

I recently joined with a bipartisan coalition to form the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement Working Group. This group, composed of Members of Congress who represent diverse districts from across the country, wants to see this agreement ratified.

Despite being signed by President Bush over 3 years ago, Congress has yet to pass the agreement. President Obama cites the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement as one of our biggest domestic trade priorities and would like to see disagreements worked out by the next G20 meeting in November. It's already late September and very little progress has been made to get this agreement passed.

The benefits to the U.S. are obvious. Passing a free trade agreement with South Korea, who is our seventh largest trading partner, would add an estimated \$10 billion to \$12 billion to our gross domestic product. What we have already seen in Alabama could be expanded across this great country of ours.

Madam Speaker, our number one priority must be getting Americans back to work. We have already seen the benefits of a close partnership with South Korea. Let's expand on that relationship. I can think of no better way to create jobs for Americans at virtually no cost than to pass the U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement.

□ 1900

Without question, there are many issues we must tackle in this difficult economic and political time. But trade, especially an agreement that enjoys bipartisan support such as the one with South Korea, can and should be an issue in which we work together. Let's not let partisan politics get in the way of this agreement.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE SPIRIT OF SOUTH FLORIDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise to remember the life and legacy of a great south Floridian and fellow Cuban American, Ricardo Mayo-Alvarez.

Ricardo was an irreplaceable member of the Cuban American community. Having fled Cuba's communist regime, Ricardo continued the fight for a free Cuba in south Florida.

Ricardo became a successful entrepreneur and started a chain of pharmacies in south Florida. He generously gave of his time to serve his commu-

nity and was a constant fixture in the civic and cultural fabric of south Florida.

Although he was deeply committed to the struggle for a free Cuba, I know that the role he cherished the most was that of devoted husband, father, and grandfather.

Ricardo leaves behind his beloved wife and partner, Nieves Fraga, and his children—Jorge, Alina, and Ricky—as well as his grandchildren.

Ricardo, we will never forget you nor your selfless legacy. Rest in peace, my friend.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to praise the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and its executive director, Carmen Caldwell, who has served our area in so many ways over the years. Neighborhood volunteers are truly the backbone of our communities. Volunteers have done so much to reduce crime and to help keep our south Florida neighborhoods safer.

Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County will be celebrating its 35th anniversary at the Doubletree Miami Mart/Airport Hotel on October 1 and will be honoring the leaders of south Florida's war on crime.

It is my honor and privilege to recognize the many dedicated and hard-working members of Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and to thank each of them for what they do to help keep us safe.

Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the International Ballet Festival of Miami for another spectacular year of performances. Since 1995, this yearly celebration of the arts has brought some of the world's leading ballet companies to our area of south Florida.

In addition to being known as a hub for international commerce, south Florida has a thriving and diverse arts community. Through the dedication of Pedro Pablo Pena, the festival has become a yearly staple on the south Florida calendar with five spectacular performances at four theaters. Ballet companies from as far away as Hungary, Australia, and Italy have participated in this festival.

I congratulate Pedro Pablo Pena and everyone who made this year's International Ballet Festival of Miami a resounding success. Your efforts have enriched south Florida, and we are all the better for it.

THE DEADLIEST YEAR OF THE AFGHAN WAR

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the bad news in Afghanistan just continues to pile up. This week, a helicopter crash in the southern part of the country brought the number of 2010 coalition fatalities to 529. That makes this the deadliest of the 9 years we have been

mired in this war. And, of course, we still have more than 2 months remaining before the calendar turns.

Meanwhile, these deaths appear to be in vain. While Afghan citizens who turned out to vote this weekend must be saluted for their courage, well, the fact that courage was required to exercise a basic democratic right is rather telling in and of itself. But the parliamentary elections were marred by violence, not to mention all kinds of fraud and irregularities. Time Magazine quotes one candidate as saying, "It was complete anarchy. Everyone was trying to manipulate this election."

Mr. Speaker, Afghanistan's financial infrastructure is crumbling almost as badly as is its democratic infrastructure. One of the nation's most prominent banks is teetering on the brink of collapse, at the same time that cronies and relatives of President Karzai appear to have used the bank to line their own pockets.

And in yesterday's New York Times, there was a long story about how families are dressing their little girls as boys, just so they can get a job and an education—and even so they can preserve the family's honor to have more boys than girls.

Steven Walt of Harvard University, a member of the Afghanistan Study Group, summarizes the bleakness of the situation. In the last few years, Walt says, "We have had a fraudulent presidential election, an inconclusive offensive in Marja, a delayed and downgraded operation in Kandahar, and a run on the corrupt bank of Kabul. Casualty levels are up, and aid groups in Afghanistan now report that the security situation is worse than ever, despite a heightened U.S. presence."

Mr. Speaker, other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

Seriously, there is little to be encouraged by in Afghanistan. And that is the situation that it is in now. Now, a new book that has come out this week by Bob Woodward reveals that even top White House officials were deeply skeptical about escalating the war. The Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan is quoted as saying of our strategy, point blank, "It can't work."

He is right, Mr. Speaker. But what can work is a smart security approach, one that replaces the military surge with a civilian surge. At this point, a military occupation can't cure what ails Afghanistan; it can only spread the disease. But an influx of humanitarian aid can deliver a brighter, peaceful future for Afghanistan, elections that are free and fair, government leaders with legitimacy and integrity, schools that educate all children—even the Afghan girls, or especially the Afghan girls—and an economy that creates opportunity and lifts people out of poverty.

The current policy is not redeemable. It will continue to engender death, destruction, instability, and chaos. There is only one answer, Mr. Speaker: Bring our troops home.

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

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

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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.)

A SIGNIFICANT DAY FOR AMERICA

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and honor to have the opportunity to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives and to do so on such a significant day. This is a day of events, I believe, that will be marked for a long time in at least political history, and hopefully it will be marked in the hearts and minds of the American people as well.

And I can think of a couple of events today, one that is unfolding as we speak, and another that unfolded earlier when the United States Senate had a cloture vote and didn't have the votes to force HARRY REID's version of the Department of Defense authorization bill to actually come up for a vote before the United States Senate.

□ 1910

The cloture vote failed because he attached two unrelated issues, unessential issues, to that bill. The politics of it are such, pick your side of the argument. My side of the argument, Madam Speaker, is that they were unnecessary pieces of legislation that were attached to experiment socially with the military, not essential legislation. And the objection on the part of even the Republicans that supported each piece of that legislation was that procedurally, the majority leader in the United States Senate had crossed the line.

So the Department of Defense authorization bill is now frozen in place.

I think it must come forward at some time. The indications that we are getting is that will not happen until a lame duck session. That means after the election and after a new United States Senate is elected and after a new United States House of Representatives is elected. Then the people who no longer represent the will of the American people come back to do the essential business of the United States of America, but they don't have the support any longer of the voters who have chosen some different people.

But the two pieces of legislation I am talking about that were attached to the DOD authorization bill are the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, which is something that was implemented under President Bill Clinton back in the era when he wanted to put gays in the military, found that he ran into a political buzz saw, and settled for a compromise. And I didn't support it at the time, to be straight about that, Madam Speaker, but in retrospect it was a pretty good policy. Essentially it was we have people with different inclinations, and those who come to serve America can do so without announcing their sexual preferences. And as long as they keep that to themselves, they can serve in the United States military. That policy has served our military well for these last 15 or so years that it has been in place. I suspect it has actually been longer than that. Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Bill Clinton's policy.

Now, because of the activism of the homosexual community, they have pushed an effort, and the President has made a campaign promise that he will repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell and recruit into the military openly gay people. That is a social experiment with our military, Madam Speaker. The military is not a place to conduct social experiments. One would think that our military personnel should have a say on this. One should do a study. There has been a request for that study through the Department of Defense to get the results of what our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines think of this, and then make a determination on whether to go forward with a different policy.

I am hearing continually Don't Ask Don't Tell worked. Opening it up undermines the effectiveness of our military and it breaks down their readiness, and it is bad for America's national security. That seems to be the tone that comes from the enlisted personnel. It comes from some of the officer personnel. But we know that when you are, let's see, one of the joint chiefs, for example, or if you are the Secretary of Defense, and the President of the United States is your commander in chief, and if he should tell you in a Cabinet meeting, for example, that you are going to support the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, or you are going to be mum on your opinion and keep it to yourself, so this repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell that opens up access to the military for gays, so that

comes about and that happens. That is what takes place.

Our officers in uniform take their orders from, on up through the ranks, the commander in chief at the top. They get the message from the top. So you don't hear the straight answer from them that we like to think that we are getting from our military personnel. I believe if you could hear that straight answer, you would hear a far different tone coming out of our Joint Chiefs, for example. But the study should be done. It should not be an experiment to play with. What has happened over in the Senate is that they refused to invoke cloture because it is inappropriate and improper to stick the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell in the DOD authorization bill. If HARRY REID and others believe it should be repealed and we should open up the military to openly gay people, then they should put it up as a stand-alone piece of legislation. They should allow for amendments on it. They should debate it, and they should allow for a recorded vote. And why not do it right now, HARRY REID? Why not bring that up right now as a stand-alone piece of legislation? Why not roll it out on the floor of the United States Senate right now? And if you can pass it over there, send it over here to the House, and I hope that NANCY PELOSI picks that up. I hope Speaker PELOSI picks that up and runs it out here for a debate and a stand-alone vote so the American people can see where these Members of Congress stand.

When you roll it into and you hide it in a DOD authorization bill, then you are trying to push a social activist policy without the accountability of a recorded vote. And that is what the Senators objected to, and that is why they voted no on cloture. That is why Don't Ask, Don't Tell will not be repealed, at least in this period of time between now and the November elections. If there is a pledge over there to bring it up in a lame duck session, we know how those pledges work. If they do so, a policy of that magnitude in a lame duck session, after watching the dynamics in the United States Senate change because of the elections that will take place election night in November, and after watching a change that will take place here in the House of Representatives, to come forward with a bunch of lame ducks and try to pass legislation that is rejected by the American people would be another insult. It would be another affront to the American voters, the American taxpayers, to American citizens.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell needs to stand. That is what the American people want. That is what the military wants. And there is a study out there that needs to be completed. I want to look at the results of that, and I want to look at the methodology of it. I am not necessarily endorsing the results. I have not seen them, nor have I seen the methodology.

But I believe, Madam Speaker, that our military personnel that put their