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## House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
July 24, 2006.

I hereby appoint the Honorable K. MICHAEL CONAWAY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 31, 2006, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

### PROGRESS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to talk about progress in Afghanistan. There has been a lot of publicity lately about questioning that progress.

My colleagues, since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan has made real and substantive progress. To understand the degree to which this progress can be measured, it is important, of course, to remember the many obstacles that we faced in Afghanistan.

Consider, for example, that life expectancy is only 45 years; 71 percent of Afghans over 15 cannot read or write; 91 percent of all rural women are illiterate. Three out of five girls do not go to school, and most of the existing infrastructure has been destroyed. Under those conditions, we realize that progress still is able to proceed.

Now, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, James Kunder, the Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East for USAID said, "Historically, the vast majority of Afghans have not had access to electricity or safe water. In some remote, mountainous villages, the nearest paved road is a 2-week walk away. And when USAID first arrived in Kabul, much of the population had been severely traumatized after years and years of war. Most Afghans did not remember a time when conflict was not a major part of their lives."

So, my colleagues, against this background, the overthrow of the Taliban by the United States and coalition forces, the rebuilding of roads and infrastructure, and the widespread participation by the Afghan people in presidential and parliamentary elections is a monumental and historic achievement. Afghanistan continues to confront obstacles, but the colossal steps forward that have already been taken should not be underestimated.

In order to increase business opportunities and develop a private sector in Afghanistan, the USAID's Alternative Livelihoods' Private Sector Development Unit opened their first Eastern Regional Business Development Center in Jalalabad. Now, my colleagues, this office works closely with local government, national and international communities, to promote business enterprises, effective services and full employment.

Approximately 6,000 businesses have already registered in one of the provinces. There have been successes in the

agriculture sector as well, including 600 farmers in the Jalalabad region who have received training in harvest handling, packaging and marketing to improve their business opportunities. This program is developing a regional market information system to develop quality standards and retail marketing measures for farmers and business people.

Over 4,000 women in 13 districts have benefitted from the micro-enterprise development projects that train them and increase their income potential. Said one of these recipients, a mother of five in one province, quote, I learned how to sell and to market my products during the USAID training, so I now sell cheese in the neighborhood and in the nearest markets. The skill of cheesemaking has helped me and my family to stand on our own two feet and depend on this, instead of poppy cultivation.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's reconstruction has made considerable progress during the past 4 years. Recently, the World Bank reported that "led by the government with international support, but relying most on the energy and initiative of the Afghan people themselves, reconstruction has resulted in solid achievements. Economic growth, unprecedented primary school enrollments, including for girls, great expansion of immunization, rehabilitation of major highways, a new and stable currency, promulgation of a new constitution, presidential and parliamentary elections, return of refugees and the demobilization of militias . . . Yet the challenges still remain enormous."

Since 2001, the United States has dedicated \$60.5 million for primary education to construct schools, train teachers, provide books and supplies. Currently, approximately 5.3 million Afghan children are enrolled in schools, and 40 percent of them are females.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g.,  1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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