

Coral Springs that it “demonstrates a consistently high level of financial performance” and that its key strategic advantage is the “city’s effectiveness of running like a business.”

The city’s efforts to improve public safety have resulted in the city’s crime rate decreasing by nearly half over the last 10 years, the lowest crime rate in the State.

I rise to congratulate the City of Coral Springs, its citizens and its leadership for striving for the best and inspiring others to do the same.

SAVING STARVING CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today as the Chair of the Congressional Children’s Caucus to emphasize the crisis in the lack of food for those around the world. As we have seen the rising food costs, we in America are suffering, but the rest of the world is in a crisis.

I believe it is imperative as we move into our appropriations process that we emphasize the importance of utilizing the food stock here in the United States to provide service and support around the world, and I believe it is even more important to focus on the impact on children.

I will convene a briefing that will draw upon the insight of food advocates from around the Nation to focus on how we can prioritize children in developing nations being provided foodstuffs and receiving priority over adults, for a malnourished child dies, a malnourished child has disease.

We are in a crisis. It is time for us to act to save the children.

THANK YOU TO THE 218TH

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, soldiers of the 218th Brigade Combat Team of the South Carolina Army National Guard, under the leadership of Brigadier General Bob Livingston, are successfully returning to South Carolina. For the past year they have been in Afghanistan as part of Task Force Phoenix working to build the Afghan military and police.

As a 28-year veteran of the 218th, I know firsthand of their competence and patriotism. These citizen soldiers have built one Afghan military battalion to be fully independent with 13 additional battalions to be operational by this summer. After overhauling the Afghani police forces to eliminate corruption, the 218th helped build an Afghan police force of 79,000.

Additionally, the 218th provided humanitarian relief, including the construction of schools, hospitals and

roads. They conducted 200 medical assistance missions and delivered 300 tons of food and supplies to the 37,000 Afghans.

At this time, we also remember the fallen. Staff Sergeant James D. Bullard, Sergeant Shawn F. Hill and Sergeant Edward O. Philpot lost their lives during the year-long deployment. These patriots gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of American families by defeating terrorists overseas. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th.

In addition to the information provided above, the 218th Brigade Combat Team has had extraordinary success in working alongside the Afghan forces. During the past winter—a time when Taliban forces often regroup—soldiers from the 218th, along with Afghan soldiers, stayed in forwarding operating bases around Afghanistan and took the fight to the Taliban. This action kept the enemy from gathering strength.

Due to the commitment and professionalism of the men and women of the 218th, the Afghan army now has a reenlistment rate of 55 percent—more than double the 20 percent a year ago. The percentage of Afghan soldiers ready for duty has gone up from 55 percent to 85 percent. Their absent without leave percentage has dropped to eight percent, and they have 29,000 recruits that have completed basic training.

The Afghan police continue to grow in size and ability. As a sign of success, this winter the police were able to defend and hold their 364 district centers. This is something they have not been able to accomplish since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001.

I appreciate the above factual information provided by embedded reporter Chuck Crumbo from Kabul, Afghanistan, in The State of Columbia, South Carolina, on April 27, 2008.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Resolution 1073 and House Resolution 49.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

BRINGING RECONCILIATION TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ

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

woman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to announce that Representative CHRIS SHAYS of Connecticut and I have introduced an important bipartisan bill in the House today that can help bring desperately needed reconciliation to the people of Iraq. The bill is called the International Partnership for Reconciliation in Iraq. By the standards of the Federal Government, it is a tiny outfit. But few government agencies have delivered more bang for their buck or done so much with so few people.

The USIP Institute has an impressive track record of conflict management and peace building in the Balkans, the Philippines, Nigeria, the Sudan, Rwanda and other parts of the world, including Iraq.

This bill is vitally important, because, as Ambassador Ryan Crocker has said, “reconciliation is perhaps the most critical challenge that Iraq faces right now.” Our bill would encourage reconciliation by supporting the work of a remarkable but unheralded organization called the United States Institute of Peace.

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The Institute was established by Congress 24 years ago today. It has 142 employees and a budget of \$32 million. It has been successful because it is unique. There is no other organization like it. It is a center and a clearinghouse for best practices in preventing and dealing with conflict. Its staff includes many of the world’s top experts in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These incredibly dedicated experts travel to some of the world’s most violent places to facilitate reconciliation efforts on the ground.

And the Institute is impartial, it is nonideological. Its only axe to grind is peace. That is why USIP has gained the respect and trust in all sides in conflict. In fact, you can say the Institute is one of the world’s top brand names when it comes to making peace.

In Iraq, the Institute has been working to inspire reconciliation at the regional, at the national, and at the community levels. It has been particularly effective in the city of Mahmoudiya, which has been called the Triangle of Death. There, it has worked to bring Sunni and Shiite factions together. Its work has been so effective that the U.S. Army’s provincial reconstruction teams have asked the Institute to help with reconciliation efforts in other parts of Iraq. Not bad for an organization whose annual budget is less than what we spend in Iraq every 3 hours.

There is an excellent article on the Institute’s work, Madam Speaker, in the current issue of the National Journal, and I urge all my colleagues to read it.

The bill that Representative SHAYS and I introduced today would provide assistance to the Institute to do the

following in Iraq: Prevent violent conflict, promote post-conflict stability and development, increase conflict management capacity, promote tolerance and forgiveness, and facilitate regional dialogue.

We believe that the Institute's work will also encourage nations from outside the region to get involved. Reconciliation in Iraq has become something like the weather: Everyone here in Washington talks about it, but no one can really do anything about it. We just sort of sit around and wait for the Iraqi government to meet their reconciliation benchmarks. Then, when they don't, we make speeches.

This bill is an opportunity to do something about reconciliation by supporting an organization that knows how to get the job done. And this bill we can all get behind, because no matter where we stand on the Iraq issue we all support reconciliation.

I am proud to join with Representative SHAYS in asking all of our colleagues in the House on both sides of the aisle to cosponsor this critically important bipartisan bill.

POLICE GONE WILD—MEXICO

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, brutal actions of local and state police are going unpunished; and, as the founder of the Victims Right Caucus, I bring this serious matter to the House's attention.

Two years ago, on May 3 and 4, 2006, there was a lawful protest in support of local flower sellers who had been displaced from their business because a new airport was being built. During the protest, law enforcement officers arrested and detained 47 separate women. The police officers didn't read the women their rights; the women were just arrested, locked up, and taken into custody. Then, Madam Speaker, the officers beat and sexually assaulted them. I repeat, they beat and sexually assaulted the 47 women that were arrested. Obviously, lawmen have become outlaws.

One of the 47 women was Barbara Mendez, a 27-year-old student and a child advocate. Barbara went to the protest because she heard a child was killed in the violence between the police and the protesters. As a child advocate, Barbara went to show her support for the child and her community. But after Barbara arrived at the protest, the police beat her and arrested her because she was with the protesters and supposedly blocking a road. Barbara was placed in a police vehicle and forced to take off her clothes. She was then gang raped by the police officers, as other officers watched and cheered on the rapists. Barbara was then locked up in jail for 12 days.

Madam Speaker, this is a case of police gone wild.

Jail doctors then examined Barbara, but it just so happened that they failed

to document her physical injuries or gather any forensic evidence of the rape. This evidence is crucial for any prosecution.

Madam Speaker, rape is a crime that tries to destroy the soul of the victim. And of these 47 women arrested and assaulted, 26 of them later filed complaints with authorities claiming physical, psychological, and sexual abuse during the arrest and detention. But since these assaults occurred, none of the police criminals have been brought to justice. No, not one. And this ought not to be.

Five months after the assaults, a national human rights commission called for criminal investigations into the assaults, but no investigations have occurred.

In February of 2007, the Supreme Court instructed a special judicial commission to investigate the crimes by the police in the arrest of these 47 women.

Then, Barbara Mendez and several other victims filed another complaint with federal authorities, but the federal authorities are sitting on these cases refusing to move forward. Why isn't there any justice for these women?

Next week marks the second year anniversary of these assaults, and yet none of these women have seen a courtroom. Obviously, no justice for these rape victims. Of the 47 women, two are from Spain, one is from Germany, two are from Chile, and the rest are Mexican citizens. But none of them received any justice. Basic human rights is obviously being denied.

Madam Speaker, these assaults did not occur in the United States. They occurred in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico, just 30 miles outside of Mexico City.

This issue is a world human rights issue, and this type of abuse cannot be tolerated and peace officers cannot enjoy impunity. Police officers are supposed to protect the community and keep people safe from harm, not cause harm to people. And, of course, this includes Mexican police officers. These officers must be held accountable. They need to have their day in court. And, if they are guilty, they need to be sent off to the jailhouse.

As we approach Mother's Day in the United States, Madam Speaker, we need to proclaim that mothers and women throughout the world receive the respect and honor due them. That includes justice, because justice is the one thing we should always find, even in Mexico.

And that's just the way it is.

RISING FUEL PRICES

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

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to express my disappointment that the administration has done nothing to rein in rising fuel prices.

The past 7 years have brought hardship to anyone in Maine with a vehicle to fill up at the gas station, a furnace to feed, or a livelihood dependent on affordable fuel.

As you can see in this chart, in January 2001 oil traded at \$23 to \$25 per barrel. This week, it topped \$120 per barrel.

In January 2001, #2 heating oil cost Maine families and businesses \$1.55 a gallon. This week, it topped \$3.85.

In January 2001, regular unleaded gasoline cost Maine drivers \$1.55 a gallon. According to the AAA, the going price in Portland this week is \$3.55 a gallon, and rising.

In January 2001, diesel for their rigs cost Maine's independent truckers \$1.53 per gallon. In Bangor this week, it was \$4.33 per gallon.

These past 7 years, the oil companies have padded their bottom lines at the expense of the hardworking people of Maine and across the country. For the past 7 years, everyone in Maine has paid a steep price for the Bush administration's disastrous energy policy and for Big Oil's efforts in Congress to block legislation to stop energy profiteering.

What has the administration done? Nothing. And they will do nothing unless the people's elected representatives push them to action.

That is why I have called upon the Federal Trade Commission, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Attorney General of the U.S., and the Secretary of Energy to launch an immediate investigation of price fixing, manipulation, rampant speculation, and other unscrupulous behavior in the petroleum markets. Inappropriate and criminal behavior by oil companies, their subsidiaries, agents, or employees must be prosecuted and punished to the full extent of the law.

These outrageous price increases are a cruel blow for Maine families whose incomes are stagnant or shrinking, and whose costs for health insurance, college tuition, and other everyday expenses continue to rise faster than inflation. Fuel prices are an economic catastrophe for Maine farmers, fishermen, and other small business people. For some of Maine's independent truckers, like those I met on the road in Kennebunk when they were coming down here, unbridled fuel costs when coupled with a stagnating economy may very well put them out of business.

As independent truckers are staring down unemployment, oil companies are reaping record profits. However, for one sector of the economy, the last 7 years have been a bonanza.

In 2001, the Big 5 Oil companies posted combined profits of just over \$40 billion. In 2007, their combined profits topped \$123 billion. ExxonMobil's \$41 billion profit last year was more than all of the Big 5 combined in 2001, and