

IRAQ WAR SUPPLEMENTAL BILL

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

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the issue of the Iraqi supplemental that we are currently about to redo.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the President in his regional message indicated that the bill “is loaded with billions of dollars in nonemergency spending that has nothing to do with fighting the war on terror.” He went on to say that Congress should debate these spending measures on their own merits and not as a part of an emergency funding bill for our troops.

Mr. Speaker, for 19 months now, we have been trying to get this administration to pay attention to the people on the gulf coast. We have for weeks and months been trying to get the President to support our efforts to make sure that many of the families and friends of our troops, who have been affected in Louisiana, Mississippi, and even in Florida and Texas by this catastrophic event perpetrated by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, get help. Today, we have not been able to get the President to support our efforts as we have tried to address these emergencies.

And so, Mr. Speaker, since we are doing an emergency spending bill, we thought it very appropriate for us to do both international and domestic emergencies all in one piece of legislation. Consequently, we have moved in this legislation to address issues such as the East and West Bank Levee Protection and Coastal Restoration System in New Orleans and the surrounding parishes by inserting into this legislation \$1.3 billion. We have added another \$30 million for K-12 education recruitment assistance, another \$30 million for higher education assistance.

I plan to be in Baton Rouge next week to address Southern University’s commencement exercises. I would hope that, as I go there, I can carry them more than mere promises to get them to feeling, once again, that we in this body are paying attention to and responding to the problems that they are suffering, many of them having lost a full year out of their educational pursuits.

I would hope that those children in K through 12 can begin to feel that here in this Congress, with this emergency supplemental, that we are going to respond to them as well.

And then there is the Community Disaster Loan Forgiveness Program. We have put language in this bill to address that issue, \$4.3 billion for FEMA disaster recovery grants. These State and local grants will be waived, meaning that the Federal Government will be able to finance 100 percent of the grants.

We have been trying for a long time now to get this administration to treat the victims of Katrina, Rita and Wilma

in the same way we treated disasters after 9/11 in New York, the same way we treated the earthquakes in California, the same way we treated the Hurricane Andrew down in Florida some years ago and Hurricane Anika out in Hawaii. In each one of those instances, we waived matching requirements. In this instance, we have not. And so we want, in this administration, to waive those requirements of the Stafford Act, the matching requirements, so that we can begin to address these emergencies.

There are other emergencies that we plan to address here, and that is the Children’s Health Insurance Program. We think, with 14 States out of money, another 3 States expected to be out of money by September 1, it is an emergency for the children in those 17 States, and I would hope that when we put the final bill together to send back to the President, we will address these emergencies that we have with our people here at home.

□ 1615

REPUBLICAN STUDY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minority Leader for affording not only myself, but other members of the Republican Study Committee, the House conservative caucus on the Republican side of the aisle, the opportunity to take advantage of these opportunities on the House floor periodically in the form of a Special Order.

While I come to the floor today with the objective, Mr. Speaker, of addressing this week’s momentous events concerning the President’s second veto in the history of this administration and the war supplemental bill, I wanted to also speak about an issue that House conservatives have been heard on and have been active on in the course of this week, and it has to do with today’s passage, by a vote of 237-180, of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. This legislation passed the House today, but not without the strenuous opposition of both the Republican Study Committee, and virtually all of its members who represented a lion’s share of the 180 Members who opposed this legislation.

And to lead is to be misunderstood. And it is very likely, Mr. Speaker, that both yourself and maybe others that might be looking in would question why anyone would oppose hate crimes legislation. And I thought I might, before I move on to the attendant topic of the day, address the concerns that House conservatives had with this legislation and why, last night, with the leadership of our caucus chairman, JEB HENSARLING of Texas, and with the support of myself as a former chairman of

our caucus, Mrs. SUE MYRICK of North Carolina, a former chairman of our conference, and JOHN SHADEGG of Arizona, we urged the President of the United States to issue a veto threat of this hate crimes legislation, which he did so earlier today by way of a statement of administration policy.

So let me speak to our concerns about this bill before I move on to the topic of the Iraq supplemental. Thomas Jefferson said, famously, “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative power of government reach actions only, and not opinions,” Jefferson went on to say, “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that the act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church and state.”

Again, Thomas Jefferson, framing, as perhaps only he in American history could, the issue that grounded conservative concern in the hate crimes legislation today, that legislative powers of government should reach actions only and not opinions, and then reflected on that as the core central logic behind the first amendment protections of the freedom of religion.

In the case of the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, we did not meet that standard today, Mr. Speaker. I believe this legislation was bad public policy, and unnecessary, and many House conservatives in the Republican Study Committee agreed.

Violent attacks on people or property are already illegal, regardless of the motive behind them. And there is no evidence presented on the floor today or before the Judiciary Committee, on which I serve, that underlying violent crimes at issue are not already being fully and aggressively prosecuted in the States. Therefore, hate crimes laws truly serve no practical purpose and instead serve to penalize people for thoughts, for belief, for opinions.

Now, let’s grant the point. Some thoughts, beliefs and opinions, like racism or sexism are abhorrent, and I disdain them and condemn them. However, hate crimes bills, as the one we passed today, are broad enough also to include legitimate beliefs, and protecting the rights of freedom and speech and religion must be paramount in cases like the bill we consider today.

The first amendment to the Constitution provides that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Now, America was founded on the notion that the government should not interfere with the religious practices of its citizens. Constitutional protections for the free exercise of religion are at the very core of the American experiment in democracy.

But what does that have to do with the hate crimes bill? Well, there is a real possibility that this bill, as written, religious leaders or members of religious groups could be prosecuted criminally, based on their speech and protected activities under conspiracy law or section 2 of title XVIII, which holds criminally liable anyone who aids, abets, counsels, commands or induces or procures its commission, or one who willfully causes an act to be done by another.

In the debate in the Judiciary Committee, much was made of the fact that there was an amendment adopted by my friend and colleague, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. But that amendment did not go far enough in making it clear that this bill would not limit religious freedom. The sponsor of the amendment even admitted in open markup testimony before the committee, that a pastor could, theoretically, still be targeted under the bill for incitement of violence for simply preaching his religious beliefs having to do with moral issues related to life or family or sexual preference.

For example, if a pastor included a statement in a sermon that sexual relations outside of marriage are morally wrong, and even quoted the Bible to make that point, and then a member of perverse intention in that congregation caused bodily injury to a person having such relations, that sermon could be used as evidence against that pastor.

Now, the real world effect of this, in addition to the possibility of prosecution, is the much greater and geometric possibility of a chilling effect. Putting a chill on pastors' words or religious broadcasters' programming or an evangelical leader's message, or even the leader of a small group Bible study is quite simply a blatant attack on the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of religion.

Now, last week, when the Judiciary Committee took up the bill, I offered an amendment in good faith to make it clear, crystal clear, that this bill would not affect the constitutional right to freedom of religion. The Pence amendment stated plainly, "Nothing in this section limits the religious freedom of any person or group under the Constitution." Unfortunately, the Pence amendment was defeated and rejected by the majority of the Judiciary Committee.

Yesterday, I took another bite at the apple. I submitted the Pence religious freedom amendment to the Rules Committee for consideration. But, again, that committee chose to adopt a closed rule, effectively blocking my amendment and many other good amendments offered for consideration.

Now, I would say very emphatically, we must guard against the potential for abuse of hate crimes laws. And very humbly put, the Pence amendment would have done so by stating once and for all that people and groups will not have their constitutionally guaranteed right to religious freedom taken away,

even as an addendum to or unintentionally as a result of the aiding and abetting clause of current law.

Mr. Speaker, House conservatives rose, as one man and one woman today, in opposition to this legislation. But it did pass. Again, Congress today adopted legislation, 237-180, but not without a fight.

Members of the Republican Study Committee came together late last night, called on President George W. Bush to veto this legislation should it reach his desk. And as I mentioned earlier today, the administration, in no small measure, due to House conservatives and the leadership of the Republican Study Committee, the administration issued a veto threat pertaining to the Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007. They did so as House conservatives did, out of a belief that this bill threatens religious freedom by criminalizing ultimately religious thought.

And I must say before I move to my next topic, it was particularly grievous to many of us that the Democrat majority in Congress chose the National Day of Prayer to bring this bill to the floor; a bill that intentionally or unintentionally, could put in jeopardy the very religious expression that was being celebrated at tens of thousands of locations across the United States today.

I, myself, began my day in the east room of the White House with the President of the United States and religious leaders representing every faith in America to initiate and kick off this National Day of Prayer in, I believe, its 56th consecutive year.

In the ceremonies that took place here just off the Capitol, across the street in the Cannon Office Building, I learned that due to the leadership of Shirley Dobson and the organizers of the National Day of Prayer, by their estimates, there were some 50,000 venues in the United States of America where people were coming together, Mr. Speaker, not for politics, not for the purpose of political demonstrations, not to support one party over another, but as happened in Anderson, Indiana today at City Hall, for the purpose of coming together in prayer, believing that the effective and fervent prayers of a righteous Nation availeth much, believing that our prayers reach heaven and the throne of grace as Americans, by the millions, have believed from the very inception of our Nation.

□ 1630

And again I say I don't believe it was intentional. I would not ascribe this to the Democrat majority. But it was grievous, I can say, to many of us that this legislation, which we believe in our hearts threaten the very fabric of the first amendment, freedom of religion, was scheduled to come to the floor on the National Day of Prayer.

On the floor today, I closed with the thought that on this National Day of

Prayer, we ought to take a stand for the right of every American to believe and speak and pray in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, that we ought to take a stand for religious freedom and the first amendment in opposing the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

And with that let me yield to the planned topic of the day, and I may well be joined by colleagues on the attendant question that has been the preoccupation of much of official Washington, much of the national media, and, understandably, much of the American people over the last week. It has to do, of course, Mr. Speaker, with the President's decision to exercise his authority in the executive branch under the Constitution to veto legislation delivered to him by the Congress of the United States. This was, in fact, the President's second veto. And today's Republican Study Committee leadership hour was organized to speak to the issue of Iraq and specifically the Iraq supplemental.

It was, as I said, a momentous week. We began with the delivery to the President of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act on May 1. The President very promptly addressed the Nation at the dinner hour and announced his intentions to veto the legislation, just his second veto in the history of the 43rd President of the United States.

The President made his objections clear, that, in effect, he vetoed this legislation because he believed, as I do, as House conservatives do, that the legislation was constitutionally flawed and fiscally irresponsible.

The President made reference specifically to the arbitrary date for beginning withdrawal of American troops without regard to conditions on the ground. He spoke of the effort by Congress, his words now, "to micromanage the commanders in the field by restricting their ability to direct the fight in Iraq." And he also mentioned that this legislation "contained billions of dollars of spending and other provisions completely unrelated to the war."

The President spoke of the precipitous withdrawal from Iraq not being a plan for peace in the region. The mandated withdrawal in the legislation, he argued, would actually embolden our enemies and it could lead to a safe haven for terrorism in Iraq.

The President probably focused most of his objections in his message to the Nation on the micromanagement of the war by Congress. I have said many times on this floor, as many House conservatives have, under the Constitution of the United States, Congress can declare war. Congress can choose to fund or not to fund military operations. But Congress may not conduct war. And in the President's veto message to the Nation, it was precisely that effort by Congress, that constitutional overreach, in his words, to "micromanage"

this war in Iraq that he found most unacceptable. The President would say the legislation is unconstitutional “because it purports to direct the conduct of the operations of the war in a way that infringes upon the powers vested in the Presidency by the Constitution, including as commander in chief of the Armed Forces.”

In a very real sense this is an issue, Mr. Speaker, that the Founders of this Nation thought about, I would argue, more deeply than maybe any other issue in that balmy summer of 1787. It was the debate over whether or not we want a unified chain of command in the commander in chief, centered in the Presidency, or whether we wanted to risk creating the possibility or the prospect of what our Founders would call “war by committee.”

Now, this notion of war by committee was actually something our Founders were fairly familiar with. A very cursory study of the early months of the Revolutionary War, from the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, all the way until that famed Christmas Day, 1776, is a classic case of an American military that is being beaten back, chased out of New York, chased across the Hudson River, chased all the way across New Jersey, and was facing great peril by the time they reached the Delaware. And many would observe, in the years that followed the war during the period of the formation of our constitutional government, that it was precisely war by committee that put our Nation in its nascent days most at risk.

History records that every night General Washington would spend a great deal of his time in his tent in the midst of the war, writing back to Congress, handing letters to couriers to send messages to the Congress to gain specific permission for military operations and appropriations and the conduct of the war. And the Congress was very busy engaging in what our Founders came contemptuously to refer to as “war by committee.”

When the Constitutional Convention came around in 1787, it would be precisely that same generation of Americans that would say “no,” we want a unified chain of command, we want to vest in the President of the United States the ability to conduct war as the commander in chief.

And I think singularly the President’s objection is grounded there, with the slight addition of some more than \$10 billion in additional spending that has nothing whatsoever to do with the conduct of the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, or, to that end, the conduct of the War on Terror.

House conservatives in the past have opposed war supplements on the grounds that war spending bills ought to be about war spending and emergency war spending bills ought to be about emergency war spending. And the addition of funding, which the President described as “billions of dollars of spending and other provisions”

that are “unrelated to the war,” are not an emergency and are not justified was altogether appropriate, in our judgment. The President said emphatically that “Congress should not use an emergency war supplemental to add billions in spending to avoid its own rules for budget discipline and the normal budget process,” and House conservatives agreed.

We were pleased to see the President veto this legislation, because House conservatives and the Republican Study Committee and, for that matter, virtually all House Republicans believed the bill, as the President found it, was constitutionally flawed and fiscally irresponsible. We would vote in a matter of a few legislative hours later to sustain the President’s veto and facilitate a meeting that took place just yesterday, I believe, Mr. Speaker, between the leaders of the House and Senate in Congress and the President. And it seems to me that it was a pivot point in the debate, and I want to shift some of this conversation today to the same kind of pivot point.

While, frankly, Democrat leaders emerged from the West Wing speaking very little about compromise and it seems like the rhetoric of the Senate majority leader as well as the Speaker of the House centered around the phrase “end the war,” that their objective remained to be end the war, it would be President Bush in the Cabinet room who struck a more conciliatory tone. And I commend him for it.

The President said, and I am quoting now, “Yesterday was a day that highlighted differences. Today is a day where we can work together to find common ground.” And I believe House Republicans would share the President’s sentiment that we can and should move forward to find common ground; not to compromise on those principles of constitutionality and fiscal discipline that the President articulated and we fully support, but to look for ways that we can ensure that these resources reach our troops in a timely way without strings attached and without fiscally irresponsible spending. And to that end, we will work and labor in the days ahead.

My personal hope and ambition, Mr. Speaker, is that before we return home for Memorial Day, before we return home to that day where we remember those who did not come home, that we would be able to speed the resources to our soldiers in the field in Afghanistan and Iraq without unconstitutional strings and without additional and unnecessary spending.

But there is one other reason why I believe it is imperative that we provide these resources to our troops in the field, and it has not been highlighted as much I believe as it should, but it has been a point that I have felt a burden about ever since my return from Iraq just shortly 1 month ago. I began the month of April in a delegation that took me literally into the heart of Baghdad and to Ramadi and to Tikrit.

We met with General David Petraeus and learned a great deal about the beginnings of modest progress on the ground in Iraq. And so I would posit at the beginning of the balance of my time to suggest that the President was right to veto this legislation because it was constitutionally flawed. The President was right to veto this legislation because it was fiscally irresponsible. But I also believe the President was right to veto this legislation and Congress would be right to find a way to deliver these funds to our troops because we are beginning to see evidence that the surge, that our new strategy, that our new diplomatic initiatives in the region are just beginning to take hold; and now is not the time for us to reverse course and to embrace the objective of those who would say the American people, whatever the circumstances on the ground in Iraq, apparently, want us to end the war.

In my district I would say with confidence, the constituents of eastern Indiana want our troops to come home, but they want us to win and come home, and more importantly, they want freedom to win in Iraq and then bring our soldiers home.

And let me say that despite a recent wave of insurgent bombing, this war in Iraq is not lost. In fact, because of the President’s surge, because of the brave conduct of U.S. and Iraqi forces on the ground in Baghdad, we are beginning to see the evidence of modest progress in Iraq. Let me say emphatically Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers that are now spread throughout the capital city of Baghdad.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of visiting one of these joint operating centers across the river from the Green Zone right in the heart of downtown Baghdad. These facilities represent a sea change in the strategy of U.S. and Iraqi forces in the capital city of Baghdad. The very essence of the surge, first recommended, of course, by the Iraq Study Group on page 72 of the publication that is available for most Americans, the very centerpiece of this surge was not that we could deal with the instability in Iraq strictly with a military solution but, rather, as the Iraq Study Group recommended and the President ultimately embraced, that we could increase forces in the city of Baghdad temporarily to quell violence in Baghdad, to create a sufficient level of stability in the capital city to allow the political process of reconciliation, de-Baathification, and oil agreement and the diplomatic process in the region to take hold. That is the essence of the surge.

Now, to make that possible, as General Petraeus described to me walking down the streets in Baghdad, our strategy now is different from the strategy we have employed the last 3 years. In Baghdad, rather than sending our troops out on patrols, confronting the enemy, and returning to our base installations, now we move into areas

with sufficient forces to clear areas, to hold areas by establishing joint operating centers where U.S. and Iraqi forces live together, and then investing the resources to build up those areas and add further security.

As I said, Baghdad is not safe, and it was not safe the day we were there. But it is safer because American and U.S. forces are beginning to move into these areas, again, more than two dozen of these joint operating centers. Once areas have been cleared in house-to-house searches, clearing out weapons caches, arresting and confronting dangerous insurgents and al Qaeda, then U.S./Iraqi forces move into those joint operating centers and live there and patrol those areas 24/7. U.S. forces actually stay at the joint operating centers, bunking in with Iraqi forces.

One of the more moving moments for me on our tour of Baghdad 1 month ago was walking into the bunkhouse with both U.S. and Iraqi military on either side of us and then being told by U.S. commanders on the ground that they had offered the Iraqis, out of sensitivity to their different religious traditions and observances, to build separate sleeping quarters for the U.S. forces and the Iraqi forces.

□ 1645

And it was the Iraqi forces that said absolutely not, that now you've got bunkhouses, which are really pretty informal, just bunk beds kind of slapped together in wood frames the way you would see at almost any military installation. And U.S. and Iraqi forces are bunking in together. They are deploying together. And the result of that is that sectarian violence in Baghdad has been reduced in some neighborhoods of Baghdad by a very significant amount.

Again, let me say again, because I have demonstrated in the past the capacity to be misunderstood; Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer, I believe, because of the surge of U.S. forces into the neighborhoods of the capital city and the establishment of more than two dozen joint operating centers where U.S. and Iraqi forces are working together to confront al Qaeda and insurgents and to quell violence in the capital city.

There has also been another significant development that argues against reversing course, or to borrow the phrase of some leaders in the majority, "just ending the war" at this point, and that is specifically in western Iraq, what is known as the al Anbar province, which is known as Ramadi.

Now, I stood at the grave site of an Indiana soldier; I stood and prayed with his parents. He fell on the streets in combat in Ramadi some 2 years ago. It's extraordinary the difficulty U.S. forces have faced. The Marines have been in Ramadi for a number of years. It has been one of the most deeply compromised cities in Iraq. Ramadi is, in effect, the upscale Sunni city in Iraq. During the era of Saddam Hussein,

those who did not live in the highly fortified Green Zone in downtown Baghdad lived in upscale Sunni neighborhoods in Ramadi.

And so one can imagine that al Qaeda and the insurgency, in efforts to resist the al Maliki government, their violence would be centered on the streets of Ramadi. And that has absolutely been true until very recently.

Things have changed in al Anbar province and Ramadi. Even The New York Times, perhaps one of the harshest critics of the war in Iraq, I think it was Sunday morning, this last weekend, depicted a huge front page story about the change in al Anbar province. And I would like to say, and I will say that the presence of U.S. Marines, under the command of General Odierno on the ground in Ramadi, have played a vital role in the precipitous decline of al Qaeda and insurgent violence in Ramadi and in al Anbar province. But General Odierno and the others would be quick to say that the real difference that has been made has been because the Sunnis themselves, Iraqi tribal leaders, 20 out of the 22 tribes have stepped forward now and initiated what has been called the "Iraq Awakening Movement."

During my trip to Ramadi just one month ago, I had the privilege of meeting with Sheik Sattar, a compelling and impressive man. His father was killed by al Qaeda in Ramadi. His two brothers were killed by al Qaeda in Ramadi. And Sheik Sattar, who presumably had had very little interest in becoming involved in the new government in Baghdad, Sunnis, if you will recall, had largely not participated in the national referendums and elections that have taken place, it would be Sheik Sattar who would go to the Marine Corps base several months ago in Ramadi and say, I'm done with al Qaeda and I'm done with the insurgency, how can I help.

And Sheik Sattar has now organized this Iraq Awakening Movement. To be specific, 22 of the 24 Ramadi area tribes are now cooperating with coalition forces, U.S. and Iraqi forces. And the decline in violence in Ramadi is that U.S. troops have established four bases, along with 40 joint security stations and observation posts throughout the city of Ramadi where they work and deploy and live alongside Iraqi soldiers. There are also 23 police stations in the city and in the surrounding area, as has been reported in the media in recent days.

Al Anbar province is not safe, but significant progress is occurring because the tribal sheiks have begun cooperating with American and Iraqi forces to fight al Qaeda, providing intelligence. And we are beginning to see a significant shift in al Anbar province. And I cite no further than the front page of The New York Times that actually had what I found to be a deeply moving photograph above the fold that showed a city where there has been war for some time.

The rubble of war shown along streets and torn asunder buildings, but there walking on the street were people and couples and children. And I caught sight of people on bicycles. When I was in Ramadi, we were presented with information of areas that had been protected from suicide bombs and car bombs, where soccer fields had opened back up. Children were returning to the streets.

Al Anbar province is changing. Is it safe? No. But is it improving? Yes. And the truth is that the progress that we're making on the ground in Baghdad, the modest progress demonstrated in the reduction of sectarian violence in the capital city, and what appears to be the beginnings of a sea change in the entire western half of Iraq, including in what was a war-torn city of Ramadi, give me hope. In fact, I characterized in an editorial in USA Today that what we saw a month ago in Baghdad could be evidence of just the sprouting of a springtime of hope in Iraq.

Let me say with confidence, Mr. Speaker, I know there is great frustration in this Congress and there are profound visions in this Congress over the role of this institution in developing policy in Iraq, and we will continue to have those arguments. But I would defy anyone to prove to me that there is one single Member of Congress who would like to see freedom lose in Iraq. I don't accept that.

Some may have come to the conclusion that freedom has lost and it can't be saved. I disagree with that. I don't believe freedom is lost. I don't believe the war is lost. But I believe in their heart of hearts, even the most hard-over opponent of continued U.S. involvement in Iraq who serves in this Chamber does not want to see freedom lose.

So I come to the floor today on behalf of the Republican Study Committee, on behalf of my own franchise in Congress, to essentially just suggest that there are many good reasons why the President vetoed the war supplemental this week. Number one, it's constitutionally flawed. It's simply wrong for Congress to place arbitrary timelines for withdrawal, to tie the hands of commanders on the ground, to engage in the kind of micromanagement that is beyond the purview of the Constitution of the United States. Congress can declare war; Congress can choose to fund or not to fund war; but Congress cannot conduct war. And that was reason enough for the President of the United States to veto this bill.

The bill was also fiscally irresponsible. We ought to ensure that war spending bills pertain exclusively to war spending. And particularly emergency war spending bills ought to be emergency war spending and not domestic projects that should be dealt with in the regular budget process.

The third thought I had today was simply to say that we ought to now find a way to come together, without

compromising core principles on either side of the aisle, we ought to find a way to come together to get our troops the resources they need to get the job done, because the unspoken fact this week, in the midst of a lot of political conflagration and argument, is the fact that, as General David Petraeus told us here on Capitol Hill last week, there is evidence that the surge, and there is evidence that because of Sunni leadership, tribal leadership in al Anbar province in Ramadi, there is evidence that Iraq is beginning to make modest progress toward exactly the kind of stability that will make possible the political progress and the diplomatic progress that are the real long-term answer here.

Let me emphasize that point one more time. I don't think there is a military solution in Iraq; we simply cannot surge troops to the four corners of Iraq. That is not the President's plan. It would not be workable in any event. I believe the President's plan is sound, to surge troops into the capital city to quell violence sufficient to give the al Maliki government in Baghdad the credibility to move a de-Ba'athification agreement, to move an agreement for sharing the revenues of oil proceeds with all of the people in Iraq on an equitable basis, to move new provincial elections, including in al Anbar province, where many of the Sunni leaders that we met with had expressed an interest in participating in provincial elections, should they be scheduled in the next month or two. But it is that kind of political process that will encourage ownership by Iraqis in this new constitutional republic that will be the real victory for freedom.

As the President said this week, we cannot define success in Iraq as the absence of violence. The day that freedom wins, whatever that day would be, the day that we can know with a moral certitude that this new democratically elected government in Iraq is able to defend itself, able to defend its people, the day we have the moral certitude that they can do that and we can begin then to come home in good conscience, there will likely be insurgent and al Qaeda violence taking place somewhere in Iraq. Therefore, we cannot define victory as the absence of violence, but we can define victory as the presence of a stable democratic, constitutional republic that can defend itself. And that, it seems to me, beyond the issues that the President raised when he vetoed the legislation, is the most compelling argument for finding a way forward, finding the common ground necessary to get our soldiers the resources they need to get the job done and to come home safe.

This is a tough time in Iraq. General Petraeus told me on the ground in Baghdad a month ago, he told Members of Congress gathered in a bipartisan briefing last week that there are difficult days ahead, that there is no guarantee that the surge, which seems

to be beginning to take hold in Baghdad, will ultimately succeed. But it seems to me the fact that, despite the recent wave of insurgent bombings, or the fact that sectarian violence is down in Baghdad, the fact that Ramadi and al Anbar province appears, because of Sunni Iraqi leadership and U.S. and Iraqi forces, al Anbar province appears to be taking a turn for the better, however modest, that that argues for us finding a way forward, finding common ground where we can give our soldiers the resources they need. Because in Baghdad, despite the recent bombings, sectarian violence is down.

Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers in that capital city, more than 40 joint operating centers now spread throughout Ramadi, and the fact that in al Anbar province, more than 20 Sunni sheiks across the region have united together to oppose insurgency and al Qaeda.

□ 1700

This war is not lost. Congress should find the common ground necessary to give our soldiers the resources they need to get the job done, to stand up this government, to ensure this new democracy in Iraq can defend itself, and then lay the framework for us to come home.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this time. It is my fondest hope that what the President called us to in his remarks from the Cabinet room this week will characterize much of the debate between now and Memorial Day, and I want to quote his words again. The President, in thanking the leaders for coming down, said, "Yesterday was a day that highlighted differences. Today," he said, "is the day when we can work together to find common ground." But he also added, "It is very important we do this as quickly as we possibly can." And he expressed confidence that we can reach agreement.

I will close with that, Mr. Speaker. I truly believe in all my heart that it is possible for a majority of this Congress to come together in a manner that we can deliver to our soldiers the resources that they need within a constitutional framework that doesn't intrude on the President's role as commander in chief, in a way that reflects fiscal discipline and in a way, also, that continues to provide the resources that if, in fact, the modest progress we are beginning to see continues to widen through the summer, that we, in fact, provide the resources for an expanding success for the surge, an expanding success for Iraqis stepping forward to oppose al Qaeda and insurgency in Al-Anbar, and ultimately a success for freedom in Iraq. I am confident of this, I am confident the common ground is there; and it will be my hope and my prayer and my pledge to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to accomplish just that.

On behalf of the Republican Study Committee and our many members, I

thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Republican leadership for yielding us this hour.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, today is World Press Freedom Day, a day that the international community has set aside to honor the work and sacrifice of journalists around the world.

World Press Freedom Day was first designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in 1991 as an occasion to pay tribute to journalists and to reflect upon the role of the media in general in advancing fundamental human rights as codified in international law, regional conventions and national constitutions.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the foundation of the postwar human rights movement, states the principle broadly in article 19. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." It may not be as eloquent as our first amendment, but its effect is the same.

For Americans, this day should spur us to consider the role that journalists play in our society and to ponder what our Nation would be like if this cornerstone of our liberty were to be curtailed.

Although most Americans take the concept of a free press for granted, I believe that an unfettered press is vital to America's national security and to our democracy here at home.

A year ago today, my colleague from Indiana, Mr. Spence, and Senators CHRIS DODD and RICHARD LUGAR joined me in launching a new bipartisan, bicameral caucus aimed at advancing press freedom around the world. The Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press creates a forum where the United States Congress can work to combat and condemn media censorship and the persecution of journalists around the world. The launch of this new caucus sends a strong message that Congress will defend democratic values and human rights wherever they are threatened.

In launching the caucus, we were encouraged by the wide range of organizations and individuals, such as Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Musa Klebnikov, the widow of Paul Klebnikov, the editor of Forbes Russia, who was shot to death outside of his offices 2 years ago, and the legendary Walter Cronkite, all of whom enthusiastically endorsed our effort.