

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, in October, we will have fair and free elections in Afghanistan. Ten million Afghans are registered to vote, one-half being women. When they go to the polls. There will be threats, intimidation and violence, but the Afghans will go.

Compare that to other elections in October held in the European country of Belarus. Candidates have been intimidated, but the people will still go to the polls. The problem is, the dictator will count the votes and the ballots.

If the international community can help ensure fair and free elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, surely they can help enforce fair and free elections in the Nation of Belarus. I call upon them to do so, and I hope they will ensure fair and free elections in Belarus.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS FOR SUCCESSFUL DEBATE

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to congratulate my friend, Senator JOHN EDWARDS, for his outstanding performance in last night's debate. Once again, he has done us proud.

JOHN EDWARDS grew up the son of a mill worker in rural North Carolina. He understands the challenges that ordinary people face in these tough economic times. Simply put, he gets it when it comes to the problems, challenges, aspirations and dreams of hard-working families. That is why he will make an outstanding Vice President.

During last night's debate, JOHN EDWARDS clearly stated why the Bush-Cheney administration's stubborn refusal to admit mistakes is so wrong for America. The Bush-Cheney record of failed policies, broken promises, and tired excuses is a strong change in our national leadership. JOHN EDWARDS articulated that case very strongly last night.

Mr. Speaker, JOHN EDWARDS and JOHN KERRY have a better plan to strengthen middle-class families, to create good jobs, provide targeted tax relief for middle-class families and invest in jobs for tomorrow for the broader future of America. We need new leadership in America. JOHN EDWARDS demonstrated last night that he and JOHN KERRY are ready to take our country in a new and better direction.

KERRY DOES NOT GET IT ON IRAQ

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, Mr. KERRY calls Iraq a mistake. On the other hand, he says our soldiers are not dying for a mistake. He has failed time and again to make sense of

his flip-flops. And while he looked good in the debate last week, he sounded like the same old candidate with 57 varieties of stances on Iraq. His call for a timetable to get troops out of Iraq sends a message that terrorists can outlast us. It is a fancy way to spin the fact that he wants to retreat.

His repeated statements that Iraq is a "quagmire," "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time," repels allies; it does not rally them to our cause. And, talking about real coalitions is a fancy way to spin the fact that, under his watch, other nations would dictate the deployment of our military, and it insults our coalition partners and the Iraqi forces who are risking their lives every day for freedom.

JOHN KERRY just does not get it.

ADMINISTRATION MUST ADMIT MISTAKES

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, here are a few headlines from the last 24 hours: "Iraqi Arms Threat Was Waning," the definitive government report saying there was a diminishing threat from Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction; "France Was Ready To Send Troops to Iraq," 15,000, but did not because of the relationship with President Bush; "Bremmer Criticizes Troop Levels," Paul Bremmer now says we never had enough troops on the ground; "White House Embraced Disputed Arms Intelligence," the White House claimed Iraq was buying aluminum tubes to facilitate uranium enrichment even though their own experts told them otherwise; "Funds To Build Iraq Are Drifting Away From Target," only 27 cents on the dollar are going to rebuild Iraq.

This does not even include what Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld acknowledged yesterday, that there was no relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda.

Mr. Speaker, their house of cards that was the case for going to war and how to prosecute this war have collapsed. In going to war, this administration allowed ideology to trump reality. Iraq was not an imminent threat, there was no impending mushroom cloud. With the costs and casualties, candor would be a welcome addition to this White House.

You cannot fix a problem if you do not acknowledge that you have one.

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS A RECORD OF LEADERSHIP

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last night, Americans saw the choice of DICK CHENEY and JOHN EDWARDS. It is being debated now who prevailed.

Where people know JOHN EDWARDS best, his and my home, birth State of South Carolina and his home State of North Carolina, the people are overwhelmingly supporting DICK CHENEY to continue his service with President Bush to best protect American families in the war on terrorism.

Senator KERRY has a 20-year record in the Senate of voting against every major weapons system that won the Cold War and that our troops are using today. Senator KERRY has proposed budget cuts in intelligence even after the first World Trade Center bombing. He voted against the first Gulf War; he voted for the current war in Iraq and then against the funding to give our troops the body armor needed to fight the war. This is not the kind of record Americans expect in a commander in chief.

President Bush and Vice President CHENEY have a strong and clear record of leading our Nation in the war on terror. President Bush has shown he will take the fight to the terrorists wherever they are, protecting American families from future terror attacks here at home.

In conclusion, may God bless our troops. We will never forget September 11.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO CUT VETERANS' BENEFITS

(Mr. STRICKLAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I have a message for America's veterans and the families who love them.

As reported in Sunday's Washington Post, Staff Sergeant Gene Westbrook, 35, of Lawton, Oklahoma, was deployed to Iraq in January as a drill sergeant, sent to train Iraqi Army recruits. While on duty on April 28, south of Sadr City in Baghdad, he was hit by a mortar shell, and the shrapnel severed his spine. He is now paralyzed from the chest down, has limited movement in his right arm and battles constant infections. His wife takes care of him full-time.

"I love the military," said Staff Sergeant Westbrook. "That was my life. But I do not believe they are taking care of me now."

He has received no disability benefits because his paperwork is missing. He is supporting his wife and three children on his regular military pay of \$2,800 a month as he awaits a ruling on whether he will receive \$6,500 from the VA for his disability.

At the same time, President Bush's budget for 2005 calls for cutting the Department of Veterans' Affairs staff that handles disability claims. What is the President thinking, cutting the budget for this vital function while our disabled servicemen wait for justice?

HONORING DARRELL WALTRIP

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor one of my constituents, someone that many of my colleagues may know, Darrell Waltrip. My colleagues might know him by his 84 racing victories, third best victory in NASCAR circuit or from his newest career in broadcasting. In middle Tennessee, we also know that he is a successful businessman.

But to those suffering with Multiple Sclerosis, he is more; he is a hero.

This year, Darrell is being honored by the Mid South Chapter of the National MS Society with the MS Hope Award for his outstanding dedication to helping end this devastating disease.

Darrell has given of his time and of his heart to educate the public on what we can do to help eradicate MS, and his support of the Mid South Chapter has been to expand the advocacy and research.

Today, I want to join those honoring Darrell Waltrip and thank him for his continuing fight against MS.

REPUBLICAN RHETORIC DOES NOT MATCH REALITY

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, well, the Republican rhetoric about the economy does not match the reality on this issue either. New figures show U.S. companies announced layoffs of more than 100,000 people last month.

If that is not bad enough, the pace of new job postings plunged in September to a mere 16,000. This is the President's economic equivalent of Mission Accomplished. Over the third quarter, job layoffs topped a quarter of a million workers. That is 20 percent worse than the last quarter, and they call it progress. The September figure for layoffs was the largest number in 8 months, and they call it progress.

They cannot create a job, so they create a sound bite. They do the same thing in Iraq every day. Things are getting better, they explain, while the rest of America looks at the nightly news and wonders what in the world these people are talking about. Every night, they deny what is before their eyes.

They have not done the job. The record is clear, and so is the outcome. In 27 days, the American people will give the President and the Vice President bus fare out of town.

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HONORING HAROLD ZINKIN

(Mr. RADANOVICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Harold Zinkin of Fresno, California, post-

humously for his service to his community and generous good will. Mr. Zinkin recently passed away on September 22, 2004.

Harold Zinkin was born in San Francisco, California, in 1922. As the son of Russian immigrants, this first-generation American lived a life that was nothing short of achieving the American Dream.

As a young man, Mr. Zinkin enlisted in the U.S. Navy in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Later he became a champion bodybuilder and was one of the patriarchs of California's fitness movement that rose out of the famed Muscle Beach. Mr. Zinkin's vision for the future of health and wellness came to fruition through his creation of revolutionary fitness equipment called the Universal Gym Machine. He was also instrumental in creating one of the most dynamic and successful shopping and entertainment complexes throughout California's Central Valley.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Harold Zinkin for his tremendous service to his community, California's Central Valley and worldwide.

FAILING ECONOMIC HEALTH OF OUR NATION

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, as Americans head to the polls in 4 weeks, we should ask ourselves, Are we better off now than we were 4 years ago?

The answer lies in the facts, and the facts do not lie. Eight million people are looking for work and 1.4 million people lost their health insurance last year; 4.3 million people have slipped into poverty since President Bush took office, and a projected 10-year \$5.6 trillion budget surplus has turned into a \$422 billion annual deficit.

Families in my district are all too aware of the sad state of our economy. Unemployment they say is at its lowest at 5.4 percent; but unemployment in my district, in East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County, is well above the norm. Just look at the schedule here. East Los Angeles, South El Monte, 9.8 percent, double-digit unemployment and it has been that way for the last 3½ years.

We know in my district that it is time for a change in leadership. We want jobs here. We want investments in America. We want to lift those boats.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

(Mr. COX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, this year is the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Republican Party. Over a century and a half, from the abolition of

slavery, to the establishments of women's right to vote, to freeing millions of people in the Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Iraq, the Republican Party has been the most effective political organization in the history of the world in advancing the cause of freedom.

The right of American women to vote is a uniquely Republican accomplishment advanced by Republicans, opposed by Democrats. All of the leading suffragists, including Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony were Republican. The first woman elected to this House was Republican.

Today marks the birth of Mary Louise Smith in 1914, elected to be the first woman to chair the Republican National Committee. Each day of the year the Republican Freedom Calendar, prepared by the Republican Policy Committee, records an important achievement, an important milestone in the Republican Party's history of advancing the civil rights of every American. The calendar is available at policy.house.gov on the Internet.

LARGE CIVIL AIRCRAFT AGREEMENT

(Mr. DICKS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, this morning the United States filed a World Trade Organization dispute settlement case against the European Union regarding billions of dollars in unfair subsidies provided to Airbus by European governments. The U.S. has also exercised its rights to immediately terminate the 1992 U.S.-EU agreement on large civil aircraft. That agreement placed limits on certain government support, including limiting it to one-third of the costs of developing a new character aircraft.

The time has come for the American Government to recognize the damage that has occurred to our economy and to take firm action to curtail what I believe is both unfair and illegal foreign competition. These subsidies from four European governments, which include aircraft launch assistance, capital injections, debt forgiveness, have enabled Airbus to develop and range market airliners well below cost. Unless this practice is checked, I am afraid it will threaten to drive the Boeing Company, Airbus' only remaining worldwide competitor and our largest net exporter, out of the commercial airline manufacturing business altogether.

Over the last few years Airbus has grown to dominate the large commercial aircraft industry, out-delivering Boeing for the first time in history in 2003. I want to support Ambassador Zellig's action. He has courageously filed this case on behalf of our government.