

had another chance at life because America's first responders were there and answered the call to defend America.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA MUST NOT OCCUPY AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POLIS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the eighth anniversary of one of the most tragic days in America's history, September 11, 2001.

On that day, our Nation was attacked, and nearly 3,000 Americans were killed. We continue to grieve for them and for their families, and tomorrow we celebrate a national day of remembrance and service in their honor and memory.

Soon after 9/11, Mr. Speaker, American troops invaded Afghanistan, where the attacks had been planned. Many Americans have considered the war in Afghanistan a good war. Our troops have shown incredible skill and bravery in a very difficult conflict over those 8 years. But now, 8 years later, our troops are still in Afghanistan and are still facing a growing insurgency. The Taliban appears to have regained control of half the country, and many al Qaeda operatives have fled to Pakistan. As a result, a growing number of Americans now oppose a war that no longer serves our national security interests.

In three recent polls, more Americans called for reductions in our troop levels rather than increases, and in one poll, the majority of Americans said that the war in Afghanistan is simply not worth fighting.

Despite this, General Stanley McChrystal, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, is expected to ask the President to commit more troops. There are reports that General McChrystal may ask for as many as 30,000 more, which would bring the American troop level to about 100,000. Enlarging the American footprint in Afghanistan, Mr. Speaker, will almost certainly lead the Afghanistan people to see the United States as an occupying force, and if history has taught us anything, it is that the Afghan people will resist any foreign occupation. That is the bitter lesson that the Soviet Union and the British empire learned.

Even Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is concerned about the problem. In a recent interview, Secretary Gates

said he asked General McChrystal about the implications of significant additional forces and whether the Afghans will see this as the United States becoming more of an occupier rather than a partner.

Secretary Gates also spoke last week about the failures of previous foreign forces in Afghanistan. He said one reason for their failures is that the Afghans concluded that they were there for their own imperial interests and not there for the interests of the Afghan people.

Mr. Speaker, the worst thing our Nation can do right now is to stumble into an occupation that the Afghan people do not want, one that will last many years, that will cost many lives and that will cost hundreds of billions of dollars that we can't afford.

We should not double-down on a strategy that hasn't worked. We need a brand new strategy, one that is based, among other things, on economic development for the Afghan people, on better governance and on improvements in policing and in intelligence. We need to have strategies that are the best ways to capture violent extremists, and we must have a clear exit strategy and a timetable for the withdrawal of our brave troops.

If we do that, if we can stop more people from dying—our troops and the Afghan people—we will truly be honoring the 3,000 who died on September 11, 2001.

COFFEE WITH THE CONGRESSMAN

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

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, like many Members in the House, I spent a good part of August visiting with those who sent me here to Washington to represent them. I held seven "Coffee with the Congressman" meetings in all parts of the 19th Congressional District, and I was amazed at the tremendous amount of turnout.

Those who came to these meetings were upset about the direction that the government is taking their country. They want their voices to be heard in Washington. I told them I would bring their messages back to Congress with me, and hundreds of those attending our meetings filled out these message forms. As I said, I would like to read these comments on the House floor so that everyone in Congress will know how they feel. The people of the 19th Congressional District, and I think people all across America, share these same thoughts. So, for the next 5 minutes, you're going to hear from the people who came to the August 24 townhall meeting in Abilene, Texas, in their own words.

David from Abilene, Texas wrote these comments:

"My message to Washington is fix Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, VA, and welfare first. When they have

a good working system in place, then we can talk about taking on health care."

Claude from Tuscola, Texas had these comments:

"In my business, I have 19 employees, and I have reasonable health care coverage for all my employees, and I furnish this at no cost to my employees. Two of my employees cover their families at their expense. It is a very good policy."

Jerry from Abilene said, "I'm a 75-year old male, married 52 years with 6 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. This is all about the enormous debt I will be leaving for them. Please quit the spending, and look for ways to cut costs and improve our current system."

Charles from Abilene said, "You can't borrow your way out of debt. When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. Whatever happened to common sense? Stop the cap-and-trade bill. It will raise taxes on all and not affect the global climate. Drill for oil in Alaska and our coastal waters, where there are proven reserves. If the health care bill is good enough for the taxpayers, it should be used by the President, Congress and the unions."

Charleye from Abilene said, "I do not want the government to control our health care. Please do not pass the proposed health care reform. Government spending is out of control. Please put a cap on spending in all areas. Not more bailouts—for anybody. Please listen, and stop spending our money now."

Bill from Abilene asked this question:

"Should this health care bill get passed, will all of the national politicians have to get on it too, or will you still keep your individual health insurance you have now?"

Trudy from Abilene said, "Please stand against all bills that are not read and debated. 'No' to government health care."

Tom from Abilene said, "You must do everything possible to prevent publicly funded abortions in the health care bill."

Maria from Merkel, Texas said, "People fail to see I am paying for this. Somebody has to. I'm tired of paying taxes toward things that people don't want to work for."

Lucile from Abilene says, "I do not want government control of my health care. This excess spending is ruining the U.S. Please be serious about your country and its citizens."

Grace from Abilene said, "No new taxes. We need insurance reform, not health care reform. The government bankrupted Medicare, not the recipients. No more bailouts. When did we start bailing out people that lived beyond their means in their high-priced homes?"

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Mike from Abilene: "I am a 27-year retired Air Force veteran. I am concerned about TRICARE for life and the

loss of benefits under the new health care bill."

Amy from Abilene: "Please save citizens of the U.S. from paying for abortions or any encouraging of such, from any funding directly or indirectly of euthanasia."

Caryn from Abilene: "Leave our health care alone and cut our taxes."

Ruth from Cisco: "Please continue to stand for truth and freedom in Washington. The health care bill is not about more health care, but less—rationing."

Hal from Abilene: "I am not against sensible reform. I am against government control of our economy and health care. In short, stay within the confines of the Constitution and out of our lives."

Marion and Mary from Abilene: "Stop the runaway spending like cap-and-trade. Fix our present health care system. Support our vets, old and new."

Emily from Abilene: "I don't think most Congressmen realize or understand the true feelings of the American people. We used to have real regard for our leaders."

Jerry and Camille from Ranger, Texas: "Stop the bailouts. Stop the outrageous spending and get back to following the Constitution. Read all the bills before signing. I was in the front row and I had never been to a town hall meeting before."

Kay from Abilene: "I oppose cap-and-trade which will dramatically reduce our standard of living and is absolutely unnecessary."

J.M. from Abilene: "Government has to stop spending and pay our way out of debt."

This is just a small fraction, Mr. Speaker, of how the American people feel.

Libby from Abilene: "While we have Medicaid for people, it is impossible to find a doctor who will take new Medicaid patients in Abilene."

Mike from Abilene: "Do not pass health care reform that reduces Medicare benefits or makes access to doctors more difficult."

Betty from Abilene: "Read the bills before you sign them."

Robert and Essie Mae from Abilene: "Stop the spending!"

Debra from Abilene: "What are the pros and cons to mandatory health care as with auto insurance, seat belt laws and smoking bans?"

Edna from Jayton: "First, we should reduce government."

Maetta from Abilene: "How about our representatives and senators sharing in the same health plan that they provide for the rest of us?"

BREACH OF DECORUM IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just a moment of good news that tells the American people that

their government is working. I look forward to holding my job fair number two in Houston, Texas, where it has been voted that Houston has the highest unemployment rate of our State, the State of Texas, at the Georgia R. Brown Convention Center in conjunction with the City of Houston, where we will be hosting private employers, local government and State and Federal Government because the stimulus dollars are working and the American people want us to create jobs.

Then we will have an opportunity to celebrate in my district the gospel music heritage legislation that myself and the Senator from Arkansas passed, Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN, to commemorate America's great history in gospel music. We will be at the Grace Community Church on Friday, September 18, at 7:30.

I say that because there is a reason to be joyful in America. It's a great country, and that is why I pause now for a serious moment to reflect on 9/11 and to offer, again, my deepest sympathy and concern for those families and victims and just to remind Americans that we will never forget.

What brings me here today, to take all of that good news or all of that recognition that we are one country not divided by Republicanism or being a Democrat or an independent, but we are one family, loving our values and loving our democracy, makes me come today with a very saddened heart. For yesterday the President of the United States rose before this body and offered in the most poignant but kindest and firmest way an extended hand to work and to collaborate with Americans and those who represent Americans in this body. And I have had the privilege of hearing a number of Presidents speak to the Nation from this place.

And let me say to you that when a President comes here, he is a guest of this body. It is not Republicans and Democrats, it is the United States Congress. For the President's cabinet is here, the Senate is here. In some instances, the Supreme Court is here. Members are here from all over the country. Our guests are here as well.

And each time a President has come, whether or not I have an emotional opposition and a reasoned opposition to the position that they may be making, I hold their presence in reverence and respect. Last night my heart weighted with sadness, for as we spoke to the American people, adults, those of us who are elected, we found the highest level of disregard and disrespect.

Not only was there a shout-out, albeit the First Amendment is protected, there is a reasonable response of those elected to high public office that when the President stands, not the President the Democrat, or the Republican, but the President of the United States, I can say this, because I denounced the throwing of a shoe at our President on foreign soil, of any kind. I denounced the seeming tolerance of President Bush having a shoe thrown at him. It is horrific and a disgrace.

Just as I denounce holding up papers while the President is speaking. That happened last night. Just as I denounce having a sign in your lap, which we are not allowed to wear buttons expressing viewpoint. That happened last night.

Just as I denounce words coming out calling the President a liar. It should be denounced by the leadership of my good friends on the other side. This is not an individual act. It should be denounced as inappropriate decorum in this place.

And for those who wish to be equally rude by holding up something, let me suggest that it is a free country. And I do appreciate, sometimes we make mistakes, I admit to mistakes. We have to clarify those mistakes. But I believe it is important to clarify it so the President of the United States' ears can hear it and so this body can hear it.

And I would hope my friends on the other side of the aisle, the leadership, will come to this well next week and acknowledge that this place should be a place of decorum. Yes, Members have turned their backs, some Members have walked out. That is their privilege. We do not have a despotic Nation, and they have the privilege to do so, if they disagree with the words being spoken by the President of the United States. But remember, he or she is our guest. And when you invite someone into your home, you treat them with the highest level of respect.

I am not angry. I am simply saddened and disappointed, because so many of my friends on the other side of the aisle expressed their own disappointment, but somewhat in silence. It is important for the American people to know that whoever the President is, no matter where they come from, what background, what region, what State, they are the President of the United States.

The President told the truth last night, and the other side must tell the truth about inappropriate behavior and the lack of reverence. We need to respect each other, and I call for that.

THE REAL STARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the eighth anniversary of the horrific attack on our country on September 11, 2001, and we need to remember that there are still people in the world who want to destroy us and all that we stand for. It is up to us at the national level to provide for our national security, and we need to focus on that.

Today someone sent me a column by Ben Stein that I had not seen but was written in 2003. In this column, he does a great job of putting us and trivial things into perspective, and I thought that today would be a good day to share this column entitled "How Can Someone Who Lives in Insane Luxury Be a Star in Today's World?"