

and people get to know them more, they like them less, not because they are not pleasant people to look at and not because they are not educated. I am sure they all qualified in their educated endeavors, but why is America rejecting them? They are rejecting them because of their nastiness and their negativity and their pessimism because America, after all, is about optimism, about hope, about opportunity, about equality, about engagement, about being part of a bigger picture, a bigger world, a bigger place.

So I do pray that as we conclude today that the minority party, that may be the permanent minority if they keep it up, rather than promising in speech to extend an olive branch, that they actually do it and give this President a chance. We will not always agree with this President as Republicans or Democrats, but I think in the final analysis, as we look at the man as a person, I have come to really admire his determination.

When I heard those comments by Paul O'Neill, I thought back of several meetings we have had with multiple Members of Congress in the Cabinet room of the White House, and one foretelling day was about the Patients' Bill of Rights, a subject that I had worked on with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) and others in this country for a long time. As we sat around the room I was really taken aback by the depth of knowledge that President Bush had relative to the Patients' Bill of Rights. The discussion with lawmakers, the back and forth, the questions, the probative questions, the responses, whether we wanted to hear the answer or not, he gave it to us with what he believed was the best course of action for this particular piece of legislation. This was a President engaged in the minutia of debate, not a scripted card that was given to him by an aide, but something that inherently he understood, both intimately and through research and through interest.

So as we hear the State of the Union tonight, as we enter 2004, let us hope that the optimism that I know will be contained in the speech becomes contagious, and let us hope that all of us as Members of this deliberate body can join together in trying to figure ways to make every American safer, Democrat, Republican or Independent, bringing together a better world where we are talking and communicating and helping each other in the Nation, whether it is the fight against AIDS in Africa or whether it is terrorism in the Middle East or whether it is freeing people from tyranny.

Let us join together in a pledge that in order to form a more perfect union, we must be organized together as citizens first and politicians second. Our political parties are not the most important credential on this floor. Our most important credential is citizens, Americans, and hopefully patriots.

I wish the President well tonight because his guidance and his expertise is

needed by the American public, and I hope as young children hopefully are allowed to watch history and democracy in action here on the floor, we will see a President whose character cannot be questioned, whose administration has performed admirably, whose people have been at the forefront of the fight. I wish him well and I wish him success, and I know together, as Americans, his leadership, his vision will help every American find work in the new year.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TURNER of Ohio). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 8:40 p.m. for the purposes of receiving in joint session the President of the United States.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 56 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 8:40 p.m.

□ 2044

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 8 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.

JOINT SESSION OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE HELD PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 349 TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The Speaker of the House presided.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Mr. Bill Sims, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate, who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort the President of the United States into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY);

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT);

The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE);

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ); and

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SANTORUM);

The Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);

The Senator from Virginia (Mr. ALLEN);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER);

The Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI);

The Senator from South Dakota (Mr. DASCHLE);

The Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI);

The Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAU);

The Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN);

The Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED);

The Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON);

The Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW);

The Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON); and

The Senator from New Jersey (Mr. CORZINE).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador from Djibouti.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Associate Justice of the Supreme Court entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 9 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m., the Sergeant at Arms, the Honorable Wilson Livingood, announced the President of the United States.

The President of the United States, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, and stood at the Clerk's desk.

(Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, I have the high privilege and the distinct honor of presenting to you the President of the United States.

(Applause, the Members rising.)