

TUNISIA, LIBYA, SYRIA, AND
YEMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, the changes in the Arabic-speaking countries over the last year have been astonishing. This region, which is home to over 300 million people, has been making unmistakable drives toward democracy, but those drives have not always been linear and smooth. There have been setbacks in advances. But as this region changes, the United States must also adjust to those changes as well.

First, I want to congratulate the people of Tunisia on their historic election on Sunday. It was Tunisia's first free and fair election since gaining independence in 1956. Tunisians created a new paradigm for governance in the Middle East, and I hope this is replicated throughout the region. Tunisia, by the way, was the first country to begin its dramatic social change against a historic dictator.

Last December, Tunisians said, "Enough." They took to the streets to demand their rights, and they ousted a dictator and went to the polls just a few days ago to elect new leaders. More than 90 percent of registered voters turned out to vote—that's 90 percent. Long lines snaked down sidewalks and around street corners. People waited for hours to exercise their right to vote that had been denied to them for more than 50 years.

It was also a well-deserved victory for a country that gave birth to the Arab Spring. Tunisians started a democratic movement that is slowly transforming dictatorships into democracies. The changes that are taking place in Libya are also irreversible. I don't celebrate the death of anyone, even a person as bad as Qadhafi, but Libya is certainly better off without Muammar Qadhafi. I am glad that the Transitional National Council will investigate the circumstances of his death, but the fact that he is off the scene gives Libya a new chance and a new lease on life.

For 42 years, Qadhafi ruled Libya with brutal force and criminal neglect. The country cannot afford more conflict. It should embark on a national reconciliation process similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa.

That's not easy for a country that has endured so much bloodshed. But Libyans now have the opportunity to lay down arms and come together. Libyans will decide for themselves what kind of country they want to build. The Libyan people must decide what kind of example they will set for other countries in the region.

I'd also like to turn attention to Iraq. I offer my congratulations to President Obama for keeping his promise to exit Iraq. No yellowcake uranium, no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, and no weapons of mass

destruction, and yet literally thousands of Americans' lives were lost, thousands of Iraqis' lives were lost, and perhaps \$1 trillion was lost. It's time to go. I congratulate President Obama in his decision to leave.

Syria's path toward change is also irreversible, but the outcomes are less certain. Bashar al-Assad's government has now killed over 3,000 people. Countless others have been raped and tortured. This is not the model that will characterize the region's future.

People like Tawakel Karman of Yemen are setting a new standard. Referred to as the "Mother of the Revolution" in Yemen, she recently won the Nobel Prize for her nonviolent activism, and I congratulate her.

As people across the Middle East and North Africa struggle for democracy, the United States should do all that it can to help them reach that democratic condition that we take for granted. As Americans, we will remember our own long struggle for freedom and should be at the waiting to help others secure their democratic future.

JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KINZINGER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that spoke previously. America needs to be a voice for freedom in the world. America is a great nation.

I find it interesting that we talk about the need to be engaged, with which I agree, but then we talk about the need to leave Iraq before we can know for a fact that we are leaving a very stable country.

□ 1010

I find it interesting people are rushing to the exits in Afghanistan, and I understand that's a tough and difficult war. But in the process, we have brought millions of people freedom; we've brought to women the ability to go to school; we've brought to people the ability to live their lives in freedom and not under an oppressed regime.

America is a great country. We are an amazing country that is a force for freedom in this world, and it's a country I am very proud of. Having served in the military and continuing to serve as a pilot in the Air National Guard, I understand that the people I serve with are part of that great country.

Right now one of the concerns in our country, though, is that, in order to back up and to support a great military and to support a great force for freedom, you have to have a great economy. What bothers me is that in 2009 in this Chamber a stimulus was passed which cost in just a few minutes of debate as much as the war in Iraq has cost in 8 years. In just a few minutes, we were promised that unemployment would not go above 8 percent, and, in fact, unemployment has never

gone below 8 percent since the passage of the stimulus.

But do you know what has gone up? Not employment. Debt and deficits, more and more of a burden that we're piling on our children.

Now the President is coming out with a plan that says we can't wait, that we can't wait to pass stimulus version 2. Really, if you look at the depths of what the jobs plan is, it's stimulus 2. It's, in essence, a carbon copy of stimulus 1 but a little bit smaller. I've heard people in this Chamber argue, actually, that the problem with the first stimulus is it wasn't large enough. Now, I disagree. I think that's the wrong answer, but let's say for a moment that that's right. Let's say the problem is it wasn't large enough. Why would you introduce a second stimulus that's even smaller and say, This is the miracle bullet right here, this is how we're going to pull ourselves out?

I don't know how many times we have to do the same thing over and over and over again until we realize it doesn't work. The American people are hurting. The definition of insanity, by the way, is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

House Republicans have a plan for America's job creators. We've had a plan for America and America's job creators and our economy for many, many months. Despite that people can get on television and say Republicans have no plan doesn't make it true. You're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own set of facts.

The fact is, at jobs.gop.gov, we have a plan. That plan includes empowering small business and reducing regulation on job creators but not to a dangerous level, as some on the other side of the aisle will have you believe that we want to take away all regulation. We don't. What we want to do is find that balance between allowing the free market to breathe and allowing people to come in and say, I want to hire people; I want to create more jobs; I don't need the heavy hand of government to come in and give me the permission to do what I'm doing.

We do have to fix the Tax Code. I think both sides of the aisle agree that there have to be Tax Code reparations go on to make it better and easier to do business. We have to boost competitiveness for American manufacturers. Look, American manufacturers aren't leaving because it's nicer in China and the weather is better. They're leaving because they simply can't afford to access the 95 percent of consumers who live outside of our country and do it competitively.

But with all these things, and, again, with the Republican plan for America's job creators, I think we have to acknowledge areas where we have found success and bipartisanship. One of those happened just a week ago when we passed the three trade agreements

with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. We've shown that this Chamber has the ability to work together.

So, yes, we can't wait. We can't wait until the end of the election for the President to come up with a real plan and to work with Republicans. We want to stand together. I get it. An election is coming up next November. We all understand that. You're going to hear about it on television. But let's not miss the next 14 months. Let's not miss this opportunity to really stand up and govern and get the American people back to work.

RETAINING AND STRENGTHENING THE TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Today's Washington Post has an interesting article about the possibility that Congress will jettison the Transportation Enhancement funding. Best known for providing resources for bike and pedestrian activities, it also opens the door to a wide range of important benefits. Sadly, the language in the article betrays a lack of understanding on the part of those who would eliminate these important programs.

For instance, they single out somehow that this was forcing the creation of wildlife corridors—turtle tunnels, passages that don't just comply with our environmental responsibilities. These aren't something to trivialize. More Americans die in collisions with moose, with deer—or, for that matter, from swerving to avoid a turtle in the roadway—than die on our airplanes and buses in a given year. These are not trivial issues. These are areas that give choices to be able to deal with meaningful transportation problems.

Right now, as I speak, there are millions of Americans stuck in traffic—burning fuel, wasting time, raising their blood pressure. The investment in complete transportation systems, which includes bike and pedestrian activities, means that there are hundreds of thousands of cars that aren't in front of these people in the roadway because they're able to walk or bike to work, and they're not fighting these commuters for a parking space.

These programs are about safety. In the communities that enhance bike and pedestrian activity, everyone is safer. Look at the numbers in New York City or in my hometown of Portland, Oregon. It isn't just the pedestrian and the cyclist who are safer, but it's also the individual motorist. Traffic accident rates for everybody have declined.

It gives people transportation choices. More people can let their children walk or bike to school safely on their own because of the Safe Routes to School program rather than producing another bulge in the early morning

commute. Choice also means healthier communities and the people who live in them. It's easier to get gentle exercise, cleaner air, less energy wasted.

The costs associated with pollution and obesity are astronomical. This gives values to families. Communities that have balanced transportation programs actually spend less on transportation. The figures for my hometown of Portland, Oregon, show that the average family saves \$2,500 a year not being stuck in traffic, in a commuting mess—money that they can spend on health care or books, restaurants or housing.

It's not just pedestrians and cyclists who would be shortchanged if we jettison these programs. The same adjustments that make it safer to walk or bike also have a profound impact on people who rely on walkers, baby strollers, motorized scooters. These enhancements have enhanced the community for the elderly, the disabled, and the young.

We also, frankly, have a current debate that shows exactly why we need a national policy. It's easy for people to get confused or misled. Nobody is forced to build a specific project. It forces State transportation officials to work harder and think differently, but it gives people more choices, more value, better health, stronger communities. It means that all our communities are more livable and that our families are safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

The 20-year legacy of the Transportation Enhancement program is strong. That's why they are the most requested transportation projects that Congress has entertained for the last 20 years. I do hope that we debate it fully and fairly. In the end, if we do, I am confident we will retain these important programs, and if anything, we will strengthen them.

□ 1020

HONORING SPRINGFIELD LITERACY CENTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MEEHAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Springfield Literacy Center, which is an innovative district-wide initiative in Springfield Township, Delaware County School System in the Seventh District of Pennsylvania, which I have the privilege to represent.

Like so many of my colleagues, when we have our district work week, it gives us the chance to go back and really spend some quality time engaging with a number of the groups. While the principal focus of my work weeks is to go back and work on the issue of jobs and the creation of opportunities, particularly with small businesses, one of the issues that many of them will talk to me about is the unpreparedness of many of our graduates to be able to

take on the jobs, particularly the jobs in the expanding global economy which we face.

One of the issues is the ability to do fundamental things. I visited this literacy center last week because it's setting the standard for educational excellence in the 21st century. It's a community-wide focus on the issue of the fundamental of reading, and it started with the superintendent on down and every teacher in the school district focused on having the ability for every child being able to read.

This particular literacy center brings their entire second grade class from the full district together to learn. While it's an architecturally impressive area which supports the learning concept, it's really the individualized attention that's given to each and every student, identifying where they are in the process and, if necessary, going down and even to an individual basis to help them stay current with their class.

The literacy center is the foundation of Springfield Township's literacy first initiative, which aims to ensure that every child leaves elementary school reading at grade level. Let me repeat that: every child leaves elementary school reading at grade level. The center's teachers accomplish this by designing an individual literacy curriculum designed for each student. Lessons often use creative techniques, and the settings are tailored to individual students' learning styles. The key thing here is that students do not fall behind and they are prepared as they move into later education to stay with the rest of their class.

With these innovative techniques and through the hard work of the literacy center's teachers, students and families after only 5 years of operation, 99 percent of its students were reading at grade level. Let me repeat that again: 99 percent of its students were reading at grade level.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Springfield Literacy Center and its staff for all that they do in making a difference in the lives of their students and their communities. But I suggest to you that this is the kind of model that we should be replicating so that all American students will be prepared to have the fundamental of reading be a central part of their ability to be prepared to compete in the global economy.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor October as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

For nearly 30 years, the month of October has brought a sea of pink ribbons to our shopping centers, sports games and lapels as we commemorate National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.