

the application to get a \$100,000 mortgage, you weren't supposed to get it, you made up your income and you didn't talk about what you owed, the majority gave the judges of this country the ability to cram down that mortgage and say you don't owe \$100,000 any more, you only owe \$60,000.

So clearly if that is where we are going to go, if we are going to target people who make cars in this country and we are going to reward people who lie on their mortgage applications, it is obnoxious. Some people say what's the big deal, it is 50 words. What the big deal is we have said to the auto guys, cram down your wages. We have said to the mortgage holders, cram down your mortgage. But in the dead of night, the hidden hand inserted language that not only didn't prohibit the awarding of \$170 million in bonuses to people, it protected those bonuses; and today, they are shocked. It is a little bit like the man who is taking a bath and throws his clock radio in the bathtub and says, I'm shocked. That's what we have here.

Mr. MCCOTTER. On your line of thought regarding the sanctity of contracts, in many ways we heard that these contracts here could not be voided, that the sanctity of contracts prevailed.

The reality is this amendment was necessary because the sanctity of contract "ended" when a company that would have gone bankrupt but for taxpayer money being injected to save it occurred. That is why this amendment was necessary for precisely the reasons you talk about.

When you look at the disparate treatment of auto workers who have to give up hard-earned, negotiated contractual benefits in exchange to show viability for taxpayer bridge loans, when you talk about responsible lenders having to foot the bill for people who have even lied on their mortgage applications to be bailed out while mortgage contracts are crammed down and rewritten, they cannot abide a company that says we have a sanctity of contract when the reality is there would have been no bonus, no contract if they had gone into bankruptcy. Again, as you have pointed out, but for the Federal taxpayers, the American people's hard-earned savings going in to bail that company out, a company that has not been asked to restructure but to wind down, those contracts were no longer void.

And it also shows the point that had this Congress known, both Republicans and Democrats, I believe, would have demanded that any further bridge-loan assistance to a company, a financial institution, had to have as an attachment, as a precondition, the preclusion of any executive compensation in the terms of a bonus.

Again, we were not allowed that opportunity because in the dead of night, this mystery amendment was offered by a hidden hand.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, we have launched the mys-

tery of the hidden hand. Again, the mystery of the hidden hand is somebody, and we just want that person to identify themselves so we can move on to something else. Somebody took out a paragraph in the stimulus bill spending a trillion dollars of taxpayer money that said that AIG and others, anybody who got taxpayer money, could not hand out excessive executive bonuses. The hidden hand removed it and inserted this paragraph in section 7700 that permitted and protected the \$170 million of bonuses that people are now shocked AIG paid out.

We have established motive. We have identified a clue. Mr. COLE was kind enough to give us a clue, and we started with 535 suspects and we have winnowed it down to, well, we are down to about 524 now.

So I am going to bring the face book, Mr. Speaker, next week and every day to the floor, and I will seek out Members of this body and ask them if they are the hidden hand. If they didn't put this paragraph in, I am going to cross their face off. When I am done with the House, I am going to go over to the Senate, if they will let me over there, and I will ask the Senators: Are you the hidden hand? Did you foist this fraud upon the American taxpayer and then not have the courage to own up to it?

Mr. Speaker, we will be back. We will solve the mystery of the hidden hand. The taxpayers deserve no less.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS MESSAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about a very critical anniversary before us tonight, the Iraq anniversary. The Iraq war anniversary is tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and it is critical that we give this moment due attention.

I am here as the person who leads our Progressive Special Order hour, the Progressive Message, and I want to just start off by thanking Mr. JARED POLIS of Colorado who is here with me tonight who is a member of the Progressive Caucus and who has some very clear remarks to share with me right now.

Congressman, let me yield to you and can you reflect on this auspicious occasion, the anniversary of the Iraq war.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON. I would like to read briefly from warnewstoday.blogspot.com.

Frequently in our mainstream media, it seems as if everything is wonderful in Iraq. That couldn't be further from the truth. Every day, Mr. Speaker, there are casualties and deaths of Iraqis. And yes, our American men and women continue to lose their lives overseas.

Today alone, Mr. Speaker, a leading politician from the Iraqi Islamic Party has been assassinated west of Baghdad.

Incident number two, a magnetic bomb targeted a police officer's car in the Shaab neighborhood of eastern Baghdad. It went off at 7:15 p.m. The officer was injured and taken to a hospital.

Incident number three, from today, Mr. Speaker, gunmen shot and wounded two Interior Ministry personnel when they attacked their vehicle in central Baghdad on Wednesday.

Incident number four from today in Kut, police forces found an unknown civilian body, as they do many days, hard to identify, happens often, on the outskirts of town.

In Kirkuk, gunmen killed a landlord and his wife when they stormed their house.

□ 1715

In Mosul, again, today, Mr. Speaker, an employee from the Displacement and Migration Department on Wednesday was shot by an unknown gunman in northern Mosul.

Also in Mosul, a gunman killed a civilian in a drive-by shooting 390 miles north of Baghdad. A roadside bomb killed two civilians when it struck a U.S. patrol in eastern Mosul. And again today, unknown gunman on Thursday killed the Mayor of Dober Dan Village. Again today in Iraq, police found the body of a man shot in the head and chest in a town near Mosul.

When I had the opportunity to go to Iraq last year, Mr. Speaker, and talk to people who served on town councils, mayors—these were in the city of Baghdad, autonomous zones, they had their own city council—it was a high-risk occupation. I was informed that nearly a quarter of the people that serve in those capacities on those local city councils have been assassinated, Mr. Speaker.

There are many who would have us believe that the situation in Iraq is rosy. While it might be pleasant to believe that, Mr. Speaker, today, on the sixth anniversary of the war, we need to face reality. This war will end when we choose for this war to end, Mr. Speaker.

Along with several of my colleagues, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, we signed the Responsible Plan to End the War in Iraq almost 2 years ago. Joined by our colleagues, Representative EDWARDS, Representative MASSA, Representative PINGREE, Representative PERRIELLO, and myself, as well as a number of retired military personnel, we put forth a plan not only to end the war, but to ensure that this sort of travesty never occurs in our country again, to restore our Constitution and our liberties.

Mr. ELLISON. Will the gentleman from Colorado yield for a moment?

Mr. POLIS. I will.

Mr. ELLISON. You are fresh off the campaign trail, Congressman. You have been knocking on doors, talking to folks, and you know what people are thinking. You haven't been around here long enough to get jaded, and so your level of enthusiasm for the work

is still very fresh. What are the American people saying about our involvement now on its sixth year in Iraq?

Mr. POLIS. There are a lot of distractions here at home. We have the most severe recession since the Great Depression. We have scandalous uses of public money that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle talked about that we addressed today with regard to bonuses paid to AIG executives. But there are many Americans who, even today, have their sons and daughters, their brothers and sisters, the mothers and fathers of young Americans in school serving overseas in Iraq today, putting their lives in jeopardy every day and, yes, losing their loved ones every day. And you can bet that for those families that are affected by that, that is one of the most important issues to them.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, if you would yield back for a moment, I would like to ask you again; in the course of your work, you're walking around Colorado, you're walking around your district, you're talking to folks, did you talk to any American families who had loved ones who were stop-loss, who are now on their second, third, fourth deployment? Did you see anything like that as I yield back to you, Congressman?

Mr. POLIS. Absolutely. And not only does that divide families, does that compromise the ability of families to provide the kind of family life for their kids that they want to, to support themselves at the level that they want to, not only does it do that, but it divides these families, it compromises our competitiveness as a country, and it weakens our national defense to have men and women serving who would, in many cases, rather be almost anywhere else.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, if you would yield back, I can tell you that as a Member of Congress myself—now I'm a sophomore Member, and you and I are closer to not being Congressmen and being long-term veterans—my heart always breaks a little bit whenever I talk to a spouse who says my wife or husband is going to be leaving here for a year or 18 months, or how about the situation where a woman walks up and says, see this baby who is 9 months old? She never met her daddy. Is this the kind of thing that you saw while you were on the campaign trail?

Mr. POLIS. I saw many families across our district that were directly affected by this. And as you know, with that duration of service—well beyond what many of our men and women thought they were signing up for—the psychological toll when they return is terrible. To serve under those conditions for several years in a row, continually being re-upped, that becomes your reality, the existence in that war zone. It is very hard, when you finally do return, to rejoin this reality we have here in this country.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, as you have done your work, you're fresh off

the campaign trail, I wonder, did you ever have any occasion to talk to family members who said, you know, my son came back, but he's kind of different than he was when he left; he used to have a smile, he used to have a joke for everybody, and now it seems like the weight of the world is on this 22-year-old guy, now it seems like my daughter can't find her smile again?

In my great State of Minnesota, we had a young person who sought mental health care, and there wasn't enough room and they couldn't get in right away. And before this person could come back, they took their own life because they couldn't get the helicopters out of their head, they couldn't get the horror, they couldn't get these kind of images out of their mind, and yet, we've learned that suicide is a serious issue for our fighting men and women, particularly in connection with Iraq.

Have you encountered these kind of medical challenges that our veterans are facing in connection with this war?

Mr. POLIS. I have held hands with veterans and their families and borne witness to the tremendous stresses. It is a difficult topic for any of us to talk about without getting emotional. These are men and women who have served our country proudly. We need to make sure that we have the right mental and physical health support services when they return, but most importantly, to bring them out of harm's way.

It is hard to adjust. I talk to many who are living at home, who are depressed, who are living in a basement. They had their whole lives ahead of them, have had to serve several years overseas, have become part of that reality of seeing the cost of war, their co-workers and people in their unit blown up in front of their eyes, sometimes receiving physical injuries, sometimes only mental injuries, but turning back, having a very difficult time reintegrating and getting back to work.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, let me tell you, tomorrow marks the beginning of the seventh year of the war in Iraq. Throughout that time, we have lost more than 4,000 of America's bravest men and women. The number, to date, that I have is 4,259, but of course the way this war has been going, it could be 4,260 or 4,270.

We have spent over \$600 billion, with long-term cost projections in the trillions, and we have seen Iraqi civilian casualties estimated at the hundreds of thousands. We know that there are over 30,000 Americans who have been injured. And of course the numbers of deaths are easy to count, but the injuries are more difficult because not all the injuries are manifested in terms of a limb or a scar; but of course we've seen those, too. Let me tell you, if you go to Landstuhl Air Force Base, the hospital there in Germany, you see bright-eyed, young people who have suffered catastrophic injuries, and of course we've seen them back home.

We all know, Congressman, that the purported reasons for going to Iraq—

you remember what they are. Would you care to tick off a few of the reasons you and I were told, as Americans, that we needed to go into Iraq? Do you remember what some of those reasons were back almost 6 years ago, Congressman?

Mr. POLIS. We were misinformed and led to believe there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Mr. ELLISON. Weapons of mass destruction. And all we have been found with, Congressman, is weapons of mass distraction, as we have been given misinformation, disinformation due to a combination of political pressure, cherry-picking effects, and poor intelligence. All these assertions ended up being wrong, wrong, wrong and dramatically undermined American credibility around the world.

Congressman, you also would probably have to agree with me that this war has had a corrosive effect on our standing in the world. Whether you're talking about Abu Ghraib, whether you're talking about Bagram, whether you're talking about—whatever you're talking about, our country, which is known as a beacon of civil and human rights, as the rule of law prevails in America, we have seen this conflict sort of eat at what we stand for. I wonder, are these things that you've encountered as you were out there on the campaign trail and as you have been a Member of this body for the last several weeks?

Mr. POLIS. There is great frustration that this war continues to compromise our very important war on terror. One of the most important fronts on the war on terror is the diplomatic front. This war has undermined our ability to engage other nations on the diplomatic front and continues to this day.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, yielding back, Congressman, you and I also know that you are right when you say one of the purported reasons was weapons of mass destruction, which you and I learned was not true. We also know that we were told—we went through sort of this link that was sort of made between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. What have we learned? The bipartisan—bipartisan, that's Republicans and Democrats—9/11 Commission found that there was "no operational relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda." Claims that 9/11 hijacker Muhammad Atta met with Iraqi agents in Prague turned out to be false. Do remember that one, Congressman?

Mr. POLIS. I remember those insinuations that were made by the administration at the time. Many people were led to believe that somehow, in some way, shape or form, Iraq and Saddam Hussein were aligned with al Qaeda, and it couldn't have been further from the truth.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Congressman, as you yield back, we were told weapons of mass destruction, links with Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. And some people said, well, at least Saddam Hussein is gone—and of course we're glad he is

gone, but it almost seems like, when the argument was made, that folks acted like it was a cost-free endeavor, that he was just gone and we didn't have to pay dearly as a Nation for it.

But one of the questions that I want to also direct to you, Congressman, is, \$8 billion in reconstruction funding disappeared under the Bush administration's watch. According to Iraq's Public Integrity Commission, roughly \$8 billion in the country's reconstruction funds were "wasted or stolen" between 2007 and the beginning of the invasion. How does that strike you?

When you think about waste, fraud, and abuse, you might have heard that story about that billion dollars in bills sitting on a wooden pallet. How does that strike you? How does that strike your constituents?

Mr. POLIS. You know, our colleagues today from the other side were here holding forth about accountability for this \$160 million, where did this \$160 million go? Who knew and when? And those are questions that we need to answer, but let me say that that pales—\$160 million wrongfully paid to AIG executives, \$8 billion unaccounted for, where is the outrage and where is the investigation?

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Congressman, I think that is a question that we all need to ponder. But Halliburton, after receiving no-bid reconstruction contracts from the Bush White House, wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. A 2005 report by Senator BYRON DORGAN and Congressman HENRY WAXMAN cited internal Pentagon audits that question "more than a billion dollars in the company's bills for work in Iraq."

It just boggles the mind. If the American taxpayer, in their generosity, says let's get water going in Baghdad, let's get electricity going in Baghdad, at least if we spent the money, the people there ought to get it; wouldn't you say so, Congressman?

Mr. POLIS. Absolutely.

Mr. ELLISON. And there have been other costs, those that are less easy to quantify, such as the cost to America's image, which you spoke of very well, Congressman POLIS. And though it is difficult to assign numbers, we know the view of our great Nation has suffered—although I'm happy to report we're on the mend now—and the cost is just really very difficult to calculate.

Let me just remind folks that this is the Progressive message. We are talking about the anniversary of the Iraq war, we are talking about what's going on. We are the Progressive Caucus, and we're talking about a vision of peace and a vision of a progressive message in our country.

I want to get to this panel in our slides, Congressman. And I want to say, after 6 years of the Iraq war, here is sort of the cost that I just alluded to. Here is what we've had to pay. Here are some of the hits—flush with cites on the bottom of each one because we're not just up here talking, we back up

what we say at the Progressive message. U.S. troops killed in Iraq, 4,259 as of today.

Mr. POLIS. Each one with a family.

Mr. ELLISON. Each one with a family, each one with a story, each one with a future, each one with a patriotic passion for their Nation, each one who wanted to come home. And each one didn't have to ever go to Iraq because the premise for our involvement was, as you and I just mentioned, those reasons were discovered to not be accurate, the weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein in connection with al Qaeda.

U.S. troops wounded in Iraq, 31,102. And again, these are traumatic brain injuries, these are lost limbs, these are severe injuries—some will heal, some are injuries for a lifetime, as you know, Congressman. And I will yield if you want to comment on any of these. Iraqi civilians killed in the war, about 150,000; that's according to the World Health Organization. Please look it up yourself if you have any questions about that number. And you would have to imagine, in a country of about 29 million people, that there is no Iraqi family that has not seen death and destruction, and this has to be extremely traumatizing.

□ 1730

Iraqi civilians forced from their homes, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, about 4.7 million persons who have been homeless as a result of this conflict. That's a big deal. U.S. troops deployed in Iraq, right now we have got about 138,000 people there and, again, a conflict that, according to the reasons offered to us by the Bush administration, not one should have been there based on the reasons they offered to us.

Impact of war on the U.S. economy, \$1.3 trillion. That's the Congressional Joint Economic Committee Report. I hope folks who might be seeing this, Mr. Speaker, will be willing to look at the Congressional Joint Economic Committee Report, which will cite the impact of this war on our economy as \$1.3 trillion. That's a lot of money. That's a whole lot of money.

Cost of the Iraq War to the average American family, according again to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee Report, that's about \$16,500 per American family. We have paid dearly, too dearly for our involvement in this conflict. And in my view, Mr. Speaker, the cost of even one life is too dear, even \$1 is too dear, but we have made much, much more than that.

Mr. POLIS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ELLISON. Yes, sir.

Mr. POLIS. At top of the chart, it says after 6 years of war in Iraq. I ask you how many more anniversaries must we observe? Is five enough? Is six enough? We have been in this war longer than our Nation was involved in World War II. After 6 years how many more? There was a young boy 12 years

old playing video games when this war started who is serving and being injured in Iraq today. How many more years, Mr. ELLISON?

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, I have just got to tell you that 1 more minute is too much. Our President has said that 16 months is our out date, and I think it's incumbent upon all of us to make sure that it is that or less because, quite frankly, I don't look forward to coming up here another year from now saying that we're still present in Iraq in the way that we are now. We need to out of there. We need to wind our way out. Iraq needs to go back to the people of Iraq. Iraqis need to get ahold of their country and govern their own affairs.

Sometimes we talk about the Iraq War and even here I've used the word "war," but really at this point we are not talking about a war. We are talking about an occupation. And when I say that, I don't mean that in any sort of a derisive way. It's the legal word that is appropriate for this situation. In a war you can win or lose, but in an occupation you can only stay longer than you should or you can leave sooner than you should, but eventually you've got to go; right? So with this America involvement in Iraq, it is time to say to the Iraqi people, "This is your country. We will not abandon you. We will not leave you because, of course, we're deeply implicated in your country at this time, but the reality is the military engagement needs to come to a close."

Let me ask you this, Congressman POLIS: When you think about this statistic, Iraqi civilians forced from their homes and the number of about 4.7 million, how does that strike you when you consider Iraqi boys and girls who used to live one place but now can't because of this military conflict? How does that impact their development? How does that impact their ability to grow up to be strong citizens of the world in, say, 5, 10, 15 years?

Mr. POLIS. As you know, Mr. ELLISON, close to a million of them have been forced from their country and reside in Jordan, reside in Syria, reside in Lebanon in everything ranging from refugee camps to short-term rental housing. It has been an issue in the greater Amman area, do we let them in the school with our Jordanian kids? They're out of school for a while. Sometimes they're in; sometimes they're out. It's spotty. Many of them might never be able to go back. The areas they lived in might be controlled by competing tribes, their houses taken over, forced away at gunpoint.

This dislocation is historical in scope. We are talking about a sizable amount of people within Iraq who have been displaced, some to other countries, some to other parts of Iraq.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Congressman, I just want to point out to you and to everyone watching, Mr. Speaker, that when one child is forced from their home or one adult, for that matter—a

home is like a bowl. Can you imagine making a cake without a bowl? Where are you going to put the eggs? Where are you going to put the milk? Where are you going to put all the ingredients for that cake so that you can make that cake and put it in the oven? Try to imagine raising a family. You don't know where you're going to be. You don't know where your school is going to be. No familiar places. You're a stranger everywhere. This kind of displacement has an impact on a child's ability to learn, a child's ability to embrace the environment that they're in. The child begins to sense that maybe their parents can't really protect them, that maybe they're vulnerable and perhaps that anything could happen to them at any time.

This does not bode well for the future. We're talking about a region of the world that has known way too much conflict, and this conflict is one that we surely need to end. And this idea of displacement, I think, is another thing that we need to talk about in terms of the impact on the development of this society as we talk in this Progressive message this hour and the anniversary of the war in Iraq.

Congressman, let's turn for a moment, then, to veterans' care, if you will. We must begin to take seriously the promise to care for our veterans. Our veterans, prominent men and women, you have them in Colorado and I've got them in Minnesota. Actually, they are from all over this country. And the fact is with tens of thousands of injured troops returning home, we must work diligently to ensure that they do not fall through the cracks and that every soldier receives care and benefits that they have earned and deserve.

During the 110th Congress, when I was a freshman Member, I was proud to have voted for the largest increase in funding for Veterans Affairs in history, upon passage of H.R. 2642, the Fiscal Year 2008 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies appropriations bill. We made a real commitment to military hospital construction, improving the quality of care for veterans, improving the lives of veterans, making sure that we shorten the period of time and that their veterans' benefits got to them in a quick way. We not only talked patriotism, we did patriotism as we passed this largest Veterans Affairs funding bill in the history of our country.

In the fall of 2007, I worked closely with the Minnesota congressional delegation to ensure that members of the Minnesota National Guard Unit, the 1/34th Brigade Combat Team receive their full active component GI Bill entitlements. That particular unit, that particular brigade combat team, returned to Minnesota after a 22-month mobilization and deployment to Iraq, the longest tour of any ground combat unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unfortunately, members of the unit were informed after they returned

home, Congressman and Mr. Speaker, that they were not eligible for their full GI benefits because their orders to return home cut them a few days short of the eligibility for these benefits. After my office was informed of this decision, I and Mr. TIM WALZ, my congressman and the highest-ranking enlisted Member ever to come to Congress, wrote a letter to the Department of Defense to appeal the decision. The Army responded positively, and most of the soldiers of this very brave, courageous, and successful combat unit were granted waivers to access those educational benefits.

And I just wanted to share that with you, Mr. Speaker and Congressman, because I think it's important that the world know that Members of Congress are fighting for their constituents who have served our country bravely.

And I just want to ask you, Congressman POLIS, if you have any thoughts you want to share with us about our veterans at this time and about our Nation's commitment to this group of Americans. Whether or not we agree on the war, we all agree that the warrior needs to be supported. Any comments as I yield to you?

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON. We have some fortunate news for Colorado veterans. Yesterday morning several of my colleagues from the Colorado delegation and I met with Secretary Shinseki, and he announced that they are moving forward with a new VA hospital at Fitzsimmons to serve our veterans in Colorado. Due to the hard work of your classmate and our colleague Congressman PERLMUTER and my predecessor who is now on the other side, Senator UDALL, who have for years fighting to improve it. And I have toured the old VA hospital in Colorado. And this new one is going to have a spinal trauma unit. It's going to be state of the art, and it's what we needed.

But there are too many places in our country, as you know, Mr. ELLISON, where veterans don't have the quality of health care that they have earned by serving our country so proudly.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Congressman, I just want to congratulate you and all the delegation of Colorado on this wonderful news. I believe that Mr. Shinseki is one of the best Veterans Affairs Secretaries our country has ever seen, and I expect that we will be able to work closely with him to not only help the constituents of your great State but probably many others around our country.

I also just want to mention that I'm proud to have the Minneapolis VA hospital in my district, and Minneapolis VA is one of the facilities in our country that I feel very proud to be able to represent. The Minneapolis VA Medical Center has been awarded the 2008 Robert W. Carey Trophy Award for performance and excellence. If I sound like I'm a little proud of them, you're right, I am. The annual Carey Trophy Award, the most prestigious national

quality award that the VA bestows, recognizes a VA organization that implements management approaches resulting in high levels of performance and service to our veterans. So I am just real happy to mention that. And I am proud, along with you, as we see veterans in Colorado, Minnesota, all over the country being able to benefit from a responsive Congress, a grateful Congress, for the great service that these brave men and women have given to our country.

Mr. POLIS. Will you yield for a moment?

Mr. ELLISON. Yes, sir.

Mr. POLIS. Let me also add how important it is that the rest of our agenda, the Recovery Act, health care have passed so that our returning veterans are returning to an economy that's growing, that has jobs, that has health care if they were not injured in combat. They deal with the very real issue of health care sometimes for the first time in their lives, if they've been in the military for some period of time right out of college or even before college, and the importance of the Recovery Act, creating over 3 million jobs, hopefully many of which will go to our returning veterans.

Mr. ELLISON. Congressman, great point. The fact is that our veterans are Americans, of course, some of the finest Americans. They come back to their country; they expect a country that's working. So they can come back and maybe get a green job that will help them build our country on the civilian side. They can help weatherize our neighborhoods. They can help build senior housing, low-income housing. They can do so many things our country needs and help build us a renewable future.

So I think you're absolutely right to introduce the broader economic context that we're in. One thing we don't want to see is to have these veterans who have given so much for so many come back to a country where we're not building, where we're not preparing for the future. So you're right. I'm glad you mentioned the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act. I'm glad you mentioned our efforts to build a health care system that everyone can benefit from. I'm glad you mentioned these important things because, of course, veterans are folks who come into a broader context, and it's not only veterans' benefits that benefit veterans. It's a working, functioning America in which everybody has a slice of the pie.

So, Congressman, as we are wrapping up today, I just want to thank you again for being here with us this afternoon. The Progressive message has to always come week in, week out. Whether or not Members are on a Thursday night jumping on a plane trying to get back home or not, the Progressive message has to be part of what we do every week. And I just want to yield to you to sort of offer some final thoughts as we begin to wrap up our comments tonight.

Mr. POLIS. I would just say that let us hope that next year we are celebrating an anniversary of the end of the Iraq War and not the seventh anniversary of this unjust war in the wrong place.

Mr. ELLISON. Let me join with you in that hope and in that wish. I think I can speak for the members of the Progressive Caucus, Mr. Speaker, when I say that we will be working hard to make that dream a reality.

I also want to point out that there have been a great many Americans, I'm sure Minnesotans and I'm sure Coloradans as well, who have been calling for, working for, pushing for America to assert its soft power in the world and to help make peace in this world and be a source of peace in this world.

□ 1745

You can bet there is a committed group of Americans who are in the United States Congress who are people who call themselves the Progressive Caucus, and you can find out what we are doing on this Web site, it's cpc.grijalva.house.gov. We are going to be here giving this progressive message every week, and we are the Progressive Caucus.

As I wrap it up, and I just want to thank you for joining me tonight, we are going to be here week in, week out, through rain, shine, winter, summer, talking about a progressive message, a progressive message for America, for the world.

Congressman POLIS, let me thank you again for joining me tonight.

I yield back.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. NAPOLITANO (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of an event in district with the President.

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of personal business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. LEE of California) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. REYES, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SPRATT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GRAYSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. COHEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MORAN of Kansas) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE of Texas, for 5 minutes, March 26.

Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, March 26.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, March 23, 24, 25 and 26.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at her request) to revise and extend her remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. BACHMANN, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1541. An act to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Lorraine C. Miller, Clerk of the House reports that on March 18, 2009 she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 1127. To extend certain immigration programs.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 46 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, March 23, 2009, at 12:30 p.m., for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

947. A letter from the Director, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's nineteenth annual report for the Pentagon Renovation and Construction Program Office (PENREN), pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2674; to the Committee on Armed Services.

948. A letter from the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's report on the need for and feasibility of a mental health scholarship program, pursuant to Section 1117 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA); to the Committee on Armed Services.

949. A letter from the Chairman, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's 2008 report on the Military Retirement Fund (MRF), pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 183; to the Committee on Armed Services.

950. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Installations and Environment, Depart-

ment of the Navy, transmitting notification of the Department's decision to conduct a streamlined A-76 competition of the administrative management and correspondence services function performed by six military personnel at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma; to the Committee on Armed Services.

951. A letter from the Chair, Congressional Oversight Panel, transmitting the Panel's monthly report pursuant to Section 125(b) of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, Pub. L. 110-343; to the Committee on Financial Services.

952. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's report entitled, "Implementation Report: Energy Conservation Standards Activities," pursuant to Section 141 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

953. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting correspondence from Senate Secretary Emma Lirio-Reyes of the Republic of the Philippines; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

954. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Department's report on all data mining activities, pursuant to Section 804 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

955. A letter from the Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union, transmitting proceedings of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization, which was held jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Parliament in Geneva on September 11 through September 12, 2008; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

956. A letter from the Acting Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

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