

ETHICS REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. SPACE) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask support for the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. I hail from Ohio's 18th Congressional District, a district of proud, hard-working people who understand the virtues of personal responsibility, a district whose constituency was betrayed in years past by a Member of this body who crossed a line. My predecessor is now in prison and he has been imprisoned for having, once again, betrayed his constituents and sold his vote. He became mired in and then consumed by a scandal involving lobbyists. This legislation helps further break the link that exists between lobbyists, legislators and the wealthy clients that lobbyists represent. It represents yet another positive step forward. It's not the end. It represents more of the beginning of a process whereby bribery will become deinstitutionalized from this body. It represents a process whereby we can make decisions in this body on an informed, rational basis designed specifically to benefit the good people who put us here.

Early on in this Congress, we banned trips and gifts and meals from lobbyists, a good first step. Now we are bringing transparency to the system. But it can't stop here. My colleague from Connecticut raises the prospect of an independent organization to review potential breaches of law, something that I associate myself with, but we need yet to go beyond even that with aggressive and comprehensive campaign finance reform. I support this measure because I think it represents a good first step along that process, but again I urge my colleagues to give serious consideration to taking it yet farther, and that is again with the deinstitutionalization of bribery through comprehensive campaign finance reform.

IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SESTAK) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 2 minutes.

Mr. SESTAK. I am here to speak about Iraq. Americans are tired of this war, but at the same time they want to secure the best of the situation for the perception of security not just in that region but globally.

I watch the Republicans and our concern as Democrats is that they believe that our military might provide a solution in Iraq. I look at my party and my concern is that we need to stop the impure opposition and to begin to help craft, to help author an implementable, comprehensive Middle East/Persian

Gulf security plan. But to do that, we obviously need a union with our Republican brethren.

I honestly believe that when people talk about taking care of our troops, the belief is not that we use them in war when necessary but where and how we use them. There are the elements right now to begin to come together in a union to craft a comprehensive end to this tragic misadventure that can meet the goals of both sides.

First, we have an army that is strained and by next April we will be at the point of almost irreparable harm for some years to come. Second, we know that in order to redeploy that army out of Iraq, it will take time. When the Soviet Union left Afghanistan with 120,000 troops, it took them 9 months and because of the ill preparation, 500 died on the way. We have 160,000 troops, 100,000 contractors. We must work well to get them to redeploy safely. They can only take in Kuwait two to two and a half brigades at a time. Forty combat equivalent brigades are in Iraq. The math comes out to a minimum of 18 to 24 months.

Third, because of that time line we can use the last arrow in our arsenal we have not used, diplomacy. The road out of Iraq is through Tehran, Iran. If we have the ability as we slowly redeploy to bring together Iran to work for stability, we can have a comprehensive solution to this conflict.

VISITING FOOD AND FRIENDS, A D.C.-BASED ANTI-HUNGER ORGANIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of spending a morning at Food and Friends, an organization that provides high-nutrient meals and nutrition therapy for people living with life-threatening illnesses, like HIV/AIDS, cancer and diabetes. It's located right here in Washington, DC. Five of my esteemed colleagues joined me on this visit, Representatives JO ANN EMERSON, LOIS CAPPS, JAN SCHAKOWSKY, BARBARA LEE, and ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. Our visit was enlightening and inspiring.

Food and Friends began in 1988 when Reverend Carla Gorrell began making lunch for her friend who was so sick with AIDS that she was unable to leave the house. Reverend Gorrell recognized what is so basic, and yet so often overlooked. When we treat people with diseases, she recognized that nutritious food is an essential component of any medical regimen. Today, almost 20 years later, Food and Friends remains steadfast in its mission to provide high-nutrient meals, with care and compassion, to the critically ill in Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia. Since 1988, Food and Friends has

delivered more than 10 million meals to nearly 16,000 individuals. The organization that began in a church basement now operates in a multifaceted facility with over 50 staff members and, most impressively, 1,500 dedicated volunteers.

While my colleagues and I were at Food and Friends, we learned a tremendous amount about the significance of nutritious food for those suffering from critical illnesses. Laura Otolski, one of the three full-time dietitians on staff, educated us about the importance of individually treating each client's nutritional needs. To this end, the dietitians assess clients and then collaborate with chefs to prepare 14 different meal plans, including pureed meals for individuals who cannot chew solid food and meals for the homeless who may not have access to refrigerators and ovens.

Food and Friends staff members also recognize that to treat an individual, you must also provide food for his or her children and caretakers. For example, if a mother is too sick to cook and a volunteer only delivers a meal for her, she will give it to her children and go without food. Therefore, Food and Friends delivers meals for the whole family, including a specially designed children's meal plan. For those who live beyond Food and Friends' delivery area, they are eligible for the Groceries to Go service that provides two bags of nonperishable groceries as well as perishable frozen meals prepared by Food and Friends kitchen staff. In addition to providing food, Food and Friends offers cooking classes, nutritional counseling and even a photography workshop for clients to express themselves through art. Through its diverse programs, Food and Friends nourishes the body as well as the mind and soul.

Without a doubt, the highlight of our visit was hearing from two Food and Friends clients, Ajani Johnson and Crystal Wood. They described the hopelessness they felt when first learning about their illnesses. How quickly he felt sick. How far her cancer had spread. But then they told us about the gift of food that changed the course of their lives. The food—and the friendship of staff and volunteers that accompanied it—renewed their physical strength and belief in their ability to fight the disease. They became passionate when talking about the power of food to improve their quality of life while battling deadly illnesses. They also wanted us to know that they're not just clients of Food and Friends, they are also volunteers of the organization. They want others to experience the nourishment and compassion that was freely offered to them.

Mr. Speaker, Food and Friends is not alone in serving meals to the sick in this country. It is part of a national and international network of 120 agencies collectively serving 10 million meals to individuals each year. The Association of Nutrition Services Agencies is currently working with the Congressional Hunger Center on a Food as

Medicine initiative. The purpose of the Food as Medicine campaign is to educate local and national leaders, academics and citizens about the value of nutrition services for those fighting disease.

We have the information we need to make great strides in recognizing the therapeutic effects of nutrition for those living with life-threatening illnesses, and I urge my colleagues to work together to ensure that all critically ill Americans have access to food and nutrition therapy as part of their treatment plans. These services improve the efficacy of medications and the quality of life of those suffering and their families. It is a simple but crucial step in improving the quality of health care in this country.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentlewoman from Kansas (Mrs. BOYDA) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 3 minutes.

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of accountability in Congress. This year, taxpayers will pay the retirement benefits for Dan Rostenkowski, Duke Cunningham and Bob Ney. What do these men have in common? All are retired Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. All are convicted criminals. Each abused his office by committing fraud, bribery or conspiracy, and each was found guilty in Federal court.

Despite their convictions, these three representatives and over a dozen other former lawmakers remain eligible to draw taxpayer-funded pensions for their service. The exact amount of the payments vary, of course, but the average is about \$47,000 per year. That's more than the average American makes. Let me tell you, it's certainly more than the average Kansan makes. Certainly a lot more than the average person in the Second District of Kansas makes.

Mr. Speaker, when the new majority was sworn into the House of Representatives, we had a clear mandate from Americans—End the scandals. Clean up Congress. We've already taken meaningful first steps toward reform. In our first days, we passed an ethics package that banned Members from accepting gifts from lobbyists. We blocked representatives from flying on corporate jets. And we prevented Congressmen from pressuring businesspeople to fire or hire for political reasons.

That last one to me is especially important. Before this Congress, our Congressmen were out there actually influencing people and saying, if you don't agree with my politics, we're asking you to hire or fire businesspeople. It was so wrong.

But our work is not done and it never will be done as long as convicted criminals can draw a congressional pension. Congress can and should revoke the

pensions of convicted lawmakers. But for decades now, even as payments have totaled millions of dollars, this body has quietly ignored the problem. But no longer. Today, the bill we will consider this afternoon incorporates legislation that I authored to strip the pensions of these crooked lawmakers. The final bill also sets limits on the so-called revolving door of lawmakers who are turning into lobbyists, and it imposes financial disclosure requirements on the lobbying industry. Sunlight is the best disinfectant and we need a whole lot more transparency still.

Taken together, these changes represent the most significant ethics overhaul to pass the Congress in decades. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. By enacting these sweeping reforms, Congress can begin to recover from the long years of scandal and corruption. Congress can begin to earn back Americans' trust.

ETHICS REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, when I was campaigning last year for this seat in Congress, we talked about a lot of issues. We talked about Iraq. We talked about global warming. But we also talked about a very important issue on ethics. Ethics in Congress. It is disappointing to me that people in Indiana and around the country don't have a lot of respect for Members of Congress. I think our approval rating right now is at 23 percent. And one of the reasons why the approval rate is at 23 percent is because we're not doing a very good job in Congress in investigating the wrongdoings of a few Members.

And I want to emphasize it's just a few Members. Because most Members in this August body are honorable people. But there are a few that are spoiling the basket. We need to do a better job of policing the Congress of the United States. And so one of the things that I have done and one of the campaign promises that I want to keep that I made during the campaign last year is making sure that we clean up our act in Congress. One of the ways that we do that is changing the way we govern ourselves here in Congress. Right now in Congress, the Ethics Committee has a hard time with investigating Members of Congress because they are our colleagues. It's kind of like investigating members of your own family. It's hard to do. It's just natural that Members of Congress are reluctant to investigate the wrongdoings of their own Members. And so I think we need a change. We need to have an independent body of members who are investigating the minor wrongdoings of Members of Congress. And so I propose and have intro-

duced legislation that would set up a new committee of Congress, of former Members of Congress who know this institution, who respect this institution, who will do the investigations that need to be done about a few Members of Congress who are misbehaving.

This new body would have subpoena powers. They would have all the powers that the present Ethics Committee has to them now, but they would be independent. And that's what we need. We need an independent committee that would investigate the wrongdoings of a few Members of Congress. We need to make this bipartisan. We need to restore the respect and honor of this Congress. A 23 percent approval rating is not acceptable and we need to do a better job. I believe that having former Members of Congress on a committee to investigate the wrongdoings of a few, and I emphasize a few Members of Congress, is the way to go. We need to make progress on this. We need to do this. We're going into the August recess. I hope that when we come back after the August recess that we will actually implement and pass into law an independent body of former Members of Congress to investigate those people who are doing what they should not be doing and that we can get about the business of restoring the integrity of Congress. I think it's very important.

I've been in politics for 20 years. It's an honor for me to serve in this body, and to think that only 23 percent of the people have faith and confidence in the Congress is not acceptable. I believe that setting up an independent committee of former Members of Congress can help at least restore some of the integrity that we have lost in Congress.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 25 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Reverend Richard D. Turpin, Second Baptist Church, Catskill, New York, offered the following prayer:

Our Father and our God, Creator and everlasting Redeemer, we come asking Your Holy presence to be with us today. We are filled with great joy that You allowed us to gather here this morning. We thank You for being our protector of lasting nights lying down and the guidance of this morning's sunrise.

Father, we ask Your Holy Spirit to bless the work of this day and bless the