

States troops entered Iraq, and it has become clear that the democratic elections that have been provided to the people of Iraq through this campaign have begun to spread throughout the region.

In Beirut on Monday, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese protesters gathered in Martyr Square, which some are now calling Freedom Square, to demonstrate for the removal of Syrian troops to withdraw from Lebanon. They chanted, "Sovereignty, Freedom, and Independence."

When their prime minister was assassinated 4 weeks ago and replaced with a pro-Syrian prime minister, the Lebanese people took to the streets and called for freedom. Their protests sparked the resignation of the pro-Syrian prime minister.

Because of U.S. efforts in the Middle East, freedom is no longer something inconceivable to the people of this region. Instead, they have witnessed the spread of freedom to their neighbors and have been empowered by it.

We must continue to support policies which promote freedom in the Middle East.

MEMORIALIZING THE NATIONAL DAY OF SILENCE

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

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to provide a voice for those too often silenced, the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students who face verbal, nonverbal and physical harassment in our schools.

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Today is the National Day of Silence; and across the country, students have taken a vow of silence to protest the discrimination and intolerance that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people face on a daily basis. We must continue to promote the diversity that makes our country so rich, while denouncing stereotypes that make it harder for youths to accept themselves. Stereotypes also contribute to the harassment, prejudice, and discrimination that silence GLBT youth.

For that reason, I am proud to sponsor H.R. 123, which memorializes the National Day of Silence.

I would also like to highlight the new campaign from the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network called TeachRespect.org.

I would also like to thank Mat Friday and Bruce Carlsen, community members in my district who are working hard to make K-12 schools safe, and especially Stewart Rosenstein, who is a tireless advocate for the GLBT youth in Santa Cruz, California.

I commend my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), for introducing such important legislation. I urge my colleagues to be cosponsors.

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

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

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, this week is the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. When President Reagan first announced National Crime Victims' Rights Week, he said, "For too long, the victims of crime have been the forgotten persons of our criminal justice system. Each new victim personally represents an instance in which the system has failed, and lack of concern for victims compounds that failure."

The Crime Victims' Rights constitutional amendment is an important step forward that will empower crime victims by allowing them to confront their assailants in court and alerting them of prisoner releases and allowing victims to seek restitution from their attackers.

Last Congress, we passed the PROTECT Act, also known as the Amber Alert bill. The PROTECT Act stiffens penalties for sex offenders, eliminated the statute of limitations for these crimes, and created a national Amber Alert system. We passed the Debbie Smith Act, which funds expanding and improving the quality of crime labs to conduct DNA analyses to catch sex offenders and other criminals, ensuring that the right person is going to jail.

But there is more we can do. Last year, Minnesota suffered a great tragedy with Dru Sjodin being abducted. We need to pass Dru's Law this year.

ARROGANT MAJORITY DISMANTLES ETHICS PROCESS

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

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, a dark cloud and a suspicion of corruption hangs over this House of Representatives. It is the talk of the Nation. With no Committee on Standards of Official Conduct or reasonable ethical standards to speak of, there is no hope that the dark cloud will recede and that daylight will be let in.

By systematically dismantling the House ethics process, the majority has denied this House the right to investigate its own Members and thus betrayed our core American values. Honesty, integrity, and accountability, the values, which should be the hallmark of this government, have instead been thrown under the bus by an arrogant majority, casualties in a misguided campaign to shield from accountability those who abuse this House.

This House cannot function without an open, accountable, and independent ethics process; and the molestation of that process by the majority is an abuse of power that cannot stand.

It is for these reasons I have repeatedly asked the Chair of the Committee

on Rules to hold a bipartisan ethics hearing. As guardians of the democratic process, our Committee on Rules has the unique responsibility to protect the integrity of this hallowed institution.

What are we waiting for? This dark cloud must be lifted, the air must be cleansed, and the ethics rules must be fully restored, because the very credibility of the government and its ability to lead the American people hang in the balance.

DEATH TAX REPEAL PERMANENCY ACT KEEPS FAMILY FARMS THRIVING

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

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote to permanently repeal the death tax. The death tax hurts average Americans who have worked hard to build a family business and want to pass it on to their children.

Arguments from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle ignore those who the death tax hurts the most. I am particularly concerned about one group of people impacted by the death tax, and that is the family farm.

There are approximately 2 million family farms in America, many of which are in my district, the second district of Kansas. These farms produce 94 percent of the American agricultural products that are sold. More importantly, however, they pay death taxes as high as 47 percent when they deed the farm to their children. Furthermore, there are twice as many farm estates paying death taxes than any other type of estates combined. This troubles me because family farms cannot afford to pay high taxes that could be pushing them out of business.

Unless we act, the death tax will be reinstated in 2011. If that happens, countless family farms will be forced to sell land, buildings, and equipment, putting them out of business.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the family farm and vote for the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act.

REPUBLICAN-LEANING "PLAIN DEALER" EDITORIAL SEEKS BREATH OF INTEGRITY

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, from April 8, a Plain Dealer editorial from a Cleveland Republican-leaning newspapers writes: "Tom DeLay, the House Majority Leader, can fashion what to him is a reasonable explanation for each of the ethics questions increasingly being raised against him.

"It's a witch hunt by a Democrat out to destroy him," DeLay responds. This is the Plain Dealer writing.

“To each of these and far too many more defensive responses, his faithful defenders, especially those who have bathed regularly under the campaign money spigot he controls, shout a loud ‘amen’ and accuse the Times and Post of mounting a liberal smear campaign.

“But the ranks of DeLay’s defenders shrink almost daily, as they should.”

The Republican-leaning Plain Dealer then asks: “Is the Sugarland sugar daddy the best their party has to offer the Nation in this key leadership post? Can they not find a fellow Republican wise enough to avoid, in terms he might understand, the very appearance of evil? Can’t someone open a window and let in a breath of integrity to blow the growing stench out of the people’s Chamber?”

Words from a newspaper that endorsed George Bush in 2000, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 8.

SANDY BERGER’S DEAL IS SHADY

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

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, last year, former Clinton National Security Adviser Sandy Berger stole classified documents from the National Archives, five copies of an “after-action” memo on the 2000 millennium terror plot, to be precise. He later destroyed, he cut up, three of the copies that contained handwritten notes from administration officials. Then, he lied about it to Federal investigators. The memo was severely critical of the Clinton administration’s handling of the incident.

Recently, we learned that Mr. Berger made a deal with Federal officials, and the deal was not 5 years in prison instead of 10. No, he gets a slap on the wrist in exchange for admitting he lied.

So let us just make sure we have the score right here. Martha Stewart tells a lie about a stock sale; she goes to prison. Sandy Berger lies about stealing and destroying national security documents; he gets a slap on the wrist. So send the person who lied about money to jail, but go easy on the person who lied about stolen and destroyed classified documents who tried to cover up the public record on an issue of life and death and national security.

Justice? Sorry to say, not this time.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE DAN PEARL

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the honorable Dan Pearl.

Mayor Pearl retired in 1972 to the town of Sunrise, Florida, in Broward County after having served 30 years as a parole officer with the New York Division of Parole.

In 1979, he was first elected to the Sunrise City Council and later served as mayor and deputy mayor. It was during his tenure as mayor that Sunrise made the transition from a strong-mayor system to a professionalized city government administered by a city manager.

In appreciation of his tireless service to his community, county officials took the unprecedented step of naming the Oakland Park Boulevard Library after Mayor Pearl in 1993.

Those of us who had the pleasure of working with Mayor Pearl will always remember his contributions and insights as a public servant. He was a member of numerous boards and organizations, including the Florida League of Cities, the Gold Coast League of Cities, the Broward Planning Council, the South Florida Regional Planning Council, and the American Cancer Society.

His death in 1996 was a tremendous loss to his family, colleagues, and the citizens of south Florida; but we will always remember the warmth, sincerity, and friendliness of Dan Pearl that he shared with everyone.

On behalf of the people of south Florida, it is my honor to salute the life and legacy of Mayor Dan Pearl.

END THE TYRANNY OF ANXIETY OF APRIL 15

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

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, it is April 13; and to my fellow American procrastinators I say, 2 days and counting, until tax day, April 15.

In 2003 alone, Americans spent \$203 billion just preparing our taxes, let alone paying for them. Madam Speaker, 1 billion hours in annual paperwork has been added to tax preparation in just the last 10 years.

Think of these comparisons: in 2003, your 1040 form is 73 lines long. In 1935 it was 34 lines long. In 2003, your 1040 booklet was 131 pages. When it was created in 1935, it was 2 pages.

Are we having fun yet? I say no.

Today we will scrap the death tax, and well we should. But while we are at it, let this majority rededicate itself to scrap the code, to create a new flatter and fairer and simpler system that ends the tyranny of April 15 on the American people, a tyranny of anxiety.

ETHICS ISSUES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, the ethics of this House, the people’s House, and this leadership have been questioned.

Madam Speaker, the leadership of the majority is being investigated by

no more than 15 newspaper investigative reporters. And while all this happens, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, our Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, stands silent, locked tighter than a drum, deadlocked. This time, the majority cannot blame anyone but themselves. They cannot blame the Democratic Party.

The majority threw out the rules and House ethics. They removed the former Chair because of his independence and changed the rules to make delay and denial easier and facts harder to find.

The ethics issues that are being investigated need to be addressed, and where they should be addressed is in the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

The Republicans need to break this logjam and make the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct the most respected committee in the Congress, instead of the partisan political tool that it has become.

MAJORITY AGENDA UNFAIR AND UNAMERICAN

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, the House majority today is about to increase our deficit by \$290 billion. We are going to offer an alternative; but they will reject that alternative so that they can take care of three-tenths of 1 percent of the very wealthiest people in this country. For the difference in cost, you could restore food stamps to 300,000 families; you could restore medical care to the 7 million poor elderly people in the nursing homes that you just cut from the Medicaid program; you could restore 300,000 day care slots for poor children.

These are people who suffer from the accident of birth and, in many cases, only because of the accident of birth; in order to reward a handful of families who are advantaged by the accident of birth, who have the very best education, the very best contacts, the very best prospects for economic success, and yet we will take billions, tens of billions, hundreds of billions of dollars out of Federal revenue to reward that three-tenths of 1 percent. That is unfair, and it is un-American. This was envisioned as a Nation of equal opportunity, not one of inherited aristocracy.

BRING BACK INTEGRITY TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the Republican majority’s ongoing disregard for the democratic process in the United States House of Representatives.

In the last Congress, the arrogance of power coming from the other side of