

INTELLIGENCE REFORM IS STILL NOT DONE

(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, the House passed intelligence reform legislation last year, and the bill was another step to strengthen efforts against an enemy bent not on our defeat, but on our destruction. But the conference committee was dominated by those that ignored key recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

The final product was watered down. It did not have a plan to prevent illegal immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses. It did not put in place stricter asylum standards, problems identified by the 9/11 Commission as glaring weaknesses in our Nation's defenses.

Mr. Speaker, 19 of the 9/11 hijackers had 63 driver's licenses between them. How can this Nation in a time of war leave such a glaring hole in our Nation's defenses? Mr. Speaker, this was wrong, and that is why I am hopeful that the legislation introduced this week by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), which I cosponsored which strengthens security standards on driver's licenses and asylum standards, will pass. I hope the Senate and the 9/11 Commission will support our efforts to do so.

GROWING BUDGET CRISIS

(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, in December of 2003, Josh Bolton, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget wrote, "With the adoption of the President's policies, our projections show a solid path toward cutting the deficit in half within the next 5 years."

Fact: this year our deficit will increase for the fourth straight year, to a record \$427 billion. The Webster's dictionary defines a crisis as "an unstable state of affairs." If you are looking for a crisis to solve, look no further. Look at the President's budget deficit.

The President's reckless policies are damaging our Nation's future. Our annual interest payments on the national debt are more than six times what we spent on education last year. They are more than 12 times what we spent on veterans.

What are we doing with this \$7 trillion debt that keeps running up? We are asking our bankers, Japan and China, for more money. They control our future. It is a very fascinating economic strategy.

The President has indicated that his budget will be tough. I agree. With 3 years of record deficit and a record national debt accumulating, it is tough. It is tough on America's future.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the President and the economy, the truth is, we will forever be in his debt.

A STEP TOWARDS LIBERTY IN IRAQ

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, in his second inaugural address just days ago, President George W. Bush restated our Nation's longstanding vision as the beacon of liberty and the arsenal of democracy on planet Earth.

This Sunday, January 30th, because of the leadership of that same Commander in Chief and the courage and sacrifice of our American military and their families, that vision will take one more step forward on Earth with the free elections taking place in the war-torn nation of Iraq.

The Good Book tells us that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. So I know I rise on behalf of millions of Hoosiers when I say to the good people of Iraq, you not only have our sons and daughters and our resources, but you will have our prayers; and our prayers are with all the good people of that nation as they take this small step toward liberty. May it be the beginning of a permanent break with their tyrannical past.

SUPPORT FOR ADVOCATES FOR VETERANS

(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, our good friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), had served on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for 24 years. He had been the chairman of that committee for 4 years.

On January 5, representatives of 10 national veterans organizations wrote the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT) asking him to keep the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) in that position. But he was removed. And a senior GOP aid referred to these veterans by saying, "If they think coming up here to argue for CHRIS SMITH is going to help CHRIS SMITH, they are crazy."

Well, the Republicans in this House may think the advocates for veterans are crazy, but we Democrats do not; and we will not stand by and let this administration or this House of Representatives decimate VA health care.

PUSH POLL DISCLOSURE ACT OF 2005

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

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to increase the disclosure requirements for telephone push polls. My bill, the Push Poll Disclosure Act of 2005, uses the light of

public disclosure to lift the darkness surrounding these smear polls, which are a campaign device to spread disinformation about candidates under the cover of a legitimate poll.

They are not, however, real polls. Their only purpose is to create a negative image among the voting public without leaving a visible trace. My bill combats this obnoxious practice by requiring increased disclosure for polls when more than 1,200 households are included.

The time has come to regulate smear polls for what they are, a campaign tactic, and make those who employ this tactic take full responsibility for their actions.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

EXPRESSING CONCERNS OVER IRAQ ELECTIONS

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I am sending a letter to Secretary-Designate Rice and Ambassador Negroponte expressing concerns over the Iraq elections that are to take place in just 5 days.

It will be impossible to determine the extent to which corruption, voter intimidation or outright fraud will mar the results. Here is why: there is a total absence of international election observers for the process. As such, it will make the elections themselves, regrettably, a farce.

International observers were present at polling sites in Nigeria, East Timor, Haiti, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Ukraine. Iraq is the first so-called transitional election in the past 2 decades that will not have international election observers touring polling stations. Instead, Iraq will have a "mission," which will assess the elections from Amman, Jordan, inspecting the Iraq elections from Amman, Jordan.

This is not acceptable, to stage an election that cannot be monitored for fairness, where it cannot be independently determined whether ballot boxes are being stuffed.

EXPRESSING AWE AND ADMIRATION FOR IRAQI PEOPLE

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

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the fact that this Sunday, January 30, will be a truly historic day, a day when the Iraqi people, once oppressed and without a voice, will cast their vote in their nation's first democratic elections. It is an amazing fact when you think that just 2 years ago they suffered under a brutal dictatorship.

There is no question that the desperate tactics and deliberate attacks