

California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the situation in Afghanistan is as bleak as I can remember at any point in the last 10½ years that we've been at war.

In recent months, we've seen the burning of the Koran by American troops, a video of soldiers urinating on bodies of dead Afghans, spontaneous riots in the Afghan streets protesting the continued U.S. occupation, as well as deadly attacks by Afghan soldiers on the U.S. and NATO forces that are there to help and to train them.

And now, in the most grotesque tragedy imaginable, 2 weeks ago a U.S. staff sergeant left his base, walked more than a mile to an Afghan village outside Kandahar, going door-to-door and systematically gunning down 17 civilians.

The New York Times reported that one Afghan farmer was visiting a nearby town for the day and returned home to find that his wife, four sons, and four daughters had all been murdered in the attack. And here's the irony: According to the Times' account, because the Taliban still lingered in the area, the farmer had been concerned about moving his family back to this part of southern Afghanistan last year, but he was reassured by the very fact that he would be near an American military base.

With these latest atrocities, how can we expect President Karzai, a reluctant ally under the best of circumstances, to continue to cooperate? How do we expect to convince the Taliban to come to the negotiating table for a peace and reconciliation settlement? And most importantly, after this incident, how do we convince the people of Afghanistan that we are their friends, that our presence in their country is a force for good?

Staff Sergeant Robert Bales will be tried for these unspeakable crimes, but I also think any responsibility analysis would conclude that he is also a victim of the war. He was on his fourth deployment. He clearly suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, or even worse, mental health affliction. He clearly had no business being on active duty.

Mr. Speaker, more than a decade of war is weakening and wreaking havoc with the bodies and minds of our servicemembers. Staff Sergeant Bales will be held to account. But what about the cruel and unforgiving war machine that absolutely has to bear some responsibility? When are we going to finally set warfare aside and embrace a SMART Security approach?

Yesterday, 80 retired top military leaders took out an ad in Politico calling for robust investment in development, diplomacy, and other civilian efforts that will do a lot more than military force to keep America safe. And yet the Republican budget we'll debate later today cuts that very foreign aid in humanitarian programs.

□ 1030

When will we learn, Mr. Speaker? How bad does it have to get?

Our Afghanistan policy is an absolute shambles, and the American people know it. The latest polling shows more than two-thirds, 69 percent, believe we shouldn't be waging this war.

This is the moment we must realize that this mission has no hope of succeeding, that the only humane and responsible course is to end the war at once. This is the moment, finally, after all the tragedy and mayhem, to bring our troops home.

STOP MILITARY RAPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise again to highlight the epidemic of sexual assault and rape in the military.

Next week will mark the 1-year anniversary of my first floor speech on this issue. That day, I told the story of Technical Sergeant Mary Gallagher, who was raped by a coworker while deployed in Iraq. The week leading up to the rape, Sergeant Gallagher's assailant harassed her, stalked her, and attempted to break into her room.

Though she twice reported the assailant's threatening behavior, her command did nothing about it. They called it a "he said-she said" scenario. Justice was not served.

I've told the story of Army Specialist Blake Stephens, who was consistently assaulted and sexually harassed by the men in his unit. He reported the harassment to command, but no action was taken. Fellow servicemembers later sodomized him with a bottle; and the only punishment his assailants received was extra pushups. Justice was not served.

Last week, I told the story of Marine Lieutenant Elle Helmer, who reported repeated sexual harassment by superiors, to no avail. The Marine Corps did absolutely nothing in response to the harassment. Lieutenant Helmer was later raped by another superior whose behavior went unpunished.

Her command ultimately told her, You're tough. You need to pick yourself up and dust yourself off. I can't babysit you all of the time. No justice was served.

Mary, Blake and Elle, like so many victims I've heard from, paint a picture of a military culture that treats sexual harassment and assault with silent acceptance, a culture that punishes victims for reporting the crimes committed against them.

The military refutes this; yet evidence suggests just the reverse. The "Hurt Feelings Report" that stands beside me is a repugnant example of how rape and sexual assault has been trivialized, and how a victim was mocked in the military.

It was supposed to be satire. The "report" was posted on the Facebook page

of a female captain in charge of the Marine Barracks Protocol Office just a few months ago. It mocks fellow marines who file sexual assault complaints with a list of "Reasons for filing this report," which include options such as:

"I'm a little b——."

"I'm a little p——."

"I'm a cry baby."

And "I want my mommy."

And what did the head of protocol do when she saw this document? Did she report or punish the people who made it? Did she tell them there is zero tolerance for this behavior?

No, she didn't do anything of the sort. In fact, the head of protocol wrote this caption to the image on her Facebook page: "My marines crack me up."

It's no wonder that only 13 percent of victims of rape and assault are brave enough to report the crimes committed against them. The "Hurt Feelings Report" and the Facebook response convey a toxic culture when it comes to sexual harassment, assault, stalking and rape. Victims have been told to "get over it," or told that they were "asking for it" based on the way they dress.

One year ago, I promised to tell the stories of servicemembers who survived rape and sexual assault while in the military. I said then, and I promise you now, that I will tell their stories until meaningful action is taken to eliminate the chasm between the number of estimated sexual assaults and the number of prosecuted sexual assaults.

I urge survivors to email me at stopmilitaryrape@mail.house.gov if they want to speak up.

THE DEATH OF TRAYVON MARTIN IS AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

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

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, the death of Trayvon Martin is, indeed, an American tragedy. Too often this violent act that resulted in the murder of Trayvon Martin is repeated in the streets of our Nation.

I applaud the young people all across the land who are making a statement about hoodies, about the real hoodlums in this Nation, particularly those who tread on our laws wearing official or quasi-official clothes.

Racial profiling has to stop, Mr. Speaker. Just because someone wears a hoodie does not make them a hoodlum.

The Bible teaches us, Mr. Speaker, in the book of Micah 6:68—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend.

Mr. RUSH. These words:

He has shown you, O man—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will suspend. The Chair must remind Members of clause 5 of rule XVII. The gentleman is out of order.

Mr. RUSH. What is good. What does the Lord require of you? To do justly

and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

In the New Testament, Luke 4:18-20 teaches us these words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is not in order.

Mr. RUSH. And to recover sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free.

I urge all who hear these words to heed these lessons.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is no longer recognized.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will ask the Sergeant at Arms to enforce the prohibition on breaches of decorum.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind Members that clause 5 of rule XVII prohibits the wearing of hats in the Chamber when the House is in session. The Chair finds that the donning of a hood is not consistent with this rule. Members need to remove their hoods or leave the floor.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, America has the best health care system in the world.

Long before coming to Congress, I spent my energy in the life and health insurance field. In selling individual contracts, I found that questions of preexisting conditions and portability were a major concern for people buying individual health insurance contracts.

Over the years, I became convinced that these two major challenges could be solved by breaking down the walls between the individual States. This would provide a much larger pool of applicants, thus allowing for a much more reasonable base to underwrite the cost of covering those preexisting conditions and allowing for more effective portability.

□ 1040

When we debated how to solve the problems affecting our health care system 2 years ago, many were warned that government would go too far and must not be the solution. Our former Speaker said, "We have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it." Well, now we know what is in it, and it's time to speak up.

Mr. and Mrs. America, do not allow a federally mandated program to undermine the best health care system in the world. Do not allow a Federal mandate to get between you and your physician. Do not allow government to undermine your right to choose between

the great variety of protection available in the marketplace. Do not allow a politically appointed board to ration health care in the name of reducing costs. Do not allow the Federal Government to take us down the pathway to socialized medicine. Do not allow us to be dominated by those who would have America look more and more like Europe.

So, Mr. and Mrs. America, it's time for all of us to come together. We can solve the problems of our existing health care system without allowing a bunch of unelected bureaucrats getting between you and great health care.

You need to tell Congress to do their job—solve the problems without destroying the best health care system in the world.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dennis Culbreth, First Baptist Church, Jasper, Alabama, offered the following prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, I want to thank You so much for the privilege we have to pray to You today. You are the Creator of all. It is through You that we can have hope and we can have grace.

Father, You have blessed our country as no other country has been blessed. I pray, Lord, that You will never let this body forget Your goodness and Your mercy to us all. Guide these legislators in such a way that Your will is promoted throughout the world.

Continue to use our country as a beacon on the hill. It is because of Your mercy our country is a light of hope shining in a lost and a dark world.

Dear Lord, please let us never take this freedom for granted. As these representatives gather from across the Nation, we ask for Your guidance and for Your wisdom as these men and women seek to make decisions that affect the lives of every American here at home and across the world.

And this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. 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. COHEN. Mr. 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 Texas (Mr. REYES) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. REYES 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 agree to the request of the House of Representatives that the Senate return to the House the bill (H.R. 5) "An Act to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system."

WELCOMING REVEREND DENNIS CULBRETH

THE SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Alabama is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, it's my honor and my privilege this afternoon to welcome our guest chaplain, Dennis Culbreth, who gave today's opening prayer.

Dr. Culbreth, as senior pastor, serves a congregation of 2,400 at First Baptist Church in Jasper, Alabama. Prior to his tenure at First Baptist Church in Jasper, he served congregations across Alabama, Virginia, and Georgia.

In addition to his service within his congregation, Dr. Culbreth has also been an active member of the senior executive leadership team for the North American Mission Board and the Virginia Baptist Convention.

Dr. Culbreth earned his bachelor of arts at Samford University, his master's in divinity at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his doctorate at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is a native of Evergreen, Alabama, and enjoys spending time with his family—his wife, Marybeth, and children