

I have been struck by how there are many opportunities for us in the new farm bill to redirect, what is it, \$23 billion of subsidy at this point that flows increasingly to a very small number of farmers, often corporate farms or large ones in a small limited area in a small, limited number of crops. We have an opportunity to unlock that, help farmers with their energy production, allow more farmers into it and find out how we unlock the power of this ingenuity.

Mr. INSLEE. We just have a few seconds. I would like to just make a closing comment.

First, I would thank my colleagues and say that I really do believe this is a historic moment for the industrial base and agricultural base of America, which is today's date, to start to move to a new base away from just a dirty fossil fuel-based system to a clean energy system. We are starting to do this starting today. We are going to join Republicans, hopefully, in finding a bipartisan way to do it.

We can tell people that the genius of Americans is in these new wind sources, wind turbines, solar cells, transit, flex-fuel vehicles, plug-in vehicles, cellulosic ethanol, wave power, geothermal, fuel efficient appliances, energy efficient homes; this job is going to get done by a new Congress and it is a bright day for the country.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOUCHER). The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate once again the opportunity to come to the floor of the House, and I am pleased to do it on the first day of the 110th Congress. It is an exciting day, a historic day.

I want to thank the leadership for allowing me the opportunity to host an hour of the Official Truth Squad. We started this 2 years ago, and did so because there were many of us who were concerned about the fact that on the floor of the House oftentimes the words that were spoken and the presentations made oftentimes bore little resemblance to the truth. So we began 2 years ago to institute the Official Truth Squad, to try to come to the floor like this every so often and try to do it at least once a week to bring light to issues of concern to the American people.

Today is no different. This is a historic day, the first day of the 110th Congress. It was an exciting day. The first day is always exciting. It is full of families and celebration and children on the floor of the House sharing the remarkable experiences of Members being sworn in, oftentimes new Members, of which we have today, Mr. Speaker, as you know, over 50 new Members in the House of Representatives. So it is an important occasion.

We heard a lot of discussion leading up to today, and that discussion was

culminated in November by a vote by the American people, and the American people voted and changed the majorities in the House of Representatives. And in terms of the American people's decision, it was the right decision for them because it was the decision that they made at the polls. It was important for us, it is important for all of us to appreciate that, yes, they did, the American people spoke.

I think one of the things that they said is that they want a different process here. They were tired of some of the things that had gone on here in the past, so they spoke and said a different process is needed.

Many of my friends on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, talked as we led up to the November elections about the need for civility in Congress, which we believe wholeheartedly, about the need for openness, which is imperative for us to have in our system of government, openness, and then fiscal responsibility, kind of three tenets that they brought to the American people. I would concur with each and every one of those.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that those principles by the now-majority party ought to last longer than one day of speeches. So we have some concerns about what has occurred and some disappointments already, and we would like to share some of those with the American people as we are presenting things to the House of Representatives this evening.

Now, in pointing these out, the purpose is not to say how good it was when we were in the majority, because it can always be better. As many of us talked in the election process, the campaign process, we talked about the kinds of improvements that we would like to see. The purpose is to shed light on both word and deed, and it is important, because what folks say and what they do, it is important for the American people to know that those two things are the same.

In our system of government, we have elections where people go to the polls and vote. They vote based on a lot of things, but probably most importantly they base their vote on the fact that they believe that the person that they voted for and what they said they were going to do was in fact what they were going to do. So when individuals say things that they are going to do once they get into office and then they break those promises, then it is important for people to be held accountable. The American people do that time and again.

It is also important as a Member of now the minority party for us to hold the majority party accountable. One of the responsibilities we have in our dynamic form of government is to hold them accountable, and we do this as a matter of principle. It is a matter of principle, and we believe it is a matter of principle that elected officials ought to be held accountable for not just what they say, but also what they do.

To that end, I would like to share, Mr. Speaker, some quotes. We are going to talk a fair amount tonight about what individuals have said in the past, oftentimes the recent past, and what we have some concerns with in terms of their action.

This first quote is from the "Declaration on Honest Leadership and Open Government," which was one of the Democrat Party's publications that they had prior to the election. The quote there is from the now-Speaker. It says: "Our goal is to restore accountability, honesty and openness at all levels of government." It is a noble goal. It is a noble goal. We would agree with that. It is just important that when one says that that is your goal and that is your purpose that, in fact, you comply with that.

The Washington Post on December 17, 2006, said Speaker PELOSI is determined to try to return the House to what it was in an earlier era "where you debated ideas and listened to each other's arguments." Where you debated ideas and listened to each other's arguments. That is important as we go through the process of what is of concern to many of us here in the House of Representatives about how the process is already being implemented.

This is a quote from July of 2005 from Representative RAHM EMANUEL, now the chairman of the Democrat Caucus, and he voiced some frustration about the inability to have either an amendment or a vote on the floor. He said, "Let us have an up and down vote. Don't be scared. Don't hide behind some little rule. Come on out here. Put it on the table and let us have a vote. So don't hide behind the rule. If this is what you want to do, let us have an up and down vote."

It is important to remember that the purpose of that was to say that every Member of the House of Representatives ought to have the opportunity to in fact offer amendments and have their opportunity for people to say, yes, I agree with you and your amendment or your bill, or, no, I don't.

Here is a quote from Representative STENY HOYER, now the majority leader, in October of 2005. The one that I would like to highlight here is a quote where he said these provisions are an outrage, talking about the rules that were in place: "These provisions are an outrage and this process is an outrage. As one Member of this body complained, once again the vast majority of Americans are having their representatives in Congress gagged by the closed rule committee."

□ 2100

Now, we will talk a fair amount this evening about what a closed rule is and why Representative HOYER in October 2005 would have made that comment, saying that the representatives were being in effect disenfranchised in the House of Representatives.

This quote comes from our now Speaker, Speaker PELOSI, who, in a letter to then-Speaker DENNY HASTERT in October of 2006 said, and this is an important quote, because this is one of those promises that were made prior to the election and that I believe affected individuals all across this Nation and what they were going to do when they went to the polls in November.

This, again, is from now-Speaker PELOSI to then-Speaker HASTERT. And what this says is, "More than two years ago, I first sent you Democratic proposals to restore civility to the Congress. I reiterate my support for these proposals today. We must restore bipartisanship to the administration of the House, reestablish regular order for considering legislation," and we will talk about what that means, "and ensure the rights of the minority, whichever party is in the minority." Restore the rights of the minority, whichever party is in the minority. "The voice of every American has a right to be heard."

We would certainly concur with that. And, again, we will point out some of the concerns and disappointments that many of us have about the process that we have already seen in place today.

This quote here, Mr. Speaker, is from a Washington Post article of January 2, 2007, 2 days ago. And it says, "As they prepare to take control of Congress this week and face up to the campaign pledges to restore bipartisanship and openness, Democrats are planning to largely sideline Republicans from the first burst of lawmaking. Instead of allowing Republicans to fully participate in deliberations as promised after the Democrats victory in the November 7 midterm elections, Democrats now say they will use House rules to prevent the opposition from offering alternative measures."

And so we think it is important for people to be held accountable for what they say and what they do. We also think it is important, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of principle for people to do what they say they are going to do, especially elected officials.

So, Mr. Speaker, I place into the RECORD an article which appeared in The Washington Post on January 2 that included this quote, in addition to that an editorial which appeared in the Washington Post yesterday entitled, "A Fairer House, But Not Quite Yet."

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 2, 2007]

DEMOCRATS TO START WITHOUT GOP INPUT:

QUICK PASSAGE OF FIRST BILLS SOUGHT

(By Lyndsey Layton and Juliet Eilperin)

As they prepare to take control of Congress this week and face up to campaign pledges to restore bipartisanship and openness, Democrats are planning to largely sideline Republicans from the first burst of lawmaking.

House Democrats intend to pass a raft of popular measures as part of their well-publicized plan for the first 100 hours. They include tightening ethics rules for lawmakers, raising the minimum wage, allowing more research on stem cells and cutting interest rates on student loans.

But instead of allowing Republicans to fully participate in deliberations, as promised after the Democratic victory in the Nov. 7 midterm elections, Democrats now say they will use House rules to prevent the opposition from offering alternative measures, assuring speedy passage of the bills and allowing their party to trumpet early victories.

Nancy Pelosi, the Californian who will become House speaker, and Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland, who will become majority leader, finalized the strategy over the holiday recess in a flurry of conference calls and meetings with other party leaders. A few Democrats, worried that the party would be criticized for reneging on an important pledge, argued unsuccessfully that they should grant the Republicans greater latitude when the Congress convenes on Thursday.

The episode illustrates the dilemma facing the new party in power. The Democrats must demonstrate that they can break legislative gridlock and govern after 12 years in the minority, while honoring their pledge to make the 110th Congress a civil era in which Democrats and Republicans work together to solve the nation's problems. Yet in attempting to pass laws key to their prospects for winning reelection and expanding their majority, the Democrats may have to resort to some of the same tough tactics Republicans used the past several years.

Democratic leaders say they are torn between giving Republicans a say in legislation and shutting them out to prevent them from derailing Democratic bills.

"There is a going to be a tension there," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen (Md.), the new chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "My sense is there's going to be a testing period to gauge to what extent the Republicans want to join us in a constructive effort or whether they intend to be disruptive. It's going to be a work in progress."

House Republicans have begun to complain that Democrats are backing away from their promise to work cooperatively. They are working on their own strategy for the first 100 hours, and part of it is built on the idea that they might be able to break the Democrats' slender majority by wooing away some conservative Democrats.

Democrats intend to introduce their first bills within hours of taking the oath of office on Thursday. The first legislation will focus on the behavior of lawmakers, banning travel on corporate jets and gifts from lobbyists and requiring lawmakers to attach their names to special spending directives and to certify that such earmarks would not financially benefit the lawmaker or the lawmaker's spouse. That bill is aimed at bringing legislative transparency that Democrats said was lacking under Republican rule.

Democratic leaders said they are not going to allow Republican input into the ethics package and other early legislation, because several of the bills have already been debated and dissected, including the proposal to raise the minimum wage, which passed the House Appropriations Committee in the 109th Congress, said Brendan Daly, a spokesman for Pelosi.

"We've talked about these things for more than a year," he said. "The members and the public know what we're voting on. So in the first 100 hours, we're going to pass these bills."

But because the details of the Democratic proposals have not been released, some language could be new. Daly said Democrats are still committed to sharing power with the minority down the line. "The test is not the first 100 hours," he said. "The test is the first 6 months or the first year. We will do what we promised to do."

For clues about how the Democrats will operate, the spotlight is on the House, where the new 16-seat majority will hold absolute power over the way the chamber operates. Most of the early legislative action is expected to stem from the House.

"It's in the nature of the House of Representatives for the majority party to be dominant and control the agenda and limit as much as possible the influence of the minority," said Ross K. Baker, a political scientist at Rutgers University. "It's almost counter to the essence of the place for the majority and minority to share responsibility for legislation."

In the Senate, by contrast, the Democrats will have less control over business because of their razor-thin 51-to-49-seat margin and because individual senators wield substantial power. Senate Democrats will allow Republicans to make amendments to all their initiatives, starting with the first measure—ethics and lobbying reform, said Jim Manley, spokesman for the incoming majority leader, Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.).

Those same Democrats, who campaigned on a pledge of more openness in government, will kick off the new Congress with a closed meeting of all senators in the Capitol. Manley said the point of the meeting is to figure out ways both parties can work together.

In the House, Louise M. Slaughter (D-N.Y.), who will chair the Rules Committee, said she intends to bring openness to a committee that used to meet in the middle of the night. In the new Congress, the panel—which sets the terms of debate on the House floor—will convene at 10 a.m. before a roomful of reporters.

"It's going to be open," Slaughter said of the process. "Everybody will have an opportunity to participate."

At the same time, she added, the majority would grant Republicans every possible chance to alter legislation once it reaches the floor. "We intend to allow some of their amendments, not all of them," Slaughter said.

For several reasons, House Democrats are assiduously trying to avoid some of the heavy-handed tactics they resented under GOP rule. They say they want to prove to voters they are setting a new tone on Capitol Hill. But they are also convinced that Republicans lost the midterms in part because they were perceived as arrogant and divisive.

"We're going to make an impression one way or the other," said one Democratic leadership aide. "If it's not positive, we'll be out in 2 years."

House Republicans say their strategy will be to offer alternative bills that would be attractive to the conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats, with an eye toward fracturing the Democratic coalition. They hope to force some tough votes for Democrats from conservative districts who will soon begin campaigning for 2008 reelection and will have to defend their records.

"We'll capitalize on every opportunity we have," said one GOP leadership aide, adding that Republicans were preparing alternatives to the Democrats' plans to raise the minimum wage, reduce the interest on student loans, and reduce the profits of big oil and energy companies.

Several Blue Dog Democrats said they do not think Republicans can pick up much support from their group.

"If they've got ideas that will make our legislation better, we ought to consider that," said Rep. Allen Boyd Jr. (D-Fla.), leader of the Blue Dogs. "But if their idea is to try to split a group off to gain power, that's what they've been doing for the past 6 years, and it's all wrong."

To keep her sometimes-fractious coalition together, Pelosi has been distributing the

spoils of victory across the ideological spectrum, trying to make sure that no group within the Democratic Party feels alienated.

Blue Dogs picked up some plum committee assignments, with Jim Matheson (Utah) landing a spot on Energy and Commerce and A.B. "Ben" Chandler (Ky.) getting an Appropriations seat. At the same time, members of Black and Hispanic caucuses obtained spots on these panels, as Ciro Rodriguez (Tex.) was given a seat on Appropriations and Artur Davis (Ala.) took the place of Democrat William J. Jefferson (La.) on Ways and Means.

Democrats acknowledge that if they appear too extreme in blocking the opposing party, their party is sure to come under fire from the Republicans, who are already charging they are being left out of the legislative process.

"If you're talking about 100 hours, you're talking about no obstruction whatsoever, no amendments offered other than those approved by the majority," said Rutgers's Baker. "I would like to think after 100 hours are over, the Democrats will adhere to their promise to make the system a little more equitable. But experience tells me it's really going to be casting against type."

"The temptations to rule the roost with an iron hand are very, very strong," he added. "It would take a majority party of uncommon sensitivity and a firm sense of its own agenda to open up the process in any significant degree to minority. But hope springs eternal."

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 3, 2007]

A FAIRER HOUSE: BUT NOT QUITE YET

The new Democratic House majority has an ambitious plan for its first 100 hours in power, from increasing the minimum wage to strengthening ethics rules to having the federal government negotiate prescription drug prices. Unfortunately, its plans don't include getting those provisions passed in the democratic fashion that the Democrats promised to adhere to once in the majority. When Republicans took over in 1995, they at least went through the motions of putting their "Contract With America" proposals through the normal committee process. Democrats under Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) have decided not to bother with that, nor to let Republicans offer amendments on the floor, nor even to put a GOP alternative up for a vote. This is exactly the kind of high-handed mistreatment that Democrats complained about, justifiably, when they were in the minority.

Democrats offer various rationales for their about-face. They say the streamlined process is necessary because they've pledged to accomplish so much in their first 100 legislative hours. But what makes living up to that self-imposed deadline—which will stretch on for weeks, in any event—more important than living up to their promise of procedural fairness? And why, even if that deadline is sacrosanct, couldn't Republicans at least be offered an opportunity to offer alternatives on the floor?

Democrats also argue that their proposals have been fully vetted and debated, but in fact many of them involve complex policy choices and some are new proposals. Democrats howled when Republicans moved unilaterally to change the rules governing the operations of the House ethics committee; why is it different for them to move unilaterally to change ethics rules? Questions such as whether the minimum wage increase should be combined with tax breaks for small businesses and whether the federal government should be the only party negotiating Medicare prescription prices ought to be put up for discussion and a vote. If that causes a fracture in the Democratic caucus, so be it.

Republicans, who were only too happy to strong-arm and ignore Democrats when the GOP was in the majority, are now, of course, moaning about being abused. In a nice bit of political theater, they plan to offer Ms. Pelosi's own "Minority Bill of Rights" from 2004, which would provide for, among other things, "open, full and fair debate consisting of a full amendment process."

Democrats say that they'll adhere to their previous promises once their first flurry of business is finished. We look forward to that. But if they don't reconsider, they will set an unfortunate precedent that fairness will be offered on sufferance, when the majority finds it convenient, and not as a matter of principle. That would not be a good start for the 110th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased tonight to be joined in our discussion about truthfulness and our discussion about keeping promises and our discussion about the rules process by a couple of my colleagues, and others may join. And I would like to ask first for a comment or two from Congressman MCHENRY from North Carolina.

Congressman MCHENRY is an individual that came to Congress with me after the 2004 election, and has shown just great perspective and great work ethic in making certain that he understands and appreciates all of the nuances of the House and, as a matter of fact, has championed ethics reform in this House. And so I thank you so much for joining us tonight for the Official Truth Squad and look forward to your comments on the ethics that we have seen so far and also on the minority bill of rights that we have co-authored together.

Mr. MCHENRY. Thank you, Congressman PRICE. I appreciate your leadership, friendship, and support in our first term in Congress and as we begin our second. And I appreciate you pulling together the Official Truth Squad and taking this from an idea and actually making it into reality. After all, that is what this legislative process and indeed this House of Representatives is all about, is taking an idea, a powerful idea and making it happen for the American people.

To that end, the Official Truth Squad is here to make sure that the American people know what happens here in these hallowed halls of Congress. And I think it is important, what you point out today from the Democrat leaders' words and actions on their opening day and the lead-up to taking control of this new Congress. It is indeed a new day here, and the American people know that. And I think what the American people see is that the Democrats worked very hard in the campaign and were rewarded by taking control of this wonderful Congress of us, the people's House, and they campaigned on a number of things. But one of the key tenants and key principles upon which they ran their campaigns and the rhetoric they used during the campaign was about openness, honesty, and fairness.

This openness idea, it is a wonderful thing to talk about and I think it is something that I stand for and I know

my colleague from Georgia does as well, and we have worked very hard during our times in public service to provide this for the American people. But it was their number one tenant in the campaign, their number one principle, openness.

Well, on the opening day of Congress, we were hoping as the new minority that this new Democrat majority would ensure openness and fairness. And that is why Congressman PRICE and I, along with some of my other colleagues, joined together to offer the minority bill of rights. And what the minority bill of rights is, in essence, is what all fifth graders in America are taught: It is the legislative process that, when you file a bill in this House, it goes to committee or subcommittee, and it is heard, it is debated, it is amended, it is crafted, and there is compromise in the process. All sides, Democrats, Republicans, conservatives, moderates, liberals, they are all heard. And then it comes to this House floor, where it again goes through that very same process of compromise and input. Well, that is what the minority bill of rights is all about. And what we offered as the minority bill of rights and what we offered here on the House floor today with our two procedural votes today, was ensuring that these principles, which then minority leader NANCY PELOSI, now Speaker PELOSI, advocated just 3 years ago.

So what we offered was, in fact, the Pelosi minority bill of rights. It is not simply a Republican idea, it is actually the minority leader, now the Speaker, her ideas on the way this place should be governed. And when we offered it here on the floor, it was flatly rejected. So it became clear here on the opening day, the opening hours of this new Democrat majority, the campaign on openness, that they really advocated closed process and they only want their ideas, their few ideas heard. They don't want any input or any dissenting opinion.

The bottom line is that Speaker PELOSI thinks that Minority Leader PELOSI was wrong. I think some people call that hypocrisy, some call it ironic to campaign on that. I think it is ridiculous on the opening day of Congress, after a new majority is elected on openness, that they cram down the throats of all the Members of this House a closed rule that does not allow for input, does not allow for amendment, doesn't allow for full, open, and fair debate, on their opening day of their first act as a majority. That is what is so egregious about what we saw here on the House floor.

In fact, this type of abuse has never happened before in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives, the idea that you put a rule out, a rule forward that closes off debate on an unknown bill. We can't even see the text of the bills that they are offering in their 100-hour proposal. They have closed it off from minority view. Simply because I have an "R" beside my name, they believe that I am not able to view it.

Well, I have got news for them. I have got news for this new Democrat majority. 140 million Americans voted for a Republican for U.S. Congress. They are not simply silencing a Member of Congress from North Carolina or a Member of Congress from Georgia; they are silencing the constituents who elected me. That is not fair. That is not openness. That is not a new way of operating. In fact, it is a very old way of operating that the Democrats used when they were in the majority before.

So I think that we should set aside the first day and be hopeful for a second day and a new beginning. We like second chances as Americans. Let's give the Democrats a second chance for true openness, input, and dialogue in a bipartisanship basis; not simply use it as a rhetorical device during the campaign, but to actually govern that way, to actually do it, make sure it happens here on this House floor, not for us as Members of Congress, but for our constituents and for the American people.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate those comments so much, because they really bring into focus and clarity exactly what happened today.

As I mentioned before, the purpose of this is not to say to folks, well, it was better when we were in the majority. The purpose is to say the promises that were made to the American people and decisions that the American people made upon those promises are not being followed. They are not being followed. And when they are not being followed, what that means when it comes to rules, it means that the individuals who represent those 140 million people are not allowed a voice, which means in essence that those 140 million people have no voice in the House of Representatives as it relates to the rules that have been put in place.

I also think it is important to talk about the fact that it never happened before. There is kind of this general sense by some that this is just business as usual. Well, it is not business as usual. And one of my colleagues who knows better than most, who understands and appreciates that, is my good friend from Georgia, fellow colleague from Georgia, Congressman GINGREY, who is a former member of the Rules Committee, who I think has a wonderful perspective on the rule that will enact bills in place on this floor of the House without any review by committee, any review by anybody other than potentially, I guess the Speaker, and that may be it.

So, I am so pleased that you joined us this evening to talk about what is a closed rule within a closed rule and to talk about the bills and the consequences of that for the American people. I welcome my good friend, Congressman GINGREY.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank my colleague from Georgia (Dr. PRICE) for yielding, and I thank my friend from North Carolina (Mr. McHENRY), the two co-authors of the minority bill of rights. I am a proud co-sponsor of that, and I

am proud of their ethics in regard to that.

And also, Mr. Speaker, let it be known to our colleagues that this Official Truth Squad of the former freshman Members, now sophomore Members, this is not something they just dreamed up tonight. This is something that they have been doing for the entire 109th Congress and putting some sunshine out there on a lot of these issues and shining that light of day, and this is, of course, part of a continuing process.

Dr. PRICE and Mr. McHENRY are exactly right; I was enjoying very much being on that select powerful, powerful Rules Committee, and had that opportunity to go home and tell the folks back home that I am a member of the powerful Rules Committee. And as a member, many times I had an opportunity to hear the minority, the current chairman, Ms. SLAUGHTER, the vice chairman, Mr. McGOVERN, the senior members, Mr. HASTINGS and Ms. MATSUI, talk about the process and talk about this idea, the appalling idea of a closed rule as Congressman PRICE points out, and what they are doing in this rules of the House package that they are sort of forcing upon us in asking us to vote on with much less than 24-hour notice.

Just listen to some of the quotes of the former four minority members of the Rules Committee who are now running the show and driving this package that contains not one significant piece of legislation, but five pieces of legislation, including the minimum wage bill, the stem cell research bill, which indeed is truly life and death issues, the 9/11 Commission Report, completing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. I mean, these are not naming of post offices, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues. We all know that and we know the significance. But listen to what my colleagues would say and did say many times in regard to one piece of legislation.

First of all, let me quote Ms. SLAUGHTER: "If we want to foster democracy in this body, we should take the time and thoughtfulness to debate all major legislation under an open rule, Mr. Speaker, not just appropriations bills which are already restricted. An open process should be the norm and not the exception." This is from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 14, 2005.

□ 2115

Listen to what my good friend, Mr. McGOVERN, had to say on September 28, 2006: "If the Republican leadership does not agree with the bipartisan substitute, then they should defeat it on the House floor after a full and open debate. Instead, they cower behind procedural tricks, parliamentary sleight of hand and closed rules. No wonder the American people are disgusted with Congress. If my Republican friends want this trend of closed rules, of no amendments, of no democracy in the House to continue, then by all means

vote for this rule. Just go along to get along. But if you believe, as I do, that the monopoly on good ideas is not held by a few members of the leadership in a closed room, then vote 'no.' Have the guts to vote 'no.'"

That was Representative JIM McGOVERN.

Listen to what our good friend, a senior member on the Rules Committee, Mr. ALCEE HASTINGS, had to say on September 28, 2006: "I have said it before: the way the majority runs the House is shameful. It is hypocritical, it is un-American, it is undemocratic, and it happens every single day that we have a closed rule, and in other circumstances as well." He goes on to say "closed rules are an affront to our democracy. We should stop it now. My outrage and the outrage of all on this side is as much about process as it is about policy. Pure partisan politics never produces sound public policy."

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, July 12, 2005.

Finally, the gentlewoman from California, Ms. MATSUI: "The American people want to hear practical, well-thought ideas from their elected representatives. Today we could have had that honest, engaged and realistic debate. These proposals and ideas deserve to come to the floor. They deserve to be debated, and they deserve a vote. Unfortunately, under the rule reported out, this will not happen. Instead, we will have a gripping session that yields no results. Congress is part of this government. In fulfillment of its responsibilities, this House should reject this rule and bring real policy to the floor."

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, June 15, 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but I think you get my drift. They are doing exactly what they railed against us about. The righteous indignation that we heard on a continuing basis in the Rules Committee, and here they come with the rules of the House, and they include in it five pieces of legislation with no rule whatsoever. What do we get? A motion to recommit.

Mr. McHENRY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman's quotes are quite illuminating about the rhetoric that the Democrat Members used versus their actions on opening day. Your expertise on the Rules Committee is quite prescient.

There are three additional quotes that come to mind from earlier today. In the new Speaker's speech today, her rather elaborate speech today about the agenda for this new Congress, she said three things that are of importance to what we are talking about here. She said first, respect for every voice. That is what their new majority is about. And it is also to work for all of America. And, finally, it is for common ground for the common good.

Those are wonderful things and wonderful ideals that this House should live up to. But as my colleague from Georgia said, it shouldn't be simply a speech. It shouldn't simply be rhetoric; it should be reality. It should be the practice of this House to seek common ground to work for all of America, even

those that didn't vote for the Democrat majority, all of America, and respect every voice, even if you have an "R" beside your name, respect for every idea that comes out of this place so that we can do what is best and right for America. It is not simply about process.

I think my colleague from Georgia said that very well. It is not about process. It is about the effects that that process have on public policy and the outcomes. If you rig the process, which I think there are countries around the world that rig their voting process, that is not true democracy. Fairness and openness, that is what brings about the best result for all of America. It is not about a Democrat idea or a Republican idea; it is about doing what is right on a bipartisan basis for the American people.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate those comments, and I appreciate the comments of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

I think it is appropriate now to ask my good friend, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), to make some comments about civility. Congresswoman FOXX is a dear friend and has had great concern about the level of discourse in this House of Representatives, has participated actively in the Official Truth Squad. I know you had some comments that you wanted to make about the level of civility and the importance of that in this House.

Ms. FOXX. I want to thank you, Congressman PRICE, for bringing the Truth Squad back. It is unfortunate that we had to do it on the first day of session, but it was necessary to do that. As some folks know who may have seen us in the 109th Congress, and you know to me it seems like it was only yesterday we were here. It does not seem like a while ago.

We began the Official Truth Squad because our colleagues on the other side of the aisle were constantly saying things that we knew were not true, and we felt that somebody needed to respond to them. It fell to a group of primarily freshmen Members to form the Truth Squad, although we had great help from some of our colleagues, some of whom are here tonight, to talk about the truth.

Unfortunately, a lot of what our colleagues said in the 109th Congress, some of those things that were not true were believed by the American people, and they believed a lot of the things that they said that were not true about the economy, about things that were happening in the government; but they believed them on their promises of what they said they would do.

They offered to make changes, and we know that there were some Republicans who didn't do all that they should have done, not just in the last Congress but in others. And so the American people have held our feet to the fire on this. I think we came back here, though, with a very positive spirit and we all came in today knowing it

was going to be a very historic day, but we were going to celebrate the very positive day that we have here.

All of us are very grateful for the wonderful opportunity to serve in the Congress of the United States, and we came here with the idea that we were going to solve problems that all Americans face. We see that happening in our communities every day. We see Democrats and Republicans working together side by side in many different ways.

I marvel every time I go to a parade or to some fair or some event that is put on by a community and how the people have worked together to do that, very often without any support from any government body because they put aside political differences for the good of the community. That is obviously what we Republicans want to be happening in the 110th Congress.

We believe that the American people are united in their desire for peace and national security. They want solutions to problems, not partisan bickering that only creates deadlocks and no solutions.

Again, the people in our communities do that every day, and so we looked forward to the goal and the promise of the new majority to restore the House to civility, to restore open debate so that ideas can be examined, always reviewed and respected. And as Leader BOEHNER said today in his speech, "May the best idea win."

We are here to debate ideas. We want to put the best ideas out there and know that if we put our good ideas out there and get them up for a vote, many times they are going to win; and many times we are going to vote for the ideas that the Democrats bring up. But we should be united in a common goal, although they are different perspectives. All Members agree they should be able to voice their opinions on behalf of their constituents and the constituents that sent them here to represent them.

We are going to hold the Democrats accountable to their promises, just as the Truth Squad during the 109th Congress came in and brought in the facts. And we are not going to compromise our ideals or principles, but we are going to do everything we can to make America better.

We want open debate on legislation. We want Members to be able to voice their concerns, their opinions, offer amendments in subcommittees, full committee and in consideration of any legislation on the floor. There should be plenty of time to review legislation and every Member should be allowed the opportunity to participate. After all, this is the people's House. It doesn't belong to the Members of Congress; it does belong to the American people. We are here not for a lifetime but temporarily to serve the people who sent us here.

As we are reminded again today, this House has been here for a long time and will be here for a long time to come. We want to make sure that it is

strengthened and not weakened in what we do.

I don't believe there was a direct mandate in this last election. Folks lost races and won races for lots of different reasons; but I do believe the American people want change in the way we operate.

As I said the other day in our conference, as I have heard the rhetoric and seen the actions of our Democratic colleagues, the North Carolina State motto just kept going over and over in my head. The North Carolina State motto is "esse quam videri" which means: to be rather than to seem.

What we want to make sure is that our Democratic colleagues don't try to pull the wool over the eyes of the American people by seeming rather than being. And what we have seen on the first day is the seeming rather than the being.

So we want to do what I think the American people want us to do, to find solutions to the problems we face. We don't think that is going to be done behind closed doors and legislation ramrodded through here because of the majority. We don't want Members stripped of the ability to address the House with their ideas, principles and amendments. Those things don't affect us individually as much as they affect our constituents.

So I am going to remind our colleagues over and over and over again of the North Carolina State motto and say to them we hold you to the principles of doing what you said you were going to do and being rather than seeming.

Again, I want to thank my colleague from Georgia for organizing the Truth Squad in the 110th Congress, and I look forward to working with you, although I hope we are not going to have to be here too many nights a week.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina and the wonderful words and focus that you bring to the need for civility and appropriateness in terms of word and deed on the floor of the House and in actions throughout our careers as elected officials.

I am so pleased to be joined by another good friend and colleague from Tennessee, Congresswoman MARSHA BLACKBURN, who has participated actively in the Official Truth Squad. I guess I share the gentlewoman from North Carolina's lament in having to be here on the first day because there is some straightening out in terms of bringing truth to the issue that has occurred even on this first day. We welcome you and look forward to your comments as they relate to the issues that have already occurred in this 110th Congress.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his work on this issue and for his work on the Truth Squad.

Today is a historic day, as my colleagues have mentioned. I commend my colleagues from both sides of the

aisle on their collegiality and their tone as we have approached this day, and have recognized the historic importance and the significance of the first female taking the position of Speaker of this wonderful body which is the people's House.

You know, as the gentleman was saying, it is so important that we note, we are not here to complain. We are not here to gripe. What we are here to do is to highlight for our constituents some of the content of a rules package that seems to be hastily pulled together that did not go through the committee process, that didn't have hearings, and was brought to the floor for a vote.

I think it is important that our constituents know, because we have a lot of new Members of this body, and those voters that voted in the elections this fall did not go to the ballot box voting to have a government that was going to be carried out in the shadows. They went to the ballot boxes saying we want government that is more accountable. We want government that is more open. We want government that is more responsive to the needs of our constituents. We want government that is going to work more effectively and more efficiently for the American people.

□ 2130

And the very first vote that is taken on the rules package presented in the people's House today is a vote that would eliminate recorded votes in the Rules Committee.

Now, in my great State of Tennessee, we have had this discussion, and in our general assembly in the great State of Tennessee, we have had this debate, and people said over and over again we want those votes recorded. We want sunshine. We want openness. And that is something that needs to be highlighted with our constituents. They need to realize the format that they are wanting to push forward would deny the minority the opportunity to hear, have their amendments heard in the Rules Committee. Dr. GINGREY has highlighted some of the provisions, and he does such a wonderful job with our Rules Committee and the concerns that we have with the format that would go before the Rules Committee that would deny recording some of these votes, which means there is less accountability. So it is our responsibility to come and highlight those things.

You know another thing that the people did not vote for this November was to raise their taxes. They did not go to the poll and vote saying, "Representatives, we want you to make it easier to raise the taxes on us." And one of the things that we find with the PAYGO rules is that it is basically pay as you go on a spending spree. Even the Concord Coalition has estimated that this 100 hours would cost \$800 billion over 10 years if everything was funded. That is \$80 billion a year for 10 years, \$80 billion a year additional, additional new spending.

Now, I can tell you one thing for certain. I don't know a lot, but one thing I do know is that the people of the Seventh District of Tennessee do not want to be forking over another \$80 billion a year.

What they did vote for this November was to see government spending reduced, and that is where they want our emphasis to be. And it is important that we spell this out for our constituents, for the American people, for them to know what is transpiring as we come into the 110th Congress.

Words are important and it is important that we provide the clarification that is there and that is needed. And as I have viewed the package that we have debated some today and will debate tomorrow, I have come to realize that one of the things our colleagues across the aisle, the Democrats, have said is they want to go back to the way things were. I even said maybe Barbara Streisand's "The Way We Were" should be their theme song because that is how they want to go back to doing business where it is closed. This is what people voted against with the resolution in 1994. They voted then for more openness.

This past November, people thought they were going to see more action and more openness, and the first votes that are being taken are closing that process and are excluding people, excluding representatives of as many as 140 million Americans from participation in that process.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I wanted to highlight the new rule for the Rules Committee, which says that votes don't have to be recorded, and I appreciate so much your bringing that up because nobody at home, none of my constituents, believe that any Member of Congress ought to be able to come here and vote and not have their constituents be able to look and see what they have done.

And, in fact, part of this rules package that I think breaks a number of promises that were made by our friends in the majority as they ran up to the election, part of this package says that those votes don't have to be recorded. And I would be happy to yield to you, but for the life of me, I can't think of a reason that one would want to do that.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If the gentleman would yield and also yield to Dr. GINGREY, who is on the Rules Committee, but having served in a State legislative body, that is one of the things that our constituents who were tuned into watching so closely would say, how in the world can you represent me and then not tell me how you voted and try to keep that a secret? I am having a difficult time finding words to say how egregious that is and how offensive it is to our constituents.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding and giving me an opportunity to talk about

that a little bit because at the beginning of my remarks, I talked about the powerful Rules Committee. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a powerful Rules Committee in that you decide how long you can talk on an issue. That is, you limit the time of debate. You have the power to make amendments in order to give a Member on either side of the aisle, majority or minority, an opportunity to come and talk about their amendment on the floor. They may get beat 434-1, but they have that opportunity.

As an all powerful member of the Rules Committee, as Representative PRICE was just saying, all of a sudden, in this rules package, they are saying that one of these all powerful members can make these votes, can set this time of debate, can deny the amendment opportunity for Members on either side of the aisle and then not take a public vote, not take a roll call vote, and not go home and face their constituents, these all powerful members of the Rules Committee, not answer to their constituents for why they denied maybe a Member of their own party a good idea to debate on the House floor, their body.

And I am going to tell you the rhetorical question Dr. PRICE asked, was why would this new majority do this? I can offer a suggestion. They now, of course, have nine members. The four that were in the minority are now the majority including the chairman of the Rules Committee and the vice chairman of the Rules Committee, but they also have an additional five seats, which they are filling with some of their newly elected freshmen Democrats who can go home in these marginal districts, these red Bush districts, if you will, and say that I am an all powerful member of the Rules Committee, re-elect me, but yet not have to answer for these difficult votes that they took probably in opposition to what their constituents would want them to do.

So I thank you for giving me the opportunity to explain the rhetorical question of why they might want to do that.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. And if the gentleman would yield, if my memory is correct, in 1995, when Speaker Gingrich and the House Republicans set the rules, that was at the time that they started recording those votes; is that not correct?

Mr. GINGREY. I think the gentlewoman from Tennessee is absolutely correct on that.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. And before that, the votes were not recorded and it was the process. That is why I say we are returning to the way we were, the way they were. And it is different from the way business was conducted from 1995 until now. And I think that is an important distinction for our constituents who have stopped us on the campaign trail and stopped us as we have prepared to come in and take our solemn oath of office today and have said we want to be certain that this Congress is going to function in an open,

accountable manner. We want to know what is happening in the people's House, and it is your charge to keep with us to keep us informed.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank the gentlewoman and I thank my good friend from Georgia for his answer to my rhetorical question, because the answer was the only thing that can be possible as a reason to do it is politics. That is it. That is the only thing that can be possible. There can be no good reason, from a process standpoint, for this House of Representatives not to record those votes. So I appreciate so much your enlightening me and helping me understand why that would have been done.

I do know that constituents at home are tired, are tired of decisions that are made up here in Washington based solely on politics. And, in fact, I would suggest to my friends on the other side of the aisle who now find themselves in the majority that decisions like that and being held accountable for those decisions make it so that lives in majorities can sometimes be very, very short.

So I appreciate your comments and appreciate your input and would be happy to yield if either of you had anything else to comment regarding the rules.

If not, I do want to comment a little bit about the process and about why discussion of the process is important. My good friends know and most Americans know we live in the longest surviving democracy ever in the history of man, ever in the history of man. And there is a reason for that. I think people can conjecture about why that is the case, but I think one of the reasons for that is that we as a Nation have respected the process by which we develop policy. And the reason it is important is because everybody that is an elected official, is a representative of the people, has an opportunity to have input into the process, and that process itself not only produces the best product because as you have more people involved who represent more diverse areas, I think you get a better product, but what it does do is it ensures that people trust the outcome.

They trust the outcome of not just elections, but they trust the outcome of the process of legislation. And when that process gets truncated or gets cut down or is closed, we use that term "closed rule" here, when the American people hear about a closed rule, what that means is that it does not allow your representative at home to be able to offer amendments, be able to have input into what the ultimate work product is, what the ultimate bill, what the ultimate law is.

So, Mr. Speaker, many individuals across this Nation who went to the polls and voted in November have elected people who because of changes in these rules today will not be able to have input into very, very important issues like 9/11 Commission recommendations and whether or not they

are adopted; like stem cell research and whether that goes forward paid for with Federal taxpayer money; minimum wage, an important issue, but it ought to be debated, ought to have opportunity for amendment; and then something that is near and dear to my heart as a physician in my former life along with Dr. GINGREY and my other colleagues is the issue of prescription drugs and the Medicare part D prescription drug program. An extremely complex issue. Extremely complex issue.

And today, what the majority party did was say that we will bring within the next week to the floor of this House a bill that has never been discussed in committee. It has never had a hearing. It has never had anybody in this body be able to offer an amendment officially and have folks vote on it and say "yes" or "no," they believe that that is the case, that has never been through that process that results in the best work product that is available for a bill and for ultimately a law. And from the rumors that we hear, and we only hear rumors because we don't have the legislative language, because we do not know what is going to be in that bill, but from the rumors that we hear, the result of that bill will be a decrease in the kinds of medications that are available to the American people.

That may go into effect, Mr. Speaker, if the majority party goes forward with the rule that they adopted today. That may go into effect without anybody in this House of Representatives ever having an opportunity to affect that outcome.

□ 2145

Some on the majority side would say, well, it has been talked about for a long time. It was voted on, the Medicare prescription drug program was voted on in 2003, got a lot of hearings then. There were a lot of people that talked about it and voiced their opinion on it at that time.

That is true, Mr. Speaker, but what hasn't happened is that every single freshman Member of this House was duly elected in their districts and has a right, a right, under our system of government to have input into a bill that comes out of the House of Representatives. Every single freshman will have no input into that bill or into the bill as it relates to minimum wage, as it relates to stem cell research or anything else that was included in the rules package today. Never.

That has never been done, as my colleagues said before, never been done in the history, in the history of this Nation, to have that kind of substantive legislation dealt with in a way that does not allow that kind of input.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of rule, that kind of process, which is difficult to get your arms around, but that kind of process, I would suggest to you, is an abuse of majority power. Our job, on the minority side, is to hold people accountable for their actions and for their decisions.

It is important that the American people understand and appreciate that these decisions that were made on the very first day, which, by and large, are procedural issues, that are difficult to get folks interested in, but they not only set the tone for this Congress, but they set the rules under which we make major decisions that will affect the American people as it relates to their income, as it relates to their security, and as it relates to their health. Nothing, nothing could be more important.

Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a historic day. But it is also a day of concern. It is a day of concern, because what goes on here is extremely important. Within these walls we can effect change that will benefit citizens all across our Nation. We can also effect change that will harm citizens all across our Nation. If we work together, we will do much more of the former and very little of the latter.

Let me close by just saying, Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, the challenges that we face in this Nation are huge. They are immense. But they are not Republican challenges, and they are not Democrat challenges. They are American challenges.

If we work together as a body of elected representatives from all across this wonderful and glorious Nation, we will come up with the best product, the best legislation, the best laws that will result in the most amount of benefit to our citizens all across this Nation. So I challenge, I challenge my Democrat colleagues to fulfill the promises that they made on the election, during the election campaign, to fulfill the promises that they made, to fulfill the promises that they made when they talked to citizens in their districts all across this Nation about openness and about civility and about fiscal responsibility. That challenge, that challenge making certain that you fulfill those promises is what will ring true to the American people.

I appreciate once again, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to come to the floor tonight.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. INSLEE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STUPAK, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PRICE of Georgia) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, today and January 5.

Mr. DENT, for 5 minutes, today.