

The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint meeting by placard will not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats by physical presence only following the security sweep of the Chamber.

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RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Thursday, July 20, 2006, the House stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

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□ 1051

JOINT MEETING OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY NOURI AL-MALIKI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

The Speaker of the House presided.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Mr. Bill Sims, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT);

The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE);

The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER);

The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN);

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);

The gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);

The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON); and

The gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST);

The Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL);

The Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS);

The Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SANTORUM);

The Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON);

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL);

The Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE);

The Senator from Montana (Mr. BURNS);

The Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID); and

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Jesse Bibiano Marehalau, Ambassador of Micronesia.

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The Members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 11 o'clock and 6 minutes a.m., the Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, it is my great privilege and I deem it a high honor and a personal pleasure to present to you His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

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ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY NOURI AL-MALIKI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

Prime Minister AL-MALIKI. In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Your Excellency the Speaker of the House, Mr. Vice President, honorable ladies and gentlemen, Members of Congress, it is with great pleasure that I am able to take this opportunity to be the first democratically and constitutionally elected Prime Minister of Iraq to address you, the elected representatives of the American people, and I thank you for affording me this unique chance to speak at this respected assembly.

Let me begin by thanking the American people through you and on behalf of the Iraqi people for supporting our people in ousting dictatorship. Iraq will not forget those who stood with her and who continue to stand with her in times of need.

Thank you for your continued resolve in helping us fight the terrorists plaguing Iraq, which is a struggle to defend our nascent democracy and our people who aspire to liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

All of those are not Western values. They are universal values for humanity. They are as much for me the pinnacle embodiment of my faith and religion and they are for all free spirits. The war on terror is a real war against those who wish to burn out the flame of freedom. We are in this vanguard for defending the values of humanity.

I know that some of you here question whether Iraq is part of the war on terror. Let me be very clear. This is a battle between true Islam, for which a person's liberty and rights constitute essential cornerstones, and terrorism which wraps itself in a fake Islamic cloak, in reality wages a war on Islam and Muslims and values and spreads hatred between humanity contrary to our Koran which says, We have created you male and female and made you tribes and families that you know each other. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of God is the best conduct. The truth is that terrorism has no religion. Our faith says that who kills an innocent has killed all mankind.

Thousands of lives were tragically lost on September 11 when these imposters of Islam reared their ugly heads. Thousands more continue to die in Iraq today at the hands of the same terrorists who show complete disregard for human life. Your loss on that day was a loss of all mankind and our loss today is a loss for all free people. Wherever humankind suffers a loss at the hands of terrorists, it is a loss for all humanity.

It is your duty and our duty to defeat this terror. Iraq is the front line in this struggle and history will prove that the sacrifices of Iraqis for freedom will not be in vain. Iraqis are your allies in the war on terror and history will record their bravery and humanity. The fate of our country and yours is tied. Should democracy be allowed to fail in Iraq and terror permitted to triumph, then the war on terror will never be won elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, we are building a new Iraq on a foundation of democracy and are erecting it through our belief in the rights of every individual, just as Saddam has destroyed it through his abuse of all those rights, so that future Iraqi generations can live in peace, prosperity and hope. Iraqis have tasted freedom, and we will defend it absolutely.

Every human possesses inalienable rights which transcend religion as it is stated in the international convention of human rights. They transcend religion, race and gender. God says in the Koran: "And surely we have honored all children of Adam." I believe these human rights are not an artifact construct reserved for the few. They are the divine entitlement for all. It is on this unwavering belief that we are determined to build our nation, a land whose people are free, whose air is liberty and where the rule of law is supreme. This is the new Iraq which is emerging from the ashes of dictatorship and, despite the carnage of extremists, a country which respects

international conventions and practices noninterference in the internal affairs of others, relies on dialogue to resolve differences, and strives to develop strong relations with every country that espouses freedom and peace.

We are working diligently so that Iraq returns to take the position it deserves and to play a positive role in its regional and international environment as a key, active player in spreading security and stability, to give an example of a positive relationship between countries through denouncement of violence and resorting to constructive dialogue, solving problems between nations and peoples.

We have made progress and we are correcting the damage inflicted by the politics of the previous regime, in particular with our neighbors. My presence here is a testament of the new politics of a democratic Iraq.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a short space of time, Iraq has gone from a dictatorship to a transitional administration and now to a full-fledged democratic government. This has happened despite the best efforts of the terrorists who are bent on either destroying democracy or Iraq. But by the courage of our people who defied the terrorists every time they were called upon to make a choice by risking their lives for the ballot box, they have stated over and over again with their ink-stained fingers waving in pride that they will always make the same choice—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. If our honored guest would suspend for a moment.

The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery.

The Sergeant at Arms will secure order by removing those engaging in disruption.

His Excellency, the Prime Minister, may resume.

Prime Minister AL-MALI. Of hope over fear, liberty over oppression, dignity over submission, democracy over dictatorship, federalism over a centralist state. Let there be no doubt. Today Iraq is a democracy which stands firm because of the sacrifices of its people and the sacrifices of all those who stood with us in this crisis from nations and countries. That is why I would like to thank them very much for all their sacrifices.

Iraqis of all persuasions took part in a unanimously democratic election for the first parliament formed under the country's first permanent constitution. After eight decades of temporary constitutions and dictatorships, a constitution written by the elected representatives of the people and ratified by the people, Iraqis succeeded in forming a government of national unity based on an elected parliamentary foundation and includes all of Iraq's religions, ethnicities and political groupings.

The journey has been perilous and the future is not guaranteed. Yet many around the world who underestimated the resolve of Iraq's people were sure

that we would never reach this stage. Few believed in us, but you, the American people, did, and we are grateful for this.

The transformation in Iraq can sometimes be forgotten in the daily futile violence. Since liberation, we have witnessed great accomplishments in politics, the economy and civil society. We have gone from a one-party state ruled by a small elite to a multiparty system where politics is the domain of every citizen and parties compete at all levels.

What used to be a state-controlled media is now completely free and uncensored, something Iraq had never witnessed since its establishment as a modern state and something which remains alien to most of the region.

What used to be a command economy in Iraq, we are rapidly transforming into a free market economy. In the past 3 years, our GDP per capita has more than doubled, and it is expected that our economy will continue to grow. The standard of living has been raised for most Iraqis as the markets witness an unprecedented level of prosperity. Many individuals are buying products and appliances which they would never have hoped to afford in the past. In keeping with our economic visions of creating a free market economy, we will be presenting to parliament legislation which will lift current restrictions on foreign companies and investors who wish to come to Iraq.

While we are making great economic strides, the greatest transformation has been on Iraqi society. We have gone from mass graves and torture chambers and chemical weapons to the rule of law and respect for human rights. The human rights and freedoms embodied in the new Iraq and consolidated in the constitution have provided a fertile environment for the ever-growing number of civil society institutions which are increasing in scope and complexity and provide a healthy reflection of what is developing beneath the violence.

The rights chartered in the constitution will also help consolidate the role of women in public life as equals to men and help them to play a greater role in political life. I am proud to say that a quarter of Iraq's council of representatives is made up of women, but we still have much to accomplish.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, our nascent democracy faces numerous challenges and impediments, but our resolve is unbreakable and we will overcome them. The greatest threat Iraq's people face is terror, terror inflicted by extremists who value no life and who depend on the fear the wanton murder and destruction creates. They have poured acid into Iraq's dictatorial wounds and created many of their own.

Iraq is free and the terrorists cannot stand this. They hope to undermine our democratically elected government through the random killing of civilians. They want to destroy Iraq's future by assassinating our leading sci-

entific, political and community leaders. Above all, they wish to spread fear.

Do not think that this is an Iraqi problem. This terrorist front is a threat to every free country in the world and their citizens. What is at stake is nothing less than our freedom and liberty. Confronting and dealing with this challenge is the responsibility of every liberal democracy that values its freedom. Iraq is the battle that will determine the war. If through our continued partnership we have the strength of mind and commitment to defeat the terrorists and their ideology in Iraq, they will never be able to recover.

For the sake of success of the political process, I launched the National Reconciliation Initiative which aims to draw in groups willing to accept the logic of dialogue and participation. This olive branch has received the backing of Iraq's parliamentary blocs and support further afield from large segments of the population. I remain determined to see this initiative succeed. But let our enemies not mistake our outstretched hand for forgiveness as a sign of weakness. Whoever chooses violence against the people of Iraq, then the fate that awaits them will be the same as that of the terrorist Zarqawi.

While political and economic efforts are essential, defeating terror in Iraq relies fundamentally on the building of a sound Iraqi force, both in quantity and capability. The completion of Iraq's forces forms the necessary basis for the withdrawal of multinational forces, but only then, only when Iraq's forces are fully capable, will the job of the multinational forces be complete.

Our Iraqi forces have accomplished much and have gained a great deal of field experience to eventually enable them to triumph over the terrorists and to take over the security portfolio and extend peace through the country. The other impediment to Iraq's stability are the armed militias. I have on many occasions stated my determination to disband all militias, without exception, and reestablish a state monopoly on arms and to guarantee citizens' security so that they do not need others to provide it.

It is imperative that the reconstruction starts now. While small sections of central Iraq are unstable, large sections have remained peaceful but ignored for far too long. These were the most deprived areas of Iraq under the previous regime and have been the most valiant in Iraq's struggle for freedom. We need to make an example out of these stable areas as models for the rest of the country.

Reconstruction projects in these areas will tackle unemployment, which will weaken the terrorists. They will become prototypes that other, more volatile, regions aspire to undoubtedly. Reconstruction in these areas will fuel economic growth and show what a prosperous, stable, democratic and federal Iraq would look like.

Members of the Congress, in this effort, we need your help. We need the help of the international community. Much of the budget you had allocated for Iraq's reconstruction ended up paying for security firms and foreign companies whose operating costs were vast. Instead, there needs to be a greater reliance on Iraqis and Iraqi companies, with foreign aid and assistance, to help us rebuild Iraq.

We are rebuilding Iraq on a new, solid foundation, that of liberty, hope and equality.

Iraq's democracy is young, but the will of its people is strong. It is because of this spirit and desire to be free that Iraq has taken the opportunity you gave us and we chose democracy.

We faced tyranny and oppression under the former regime and we now face a different kind of terror. We did not bow then and we will not bow now.

I will not allow Iraq to become a launch pad for al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. I will not deprive Iraqis of their hopes and dreams. I will not allow terrorists to dictate to us our future.

For decades, we struggled alone for our freedom. In 1991, when Iraqis tried to capitalize on the regime's momentary weakness and rose up, we were alone again.

The people of Iraq will not forget your continued support as we establish a secure, liberal democracy. Let 1991 never be repeated, for history will be most unforgiving.

The coming few days are difficult, and the challenges are considerable. Iraq and America both need each other to defeat the terror engulfing the free world. In partnership we will be triumphant, because we will never be slaves to terror, for God has made us free.

Trust that Iraq will be a grave for terrorism and terrorists. Trust that Iraq will be a graveyard for terrorism and terrorists, for the good of all humanity.

Thank you very much.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 11 o'clock and 36 minutes a.m., His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The Members of the President's Cabinet;

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

#### JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 11 o'clock and 40 minutes a.m., the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess until 12:15 p.m.

□ 1215

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON) at 12 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.

#### PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS HAD DURING RECESS

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings had during the recess be printed in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 9. An act to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 5865. An act to amend section 1113 of the Social Security Act to temporarily increase funding for the program of temporary assistance for United States citizens returned from foreign countries, and for other purposes.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will now entertain up to 15 requests per side to address the House for 1 minute.

#### IRAQI PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSES CONGRESS

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, we welcomed His Excellency Nouri Al-Maliki to address the U.S. Congress. We commend him for his sacrifices and efforts to bring peace and democracy to Iraq. Once sentenced to death and thus forced into exile by Saddam Hussein's government, Al-Maliki has devoted his life to ending the tyranny that dominated his country for so long.

I commend His Excellency for his commitment to rebuilding his nation on the principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law; and we look forward to collaborating with him in this regard. I applaud the Prime Min-

ister for condemning the countless terrorist acts in Iraq; and I encourage him to condemn all acts of terror in the Middle East, including the most recent ones we have seen begun by Hezbollah. As the Prime Minister articulated, we must continue to fight for "liberty over oppression" and "democracy over terrorism" wherever it may occur in the world.

#### GAS PRICES AND ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, as gas prices hit another record high, I call on this Congress to pass visionary legislation for America's energy independence.

This summer, middle-class families are being squeezed like never before by the high price of gasoline and farmers are watching their profits erode. With the big oil companies pocketing record profits, the only action the Republican Congress has taken is more giveaways to Big Oil. We need a new direction in this country that will once and for all put us on the path to energy independence and free us from our reliance on foreign oil sources.

Rural America feels this crisis every day; and as cochairman of the Rural Working Group, I have worked with my colleagues to draft legislation to secure America's energy independence through the bounty of American agriculture. The answer to the energy crisis is growing on our farms, and H.R. 5372 will upgrade our infrastructure to tap these homegrown resources. Specifically, the Biofuel Act will facilitate the production of vehicles that can run on E-85, ethanol-based fuel and soybean diesel and provide tax credits to encourage gas station owners to update their equipment to handle these new environmentally friendly fuels.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a new direction for America; and Congress must take action now to secure America's energy future.

#### COMPETITION

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the value of competition in our Department of Defense acquisition process. Without competition, we have no choices, innovation does not exist, we have no bargaining position relative to costs, and the capability of our military stagnates.

Some would argue that we must protect our industrial base. I would suggest that competition does just that. We live in a global economy, and when U.S. industry does not produce competitive products, our entire industrial base suffers. If we are to continue to