

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

IRAQ

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, good evening.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago I had the privilege to visit our service men and women serving in Iraq, and I saw for myself what is really happening on the ground.

I met with several service men and women from cities that I represent, the city of Azusa, East Los Angeles and West Covina in California. I spoke with troop commanders, Iraqi women representing NGOs, and two parliamentarian women.

My trip to Iraq confirmed my belief that we must supply better support for our troops, including redeployment out of Iraq. But supporting our troops means securing our troops and making sure we minimize the risks they really face. Our troops, as you know, are overextended. The length of time they are spending in Iraq is not only demanding, but exhausting. For many of them, it is not their first tour either, this is their second, third and maybe even fourth.

While our troops remain committed to their work, they are concerned about the impact their duty is having on them and their families. The time they spend with their families is short-er with each tour of duty.

Our troops are concerned about the lack of adequate equipment. Some troops lack the basic equipment needed to do their job, like body armor. In fact, one soldier told me they don't have light bulbs. I said light bulbs for what? They said well, Congresswoman, for our vehicles. When we are asked to go into the communities, if we don't have light bulbs on our vehicles we can't see. Another one mentioned they didn't have scissors, and I said, Why do you need scissors? And he said because if one of my men gets hit, I need to have scissors to be able to bandage and provide whatever help that person needs.

In some cases they told me that the equipment they use is unreliable due to overexcessive use. And I was appalled to learn that some service members are forced to share their equipment with recent arrivals. The new members of the service that we are sending in in this surge or escalation are actually taking equipment away from those who are being currently deployed there. Without the proper equipment, our troops face significant and unnecessary risk to their lives.

Supporting our troops also means redeployment and an Iraqi nation that will govern itself and its people. Unfortunately, the best plan President Bush offers is another blank check request for his already failed policies.

In California, the 32nd Congressional District that I represent, as you can see, 13 of our sons have already given their lives, the ultimate sacrifice. U.S. casualties, as you know, are close to 3,200, and more than 24,000 service men and women have been injured or permanently disabled, and more than half of those will not be able to lead normal lives.

This blank check that President Bush provides must end. By deploying additional service men and women into combat, the President shows just how out of touch he is with the real needs of our troops and the reality of the situation. The increase of troops will do nothing to improve the long-term security situation.

The President's escalation plan ignores the very needs of these veterans. The crisis, as you know, at Walter Reed highlights the fact that this administration has not prioritized the health care needs of our returning veterans. And as Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to protect our troops and veterans when our Commander in Chief will not. We need a plan that will ensure that there will not be permanent bases in Iraq. And we need to ensure that all troops are provided with adequate equipment and training needed to do their job safely.

Our plan must require the Iraqis to take control of Iraq and bring other Arab states together to help solve this problem. Our plan must refocus also on Afghanistan. And our plan must ensure that our service men and women and veterans receive the best care available when they return home.

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This includes traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, culturally competent health care, housing, and education.

The troops and their families have kept their promise to us. We must now keep our promise to them, and I am proud that we have made such a plan available. The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health & Iraq Accountability Act, in my opinion, is key to this success. It supports our troops. It holds the administration accountable. It establishes a plan for redeployment, and provides for our veterans.

My trip to Iraq strengthened my belief that the right course of action is to redeploy our troops out of Iraq. Our men and women in uniform are doing their job, and we in Congress must do ours so that our troops will come home and receive the care that they deserve. We must not continue to turn our backs on those who proudly have served our Nation, and I will continue to fight and support our troops.

I look forward to their redeployment and their safe return to their families, to their friends, and to their loved ones, and I look forward to a resolution, and an Iraq governed by Iraqis, and a world safer and more secure for all of us. And I know our leadership will help to take us there.

PRISON INMATES HELP IN WAR EFFORT

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, behind the thick walls of some Federal prisons, inmates are being put to work. Not on chain gangs tarring roads and hacking rocks, but in prison factories.

Private industries are bringing their businesses behind the barbed wire fortresses, realizing the benefits of incarcerated inmates going to work. Prison industries are operated to achieve two goals: First, they occupy the prisoners' time to keep them busy and out of trouble. The second goal is to provide those incarcerated inmates a trade and valuable work experience, a trade and experience that can be applied to the American workforce once they leave the penitentiary. Prison industries give an inmate a sense of accomplishment and achievement, and the ability to have a chance to work and live as a law-abiding citizen beyond the prison walls.

In the Federal prison system, UNICOR, the Federal Prison Industries, Incorporated, contracts out to the Federal Bureau of Prisons and hires inmates to work behind those tall prison walls. The inmates earn 35 cents to \$1.15 an hour. Now, Mr. Speaker, this money is paid by private industries, not taxpayers.

And, here is the best part: The money that the inmates earn goes to, first, pay their fine; second, partial restitution to the victim through the Victims of Crime Act; and, third, the rest goes into a savings account that the inmate will get once they leave the penitentiary. This way, the prisoner literally earns his keep in the big house. He helps pay for the system he has created, relieving the taxpayers of this burden.

I have had the opportunity to tour one of these prison units in Beaumont, Texas, at the Beaumont Federal Correctional Complex in my congressional district. In the Beaumont Federal prison system, prison inmates craft state-of-the-art military helmets for our troops fighting in Iraq. I have one of those helmets right here with me, Mr. Speaker.

This is officially called by the Federal Government the "personal armor for ground troops helmet." I just call it a helmet. It is used by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is made of Kevlar, and it provides our warriors protection from shrapnel and bullets. These helmets have been credited with saving several of our troops' lives in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, each month the inmates at the Beaumont Prison produce 30,000 of these helmets; 360,000 of them a year are being provided for our military. The Beaumont Prison factory also has the distinction of being the only UNICOR factory that produces these

helmets. Currently, the prison is designing a more protective helmet that will soon be used in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The 320 inmates in the Beaumont factory making these helmets are patriots, and they think they are because they are patriots; they are doing their part in the war efforts. This is a medium security facility, and it is not the only war contributor in the Beaumont prison system.

The minimum security system in Beaumont repairs damaged tanks. They receive a facelift from the inmates and their engines are overhauled. The mechanics that work in these prisons are experts in diesel mechanics, and they take a once unusable piece of machinery that has been damaged and they turn it into a war-worth military tank once more.

Mr. Speaker, as a former judge, I believe in using inmate labor; make them help pay for the system they have created. The taxpayer has paid for the system long enough. Some of these inmates in the Beaumont prison I met earlier on a professional basis at the courthouse, and now I am glad to see that they are turning their lives around. For behind the steel doors and tall walls of the prison, these men go to work each day producing helmets that safeguard American troops from enemy fire. They are not forced to work in the factories, but they choose to. They choose to volunteer.

The inmates I talked to are proud of our troops overseas and feel a sense of connection to them by making these helmets. Prison labor programs are a good idea for inmates and for America, and certainly for the American taxpayer. Some inmates are locked up behind bars because they harmed another person's life. Now they have the chance to redeem their past deeds; they now work to save the lives of our American soldiers. After all, Mr. Speaker, we are all in this together.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

COMMENDING THE LILLY ENDOWMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the Lilly Endowment for its exceptional commitment to Indianapolis and to the State of Indiana.

Recently, the Lilly Endowment announced the winners of its 2007 Teacher Creativity Fellowships. The result of this endowment's effort is a program that will enable 129 teachers, prin-

cipals, guidance counselors, and school librarians from all over Indiana to take the time to gain insight into new cultures, to explore subjects that intrigue them, and to just get away and bring back refreshed perspectives to share with their students.

The endowment has been successfully funding such programs for 20 years now. The class of 2007 includes nine recipients from public and private schools across the State who were selected as "distinguished fellows" of the program and received up to \$25,000. The remaining 120 recipients each received an \$8,000 grant for their activities.

The distinguished fellows feature of the program was introduced last year by the Lilly Endowment. A limited number of grants were available for creative renewal projects that would provide additional financial support and the possibility of time away from the classroom. As a result of this innovative feature, each selected teacher received up to \$25,000. A separate grant of up to \$25,000 was available to the teacher's school district to cover the costs of a replacement teacher, if necessary.

The winning creative renewal projects will send Indiana educators to study Indian culture by visiting Punjab, India; practice service learning by volunteering in Calcutta, Belfast, reservations in South Dakota, Haiti, and Mississippi; and interviewing street children in Latin America. But whether they travel to the Arctic or Mongolia, they will return to their Indiana schools carrying new cultural insights, full of new adventures and wisdom to share with their students.

Sara B. Cobb, the Lilly Endowment Vice President for Education, summarized the effort when she said, "Once again, we are thrilled at the response to this popular program. Good teaching requires a high degree of energy and motivation. We regularly hear that these renewal experiences have helped hard-working Indiana educators regain their enthusiasm for their profession."

So, Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, I want to commend the Lilly Endowment for doing such a great thing for Indiana and the education system. Good teaching does require a high degree of energy, motivation, and inspiration. I would add, "Good corporate neighboring requires a commitment to a corporate vision for a better community and the will to invest its resources to achieve that vision."

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Lilly Endowment and its CEO, and indeed a good neighbor to Indiana. Thank you very much.

TEACHER CREATIVITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM 2007—\$25,000 FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Arsenal Technical High School, Karen Beck, "Service Learning: The Example of Mother Teresa"—travel to Calcutta, Belfast, the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations (South Dakota), Haiti and Mississippi to do volunteer service; conduct interviews in Maryland and Washington in preparation for

creating service learning program at Tech; volunteer with local agencies.

Juvenile Learning Center School No. 459, Robert Masbaum, "Street Children of Latin America and Human Rights"—visit Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Panama to study and interview street children; prepare a documentary, curriculum guide and exhibit about children's rights.

TEACHER CREATIVITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM 2007—\$8,000 FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

Archdiocese of Indianapolis (private), St. Joan of Arc School, Susanna L. Abell, "Mentoring Abroad in Central America"—work with promising young artist in Honduras; offer an art camp for children in Honduras; create paintings.

St. Therese Little Flower School, Lori Grant Feliciano, "Defining a Hoosier"—study the unique history and culture of Indiana.

Heritage Christian School (private), Sherryn L. Miley "Never Forget: The Holocaust"—study the Holocaust at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, European concentration camps and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel.

International School of Indianapolis, Bernadette C. Allamel, "Ceramic Storytelling from Mali"—learn to make pottery in Mali, from collecting the clay through firing finished pieces; study cultural stories of Mali.

Arlington High School, Kerry J. Brown (see also MSD Lawrence Township) "East Meets West"—four generations return to Vietnam to gain closure from secret boat escape in 1977.

Charity Dye No. 27, Sidney Allen, "Pilgrimage to Monet's Garden"—study art and horticulture in Giverny, France; create a garden at school.

Howe Middle/High School, Mary F. Nolan, "A Linguistic Immersion Amidst the French Culture"—spend time in rural France completing a book; experience the culture of France.

Jonathan Jennings No. 109, Patricia Reeves, "Tolerance and Diversity as Seen Through the Irish Eyes"—research Ireland's "Great Famine;" introduce classroom activities about immigration, racism and cultural tolerance.

New Horizons Alternative School, Christopher L. Howey, "A Journey on the Path of the Martial Way"—study aikido and jodo in Japan and Canada.

MSD Lawrence Township, Bernard K. McKenzie Career Center, Jane Davis Miller, "The Ups and Downs in Life: Unmasking the Search for Ourselves"—study history of mask-making; create and use masks in therapeutic theater programs.

Lawrence Central High School, Lan Bui-Brown (see also Indianapolis Public Schools), "East Meets West"—four generations return to Vietnam to gain closure from secret boat escape in 1977.

Mary Castle Elementary School, Jan Good, "The Joy of Painting"—attend watercolor workshops; develop painting skills.

MSD Warren Township, Raymond Park Middle School, Rae Bosio, "Flamenco in Spain"—travel to Spain to study culture and dance.

MSD Washington Township, Eastwood Middle School, Douglas O. Vinton, "History Alive"—tour Germany, Italy, Greece, France and Austria to explore history and culture.

J. Everett Light Career Center, Robert Hendrix, "Voices Amidst the Mountains: A Journey into the Folklore of Storytelling"—create a radio documentary on the art of storytelling in the Smoky, Blue Ridge and Appalachian mountain chains.

North Central High School, Stephen J. Quigley, "The Emerald Ash Borer and the Art of Carving Ash Sticks for the Sport of