

Mr. Speaker, the rise and fall of slavery in America, if it teaches us anything, it is that the evil about us eventually and completely collapses upon itself. The time is long past for *Roe v. Wade*, the bloodiest court decision in the history of humanity, to take its place alongside the *Dred Scott* decision in the ash heap of history.

TOURING IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, on February 28 through March 4, just this past weekend, I participated in a bipartisan congressional delegation to Iraq and Afghanistan. I have written about this extensively on my Web blog, which my constituents should know is located at MikePence.house.gov. But I wanted to excerpt portions today by way of reporting back to the House on our findings in these two countries in which American forces face a war every day.

It was a bipartisan congressional delegation, Mr. Speaker, to both Iraq and Afghanistan. In 4 days we took off and landed 20 different times in four different aircraft. We flew to Kuwait in a military jet. We flew into Iraq on a cargo plane. We flew around Iraq and Afghanistan in helicopters and Ospreys. We convoyed in military vehicles throughout both countries. It was a rare opportunity to meet with leaders and locals in both theaters of combat. I am personally grateful to the people of Indiana and our military for making it possible.

Our visit also took place against the backdrop of several major events. The Iraq Government announced that Ali Hassan al-Majid, better known as "Chemical Ali," a brutal military henchman of Saddam Hussein, was to be executed later this month. We arrived in the Kurdish region as that news was breaking and as Turkish forces were announcing their withdrawal for military operations in the north.

And on the second day, our trip to Iraq coincided with the first official visit by a President of Iran to Iraq since 1952. It was a time of great significance for the people of Iraq in several respects.

During our time in Iraq and Afghanistan, one inescapable conclusion emerged. After years of difficulty and setbacks in varying degrees, freedom is making progress in Iraq and Afghanistan. In northern Iraq, known as the Kurdish region, there is security, political process, and economic growth.

And even in central Iraq, after years of insurgent violence, following the military surge, al Qaeda and the insurgency are in steep decline and political progress is beginning to take hold.

As I saw firsthand in Baghdad and in the al Anbar province, the military surge and Sunni cooperation have re-

sulted in extraordinary progress and security. But those gains are fragile. Violence in Iraq has declined by more than 60 percent since the beginning of the surge and has remained at relatively low levels since November of last year. The Iraqi Parliament has passed legislation that makes further political progress possible.

Our visit was, Mr. Speaker, characterized by cautious optimism by American military leaders and ordinary Iraqis on the street.

Afghanistan was also equally encouraging; and with President Hamid Karzai, we saw the determination of a leader devoted to his people and to defeating a resurgent Taliban effort to overturn their progress with terrorist violence this spring.

□ 1530

In the Kunar province particularly, we convoyed out and witnessed really the greatest threat to the Taliban terrorists who operate on that border with Pakistan, a bridge. A bridge is being built by local Afghanis with American resources. Seeing locals waving at our convoy, greeting laborers at this remote construction site showed me the depth of American generosity and the resilience of this proud people.

My summary on my Web site is simply an effort on my part to report point by point, moment by moment on my trip. We speak about each of the days, from the Kurdish region to our time in Baghdad, to our time in Fallujah and our team even on the streets of Haditha, through Afghanistan and through a stop at Ramstein military base to meet with injured soldiers at Landstuhl Medical Center.

And again, Mr. Speaker, my Web site is mikepence.house.gov. And my constituents could access that by visiting my blog and gaining that information. I would be grateful for any constituent who availed themselves of our writing.

The message that we got from Iraq is clear. The surge is working, but the battle is far from over. Violence is down significantly in the past year. The enemy's abilities have been downgraded in both degree and type of attack. U.S. forces have made measurable progress against terrorist elements in Baghdad and al Anbar province, due to both the military surge and extraordinary expanded cooperation among the civilian population.

And while the military surge is working, the good news is the Iraqi Parliament seems to have gone to work too. The adoption of a budget, the passage of a law permitting Ba'ath party members to work for the government and the plan for provincial elections that may well occur by October of this year represent exactly the kind of progress that many in our diplomatic team and many in this Chamber have hoped to see.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the courtesy, especially at the opening of this time on the House floor.

I would be grateful if any of my constituents went to mikepence.house.gov,

visited our blog and availed themselves of our firsthand account of what we saw in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The progress is real. The progress of freedom is happening. It is fragile. And it is my hope that, by bringing back the information from this bipartisan delegation, that we will be able to find that bipartisan consensus necessary to see freedom win in Afghanistan and Iraq.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate so much the opportunity to once again come before the House and address issues of concern, to bring another version of the Official Truth Squad.

The Official Truth Squad started a couple of years ago and was an attempt to, actually grew out of a frustration by many of my colleagues and I who watched what occurred on the floor of the House here and felt that there just wasn't a lot of sunshine going on, bringing light to many of the discussions. And so we launched the Official Truth Squad. The attempt was to try to hopefully bring some commonsense discussion, real-sense discussion to the conversations that go on here in the House on a number of different topics.

One of our favorite quotes is that of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan who said, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but they're not entitled to their own facts."

And so, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do today for a little bit is just to talk about some facts. And one fact that I'd like to present as I begin is that, about a week ago, exactly a week ago, Thursday of last week, a little earlier in the day I took this same well, and I made the comment that at that time it was a specific hour on the clock. Today, as a matter of fact, it's 3:34 p.m. on Thursday afternoon.

Many individuals are just getting completed with a full day's work or about to complete a full day's work. A lot of folks are getting ready for the second shift, getting ready to start their shift from 3 to 11 across this Nation. Some who will be working the midnight shift, the late shift, are probably just putting their head on the pillow so that they can get some sleep before they get back up later this evening to get to work tonight.

And where's the House? Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look around you can tell that the House has gone home. The House has gone home. In fact, we went home today without even passing a bill, without even voting on a bill.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have great concern about the lack of productivity here in the House, and they have specific concern about the

inability, apparent inability of this House and this leadership to address the issues that are of utmost concern to the American people.

We take an oath, Mr. Speaker, as you know, that says that we will work to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. One of the ways that we do that is to make certain that the individuals who are gaining information on our behalf from folks across the world who wish to do us harm, that we get that information, that we're working with as much information as possible, that we, as a Nation, know what the bad guys are going to do before they do it. When we don't, what happens is days like 9/11.

And so, Mr. Speaker, shortly after 9/11 there were some laws that were passed that updated our intelligence capability, that made it so that our intelligence officers across the world would be able to track and listen to and discover electronic communication, verbal and otherwise, when terrorists outside of the United States were talking to other terrorists outside of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the Sixth District of Georgia, just outside of Atlanta. When I ask folks at home does anybody think that's not a good idea, should we be able to listen to terrorists outside of our country when they talk to other terrorists outside of our country, and they might be talking about plans to bring many of us great harm, should we be able to listen if we had the technological capability to do so, I haven't met anybody yet, not one person yet who thought that was a bad idea.

This is not the Federal Government wiretapping, surveilling, listening in on conversations between you and me. This is not the issue. The issue is not whether or not the laws ought to be changed to determine whether or not our intelligence officers can listen to American citizens talking to American citizens on American soil.

No, Mr. Speaker, this issue is the ability of our intelligence officers to listen to terrorists or suspected terrorists outside the United States who are talking or communicating with others of like mind outside the United States. Should we be able to do that?

Mr. Speaker, the Senate thinks we ought to be able to do that, by a bipartisan majority, 68-29. Up until this leadership, the House thought we ought to be able to do that. The American people think we ought to be able to do that.

But the problem now, Mr. Speaker, is this leadership in the House of Representatives who has allowed this law to expire. This leadership has made it so that the American people are suffering from an American Government that has brought about a unilateral, unilateral disarmament when it comes to determining what terrorists are doing, plotting to do us great harm. That's not my opinion. That's a fact. That's a fact.

I'll give you some other facts here, Mr. Speaker. What has happened in the past week, since I last took this well and spoke about this issue is that a letter was sent out from a bipartisan group of 25 State Attorneys General talking about this FISA bill. I will submit this letter for insertion into the RECORD.

MARCH 4, 2008.

Re FISA Amendments Act of 2007 (S. 2248)

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

Hon. STENY HOYER,
Majority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Minority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ROY BLUNT,
Minority Whip,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER PELOSI, MAJORITY LEADER HOYER, MINORITY LEADER BOEHNER AND MINORITY WHIP BLUNT: We urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote and pass S. 2248, the FISA Amendments Act of 2007. This bipartisan legislation is critical to the national security of the United States. Once passed, S. 2248 will ensure intelligence officials have the ability to collect vitally important information about foreign terrorists operating overseas.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman John D. Rockefeller (D-WV) authored S. 2248 to solve a critical problem that arose when the Protect America Act was allowed to lapse on February 16, 2008. The root of the problem stems from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act ("FISA") Court order that jeopardizes America's national security efforts. Under that decision, U.S. intelligence agencies must obtain a FISA warrant before initiating surveillance involving suspected foreign terrorists located outside the United States.

The FISA Court's decision hinged on the fact that those entirely foreign communications are frequently routed through telecommunications facilities that happen to be located in the United States. Because modern global communications networks routinely route data through numerous facilities in a myriad of countries, the nation in which the call originates may be completely unrelated to the nation through which that call is ultimately routed.

A bipartisan majority of the United States Senate recently approved S. 2248. But until it is also passed by the House of Representatives, intelligence officials must obtain FISA warrants every time they attempt to monitor suspected terrorists in overseas countries. Passing S. 2248 would ensure our intelligence experts are once again able to conduct real-time surveillance. As you know, prompt access to intelligence data is critical to the ongoing safety and security of our nation.

As Attorneys General, we are our states' chief law enforcement officials and therefore responsible for taking whatever action is necessary to keep our citizens safe. With S. 2248 still pending in the House of Representatives, our national security is in jeopardy. We therefore urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote and pass the FISA Amendments Act of 2007.

Sincerely,

Attorney General Greg Abbott (R-TX),
Attorney General Kelly Ayotte (R-NH),
Attorney General Thurbert Baker (D-GA),
Attorney General Jon Bruning (R-NE),
Attorney General Steve Carter (R-IN),
Attorney General Talis Colberg

(R-AL), Attorney General Roy Cooper (D-NC), Attorney General Tom Corbett (R-PA), Attorney General Mike Cox (R-MI), Attorney General W.A. Drew Edmondson (D-OK), Attorney General Doug Gansler (D-MD), Attorney General Troy King (R-MI), Attorney General Larry Long (R-SD), Attorney General Patrick Lynch (D-RI), Attorney General Bill McCollum (R-FL), Attorney General Dustin McDaniell (D-AR), Attorney General Bob McDonnell (R-VA), Attorney General Darrell McGraw (D-WV), Attorney General Rob McKenna (R-WA), Attorney General Henry McMaster (R-SC), Attorney General Mark Shurtleff (R-UT), Attorney General Stephen Six (D-KS), Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem (R-ND), Attorney General John Suthers (R-CO), Attorney General Lawrence Wasden (R-ID).

This letter is dated March 4, 2008, and I'm going to read the majority of it because I think it's incredibly important for you, Mr. Speaker, and the American people to appreciate the gravity of this situation. Again, this is from a group of bipartisan Attorneys General from across the United States.

And what they say is: "We urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote." Again, that's all we're asking for is a vote. "To schedule a vote and pass Senate bill 2248, the FISA Amendments Act of 2007. This bipartisan legislation is critical to the national security of the United States. Once passed, S. 2248 will ensure intelligence officials have the ability to collect vitally important information about foreign terrorists operating overseas."

Mr. Speaker, foreign terrorists operating overseas. State Attorneys General understand it's not talking about changing U.S. law to surveil or listen in upon conversations between American citizens.

Going on in the letter, "Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER authored S. 2248 to solve a critical problem that arose when the Protect America Act was allowed to lapse on February 16, 2008."

That's the law, Mr. Speaker, that was allowed to expire because this current left liberal majority, left liberal leadership who runs this House refuses to allow a vote on this bill.

The letter goes on. "The root of the problem stems from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court order that jeopardizes America's national security efforts. Under that decision, U.S. intelligence agencies must obtain a FISA warrant before initiating surveillance in following suspected foreign terrorists located outside the United States."

And, Mr. Speaker, some people say, What's wrong with that? What's wrong with going to court to see if it's okay to listen in to these folks?

Mr. Speaker, you know and I know that the manner of communication since 1978 when this bill, when the initial FISA bill was adopted, the manner of communication across this world has changed. We now have e-mails. We've got BlackBerries and blueberries

and all sorts of things that we can provide that give people access to immediate real-time communication. We now are able to rent portable phones, cell phones. You can rent them by the minute; you can rent them by the hour. If you rent a phone, have a phone and use it for an hour, and we're able to know that, in fact, that phone is being used by a terrorist overseas, but that phone's only going to be used for 1 hour or one call, it is incomprehensible that patriotic Americans would believe that our government ought to have to go to court in order to get a court order to listen to that conversation that occurred yesterday, the day before, the day before that, or that morning, for that matter.

Mr. Speaker, current technology dictates that our law keeps up with current technology. Otherwise, the terrorists, the bad guys are a leap ahead of us, and that's what's happened in the last 19 days, 20 days when this law's been allowed to expire, and that is that the terrorists are getting a leap ahead of us. Again, that's not my opinion. That's a fact that I'll demonstrate as we talk more about this afternoon.

Continuing in the letter, "The FISA Court's decision hinged on the fact that those entirely foreign communications are frequently routed through telecommunications facilities that happen to be located in the United States. And because modern global communications networks routinely route data through numerous facilities in a myriad of countries, the nation in which the call originates may be completely unrelated to the nation through which the call is ultimately routed."

What that means, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is that when a call is made in a foreign land by a terrorist or a suspected terrorist and he or she is calling another suspected terrorist in a foreign land, the electronics, the signal, the electronic signal of that call may go to a satellite, may come down to a station in the United States, and may head back to another satellite and then down to the terrorist. And that happens in real-time. That happens in split seconds. And because that electronic communication touches American soil, or a company on American soil, then, apparently, the liberal leadership in this House of Representatives believes that those individuals ought to be afforded every protection of the United States Constitution.

□ 1545

Mr. Speaker, that is an abrogation of duty. That is not what the American people believe. It is not what the Constitution says, and it is not what action we would choose in order to fulfill and live up to our responsibility and our oath.

Again, going on. In the letter it says: A bipartisan majority of the United States Senate recently approved S. 2248, but until it's passed by the House of Representatives, intelligence officials must obtain FISA warrants every

time they attempt to monitor suspected terrorists in overseas countries. We have talked about how unworkable that is. Passing S. 2248 would ensure that our intelligence experts are once again able to conduct real-time surveillance.

As you know, prompt access to intelligence data is critical to the ongoing safety and security of our Nation. As attorneys general, we are our States' chief law enforcement officials and therefore responsible for taking whatever action is necessary to keep our citizens safe.

With S. 2248 still pending in House of Representatives, our national security is in jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, that's not Congressman TOM PRICE saying that. That is a signed letter from 25, a group of bipartisan 25 State attorneys general, saying until this is passed, our national security is in jeopardy. We therefore urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote and pass the FISA Amendments Act of 2007. Signed by the attorneys general of the States of Texas, New Hampshire, Georgia, Nebraska, Indiana, Alabama, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Oklahoma, Maryland, South Dakota, Rhode Island, Florida, Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington State, South Carolina, Utah, Kansas, North Dakota, Colorado, and Idaho.

Mr. Speaker, this letter demonstrates that those individuals, Republican and Democrat across this Nation who are charged with making certain that their citizens in their respective States are safe, recognize the gravity, the gravity of this situation and the dereliction of duty that occurs when the House of Representatives is not allowed the opportunity to vote on renewing the Protect America Act.

Mr. Speaker, we have called on the Speaker, called on the leadership on the majority side of the aisle, on the Democrat side of the aisle, to schedule a vote. Three weeks ago, the leadership said, no, we need about 3 weeks. That's what they said, Mr. Speaker. Three weeks ago they said, we need about 3 weeks and we'll be able to work with the Senate and work out any differences or disagreements or concerns that we have. Just give us 3 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago they said that there wasn't any urgency. There wasn't any urgency. Then last week on the floor of this House they said, we are working on it. It's an important matter. We are working on it. We will get it done. Over this past weekend, the chairman of the Intelligence Committee said, we ought to be able to get it done this week.

Mr. Speaker, time is ticking away. Day after day after day that we do not have this law in place makes it so that our Nation is less secure, our people are less safe all for want of a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives. Senate Republicans understand that and have acted appropriately. Senate Democrats understand that and have acted appropriately. House Re-

publicans understand that and are trying to act appropriately. House Democrat leadership refuses to schedule a vote. They do so apparently because they believe it will pass. Astounding, astounding, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to be joined by my good friend from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) and look forward to her comments on this issue, which I know you have spoken out about so vigorously and understand the gravity of not acting on the Protect America Act.

I am pleased to yield to my friend.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia not only for his leadership on this issue of our Nation's security, but for his work on the Truth Squad as he always repeats the phrase, everyone's entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.

That is so pertinent, Mr. Speaker, to the debate that we are having on our Nation's security. There is no issue that trumps the security issue. This is something that we know to be very important.

As I travel the country and as I travel my district, what I hear from people is, Why are you not taking this up? Why are you not taking the steps to make certain that we can find out who is trying to harm us?

You know, Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense at all. As I talk with moms that are in my district so regularly, they will talk about how concerned they are with security, security in our communities, security in our places of work, security in our children's schools. They want to make certain that the security to live peacefully is there for us here in our homeland.

They want to be certain that those protections are there for our troops who are deployed; and at this very minute, I have troops from Fort Campbell, which is in my district in Tennessee, and troops who are National Guardsmen from Tennessee who are deployed making certain that American interests are safe and making certain that Americans in our great Nation are also safe to live their lives freely in pursuit of happiness every single day.

Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely revolting and unsettling that the leadership of this House continues to stand in the way of the Protect America Act. Our colleagues in the Senate have decided this is a very important issue. We all know what happens when you set aside work. You have to kind of pick it up off the table and move it over and say, we are going to come back to that, and we are going to get those items accomplished. But first and foremost, let's deal with the Nation's security.

So they put that on the desk. They made it the priority. They took it up and they said, it is not a partisan issue. We are going to find agreement on this because the security of this Nation trumps it all. The security trumps it all.

Now, if we wanted to go play the ostrich game or if we wanted to go play

Whack-a-Mole with the terrorists, we could do that. We could just rely on the 1978 FISA and pretend that we never had e-mail, that we never had cell phones, that we didn't have voice video and data just traveling on the waves through the air.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that would be nice and make us feel good and comfortable, but the point is, it is not true. It just isn't true. And as the gentleman from Georgia has so eloquently said, we know, we know that the terrorists are using these new technologies to communicate, and we know that there are terrorists in foreign countries who are communicating with other terrorists in foreign countries who are trying to do harm to our troops in the field. We have evidence of that, Mr. Speaker. To our citizens in this country, we have evidence of that and to our citizens and our allies around the globe.

Well, what is so difficult to understand about this, Mr. Speaker? It just seems like when the evidence is there, as the facts are there, as my colleague from Georgia says, why can there not be an admission that those are the facts, they are the givens, everybody, everybody in D.C. seems to agree with this except the leadership of this body. And I find it very disconcerting.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for her comments and for her perspective and for bringing more light and truth to this issue. And it is not just our opinion. It's the opinion of so many individuals.

As you mentioned, the bipartisan bill in the United States Senate, 68-29. These aren't the most harmonious of times in Washington, Mr. Speaker; but the gentlelady from Tennessee and I certainly understand and appreciate that one of our primary responsibilities is the protection of our Nation. And the Senate understood that, and that's why they worked together in a bipartisan way.

So many individuals have given their opinion about why this was important. Mike McConnell, who is the Director of National Intelligence, said before the House Intelligence Committee, We are significantly burdened in capturing overseas communications of foreign terrorists planning to conduct attacks inside the United States. That's what the Director of National Intelligence said.

And Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER, a Democrat from West Virginia who is the chairman of the Intelligence Committee in the Senate, said just last month, What people have to understand around here is that the quality of the intelligence we are going to be receiving is going to be degraded. He said that, if we allow the Protect America Act to expire. Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't allow it to expire, but the leadership in the House has allowed it to expire. And that's what concerns us so greatly.

I know that my friend from Tennessee appreciates what Senator ROCKEFELLER has said as it relates to

this issue, and I am pleased to yield back.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there was a comment, you mentioned, Mike McConnell, who is the Director of National Intelligence, and I would go to a quote that he gave before to the Senate panel, and listen to this: that half, half, not a third, not a quarter, not a tenth, that half, 50 percent, of what we know comes from electronic surveillance. That means that all of these new forms of communication that are out there, this is what the terrorist cells are using. Half of what we know comes from electronic surveillance, and get this, and the outdated Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act had degraded those intercepts by two-thirds.

I just find it so egregious that we would hamstring and make it difficult for the intelligence community to carry out their jobs when they are seeking to serve this Nation, when they are seeking to work with the military and to make certain that we know who is seeking to do us harm.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend once again for her comments and perspective on this most important issue.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if there's anything that we do here that is more important than making certain that America is safe and secure. And the American people, although they know that there are partisan battles and political games that are played here, they understand and appreciate that. But what they don't understand is a leadership that abrogates the duty and responsibility that they have to make certain that this Nation is safe.

Person after person, individuals who have great knowledge and experience in this area, much greater than those of us in the House of Representatives in terms of actual hands-on experience in determining what the terrorists are trying to do to do us harm, to a person, to a person say that this is a bill that must be passed.

We are now 19 or 20 days into not having the ability to gain this intelligence, and it is harming our Nation. It is putting us at greater risk.

We've been joined by another good friend from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND), and I look forward to your comments on the issue of the importance and imperative of passing the Protect America Act, and I will yield to him.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to Mr. PRICE and Mrs. BLACKBURN talk, and I was wondering if we had the time to do this. So I went back to the day that the FISA failed, which was February 13, and I looked at it and said this is a complicated bill and there are some issues and things to be worked out and have we had enough time to do it and how much time are we spending on discussing this FISA.

And so after listening to you all, I went back and got the schedule for February, and after February 13, on February 14, we did eight suspension

bills, which are bills that have very little discussion, and two motions to adjourn. So we were in session that day about 5 hours, but nothing about FISA.

□ 1600

And then it seems, too, that we were gone for about 8 days. And then, Congresswoman, when we got back the week of the 25th, we worked 4 days for a total of 15 hours and 5 minutes with no FISA legislation. We did three suspensions on the 25th. We did the public housing on the 26th, which was withdrawn. We did the energy tax on the 27th. And then we did three suspensions on the 28th. And so, that was for February.

And if you look at what we've done in March, we did three suspensions yesterday. We did six suspensions the next day. Then we did the mental health, which was a total of about 10 hours that we spent on that. And then today, it's 4 o'clock and we're already out and didn't do anything today.

So, I guess my question, then, is, what are we doing? I mean, we, the 109th Congress, was called the "do-nothing" Congress. What can this Congress be called? Does anybody have a good name, Congresswoman, that we can call this Congress?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Reclaiming my time, I appreciate that. Mr. Speaker, it's kind of appropriate that we are interrupted by a unanimous consent request, a motion that says we ought not do anything in this House until next week, let's just go home.

My friend from Georgia points out that we haven't been doing a lot this year, haven't been doing a whole lot this 110th Congress. And the American people can tolerate a lot in their political leaders, but what they can't tolerate is inaction on important issues and matters of national concern, national security. So, it frustrates them, it frustrates us that this leadership won't bring this bill to the floor. Twenty-one Members of the majority party have signed a letter that said they would vote for this; 21 Members. This bill would pass if it were just brought to the floor.

I am pleased to yield to my good friend from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The gentleman from Georgia is so right in what he is pointing out. What we're spending our time doing here are items that are not crucial, they're policy debates. They're policy debates about how you want to approach an issue. My goodness, the Government Reform Committee and my committee, Energy and Commerce, we have had hearings on steroids in pro sports. Now, we had plenty of time to parade people in and do these hearings, but we didn't have the time for FISA. We've had plenty of time to have committee hearings. Today, we were in Committee on Energy and Commerce on tobacco, and if we wanted the FDA, who already cannot keep the Nation's food supply

safe, they can't keep the Nation's drug supply safe, but we were spending time on that instead of putting time on FISA.

Now, as a mother, you know that children are going to put off to the very end doing the hardest thing. So, what you do when you're a mom is to say, no, we're going to do the hard things first. When we're doing homework, we're going to do the hard problems first, we're going to write the hard papers first because you get it out of the way. And then you know that regardless of how much time is left, you've attended to the things that are going to have the greatest impact.

Now, that is the way the leadership of this House needs to move forward. They need to go back and learn a Kindergarten lesson. They need to go back and think about what they learned there. You do the hard things first.

FISA is a difficult bill. We are pleased that there are some issues that take a lot of work, that we have to work to build consensus, that we have to look carefully and study these; the Nation benefits and our constituents benefit by that. But to put it off, to choose to not address it, to leave it at the back of the line for partisan political gain is dead wrong.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. You're absolutely right. And that's what people get frustrated by is the partisanship and the political games being played.

I yield to my friend from Georgia.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. The gentlelady brings up a good point. But the Republicans, the minority here, we've tried to bring it to the floor on over a half dozen occasions. We tried to bring it to the floor again today. We tried to bring it to the floor yesterday. And this is the same bill that passed the Senate. And the gentlelady from Tennessee was taking about, it's a hard issue and it's an issue that needs to be discussed. There is no slower body in the world than our colleagues across the hall. I mean, they've been working on a farm bill for a year now. So, I mean, it's a very deliberative body, and they passed this overwhelmingly 68-29. And as the gentleman from Georgia said, there are 21 Members that have said they would vote for this bill. So we tried to bring it to the floor to see if it would pass, but through parliamentary procedure they refused to let us vote on it.

And, you know, Mr. PRICE, if we don't vote on issues, our constituents don't know how we really feel about it. So, you can go home and say, yes, I'm for the security of this Nation, I'm for the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, but if you don't have an opportunity to vote on it, it's just words, it's simple words.

And so we're ready for some action up here. I mean, we want to see some action on our intelligence to make sure our intelligence community has the very best tools that they need. And not

only that, but our corporations, who have been so generous and willing to go along with some of the things that our government has asked them to do to keep our people safe, we need to make sure that they're protected.

And so, you know, we're not the party of the trial lawyers; we're the party of the people. And so, I think if we quit trying to protect some of these special interests and start trying to protect this whole country, we would be a lot better off.

And I want to applaud our leadership for staying consistent and being constant that we keep this in front of the American people and that we are trying to give the Members of this people's House an opportunity to vote on it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Reclaiming my time, I appreciate that.

We are ready for action. We are ready for action. The American people are ready for action on this issue; in fact, they're demanding it. And that's why we have begun, I think over the last week or so, to hear the language on the other side change, but their actions haven't changed.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. And what we're doing is we're giving an opportunity for the terrorists to act.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Exactly. Exactly.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Because we can't surveil them. And so, rather than us taking the action, they're taking the action. And that is unconscionable that this body is letting that happen.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Without a doubt. And our constituents understand and appreciate that.

The folks that we're up against in this battle, the individuals who wish to do us harm, are very smart people, very smart people. And we have an open society. When we provide them an opening in that open society, they will take advantage of it. And as you say, it's unconscionable. It's unconscionable for this House to not allow a vote on it.

Some of my constituents at home say, well, why can't you just bring it up? And as you've mentioned, we have tried to bring it up, but the House is a very majoritarian body, it is run by strict rules. And if the leadership of the majority party doesn't want it to happen, it won't happen. If the majority party doesn't want it to happen, it won't happen. And the reason for that is they control absolutely everything that comes to the floor. And consequently, our constituents, our friends at home get frustrated by the fact that we, in this House of Representatives, seem to be unable to get this done. And we've called on, I've called on, everybody here has called on the Democrat leadership, on the Speaker, on the leader on the other side to bring this to a vote.

We're comfortable and confident that this House will do the right thing, will do the responsible thing, and will pass this bill.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want Mr. HOEKSTRA to have a chance, but I do want to say this: We had a bomb go off in Times Square this morning, fortunately, it didn't do a lot of damage, at the recruiting station right in the middle of Times Square in the middle of New York City. And we also have had a bombing in Jerusalem today. So, the terrorists are still at work. People that want to terrify this country are still at work, and we've let our guard down.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank you for those comments.

We're pleased to be joined by our good friend from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), who is the ranking member, former chairman of the Intelligence Committee, understands this issue as well as anybody, and has been a champion for not just his constituents in the State of Michigan but all Americans in bringing focus on it.

I am pleased to yield to my good friend.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I thank my colleague. And I thank all of my colleagues for talking about this important issue.

You know, we've been talking about this now for over 7 months. Last August, we passed a 6-month extension. That 6-month extension expired at the beginning of February. We passed a 2-week extension. We got to the end of that, and then the Democratic majority said, well, let's do a 3-week extension. And we said, no, we need to do a comprehensive fix. We need to fix FISA long term. We need to do the telecommunications companies. And then they said, well, we can do that in 3 weeks. An hour ago marked the end of the third week of legislating.

They were never serious about getting this done, and they wouldn't have gotten it done when they said they would. At the beginning of this week they said, well, we're not going to get to it this week because our legislative agenda is just too packed full. Here we are at 10 after 4 and our packed legislative agenda means the House stopped business at 3 o'clock.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Absolutely.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Unbelievable. But now 5 weeks ago, when we started into this process one more time, we said exactly what my colleague was highlighting, both my colleagues, the terrorists have not stopped. They continue their attacks in Pakistan. Five weeks ago is when they had some major bombings in Pakistan just before the elections. They had the major bombing in Afghanistan. But we also then started hearing from al Qaeda in Iraq saying they wanted to use Iraq to do what? Do you remember? Al Qaeda in Iraq said, we want to use it as a base to attack Jerusalem.

And then a major terrorist died in Lebanon. We're not sure exactly what the circumstances were. Some think it's Israel, some others say it might have been Hezbollah itself. But one of the key leaders of Hezbollah passed away, and the statement from

Hezbollah then was, "we're going to hold Israel accountable." And what happened today? Martyr Mughniyah, within the last hour, a TV station affiliated with Hezbollah, said this group may not be affiliated with Hezbollah, but the group, Martyr Mughniyah, as far as we can tell, a new terrorist group, along with the Gaza Martyrs' Group, which may also be a new terrorist group, claim responsibility for the Jerusalem operation.

So, with the events of the last 5 weeks, some new identified terrorist groups have popped up. And most likely, if there is any intelligence that our allies, because we said, who is going to be vulnerable by our diminished capabilities? It's going to be America's homeland. It's going to be our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is our embassies around the world, and potentially our allies. With what al Qaeda in Iraq and what the various organizations have now said after the death of Mughniyah, these are new terrorist groups.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Yes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate that, because what you point out is that in a relatively short period of time, which is what we've been saying, the terrorists are flexible. They change based upon what happens here at home.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Right.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. What occurs on the floor of this House is consequential. Who is to say that there wouldn't have been information that would have been gained, had we had this bill in place, that would have been gained that would have allowed us to know that those activities were going to go on today?

I am pleased to yield back.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. We might have. But the key thing here is if these are new terrorist groups that we didn't know about before, guess what? And our allies, the Israelis, got meaningful intelligence about this group. The law on surveillance would be the law that was in place on 9/10/01, the very law that the President, his national security advisers, our current Speaker of the House, bipartisan leadership in the House and Senate all said would not work. Another example within the last hour. All right. Dynamic situation.

And remember, I think we all know that intelligence only works when you do it in a timely way. You know, 2-year-old intelligence is no longer intelligence; it's data. It's information for historical purposes. To keep America safe, intelligence has to be real-time, and the only law didn't do it.

Again, when we talked about what potential threats would be, 5 weeks ago we said, you know, there have been people who have been arrested because they were going to allegedly murder the Danish cartoonist. There was a plot in Denmark to do this. And I said, well, that's interesting. But there is another threat on the horizon. Dutch TV re-

fuses to show anti-Koran film as terror alert is raised. What is this? We've known for quite some time that a Dutch parliamentarian was going to do a video on Islam, his interpretation of Islam. I'm not saying whether it's right, whether it's wrong, but as a parliamentarian you would think that he could have the opportunity to express his views on Islam in a country that, I think in Rotterdam now the most popular baby's name is Muhammad. But he was going to give his views of Islam and was preparing a video. And there were allegations that there might be some things that were inflammatory in this video, people saying he might burn the Koran. Who knows. We don't know what's in it.

But the Dutch Government now, it just came out that the Dutch, we knew this video was in development, not knowing what was in it, but the Dutch now, the TV networks have refused to show it. But he may release this film on the Internet, which has caused the Dutch, again, a very firm and strongly in Afghanistan in the war against radical jihadists, the Dutch have gone on a high terror alert.

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If there are groups, new groups that form as a reaction to this new video, the old law will apply. Our hands will be tied behind our back. Our intelligence community will be limited in its ability to help the Dutch protect their assets. And as we have known from the past, when radical jihadists have an opportunity like this, they don't just focus in on a particular country. They use it as an opportunity to go after modern Islamic regimes in the Middle East, countries in northern Africa, all of Europe, not just the Dutch, and the Americans. But if there are new groups that haven't been identified before, the old rules apply, which means we are more vulnerable.

It is absolutely unconscionable that here we are 3 weeks later and once again we are going home without dealing with this. And it's not because of a heavy workload. It's because they don't want to do what the Senate has done.

The Senate passed a great bill, 68 votes, bipartisan. And we all know how hard it is to get 68 votes in the U.S. Senate today. But a broad bipartisan bill that gave our intelligence community the tools that they needed, and it gave to the telecommunications companies the help that they needed to do their work.

I mean, it's absolutely unacceptable to have one of our colleagues up here today to talk about the intelligence community. Remember the last debate on the last bill, not talking about what our intelligence community is doing to protect American lives. And American intelligence officials, people working in our intelligence community, have lost their lives keeping America safe, and our friends on the other side say what? They're Big Brother. Well, you know

what? They're Big Brother, but they are not big brothering America. They're focused on one thing: finding radical jihadists.

But these folks belittle the effort of our intelligence community and give the American people the impression that our intelligence community is just looking for ways to destroy Americans' civil liberties. I have met with these people. I know they're focused on a couple of things: protecting Americans' civil liberties as they keep America safe. And to belittle the work of our intelligence community is absolutely unacceptable, and it's really an embarrassment that those kinds of comments are made on the floor of this House.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Without a doubt. And there are so many things that have occurred during the discussion about this issue that have been sad and distressing. That was one of them today, as you saw the chuckles go across on the other side of the aisle when the companies, the patriotic companies, are trying to assist this administration, assist this government, assist our intelligence community in being able to protect all of us; and all they do is denigrate them. It's just so distressing because it's such disinformation and misinformation that it confuses our constituents. But what our constituents understand and appreciate is that it is the majority party in this House that won't allow this House to vote on a bill to protect America.

I'm pleased to yield to my friend from Georgia.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. I want to ask my colleague, the ranking member of the Select Intelligence Committee of the House, if I understand it correctly, after 9/11 the President called in his national security advisers, the CIA, the FBI, all of our intelligence agencies, along with representatives of some of the telecommunications companies, and got together to find out what their assets were for doing surveillance and gathering intelligence, I guess. After they came up with that, if I understand you correctly, you're telling me that a bipartisan group, which included the now-Speaker of the House, were informed of this and that there were some adjustments made to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act to cover these new groups and new methods of gathering intelligence, but what I hear you saying now is, because this thing has expired, that we're back to September 10, 2001, on our ability to gather intelligence on these new groups.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. That's exactly right. The individuals in our government. This was never the administration's program. It was never the President Bush program. This was always the American Government's program, because the administration identified what we needed to do and how we could do it and they went to the bipartisan leadership of the House and the Senate, a small group, because if you have these kinds of capabilities, you don't

want it broadcast to al Qaeda and radical jihadists about what your capabilities are. You want to use it as an effective tool. But on a bipartisan basis, the leadership of the House and the Senate and the leadership on a bipartisan basis of the Intelligence Committees in the House and Senate signed off on these programs.

The current Speaker of the House was briefed four times in the 8, 9 months immediately after 9/11, and you know what? Number one, now she's not bringing to the floor the very changes that she supported in the aftermath of 9/11, but the companies that we went to and asked them for their help. And when these companies said we know the administration is supportive of this, have Members of Congress been informed, the administration could truthfully say, yes, they have been briefed. They've been informed. They know what we're going to ask you to do, what information we expect to get and how we expect that to keep America safe. They're now throwing them under the bus.

But the more important thing is the urgency of today. We need these companies to help us. They help us all the time. And we're having a chilling effect on these types of American businesses that in many ways are helping us in basic law enforcement activities, not only radical jihadists but basic law enforcement, because they're now being told if you help us, recognize that in many cases we're going to throw you to the wolves, which in this case are the trial lawyers.

I appreciate my colleagues having this discussion and debate. Thank you very much for allowing me to be a part of this. I need to get going. I was hoping I could say I'm going to a meeting where we are going to work out the final details on FISA, but now that's not the case. I've got to go to a different type of meeting. But thank you very much for furthering the effort on this very, very important issue.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you for bringing greater clarity to that, Mr. HOEKSTRA.

And before you joined us, I read and inserted into the RECORD a letter from 25 State attorneys general talking about the importance of FISA, a bipartisan group of individuals across this Nation who have the responsibility of keeping their States safe. And they understand and appreciate the imperative of this.

Again, this gets so confusing to the American people because the people that apparently don't want this to pass want the American people to be confused. This is pretty simple, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I yield.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Do you know why those attorneys general wrote the letter? Because it's affecting the local governments' ability to do surveillance on people from Mexico who are in this

country illegally, drug lords and others. It's affecting our local governments' at-home ability to do this surveillance. It's not just al Qaeda and the terrorists. This is affecting our local law enforcement too.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. It's affecting the information that they're able to get. But it's communication from a foreign individual on foreign soil to another foreign individual on foreign soil. This is not between an American individual on American soil to another American individual on American soil.

Mr. Speaker, when it's confused and brought into kind of a perplexing dilemma for people and talking about the violation of Americans' civil rights, that's not what this is about. This is about protecting Americans from terrorists overseas. And what we have seen in the last 19 or 20 days is exactly what Senator ROCKEFELLER knew when we see, when he said on February 14 of this year: "What people have to understand around here is that the quality of intelligence we are going to be receiving is going to be degraded." He said, stating before the Senate, that if this bill is not passed, the ability to gather intelligence will be degraded. Mr. Speaker, that means that we are not able to get the intelligence we need.

We are now 19, 20 days into not having this bill in place, not having this law in place. And why? I have difficulty when I get asked at home that question. My constituents, many of them, will say, why won't they pass the bill? A majority of the House wants it. Right? And that's correct. Twenty-one Members on the Democrat side have said they would vote for the bill. The vast majority, if not everybody, on the Republican side would vote for the bill. Mr. Speaker, you know, that's a majority of this House of Representatives. So let the House work its will.

Why won't they bring it up? The only rationale, the only reason that has made any sense to anybody, is purely political. Purely political, either to continue the issue for their left, liberal wing because they believe they could gain political points with it or the political nature of not making it so the communications companies have immunity from the information that they provide on foreign individuals, terrorists overseas communicating with other terrorists overseas, providing those individuals the same protections that we have under the United States Constitution.

Never before has that been done. Never before have we provided individuals in a foreign land, non-American citizens in a foreign land, the rights, privileges, and protections of the United States Constitution. Because of the trial lawyer lobby and because of the trial lawyer support for the majority party, the Democratic Party, that's apparently the only reasonable answer to the question, Why won't they allow this to come forward?

But, Mr. Speaker, the leadership has recognized, at least they say they have

recognized, the importance of this issue. Just 6 days ago, the majority leader said: "This is a very serious, important bill. It's critical to the defense of our country." Just last week he said this. Why, then, Mr. Speaker, are we not voting on it today? It's 4:25. There's no reason that we ought not have brought this bill up today or yesterday or the day before or tomorrow. But, Mr. Speaker, no, the House has gone home.

Individual after individual has appreciated and recognized the importance of this bill, that the terrorists, those who want to do us harm, are very nimble. They're very flexible. They're very bright. Members of the House of Representatives oftentimes have the opportunity to go to Iraq and to Afghanistan. I was talking to a colleague who was there just 11 days ago. That's just a week into when we didn't have this capability. And 11 days ago, this Member of this body, this House of Representatives, was told by a general on the ground in Iraq that the information they were receiving was not as of high quality as it had been the week before. Changes occur that rapidly in the ability to gain information.

Mr. Speaker, some say that the individuals representing them across this Nation are incapable of leading this Nation anymore. Some say that the actions of this House of Representatives border upon treasonous activity. Mr. Speaker, this isn't leadership that's going on in this House right now; it's an abrogation of duty. It's an abrogation of responsibility. It's a violation of the people's trust. It's a violation of the oath of office. Mr. Speaker, the American people are demanding that this be voted on and that it be voted on at the first opportunity, which now becomes next week.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate Republicans have voted "yes." The Senate Democrats have voted "yes." The House Republicans will vote "yes" when given the opportunity. The House Democrat leadership is the only thing standing in the way of passing the Protect America Act and securing and defending this Nation in only the way that we can now, with appropriate intelligence capability. We must do that and we must do that as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2008

Mr. SERRANO (during the Special Order of Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning-hour debate; and further, when the House adjourns on Wednesday, March 12, it adjourn to meet at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 13.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YARMUTH). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.