum tax, which will lead to a \$247 billion tax increase on middle-class families over the next 5 years. Then the President's health care plan will result in a tax increase of \$500 billion over the next 10 years on middle-class families. This is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that the President levels with the American people about the budget that he proposed a month ago.

CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS
STILL WILLING TO PROVIDE
PRESIDENT BUSH RUBBER
STAMP ON WAR

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, at a time when the American people are demanding a change of direction in Iraq, congressional Republicans are more than willing to provide the President another blank check to continue the status quo.

After 4 years of incompetent planning and bad projections, it is time that Congress hold both the Iraqi Government and the Bush administration accountable. And yet Republican leaders continue to say we should just give the President what he wants, no questions asked. That is what the old Republican-controlled Congress did six times.

Later this month, the House is going to have a choice: give the President another blank check to move ahead with the status quo in Iraq, or take the war in a new direction. The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Health and Accountability Act is that new direction. Far from being micromanagement, as many Republicans call it, this legislation sets policy for equipping our troops, policy for refocusing the war on terror, and policy for a responsible redeployment.

I urge all of my colleagues to seriously consider this change in direction.

CONGRESS CANNOT AFFORD TO
GIVE THE PRESIDENT ANOTHER
BLANK CHECK ON IRAQ

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

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, after 4 years, billions of dollars and thousands of lives lost, we simply cannot reward failure with a blank check in the war in Iraq. I refuse to rubber-stamp more failed policies.

In the weeks ahead, we have the opportunity as representatives of the people to change the direction in Iraq without jeopardizing the safety and well-being of our troops. We must finally require Iraqis to take control of their own country and their own destiny.

The President has threatened to veto legislation that contains his own benchmarks for success in Iraq; provides our troops with the training and equipment they need; and ensures that when our brave soldiers return home, they get the kind of care that they deserve. Our legislation also commits additional funds to fight the forgotten war in Afghanistan and against al Qaeda, strengthening our national security.

Mr. Speaker, the people of New York's 24th District sent me here to address the war in Iraq and to start this country on a long overdue new direction for America.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Alabama). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

REAUTHORIZING UNITED STATES
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUB-
LIC DIPLOMACY

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1003) to amend the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 to reauthorize the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1003

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

**SECTION 1. REAUTHORIZATION OF UNITED
STATES ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY.**

Section 1334 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6553) is amended by striking "October 1, 2006" and inserting "October 1, 2009".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

This legislation extends the mandate of an important bipartisan panel created by Congress, appointed by the President and working on behalf of the American people. This group keeps a watchful eye on major efforts by the private sector and the U.S. Government to inform and to influence opinions overseas and to improve America's understanding of other lands.

Since September 11, 2001, such efforts, known collectively as "public diplomacy," have been recognized as an integral part of our country's work to foster better relations with people abroad. Congress created the predecessor of this panel more than half a century ago. Now it is called the United States Advisory Commission on

Public Diplomacy, and it deserves our sustained and enthusiastic support.

The commission regularly delivers its findings and makes recommendations to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of State and the general public with easily accessible reports. These reports also include assessments of the scholarly integrity and political neutrality of the cultural and educational exchange programs of the Department of State.

Mr. Speaker, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy does good and important work. Its mandate should be extended not merely annually, but for nearly 3 years more, as our legislation ensures. I am proud to be the author of this legislation, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support this short, but important, bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the gentlelady's work on this bill. The legislation before us today reauthorizes the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy through fiscal year 2009. Unique among nations, the United States maintains a vast network of formal and informal contacts with the people of the world and conducts the world's only global foreign policy.

The purpose of public diplomacy is to provide this worldwide audience with information about the United States and to convey an accurate and positive image of our beloved country and our foreign policy objectives. To accomplish this mission, the United States Government has at its disposal a number of important tools, including education and cultural exchange programs, extensive and proactive public affairs programs centered in our embassies, and a network of radio and television services broadcasting accurate and objective programming to a world community.

With H.R. 1003, Congress is reauthorizing the advisory commission for another 2 years to continue its important work to study our public diplomacy programs and reach some useful conclusions about how our government can do a better job of creating a dialogue with foreign audiences.

I urge the commission during the next 2 years to step up its efforts to study in more detail our public diplomacy and broadcasting efforts and advise policymakers in the administration and in Congress on appropriate changes and reforms that will improve our outreach efforts to the people of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would again emphasize the importance of my bill and urge all of my colleagues to vote in the affirmative.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1003.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1230

CALLING FOR RELEASE OF ISRAELI SOLDIERS HELD CAPTIVE BY HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 107) calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 107

Whereas Israel completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000;

Whereas Congress previously expressed its concern for Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon and Syrian-controlled territory of Lebanon in Public Law 106-89 (113 Stat. 1305; November 8, 1999), which required the Secretary of State to raise the status of missing Israeli soldiers with appropriate government officials of Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, and other governments in the region, and to submit to Congress reports on those efforts and any subsequent discovery of relevant information;

Whereas on June 18, 2000, the United Nations Security Council welcomed and endorsed United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report that Israel had withdrawn completely from Lebanon under the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 (1978);

Whereas Israel completed its withdrawal from Gaza on September 12, 2005;

Whereas on June 25, 2006, Hamas and allied terrorists crossed into Israel to attack a military post, killing two soldiers and wounding a third, Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped;

Whereas on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel to attack Israeli troops patrolling the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon, killing three, wounding two, and kidnapping Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev;

Whereas Gilad Shalit has been held in captivity by Hamas for more than 7 months;

Whereas Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev have been held in captivity by Hezbollah for more than 6 months;

Whereas Hamas and Hezbollah have withheld all information on the health and welfare of the men they have kidnapped; and

Whereas, contrary to the most basic standards of humanitarian conduct, Hamas and Hezbollah have prevented access to the Israeli captives by competent medical personnel and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) demands that—

(A) Hamas immediately and unconditionally release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit;

(B) Hezbollah accept the mandate of United Nations Security Council Resolution

1701 (2006) by immediately and unconditionally releasing Israeli soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev; and

(C) Hezbollah and Hamas accede to the most basic standards of humanitarian conduct and allow prompt access to the Israeli captives by competent medical personnel and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross;

(2) expresses—

(A) its vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders;

(B) its strong support and deep interest in achieving a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside of the State of Israel;

(C) its ongoing concern and sympathy for the families of Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser, and Eldad Regev and all other missing Israeli soldiers; and

(D) its full commitment to seek the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli captives; and

(3) condemns—

(A) Hamas and Hezbollah for the cross border attacks and kidnappings which precipitated weeks of intensive armed conflict between Israel, Hezbollah, and armed Palestinian groups; and

(B) Iran and Syria, the primary state sponsors of global terrorism and the patrons of Hezbollah and Hamas, for their ongoing support for international terrorism.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank Chairman TOM LANTOS and ranking minority member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, as well as the ranking minority member on the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, MIKE PENCE. These Members joined with me at the very outset of the Congress to introduce H. Res. 107. The resolution is an exercise in compassion and it expresses the sense of the House regarding the three Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped last summer.

As of today, Gilad Shalit has been a captive for 261 days, roughly 8½ months; Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev have been captives for 244 days. That is a day more than 8 months. To date, there has been no access to these men by medical personnel or the Red Cross or Red Crescent.

They have not been permitted to send mail to their loved ones. We don't know if they are ill, we don't know if