

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO JOHN FEEHERRY, PETE JEFFRIES AND PAIGE RALSTON

HON. J. DENNIS HASTERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, March 20, 2005

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish farewell to three members of my press office who are moving on to other careers after distinguished service on Capitol Hill. My press secretary John Feehery, communications director Pete Jeffries, and deputy press secretary Paige Ralston have been the core of my press team for my entire tenure as Speaker, and I would like to take this moment to recognize their contributions to my office.

As my chief spokesman, John helped me articulate the positive effects of important reforms we passed concerning Medicare, tax policy, and the organization of intelligence community, just to name a few. I depended on John for advice on how best to get my message across on a wide range of issues and the events of the day.

Pete crafted a strategy for communicating our goals and accomplishments to other Members and to the rest of America. He could take a step back and tie broader themes together to create an overall message with which Americans could identify. Pete worked with other press secretaries to coordinate our message to make it more powerful, and as a result the Republican majority has had great success in recent years.

A good message is only useful if people are listening, and that's where Paige came in. As my point person for arranging interviews with the press, she helped me reach out to different audiences in different ways to effectively explain our agenda. She has a keen sense for connecting the particular message I wanted to convey with the best venue for conveying it.

I have learned that in this legislative body, effective communication is crucial for turning good ideas into good policy. For the past 6 years, John, Pete and Paige formed a team of advisors who helped me convey our hopeful message to the rest of America. Though they will be missed greatly, I wish them all the best in the next stage of their lives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, March 20, 2005

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, on the evening of March 15, I was delayed and missed rollcall vote 72.

I respectfully request the opportunity to record my position on rollcall vote 72.

It was my intention to vote "yea" on rollcall 72.

I supported a similar amendment by Congressman OBEY in the full committee mark-up

of the bill that would have established a select committee to investigate the awarding of contracts to conduct activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

STANDING WITH CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, March 20, 2005

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues to send a strong message to the Cuban government that the United States will not forget those people who are languishing in Cuban prisons for the so-called crime of speaking out against the injustices perpetrated by the Castro regime. We cannot ignore Castro and we cannot relieve the pressure on the regime. We owe it to the thousands of Cubans languishing in jails to further open the eyes of the world community to the true evils of the Castro regime.

I rise to bring to light the injustices against a 61-year old scholar, intellectual, and decent free-thinking man—Héctor Palacios Ruiz. Director of the unofficial Centro de Estudios Sociales, Center of Social Studies, and secretary of the reporting committee of the "Todos Unidos," "All United," coalition, Héctor Palacios was detained on March 20, 2003 and subsequently tried in Havana. He was convicted under Castro's barbaric Penal Code and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

And what were Héctor Palacios' crimes? He was accused, among other activities, of having in his home an independent library containing books the Cuban government claims are "subversive and counterrevolutionary."

Héctor Palacios's wife, Gisela, was refused permission to visit him in May and threatened with imprisonment if she participated in public demonstrations on his behalf.

Before the crackdown in 2003, Héctor Palacios was arrested in 1994, 1997 and 1999 for his activism and his courage to speak out against the crimes and injustices of the Castro regime. The persecution of this brave Cuban man is an outrage. Thrown behind bars, Héctor Palacios and other political activists are feared by the Castro regime which outlaws freedom and truth. The brutality must stop. Freedom for Cuba's political prisoners must be our goal.

WESTPORT HARBOR'S NEEDS TO GO UNMET?

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, March 20, 2005

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I recently had to be the bearer of bad news to the Town of Westport, Massachusetts. West-

port is a wonderful place to live, in substantial part because of its natural environment, and the great care that the people of the town take to preserve the great gift which that environment is. Recently, I met with the selectmen of the town to discuss their very reasonable proposal for a dredging project, to cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000. I told them at the time that we would have trouble because of what has been, in my judgment, excessive tax-cutting leaving us unable to meet basic needs of our society in many ways. Not even the most ardent advocates of tax cuts have claimed that they are in any way capable of dredging a harbor.

Subsequently, after sharing with the selectmen the fact that this would be tough, I received a copy of a letter from the Army Corps of Engineers, making clear that it would be even tougher because of cutbacks in their already inadequate funds imposed upon them by the Bush Administration.

The newspaper Westport Shorelines initially editorialized in a very eloquent way about this very regrettable decision, and I ask that the Westport Shorelines' excellent analysis be printed here so that Members can get a fuller understanding of the implications of some of the budget cuts that are being imposed.

[From Westport Shorelines, March 10, 2005]

OUR LITTLE HARBOR DOESN'T FIT INTO FEDS' BIG PICTURE

Al Qaeda doesn't much care about Westport Harbor so neither do we.

That is the gist of the federal message to Westport this week. In a brief note out of the blue, the feds notified Westport that they won't help dredge the harbor channel after all.

Federal money, the note states, is "now being allocated to those ports and harbors of greatest national significance . . . Future funding for small harbors such as Westport is unlikely at this time."

In those few words, the Army Corps of Engineers cedes victory to the sand. Without dredging soon, the main channel will inevitably choke with sand—in places that has already happened. The fate of the fishermen, boatyard and ecosystems that rely on a free-flowing river rank low on the federal priority list.

Don't blame the Army Corps for this one—the decision comes from much higher places. The Army Corps recognized the need and was an enthusiastic participant in the \$600,000 project, assisting with expertise, studies and the lion's share of the funding. After years of effort by the Army Corps and Westport dredge committee, the long awaited job was about to happen. The feasibility study was complete (the project passed with flying colors), and final permitting was nearly set.

Stopping it now amounts to much more than inconvenience and delay. All those costly studies have short shelf lives. If allowed to expire, they must be done anew from scratch.

It really amounts to one more instance of a fiscal federal priority system overwhelmed by Iraq, tax cuts and all things anti-terrorism. Although the Iraq/terror link remains murky, the war continues to cost by some estimates \$177 million a day, \$7.4 million per hour (the Westport dredge project

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