

MCGOVERN, I am alarmed by the recent developments in what is becoming, in my mind, a full-fledged military campaign in Iraq. The situation in Iraq may be difficult, but that excuse does not merit the President's overreliance on war powers and the two outdated authorizations for use of force. When it comes to war and peace, the authority remains firmly with this body, the United States Congress.

Last month we heard that the White House planned to double the number of troops in Iraq, bringing the total to 3,000, despite the President's own promise not to put U.S. troops on the ground. On Monday another 250 paratroopers were called up from the 82nd Airborne for service in Iraq, and Congress is poised to give the President his \$5.6 billion request to combat ISIS with virtually no debate scheduled on this House floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to implore the President to come to Congress and explain his strategy for this new campaign in Iraq. Even the last President, who was far less sensible, sought congressional authority. It is in President Obama's best interest to address not just those relevant committees apt to grant him the legal leeway the White House weakly asserts but all 435 Members who have congressional authority and constitutional authority to send our Nation's sons and daughters to war.

The President must tread carefully going forward, and not just because our recent military history in Iraq is poor but also because he now faces a Republican Congress. Those recklessly clamoring for greater military involvement against ISIS would like nothing more than to blame what could easily become a wider conflict, likely doomed to fail, squarely on the President's head. I trust this President, and I have faith that he will make the decisions in the best interest of the American people, as he understands them.

Let me be clear: it is in the American people's best interest for the President to ask the people's representatives—us in the House of Representatives—for a proper authorization for the use of military force. Then JOHN BOEHNER should lead the debate on such an authorization—a debate at great length and with complete transparency, not behind closed doors, not in committees, not somewhere in conference reports, but out here on the floor in front of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we have wandered down this road in Iraq before with a far less thoughtful President. What our goal was in Iraq is long since lost. Whatever President Bush said it was, it never turned out to be what we were there about. And here we are doing the same thing again, unfortunately. It is time we learned from our mistakes and that we, as Members of Congress, take responsibility for sending our people over there to die. There will be deaths, make no mistake about it. Generals have already said if we go over there a

little bit, we are going to be there for the next 2 years. It is time for us to vote on this issue after a lengthy debate.

NANNY STATE LUNCHES

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Federal food police are whipping up their latest batch of distasteful government regulations. With a government fist around an iron spatula, the Federal Government has become the new Mr. Bumble from the book "Oliver Twist."

The food police have placed unhealthy and illogical regulations on menus for government school lunches across the fruited plain. This is just more unneeded, unnecessary, and unwarranted Federal Government invasion of what school kids eat. The Federal Government now is trying to raise America's children.

In an effort to control, dictate, and give children a nanny state society, school lunches have gotten watered down to a skimpy new low. After strict portion control and outlandish so-called nutrition standards, school lunches have become as exciting as detention. The food is unappealing and lacking in nutrition.

So what have students done? They have taken their frustrations to Twitter, taking photos of government-dictated school lunches. An Oklahoma school student tweeted a picture of a few chicken nuggets, a half an apple, and a piece of bread, complaining, "Thanks for the fulfilling lunch." More and more students are catching on, saying sarcastically, "I will be full for days," and "Thanks for the delicious lunch, sure was filling."

A parent eating lunch with their child at school was stunned after seeing the lunch portions. And here she took a photograph of the lunch. Here it is. And she said correctly, "This is sad." Here you have a little condiment package. Here you have a bun with a something in between, and then you have a half a fruit over on the other side. Isn't this a lovely lunch? If a parent had anything to do with this, the Federal Government would probably accuse them of child neglect.

There is a 350-calorie limit in place for entrees. So that means taking two packets of ketchup or mayonnaise would put the student over the allowed limit. Kids find themselves in an "Oliver Twist" situation with the workhouse headmaster, Mr. Bumble, and having to fearfully ask, "More please, sir?" And of course just like in the book, the answer is a loud "No."

Kids need the energy to learn, to pay attention, and to focus. That energy comes from food. The cafeteria takeover by the Federal Government is leaving students—believe it or not—hungry.

How can we expect children operating on a lunch of no more than 350

calories to make it through the day? What about athletes and afterschool programs? Whether the student plays football or plays an instrument in the marching band, a dinky lunch just won't cut it.

Meghan Hellrood, a student at D.C. Everest High School in Wisconsin, is protesting the required "healthy" lunches by promising other students unlimited condiments that she herself will bring to school. Now, I wonder if the Federal Government will charge her with smuggling the forbidden condiments. Who knows?

Students all over the United States have started to speak out. Pictures of a lunch with two pieces of cauliflower, some ham, and a piece of cheese have surfaced, or three cherry tomatoes, skim milk, and some cheesy bread. This sounds more like the tasteless gruel Oliver Twist was served in the book "Oliver Twist."

Kids who buy their lunch but opt out of the side of fruits or vegetables are still charged for the whole meal, resulting in wasted food. There has been an 84 percent increase in wasted school lunches that are just thrown in the trash.

These regulations just aren't working. So what is next? Is the government going to force-feed kids who don't eat the government food lunches? The level of Federal Government intrusion is foolish, and it seems to be arrogant.

The time is now to protect schools from Mr. Bumble bureaucrats. Interestingly enough, some of the bureaucrats in Washington making the rules for government schools send their kids to private schools, which are not under the same absurd food regulations.

Mere calorie counting is not a viable healthy option. More physical activities in schools may be needed. In any event, it is the duty and responsibility of parents and local schools to decide what their kids eat in school, not the nanny, Mr. Bumble, and the bureaucrats in Washington.

Parents should raise their kids, not the Federal Government. Federal food police don't belong in a local school cafeteria.

And that is just the way it is.

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THE GAS TAX

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, 1 year ago today, I introduced the first gas tax increase in over 20 years. I was joined by a broad coalition in announcing the bill, supported by the AFL-CIO, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, building and construction industries and their unions, local governments, AAA and the truckers, environmentalists, transit, and cyclists. It was gratifying to have that broad base of support. One year later, the only thing that has

changed is that the need, if anything, is greater and the path forward is even easier.

I just completed a press conference with my good friend TOM PETRI and with President Ronald Reagan. President Reagan, in 1982, in his Thanksgiving Day radio address, explained why we needed to raise the gas tax.

He said: "One of our greatest material blessings is the outstanding network of roads and highways that spreads across this great continent. Freedom of travel and the romance of the road are vital parts of our heritage, and they help make America great.

"We simply cannot allow this magnificent system to deteriorate beyond repair. The time has come to preserve what Americans spent so much time and effort to create, and that means a nationwide conservation effort in the best sense of the word.

"So I am asking Congress when it reconvenes next week to approve a new highway program that will enable us to complete construction of the interstate system and at the same time get on with the job of renovating existing highways. The program will not increase the Federal deficit or add to the taxes that you and I pay on April 15. It will be paid for by those of us who use the system, and it will cost the average car owner only about \$30 a year. That is less than the cost of a couple of shock absorbers.

"So what we are proposing is to add the equivalent of 5 cents a gallon to the existing highway user fee, the gas tax, which hasn't been increased in the last 23 years. The cost to the average motorist will be small, but the benefit to our transportation system will be immense. The program will stimulate 170,000 jobs, not make-work projects, but in real, worthwhile work in hard-hit construction industries, and an additional 150,000 jobs in related industries.

"Perhaps most important, we will be preserving for future generations of Americans a highway system that has long been the envy of the world and has truly made the average American driver king of the road.

"Thanks for listening, and until next time, God bless you."

That is a speech that could be given by any of us or by President Obama—and should be. Congress did return after that holiday, and President Reagan and Tip O'Neill more than doubled the gas tax. What has not changed is that we haven't raised the gas tax in 22 years. It costs the average family \$377 per year in damage to their cars.

If we increase the gas tax according to my proposal, H.R. 3636, it won't create 300,000 jobs; it will create 1.5 million family-wage jobs across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I understand people don't like the gas tax. I don't like the gas tax. I want to raise it, index it, and then abolish it and replace it with something that is sustainable. But in the meantime, raising the gas tax is

the only viable approach, as verified by two Presidential commissions that reported to President Bush.

We have been asleep at the switch. It is time for us to step up. At a time of dramatically falling gas prices—23 cents on average in the last month, and they are projected to continue going down—now is the perfect time to step up, to raise the gas tax slowly over the next 3 years, rebuild and renew America, put family-wage jobs across the spectrum, and make our communities more livable, our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

All it takes is a little leadership and courage. Like Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill did 32 years ago, I think we can do that now, and we should.

RANGER CHAPLAIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on something very dear to my heart. The duty of a military chaplain is to help guide the hearts and minds of the soldiers that he serves with or she serves with, and that comes from a perspective of a background of their own faith, but also the respect of the faiths of others that they serve with, making sure that all feel a responsibility to not only do their job, their mission, but also to themselves, that they are being all that they can be in their own careers, in their own missions.

But just again, here we go again, as the old saying goes. Recently, in my district, an Army chaplain gave a suicide awareness and prevention brief as required by the Army and received a letter of concern in his official record. A letter of concern is a means to admonish a soldier's actions.

The chaplain did not infringe upon anyone's rights, did not receive any complaints from anyone being briefed that day; but after the chaplain's actions were reviewed, he was considered to have not violated any Army regulation or policy, yet his negative counseling remains, simply because at a time in which our society is dealing with soldiers and airmen who are struggling with depression and struggling with suicide rates, he had the audacity to share his own experience with depression and how his faith helped him.

What is a chaplain supposed to do except to share from his own heart in a way that is encouraging to others whether they have faith or no faith? I hope—no, I pray—this counseling record will reflect soon his innocence.

The Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers decided to characterize the chaplain's briefing as evangelism in mental health training. The MAAF goes on to say that receiving Christian doctrine as a way to combat depression and suicidal thoughts would increase

the amount of suicides in the military. This statement belittles the belief of soldiers who feel their faith may help them through difficult and troubling times.

Apparently, the MAAF feel only their systems of beliefs are worth propagating and any others are irrelevant, if not damaging, to a soldier's emotional health.

As a military chaplain, all I have to say to the MAAF is that if it protects and helps someone value life, keep their own life, then what they need to do is be reminded that they have an opinion, and so does everyone else.

It is time that they lived up to their own thoughts, that thoughts matter, and that what this chaplain did should be reversed. It should not reflect on his record. When you have someone actually in the game trying to help, it is not the time for little people on the outside to criticize. They need to get a new direction and a new focus, and this chaplain needs to be restored and this letter removed.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4924. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to enter into the Big Sandy River-Planet Ranch Water Rights Settlement Agreement and the Hualapai Tribe Bill Williams River Water Rights Settlement Agreement, to provide for the lease of certain land located within Planet Ranch on the Bill Williams River in the State of Arizona to benefit the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, and to provide for the settlement of specific water rights claims in the Bill Williams River watershed in the State of Arizona.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2917. An act to expand the program of priority review to encourage treatments for tropical diseases.

SUPPORTING THE ABLE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, my intention this morning was to get up and try to be eloquent when talking about the ABLE Act, Achieving a Better Life Experience, which we will vote on later today, but since yesterday, I have received four emails from parents in North Dakota whose words are far more eloquent than mine could ever be.

I will submit all of their words into the RECORD, but I want to share a few of the highlights from these important emails from my constituents.

Roxane Romanick writes:

How exciting that we are at this point where the dreams of the act passing may come true in the next days.