

truly blessed. And just as you have been blessed, you have also blessed others. I've been told that "to those to whom much is given, much is expected in return."

The Millers have been fortunate to have a great family, great children, great grandchildren, friends and relatives. Their children, grandchildren, other relatives and friends have been fortunate to have the Millers in their lives. And I wish all of them a great day as they gather for a tremendous celebration on Sunday.

And so I close my comments, Mr. Speaker, with congratulations to Tom and Lois Miller, wish them well and trust that they will have many more years of happy and blissful marriage and that this relationship will continue until the end of time.

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

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

1400

#### EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening to bring information before this body about the current status of education in our Nation.

I had the distinct pleasure of speaking before the Committee on Education recently during Members Day regarding No Child Left Behind, NCLB, and its reauthorization. But I felt compelled to come to the floor as well to join with my other colleagues and reiterate my concern with the current state of education in this country and what I hope to see come out of this year's reauthorization.

Now, I share with all my colleagues here in Congress the ultimate goal of providing a high-quality education for every child in America.

Surely, we can do better than what has been done so far. What, then, should we do? I have looked at past reauthorizations of ESEA, and I noticed a troubling trend. With every reauthorization, new problems are identified with American schools. With every reauthorization, the solution proposed by Congress is for the Federal Government to become more involved with education.

So, with this reauthorization before us, I have to ask, what has this interference wrought? Back in 1983, a famous report entitled "A Nation At Risk" said that America had fallen dangerously behind the rest of the world in education. Today new studies say many of the exact same things.

According to the National Center For Education statistics, for example, in 2003, U.S. fourth graders were outperformed by their peers in 11 countries, including four Asian countries and seven European countries. U.S. eighth graders were outperformed by their peers in nine countries. Yet, as a percentage of GDP, we spend more money now on education than at any time in our Nation's history. In fact, we spend more in the United States on K through 12 education than the Philippines, Saudi Arabia or Sweden spend on everything in their countries.

Our problem is this: We have increased Federal paperwork which requires increased taxpayer dollars to pay for increased administrative staff. But we have decreased teacher flexibility. We have decreased accountability to parents and decreased student performance.

So for this year's reauthorization, I am proposing something different. Very soon, I will be dropping in legislation that will allow a State to in essence opt out of the majority of the requirements of NCLB, but at the same time, allow those taxpayers in the States to keep their education funding through what we call a refundable tax credit.

I understand this is very different than what some other Members were proposing. But I feel that only by allowing the States and local governments to bear the burden of education accountability, accountability on that level, will we ever, as a Nation, make the progress that we need to make in the classroom so that we can stay competitive in the twenty-first century.

I recently held a town hall meeting back in my district about No Child Left Behind. Every person in that room had something negative to say about the administrative requirements in the program in general. At one point in the meeting, I asked how many people there had contacted and met with a local teacher or principal or school board member regarding their problems? Nearly everyone in the room raised their hand.

I then asked the question, how many of the people in the room here met with somebody in the State capital or in the New Jersey Department of Education about their concerns? About half the people raised their hands. I then asked, well, how many of you have had contact with someone from the U.S. Department of Education in Washington? Only one person raised their hand.

My point is this: By transferring the requirements for NCLB in Washington, we are moving the accountability for education further away from the parents, the teachers, the school boards, to where it belongs. It belongs close to the parents, the students and the educators in the local school boards.

In addition, the reporting requirements under NCLB have created basically a confusing system, a system that ends up punishing our best

schools. One of the high schools in my district is consistently cited in publications in the State as one of the top-performing schools in my State. This very same school was placed on an early warning list 2 years after NCLB was instituted.

This was not an underperforming school. Every year, nearly 100 percent of the kids graduate and they attend college. The average combined SAT score for the students in that school was around 1,100. Fourteen AP courses and tests were offered and so on. So it is a great school. And, yes, it is on the warning list.

So I worry that while trying to meet the requirements of NCLB, students attending this high school will actually be held back by burdensome regulations rather than pushed to excel at already high standards that the school had previously set for them.

I am certain there are many other schools in my counties in my district in my State and across the country, which is why we need a change to NCLB.

#### CALLING FOR A TIMETABLE TO REDEPLOY FROM IRAQ

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

Mr. SESTAK. Mr. Speaker, a little over 5 years ago I was on the ground in Afghanistan and then returned with an Aircraft Carrier Battle Group. I then took that Aircraft Carrier Battle Group into the Persian Gulf for the precursor operations just before we began that war.

After that war had commenced, I returned to the ground in Afghanistan 18 months later for a short period of time and saw what had not been done. We had accomplished so little compared to what might have been because we diverted our attention and our resources from our Civil Affairs Forces to our Special Operations Forces to the tragic misadventure in Iraq.

I speak of Afghanistan because as it becomes prey to terrorists and as the Taliban has moved back into the southern provinces, it is a poster child for why I believe we must bring about a timetable for the end of the war in Iraq.

That war has hurt U.S. security throughout this globe as well as here at home, yet not one Army unit, Active, Reserve or Guard is in a state of readiness that it could deploy anywhere in the world if another contingency were to occur. Never mind that we are failing to engage properly from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

There is a change in our strategy that can bring about an end to this tragedy without a failed state in Iraq. That is to set a date that is certain by which we would redeploy out of Iraq, because a date certain changes the structure of incentives within that region to change the behavior of other

nations, in particular, Iran and Syria, that are involved destructively in this conflict because we are, to their delight, bleeding, bleeding profusely.

I asked when I was there with Senator HAGEL, our highest political officer there, does Iran want a failed state if we are to redeploy? His response was no. Therefore, we must have the confidence to set a date that is certain to redeploy out of Iraq, put our troops in Afghanistan, remain in the region on our bases in Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, or Aircraft Carrier Battle Group or Amphibious Ready Group, and bring others home, so we don't degrade the readiness of our forces, but have the competence to deal with Iran and Syria, bring them together with the Iraqis as they deal with the extreme elements and we deal with the middle.

There is a saying in the Middle East, "Insha'Allah," basically, "God willing tomorrow." Tomorrow for U.S. security has been enough. A date certain, approximately a year, 9 months, to give those countries time to work with us to bring about the political decisions that must cease the civil war, to have the Iraqis step to the plate and assume responsibility in the 32 ministries that thus far have been personal fiefdoms for personal ambitions as we provide the political and military cover for them to go about their personal pursuits. This is a change that can only about be brought about not by doubling down on a bad military bet by more troops, but by enforcing a date certain within a timetable. And lastly, we should do so on an authorization bill.

We should never again put our troops between us and the President. Being in the military is a dangerous business, but it doesn't have to be unsafe. Our business in the military has the dignity of danger, but you must provide them the bullets and the equipment they need to protect themselves, while having an authorization bill provide the date certain by which no forces in Iraq would remain, or funding for them to remain would not be there.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of my time with the understanding that there is a strategic approach to end this conflict without a failed state in order to enhance U.S. security.

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

□ 1415

#### A MATTER OF TRUST

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, in the current issue of the "New Yorker" magazine, veteran reporter Seymour Hersh lays out the shame that was Abu Ghraib and the efforts at the highest levels to sweep it under the carpet.

Former Army General Antonio Taguba takes this very brave step to share details of his meetings with former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other administration officials in the wake of the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib. In May, 2004, photos of abuse at the American-run prison were made public by CBS and other media outlets. We can all recall the inhumane treatment and degradation depicted. What was included in the photos and videos were not interrogations. They were humiliating and often horrible acts of violence.

Months earlier, before the photos emerged, General Taguba had filed a report outlining the "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses that were inflicted on several detainees and systemic and illegal abuse."

In fact, the first report sent to senior Pentagon officials came in January of that year. The response? A senior general in Iraq brushed off the report saying that the victims were "only Iraqis." According to the article, General Taguba found that Lieutenant General Sanchez, the Army commander in Iraq who had visited the prison several times, knew exactly what was going on.

Despite many reports contradicting him, Secretary Rumsfeld himself clung to the claim that he saw the photos and video of the abuse only days before testifying before Congress. He said he first learned of the problem in late January or early February. His memory seems to be a little fuzzy in this regard. And in response, who did he send to oversee prison in Iraq? Major General Jeffrey Miller, the commander at Guantanamo.

If this were a movie plot, Mr. Speaker, it would seem ludicrous. Unfortunately, this is part of our real history in the occupation of Iraq.

And our commander-in-chief? It is unclear when he first learned of the situation at Abu Ghraib, but by most accounts it was months before the notorious pictures hit the airwaves. This is absolutely disgraceful.

It appears that the administration has no shame when it comes to the

continuing abuse of human rights abroad and at home right here in America. Is this the legacy we want to leave in the Middle East? A preemptive strike against a nation which did not have weapons of mass destruction? A civil war that is tearing a nation apart? Our standing in the world at an all-time low? The loss of over 3,500 brave service members?

This did not have to happen. The administration willingly misled this Nation into an occupation that cannot be won.

The acts at Abu Ghraib could have besmirched the honor and reputation of all of the troops who serve each day with distinction and courage, but thankfully it did not, because the American people know and understand that the acts of the few and of the top leadership who endorse those acts should not be visited on those who so bravely and selflessly serve. Our troops have shown great valor in the face of unbelievable challenges. This Congress honors them and the sacrifices they have made.

That said, it is well past time that this Congress stands up and says, enough is enough from this administration. The American people are frustrated with the lack of progress on ending the occupation and bringing our troops home, and rightfully so.

This fight may be difficult, but it is our obligation. I ask my colleagues to demand that not another day goes by without a real effort to bring our troops home and to return the sovereignty of Iraq to its people.

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

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### COMMENTS ON THE CONSTITUTION

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, it is this time as we end a week of discussion and debate and we all leave to reconnect with our constituents and find out from the real people of America what we have actually done here that we have a time to sit back and contemplate the significant questions that will be brought to us next week, probably the greatest of which is simply will the Republicans continue to win the congressional baseball game.

But at this time in this weekend, I am joined tonight by Congressman GARRETT of New Jersey, who is the Chairman of the Constitutional Caucus, who wisely thought that this would be a good time for us to take a