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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHULER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 23, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable HEATH SHULER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) for 5 minutes.

DELEGATE VOTING

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, what if I were to tell you that non-Members of the House of Representatives were about to be given a vote right here in the House? You would say no, can't happen, right? Well, hold on, because it's about to happen and it's about to happen this week.

This week is a remarkable week; it should be a time of great anticipation, the State of the Union, we've got incredible and remarkable challenges that face our Nation. But at home, when I go home, people are kind of

wondering out loud, what's going on up there in Washington? There is skepticism about the Six for '06, you know, the things that the Democrat majority adopted in their vaunted first 100 hours, albeit under an unfair process and with no input from either their new Members or the minority. Really a clear abuse of power. But the explanation was, well, we ran on these issues, everyone knew they were coming, they endorsed them in the election.

Now, regardless of the truthfulness of that statement, most folks just kind of shake their head, and most in the press have given the Democrats the benefit of the doubt, and that's all right. There is a basic sense of, you know, it's tough to believe that they would violate so many principles coming right out of the chute.

And then yesterday we had a suspension bill; that is a bill that is brought to the floor of the House that requires a supermajority, two-thirds, in order to pass. And by tradition, it is brought to the floor because it has got an overwhelming amount of support, with the full knowledge of both the majority and the minority. And yesterday, a bill that virtually everyone here supports, removing Federal pensions from Members of Congress who are convicted of a felony, was brought to the floor and amended or changed twice within a few minutes before even reaching the floor. Now this is fairly esoteric stuff; however, it is important because it demonstrates the unfair process, the abuse of the rules and the abuse of power.

And now we have another in what seems to be this daily event of power-hungry Democrat majorities to give non-Members of the House a vote on this floor. It is a move that they tried the last time they were in control, a move that generated some interesting headlines—"Have the Democrats No Shame?" "The Democrats' Greedy Power Grab," "Power Grab in the

House." And these are from the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Post, not this year, but in 1992.

Now the issue is whether or not to allow non-Members of the House of Representatives, specifically the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico, and the Delegates from Guam, the Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia and American Samoa the privilege to vote during the Committee of the Whole on this floor of the House. Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous; it is an incredible, phenomenal move in both process and in substance.

Once again, now becoming the routine, this bill, scheduled to come to the floor of the House tomorrow, has had no committee hearing, no debate, no opportunity to amend, no democracy. I assure you, this is not the kind of change that the American people voted for last November.

The Constitution states that the House shall be composed of, quote, "Members chosen by the people of the several States," not Delegates representing non-State territories. It is an unconstitutional power grab, a plan that runs roughshod over the constitutional principle of one person, one vote. One of these territories has 57,000 residents, compared to the 650,000 in my district. These individuals could vote to raise your taxes, Mr. Speaker, without paying taxes themselves.

Clearly the plot by the Democrats is to slip this through during the week of the State of the Union when they think no one is paying attention. This is an unconscionable action, it is a violation of trust and a clear abuse of power.

Under the Democrat plot and logic, they could seat and allow anyone that the majority desires in the House. Who's next, Mr. Speaker? Howard Dean? Does he get a vote in the House?

The American people are disgusted with this level of arrogance and abuse of power.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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The oath that all of us took just a few weeks ago, we all pledged to uphold the Constitution of the United States; this proposal belies that oath.

I urge my Democrat colleagues to regain some sense of propriety, some sense of history, some sense of rectitude. When you trample on the Constitution, when you use the Constitution as a doormat and not the foundational document of our wonderful representative democracy, you do great harm to our Nation.

ELIMINATING POVERTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, last week, on the night of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, I attended a truly amazing event in the West Side Community Center in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

The city of Asbury Park is in my congressional district, and has been plagued in recent months by gang violence. It is a phenomenon shared by many New Jersey municipalities, including my hometown of Long Branch nearby, which recently witnessed several gang murders.

Mr. Speaker, redevelopment has come to Asbury Park, all the outward signs are of a seaside resort that is coming back big time. So why, you might ask, the gang violence? Why the murders? One of which took place right in front of the West Side Community Center where the Dr. King celebration took place. The truth is that the plight of the have-nots, that other America, has gotten worse in the last few years.

The event was organized by the Reverend Kevin Nunn, leader of Spirit of Truth World Vision Outreach in Asbury Park. More than 15 local clergy testified to the difficulty of young people in getting an education, avoiding drugs, and preventing a return to prison because of lack of economic opportunities. The recreation programs which had been the backbone of the West Side Community Center are at risk because of lack of funding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the most important theme I can convey about Monday night's event was the message of hope. Dr. King was invoked as the example of love, peace and harmony among those of all races and creeds, and he was a symbol that pervaded the audience as the speakers talked about the need to vote, to go to church and unite as a committee. Reverend Nunn and most of the clergy who spoke at this meeting are directly involved in bringing shelter to the homeless, food to the needy, and promoting economic opportunity.

The people present Monday night are proud Americans, but they need help. They are certainly not looking to government to solve all their problems, but they believe that government can

make a difference, and it is up to us as their representatives to make the changes necessary so they can continue to have hope.

Mr. Speaker, Senator BOB MENENDEZ and I will soon introduce legislation to address the issue of gang violence. The bills will have three main goals. Our first goal is to provide after-school programs for students so they have a place to go instead of joining a gang. The type of recreation and mentor programs that were discussed in Asbury Park at the community meeting I attended could benefit from the grant set up by this legislation.

The second goal is to prevent recidivism, the idea that people who leave jail don't get caught up in a gang once again because they have no job, no family or home to return to after jail. The legislation expands adult and juvenile offender demonstration projects to help with post-release housing and promote programs that hire former prisoners.

And last, the administration addresses better police enforcement as well as gang suppression initiatives. At the Asbury Park meeting, the cries of "Stop the Violence" came up repeatedly. The legislation will direct more resources to towns to create a new COPS grant program and put more police on the street. Penalties will increase for those convicted of gang crimes, and particularly those using firearms, and communities would be empowered to create their own task forces to implement antigang initiatives.

Now all of these ideas require more dollars, and on the day when President Bush is making his State of the Union address, I want to make one very serious point about Federal resources. We can't, as a nation, continue to escalate the war in Iraq with no positive consequences for America at a continued drain of hundreds of billions of dollars. President Bush needs to reverse course and redeploy our troops out of Iraq. The money and manpower are not only needed on the fight against terrorism elsewhere, for example, in Afghanistan, but also at home, to fight the criminals on our streets. The need is not only for more policemen, but for the housing, health care education and life support needs that will make it possible to get rid of the poverty that I saw on Martin Luther King Day in my community of Asbury Park.

DELEGATE VOTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, this week House Democrats are pushing forward a measure allowing Delegates to cast votes even on the House floor, even in this chamber.

Now, what is happening here is a continuation of a policy that the Demo-

crats have put in place since day one, and that is an abuse of power. This proposal this week means that Delegates from Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and my favorite, American Samoa, will enjoy new voting privileges similar to Members of Congress who actually represent districts in the United States and who actually represent districts with tax-paying citizens of the United States. This is a clear abuse of power.

And beyond that, as we all know, there is this little thing called the Constitution, and the Constitution says very clearly, the House shall be comprised of Members chosen by the people of the several States, not territories, not any member who wishes to come to this House floor and vote, but those elected by the citizens of the United States from districts in the United States.

What the Democrats are trying to do here is cushion their numbers. There is a tight majority here in the House that the Democrats have, and they are trying to add to those numbers so that when they have tough votes on the House floor, they can look up and point to a better number for their side than for the Republican side.

Beyond that, 80 percent of the Delegates from these territories are Democrats. Let's think this thing through. I think it is starting to make sense now, Mr. Speaker. There is an abuse of power that is continuing in the third week of Congress that began even before its first day. And let me tell you what is so perplexing about this, is that while my constituents have to pay Federal income tax in order to have their representation in Congress, the Delegates from the territories represent constituents who never have to pay Federal income tax. While the Revolutionary War was fought over this idea of taxation without representation, what we have here today with this Delegate voting is representation without taxation. I think that would be great for my constituents in western North Carolina; I think it would be great for all of America if we don't have to pay Federal income tax and still have our power and our elected democracy, but that is not the case.

But let's rewind. Just 2 weeks ago, the new Speaker of the House pushed forward a new minimum wage bill, a minimum wage bill that covered all of America and all of the territories, save one, American Samoa. The largest employer in American Samoa is headquartered in no other district than the Speaker's home district in San Francisco. I think something smells fishy. That is what I said at the time. And I think this is another fishy favor to the Delegates from the territories. It is quite perplexing, Mr. Speaker, that in week three we have a continued abuse of power on this House floor.

But let's go back, let's rewind. What else have the Democrats done in their short time in power to abuse the power that the American people gave them?