

## IRAQI ELECTIONS A PHENOMENAL EVENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, when I am at home and speaking to groups, I oftentimes ask them, the constituents that I am talking to, have you heard any good news lately on the radio or heard any good news on television or have you read any good news in the newspaper? Most often the silence is deafening.

But we do not have to look far for good news, either here at home or around the world. Much of that good news is directly related to the actions of Americans. That certainly has been true with the outpouring of support and relief for our fellow citizens who have been victims of recent hurricanes and other natural disasters, and this past Saturday the world witnessed not just good news but great news. The election in Iraq this past weekend was a phenomenal event, a remarkable step toward an independent, sovereign, democratic nation. What good news this is.

This is a momentous event, a huge step forward, and toward the approaching day when we will be able to bring home our service men and women.

Did you hear the good news, Mr. Speaker? Listen to some of the voices.

Lieutenant Colonel Steve Boylan in Baghdad said: "Nationwide security was a resounding success, with all of the 13 recorded attacks aimed at election targets failing."

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, talking about TV coverage, said: "I have seen pictures of citizens who are proud to be shown on camera having voted. There were no such pictures from these places in the last election. The victory for Iraq is that they are voting."

Listen to the voices, Mr. Speaker. Abdul Hussein Ahmed emerged from a polling station in the southern city of Najaf with his purple ink-stained finger raised aloft and he said: "Five members of my family were killed by Saddam and his people but now with this constitution everyone is equal under the law."

Listen to the voices, Mr. Speaker. Razifa Hussein Abdullah arrived at the polling station with tears in her eyes. Her husband, Hussein Salim, leaned on her for balance as they walked. They had returned several months ago from exile in Iran where they had fled during the Iran-Iraq war of the eighties. "We suffered a lot," she said, "and today I came to get revenge for all of these years I stayed away from my country to feel that I am an Iraqi again. It was a dream to get rid of Saddam and today is another dream come true," she said.

There is the quote from this poster, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the voices. "I voted then for Saddam, of course, be-

cause I was afraid, but this time I came here by my own choice. I am not afraid anymore. I am a free man."

Some editorials have finally recognized the importance of this occurrence. The New York Post said, "The referendum results vindicate U.S. policy and are a giant step toward regional peace." The New York Times, yes, the New York Times, said, "What we know already and can't fail to be impressed by is that large numbers of Iraqis of all persuasions turned out in defiance of terrorist threats to decide their constitutional future. They have exercised a basic democratic right that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago." Even the New York Times.

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes we are too close to the happenings of the day to appreciate their gravity and I think we are just a little too close now. This past Saturday was a red letter date in the history of the world, and the naysayers notwithstanding, this is a day and a time to celebrate and congratulate. I am proud to be an American. I am proud of and humbled by the selfless acts by so many of our fellow citizens in Iraq. In the 1800s, de Tocqueville said that America is not good because it is great, it is great because it is good. It is that goodness that continues to strive for liberty for all. What a momentous time we are in as we celebrate and witness that march of liberty around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is good news. Let's spread that good news.

## REPORT OF CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I came today to talk about the great privilege I had just 2 weeks ago to lead a congressional delegation to Iraq. It was my very first trip. I did not know what to expect. But as we approached the airport and you could look down, all you saw was very brown, very barren, very flat land. I realized as we were coming into Kuwait City that we had done a very, very poor job as elected leaders to tell the American people what our military men and women are doing in Iraq, why they are doing it, the incredible progress that they are making and the consequences not only to Iraq and to the Middle East, to the U.S. but to the entire world if they were to fail.

Since this was an armed services trip, our mission was to meet with the troops, to meet with their commanders, to learn more about their mission, to see some of the technology that they are able to use to help them, to hear of their successes and to hear of the problems or things that we as Members of Congress could help them with.

The very first person that I met was a young man on that airstrip in Kuwait City as we were waiting to board a C-130. As I was talking to him, he looked up to me and he said, "Ma'am, don't worry about me. I know what I'm doing and I know why I'm doing it, and I can tell you that there will never be another attack on our nation if I have anything to do with it. So don't worry. Just pray for me." And he walked away. What an overwhelming feeling that that was from somebody probably in their very, very early twenties.

That same evening as we had dinner with troops from Virginia, and I would like to take a moment and thank the Peterson Foundation and AT&T who provided us with telephone cards to give to our very brave men and women so that they could call home, but there was a young woman from Virginia who looked me straight in the eye and I already knew this, I had already sensed it and felt it, but she looked at me and said, "Why aren't our elected leaders telling America what we're doing?" I had no answer for her, except to make the commitment to her that we would do that.

Please understand that there are very huge successes that have been made in Iraq. We hear the stories, and any story is one too many, about our men and women who are injured or killed by the IEDs. The stories that we do not hear are about how successful our military men and women have been at finding these devices, at exploding them or disarming them before someone is hurt.

We watched the Predator land on film as it has been patrolling around Iraq and certainly been a great asset to the military. We talked about civil things, such as the need for electricity, the talk about blackouts, and what we learned is that, yes, there are blackouts in Iraq but the biggest reason is because of increased demand for electricity. I did not know that Iraqis were out buying TV sets and refrigerators and other appliances and have greatly increased it. I was not aware of the condition that Saddam Hussein put his own country in and that for 6 years prior to this conflict that he was allowing raw sewage from Baghdad to flow into the Tigris River.

During Saddam Hussein's reign, there were no independent TV stations. Today, there are 44. No independent commercial radio stations. Today, there are 72. No independent newspapers and magazines. Today, there are 100. We also do not talk about the huge successes of the Iraqi security force and the fact that we as Americans have turned over 24 fully operational bases to the Iraqi government.

We flew from Baghdad to Balad air base by helicopter. We flew very low and very fast. I was surprised, first of all, to see how green the nation was in that area, and more surprised to see the people who were working those agricultural fields who waved to that helicopter as it went by. When we landed

in Balad, I talked to General Frank Gorenc, who used to be the commander at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia and whom I know, and I said, "Frank, they're waving at us." They laughed and they said, "Thelma, they always wave at us. They're very glad that we're here."

I believe that these young men and women who are serving in Iraq are true American heroes. I believe that history will give them a name, just as they named my father's generation during World War II. I do not know what that name will be, but I can assure you that these young men and women understand the threat to our world but they need to know that America supports them and that America understands their mission.

I told them stories from back home about a presentation at Sea World, about what a great job they were doing and about how Americans stood and clapped. And how in Ireland on our way back Marines entered that airport and they stood and clapped.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 17 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS) at noon.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Watchmen over the Nation, awake! Come to attention all you, chosen by the people, to guard and guide the destiny of the Lord's people. Turn to the Lord when it is dark and you cannot read the shifting winds. The Lord will guide you from within and bring to surface your deepest instincts for what is good and where lies lasting justice.

You are stationed at the far corners of this mighty fortress that you may see what the people need. But your centered ground is what binds God's people together and builds security and peace.

As the Constitutional Congress of this Nation, you are the Lord's own watchmen over the Nation. Come now, let us bless the Lord on this new day. Let us act as God's blessing now and forever. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### WELCOMING PRESIDENT PARVANOV TO THE UNITED STATES

(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, as we continue to wage a war against terrorism, I am inspired when I look at a vibrant young democracy that only recently started out on the road to freedom. The country of Bulgaria existed under an oppressive Communist regime for nearly 50 years, but now it serves as a beacon of hope for people throughout the world who seek liberty.

Today, I am honored to welcome Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov to Capitol Hill. He is a man of great accomplishment and a champion of the Bulgarian Miracle promoting economic success and enhanced security. He has led his country to become a strategically located member of NATO, and is now implementing the reforms to join the European Union.

We appreciate Bulgaria's strong friendship which President Parvanov and President Bush recognized yesterday at the White House as the warmest ever in the history of our diplomatic relations.

Bulgarian Ambassador Elena Poptodorova to Washington has worked professionally with former U.S. Ambassador Jim Pardew and now Ambassador John Beyrle for a mutually beneficial partnership.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11.

#### TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR PAKISTANI NATIONALS

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to appeal for temporary protective status for Pakistanis who are temporarily in our country. This would allow them, Mr. Speaker, to stay in this country for up to 18 months at a time when their country has experienced a devastating impact from an earthquake.

As we know, millions are homeless, scores of thousands are dead, and millions more are in need of our assistance. Many of the persons who are here temporarily do not have homes to return to. This appeal would allow them

to stay in this country until they will have an opportunity to regroup themselves and their lives.

Pakistan has been our ally in the war on terrorism. This is the right thing to do for the people who are here, the people of Pakistan, and it is also the right thing to do because it shows the soft side of our power.

#### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, while all Americans have shown compassion for the victims of recent natural disasters, we must exercise this compassion in a fiscally responsible manner. We in Congress have an obligation to respond to these natural disasters, but we must not give future generations an IOU of billions of dollars that they will have to pay off.

How do we do this? Many of my colleagues have looked for savings and prioritizing programs, and that is a great start and I am sure many more ideas will come forward as we discuss this issue. We must focus our efforts only on spending that which is essential to the American people, just like a family budget. In the past we have reduced spending when needed, and now is such a time. The American taxpayers want Congress to be fiscally responsible.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to compare the government's budget to a family budget, and it is simple: When you spend more in one area, you must find savings in another. My colleagues and I should do just that. Now let us finish the job and show the taxpayers that Congress is able to act as responsibly as they would in their own life.

#### CALLING FOR A NEW DIRECTION

(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, I know we are pretty busy, so to catch everybody up here, a few of today's headlines:

"E-mail Show FEMA's Disarray." Documents offer a glimpse of communication breakdowns in the Federal response to Katrina.

"Inflation Soars Largest Amount in 15 years."

"General Motors Health Care Benefit Cut Part Of A Trend."

"Greenspan says surge in energy prices will act as a drag on economy."

"States Protest Contributions to the Medicare Drug Plan." The Bush administration is requiring States to pay billion of dollars to fund the new prescription drug benefit.

"Vice President Cheney's Office Is A Focus in Leak Case. Sources Cite Role of Feud With the CIA."

"As of Monday morning, 1,957 U.S. servicemen had died in the war on Iraq."