

and call for a reasonable toll level for the commuters utilizing the Dulles Greenway.

A HISTORIC MOMENT

(Mr. LANTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, moments before we opened this session, I had the privilege of witnessing a historic moment. Our distinguished Speaker, a lady who has just returned from a bipartisan visit to Kuwait, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, met the distinguished Speaker, another lady, another statesman, another political leader of outstanding qualities, the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament.

When these two women met, NANCY PELOSI and Katalin Szili, history was made. We saw two great democratic republics, with parliaments headed by outstanding women, exchange views and plan the future of stronger and even better relations between the Republic of Hungary and the United States of America.

I salute Speaker PELOSI and Speaker of Parliament Katalin Szili and wish both of them the very best.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, I think that there is a good part to the Democrat takeover of the House and the Senate, and that is that now the Democrats are at the table when we talk about Iraq. And there are many in this town who say failure is not an option. I think failure is an option. I think there would be disastrous consequences to that. The third largest oil-producing nation in the world would belong to terrorists. What would happen to the existing and fledgling Iraqi Government if you suddenly pulled our troops out of there? What kind of genocide would that bring? Those are things that have to be dealt with.

But I think that it is good that now we can have a bipartisan approach that the critics of the administration and the policy are now inside the room actually making policy. With that spirit, I think that it is time to tone down the rhetoric and work on a solution that will be best for Iraq, for America, and for the international community. And I say this with sincerity now because I think there is a good opportunity, and we only will have it, I think, for a few short months because the Presidential elections are kicking in, lots of rhetoric is floating around, but I think we can work together and come up with some good policy.

PRESIDENT'S HEALTH CARE PROPOSAL IS A BAD PLAN

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, in the President's State of the Union address last week, he made proposals for what is essentially a tax increase on more than 30 million Americans. That's right, if Congress were to pass the President's health care plan, more than 30 million Americans, many of whom are middle-class workers who have fought hard to negotiate comprehensive health care plans with their employers, would be taxed by the Federal Government. Good health insurance, for those lucky enough to have it, would be jeopardized as many Americans would be pushed into the individual insurance market where insurers can refuse coverage to workers based on their health.

That brings me to the least of these, those without insurance, a number which will grow under the President's plan. The Regional Medical Center at Memphis, the Med, a hospital that provides a disproportionate amount of service to the poor, could lose as much as \$30 million a year. Tennessee could see Federal revenue to support hospitals, nursing homes and other health providers by as much as \$300 million, and that would be an increase of taxes at the local level.

The Med plays a critical role in delivering health care to the poor. Losing the specialty services of the Med would leave serious gaps in our health care system that serves the entire region around Memphis, including Mississippi and Arkansas.

PRESIDENT'S TROOP ESCALATION PLAN IS NOT A PLAN FOR SUCCESS IN IRAQ

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, just how many people need to tell the President that his troop escalation plan is a terrible idea before he actually begins to listen? The American people sent the President a strong message last November that they no longer want our troops involved in what has become a civil war in Iraq.

The President's own generals have told him that they didn't need more troops in Iraq; but rather than listening to his generals, as he has always suggested that he has done, he has now turned around and replaced them with generals who are more friendly to the idea of sending more troops.

The bipartisan Iraq Study Group told the President that more troops were not needed. Instead, they concluded that a strategic redeployment should be initiated in the coming months and that the administration should reach out to the neighbors in the region, ideas the administration has rejected.

If this were not enough, an overwhelming number of Democrats, and Republicans I might say, here on Capitol Hill have expressed opposition to the plan.

Madam Speaker, how many people have to tell him "no" before he listens?

□ 1230

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS BUT OPPOSE THE WAR IN IRAQ

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of our troops, and I want to underscore that. But I also want to make clear that I am opposed to the war in Iraq. Our service men and women are proudly serving our country. More than 3,063 of our sons and daughters, including 13 from the 32nd Congressional District that I represent, have given their lives.

This war, as you know, has cost taxpayers \$387 billion so far, and an additional \$100 billion to \$130 billion is going to be requested by this President. There is no plan to secure the peace. There is no accountability for companies like Halliburton that have been found to make more than \$1.4 billion in unreasonable and unsupported billing charges, and our veterans lack the support needed and deserved.

We need a plan that ensures that there are no permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, and not a plan to increase the buildup. We need a plan which investigates and punishes companies engaged in war profiteering and fraud and a plan to redeploy our servicemen and women. We need to find a political solution.

AMERICANS OPPOSE TROOP ESCALATION IN IRAQ

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, President Bush's dangerous plan to escalate the war in Iraq will not make Americans more secure. In fact, it will only lead to more bloodshed and violence. The plan faces significant bipartisan opposition in both Chambers of Congress and is opposed by a vast majority of people in this country.

Some Republicans are belatedly calling for benchmarks to measure progress in Iraq, even as they stand by the President's plan to escalate the war. Democrats were calling for benchmarks for success in Iraq years ago, but our pleas fell on deaf ears.

As an early and staunch opponent to this war, I have watched as every single prediction this administration has made has been proven wrong, from the duration of the war, the reception we would receive, the costs, the number of casualties and the existence of weapons of mass destruction, all wrong.

The loss of more young men and women is too high a price to pay for

this gamble. Let's support our troops by bringing them home and letting Iraqis shoulder responsibilities which should be theirs.

HONORING ARMENIAN EDITOR HRANT DINK

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to mourn the loss of the Armenian Turkish newspaper editor, Hrant Dink. On January 19, the legacy of the Armenian genocide continued. Hrant Dink, who was tried and convicted of “insulting Turkishness” by recognizing the Armenian genocide, unfortunately, was shot dead over a week ago.

Dink was a voice for freedom of the press, for democracy and for Armenian genocide recognition. Between 1915 and 1923, the Ottoman Empire led a genocide on its Armenian population, killing over 1.5 million people. Over 90 years later, the Turkish Government still refuses to acknowledge it occurred.

I told the Turkish foreign minister last year that to move forward with democratic reform, Turkey must first comes to grips with its past, just as our country had during the civil rights movement. Yesterday, I sent a letter to President Bush urging the withdrawal of the nomination of Richard Hoagland to be Ambassador to Armenia. Given the assassination of Dink, we cannot have an ambassador who refuses to acknowledge the Armenian genocide happened. It would send the wrong message.

PRESIDENT'S ESCALATION PLAN IS NOT NEW—IT'S BEEN TRIED BEFORE AND FAILED

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, in June of 2006, the Bush administration announced a new plan for securing Baghdad by increasing the presence of Iraq security forces. That plan failed.

In July, additional U.S. troops are moved in. By October, the Pentagon was admitting that the plan to secure Baghdad had failed. In the fall of 2005, the Bush administration increased troop levels by 22,000 around the time of the elections, and the escalation had little long-term impact on quelling sectarian violence.

The New York Times had a story by a young troop member in Baghdad yesterday. You need to read it, because it talked about how the snipers killed one of their buddies and how they went in to get his body out and to get his helmet, and the blood spilled down the clothing of the rescuers.

This is happening every day because we are fighting a war with an unknown enemy in the middle of sectarian violence. It must stop.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO UNITED STATES GROUP OF THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY). Pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 1928a, clause 10 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the United States Group of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly:

Mr. GILLMOR, Ohio
Mr. REGULA, Ohio
Mr. BOOZMAN, Arkansas
Mr. SHIMKUS, Illinois

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

ESTABLISHING THE HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION FOR THE 110TH CONGRESS

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 24) establishing the House Democracy Assistance Commission for the One Hundred Tenth Congress, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 24

Resolved,

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.

There is established in the House of Representatives a commission to be known as the House Democracy Assistance Commission (hereafter in this resolution referred to as the “Commission”).

SEC. 2. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission shall be composed of 20 Members of the House of Representatives, of whom 11 shall represent the majority party and be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and 9 shall represent the minority party and be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(b) TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.—Each member of the Commission shall be appointed for a term that is concurrent with the Congress in which the appointment is made. Such a member may be reappointed for one or more subsequent terms in accordance with the preceding sentence.

(c) CHAIRPERSON.—The Chairperson of the Commission shall be designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives from among the members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives under subsection (a).

SEC. 3. DUTIES.

(a) ACTIVITIES.—The Commission shall work with the legislatures of partner countries, as determined pursuant to paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (b), on a frequent and regular basis in order to—

(1) enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives and congres-

sional support agencies to provide expert advice and consultation to members and staff of the legislatures of partner countries;

(2) enable members and staff of legislatures of partner countries to study the operations of the House of Representatives and its support agencies; and

(3) provide recommendations to the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development regarding the provision of material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and library supplies, as the Commission determines to be needed by a legislature of a partner country in order to improve the efficiency and transparency of its work, and to oversee the provision of such assistance.

(b) SELECTION OF PARTNER LEGISLATURES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to carry out the activities described in subsection (a), the Commission may conduct, as needed, studies on the feasibility of programs of assistance for legislatures of countries described in paragraph (2) for the purpose of strengthening the legislative infrastructure of such countries. Such studies shall assess—

(A) the independent and substantive role that each legislature plays, or could reasonably be expected to play, in the legislative process and government oversight;

(B) the potential benefit to each legislature of expert advice from and consultation with Members and staff of the House of Representatives in areas such as the development of research services and legislative information systems, legislative procedure, committee operations, budget process, government oversight, and constituent services; and

(C) the need in each legislature for material assistance, such as modern automation and office systems, information technology, and research materials, in order to improve efficiency and transparency.

(2) COUNTRIES DESCRIBED.—The countries referred to in paragraph (1) are countries that have established, have re-established, or are developing democratic legislatures which would benefit from the assistance described in this resolution.

(3) ADDITIONAL PARTNER LEGISLATURES.—From any countries studied in accordance with paragraph (1), the Commission may select one or more legislatures to receive assistance under the provisions of this resolution, subject to a written expression of interest from the highest ranking office within the legislature of a selected country.

(c) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than December 31, 2007, and each December 31 thereafter, the Commission shall prepare and submit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, appropriate House committees, the Office of Interparliamentary Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, an annual report on the Commission's activities, including a review of the activities of the Commission in the current year and a proposal for the activities of the Commission in the upcoming year, as described in subsection (a).

(2) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term “appropriate House committees” means the following committees of the House of Representatives:

(A) The Committee on Foreign Affairs.

(B) The Committee on Appropriations.

(C) The Committee on House Administration.

(D) The Committee on Rules.

SEC. 4. ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall carry out the duties described in section 3