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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

Pastor Joe Hishmeh, Fellowship Bible Church, Topeka, Kansas, offered the following prayer:

Almighty Father in heaven:

What a joy and privilege it is to seek You through prayer. All across this great land of the United States of America, we are in need of Your guidance, Your direction, wisdom, and grace. Heal us from our sins, restore us to Yourself and be glorified in our lives.

We entrust our citizens, our troops, public servants, and leaders to You this day. You have established this distinguished assembly of leaders to represent our citizens, and we simply ask You to use each of them to make a positive difference today.

We recognize Your powerful hand of guidance, Your heart of love for people, Your mind of wisdom and righteousness. May they offer a help and a hand, a hope and a future through the decisions that are made in this place.

I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CHABOT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 5493. An act to provide that the usual day for paying salaries in or under the House of Representatives may be established by regulations of the Committee on House Administration.

WELCOMING PASTOR JOE HISHMEH

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Kansas (Mrs. BOYDA) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BOYDA from Kansas. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When Pastor Joe Hishmeh first came to Topeka from Chattanooga by way of Dallas, the Topeka Fellowship Bible Church's congregation consisted roughly of about 100 people. Six years later, that same church now has over 1,300 loyal members.

Pastor Hishmeh, a husband and a father of three great boys, has initiated a

number of programs which greatly benefit our community of Topeka. One of those programs is called "Sharefest." Originally, there were three churches performing much-needed upkeep on two of our local schools. This year, the program has grown to eight different churches, including over 500 volunteers, painting and landscaping our Topeka schools.

Through "Sharefest," Pastor Joe has shown his congregation the joy of giving without expecting anything in return, very, very, very biblical in the principles of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through "Sharefest," in almost no time at all he has created a ripple effect of goodness and charity in the community of Topeka and beyond.

Pastor Joe Hishmeh, thank you for bringing that ripple effect all the way to Congress.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 10 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

END THE WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, \$183.7 billion war-funding request in light of more than 4,000 U.S. troops who have died, tens of thousands injured, a million dead or more innocent Iraqis, a cost of \$2 to \$3 trillion. We're borrowing money from China to fight this war. We're ruining our economy. We're ruining our moral standing in the world. We're ruining our children's future and making the world more dangerous for a war based on lies.

Why do we keep funding it? Support the troops by bringing them home. End the war. End the occupation. Close the

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

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bases. Bring the troops home. Set in motion an international security and peace-keeping process that can create the circumstances for our troops to come home. Have a program of reconciliation and reconstruction in Iraq. Return all oil assets to Iraqi control. End the war. Stop funding it.

Vote "no" on the war appropriations.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO GET TOUGH ON CRIME

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

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, last month the President signed into law the Second Chance Act authorizing hundreds of millions of dollars to assist offenders transitioning back into our societies. My concern is that this Congress has done little or nothing to prevent future crimes from occurring. With more than 700,000 offenders expected to be released back into our communities next year and the number of people who are entering their so-called high-crime years being at an all time high, conditions are ripe for a perfect storm of crime to hit our communities.

In my view, this Congress should act to, among other things, strengthen victims' rights; make restitution something that's real, not just words on paper; crack down on drug dealers who sell death on our streets, and truly protect witnesses so more people will be willing to come forward to testify against gang members who all too frequently virtually control many neighborhoods, especially urban areas and cities across this country.

The time to act is now before it's too late.

VOTE "YES" ON THE DEMOCRATIC HOUSING PACKAGE

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

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, today the House will begin debate on the comprehensive housing package that will help families keep their homes, prevent foreclosures in the future, and help the recovery of communities left almost vacant by the housing crisis. Today, more than 3.5 million homes sit empty in America, and if Washington does not act, another 2 million Americans are expected to lose their homes in the coming months.

The Democratic housing package will provide mortgage refinancing assistance to families so they can stay in their homes. We do this by expanding the FHA program so the borrowers in danger of losing their homes can refinance into lower-cost government-issued mortgages. The housing package also provides \$15 billion in loans and grants to States so they can acquire foreclosed homes and rehabilitate properties in areas hit hard by the housing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, this housing package is the best response to our Nation's housing problem.

□ 1015

DEMOCRATS HOLD IRAQIS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR OWN RECONSTRUCTION COSTS IN SUPPLEMENTAL

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow this House will have the opportunity to send the Iraqi Government a strong message: They're now responsible for their own reconstruction funding.

As we debate a new war supplemental, Democrats are bringing an amendment to the floor that requires all Iraqi reconstruction costs to be provided on a dollar-for-dollar match.

To date, the United States has spent an estimated \$46 billion in reconstruction costs in Iraq, all while our infrastructure is crumbling. The Iraqi Government is also currently working under a budget surplus, while, thanks to the Bush administration, we continue to face record deficits.

The amendment also requires the Iraqi Government to charge the U.S. military in Iraq the same discounted price for fuel that it charges everyday Iraqis. Another fair measure considering that the Iraqis are expected to take in a record \$70 billion in oil revenues this year.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that Democrats and Republicans could come together tomorrow to pass this common-sense amendment so that we can invest in America, rather than Iraq.

CHINA

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my frustration and disappointment with the leadership's decision to bypass the Appropriations Committee and to bring up the 2008 supplemental without giving Members an opportunity either on the floor or in the committee to offer an amendment.

I wanted to offer an amendment to prohibit U.S. Government employees from attending the Beijing Olympics on the taxpayers' dime because of China's violent repression of religious minorities and human rights activists.

Catholics, Protestants, Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners and other religious minorities in China face harassment, imprisonment, even torture and death. China is actively engaging in espionage against our country and now participating in a genocide in Sudan.

The political prisoners in China and the dissidents around the world will be

deeply demoralized if senior American officials attend the games.

TIME FOR A NEW DIRECTION ON ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, while the consumers continue to pay record prices at the pump, the Big Oil companies are once again pocketing all-time record profits; yet they disavow any correlation to those high gas prices. But do they really expect the American people to believe that?

During the first six years of the Bush administration, Congress pursued policies that furthered our dependence on oil. They showered the Big Oil companies with billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies but never explained why those corporations deserve corporate welfare.

Since regaining control of Congress, Democrats have twice passed legislation to redirect every penny of those taxpayer subsidies into research and development on alternative sources of fuel.

For years, Republicans in Washington have supported a policy of corporate welfare for Big Oil that clearly hasn't worked. It's time for a new direction on energy policy.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, efforts by Americans and our allies in Iraq have greatly weakened al Qaeda. If we withdraw our troops from Iraq before their mission is complete, we would forfeit all the progress we have made so far.

Since the surge began last year, we have made remarkable progress, both on the military front and on the political front. While we all agree that more needs to be done politically, there is no questioning the tremendous efforts our military have done to bring stability to areas once controlled by radical extremists.

There should be absolutely no question of whether we provide them the funding they need to do the job we've asked them to do. House Republicans stand united with our troops and our veterans who have fought bravely on the front lines. The least we can do is front the resources necessary for them to complete the task we sent our military to do.

We cannot delay, and we should provide this supplemental funding without extra new spending and extra new programs before we leave for Memorial Day.