

creates a bipartisan House task force to recommend ways to reinvigorate ethics oversight and enforcement. It would require the Government Accountability Office to report twice a year on the state of oversight and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the gavel of this institution when it comes down should mark the opening of the people's House, not the auction house. Unless we reform the relationship between lobbyists and Members of Congress, we cannot restore the public's faith in the people's House. We are suffering from a systematic problem requiring an institutional solution.

Legislation here that we produced in the last Congress, the pharmaceutical industry spent \$154 million lobbying Members of Congress. When we were working on the reimportation legislation of pharmaceutical products, there were two lobbyists for every Member of Congress. The prescription drug bill was passed in a year in which lobbyists for the pharmaceutical industry was one of the biggest spenders on lobbying Members of Congress ended up resulting in an additional \$150 billion of profits for the pharmaceutical industry over a 10-year period of time.

Just the other day, we voted, this Congress, on an energy bill, a badly needed bill that did not deal with gas prices at the pump and yet gave tax credits, the public's tax money, to the wealthiest corporations who are making the biggest profits. Even the President acknowledged that it was wrong. Why? Because this institution is being lobbied by members that have the right to have their voices heard but not the right to have their voices literally drowning out the public's voice and individuals who vote for us.

It is time for this institution and the Members of Congress of both parties to come together, change the way professional lobbyists relate to Members of Congress, how they relate to the institution, whether there is a revolving door that goes from here, you go to a place of employment and whether you have in fact the transparency and the disclosure that is required, because in truth this is the whole cloud that exists, exists over all the institution. It requires all of us to work on dealing with this.

Mr. Speaker, we have a duty to ensure that the voices of the American people are not drowned out by the voices of the professional lobbyists working the halls of Congress. Only through lobbying reform can we restore the integrity of the Congress and retain the people's trust. We work on important issues here but not so important that it must literally push out the other voices. There is time and again, whether it is dealing with the pharmaceutical industry, the corporate tax bill, the energy bill, other pieces of legislation, you can mark literally the amount of money spent by the lobbying community and the type of legislation this institution passes.

When that gavel goes down, it is intended to open the people's House, not the auction house.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

IN SUPPORT OF LIEUTENANT PANTANO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have discussed at length how, a year ago in Iraq, a Marine second lieutenant, Ilario Pantano, made a split-second battlefield decision to shoot two Iraqi insurgents who refused to follow his orders to stop their movement towards him.

Two and a half months later a sergeant under his command, who never even saw the shooting and who was earlier demoted by Pantano for his lack of leadership abilities, accused him of murder. Now Lieutenant Pantano is facing a possible court-martial for two premeditated murders, a charge that can be punished by death.

Two weeks ago, the Marines held an article 32 hearing on the case. Now the hearing officer has received an extension until Friday to determine his recommendation about whether this should move forward to a court-martial.

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Mr. Speaker, I stand here tonight, as I have many other nights, in support of Lieutenant Pantano. I have always maintained the innocence of Lieutenant Pantano, and I believe the hearing produced information that should conclusively prove his innocence.

During the hearing, it became clear that Sergeant Coburn, who accused Lieutenant Pantano of these actions, was not a credible witness. This sergeant has been demoted for his lack of leadership; and even while testifying, he was forced to admit that he recently disobeyed orders about publicly discussing this case. News reports from hearings recounted that during his testimony, Sergeant Coburn said "I don't know" or "I can't remember" over 50

times. It is inconceivable to me that these charges can move forward when the primary witness is someone who did not actually see the shooting and whose testimony was riddled with contradictory statements.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from so many people across this Nation who want this Marine exonerated. Like me, they believe he should never have been charged in the first place.

I have the utmost confidence and faith in the United States Marine Corps that in the next few days they will do what is the right thing by correcting this mistake and dismissing all charges against Lieutenant Pantano. I fear that if Lieutenant Pantano faces a court-martial for his actions, there may come a time when some other Marine, soldier, sailor, or airman will pause to second guess his or her decision and those few seconds may mean the difference between life and death for them.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot send the wrong message to our men and women in uniform. To instill doubt into the minds of our Nation's defenders places their lives and the security of our Nation in jeopardy.

I certainly hope that the Article 32 proceedings will finally bring out the truth in this case and bring closure to Lieutenant Pantano's family so that they may move forward with their lives.

By all accounts Lieutenant Pantano was an exceptional Marine. During the Article 32 hearing, many of those who served under him testified to his leadership ability and their sense of comfort and safety under his command. I pray that this week the hearing officer will recommend dismissal of all charges so that Marines can welcome back one of their finest officers and so Lieutenant Pantano may return to the Corps he loves so much.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to ask my colleagues to research this case and consider supporting House Resolution 167, my resolution to support Lieutenant Pantano as he faces this battle. And I encourage all of the Members to also visit his mother's Web site at www.defendthedefenders.org. I repeat: www.defendthedefenders.org, and learn more about this fine young Marine. I would be proud to call him my son or son-in-law.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by asking God to please bless the Pantano family and ask God to please bless all of our men and women in uniform and their families. And I ask God to please continue to bless America.

ABU GHRAIB SCANDAL: WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss a vital issue that has