

began its offensive on security issues. A USA Today-Gallup Poll published Tuesday reported that Mr. Bush's job approval rating had jumped to 44 percent from 39 percent. The questioning in that poll went through Sunday; The Times and CBS completed questioning Tuesday night. Presidential addresses often produce shifts in public opinion that tend to be transitory.

The nationwide poll was conducted by telephone Friday through Tuesday. It included 1,131 adults, of whom 1,007 said they were registered to vote, and had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

As part of the Republican effort to gain advantage on the war in Iraq, Republicans have accused Democrats who want to set a timetable for leaving Iraq of wanting to "cut and run." But 52 percent of respondents said they would not think the United States had lost the war if it withdrew its troops from Iraq today.

The poll also found indications that voters were unusually intrigued by this midterm election: 43 percent said they were more enthusiastic than usual about voting. However, with turnout promising to be a critical factor in many of the closer Senate and House races, there was no sign that either party had an edge in terms of voter enthusiasm.

Evidence of the antipathy toward Congress in particular—and Washington in general—was abundant: 71 percent said they did not trust the government to do what is right.

"If they had new blood, then the people that influence them—the lobbyists—would maybe not be so influential," said Norma Scranton, a Republican from Thedford, Neb., in a follow-up interview after the poll. "They don't have our interest at heart because they're influenced by these lobbyists. If they were new, maybe they would try to please their constituents a little better."

Lois Thurber, a Republican from Axtell, Neb., said in a follow-up interview: "There's so much bickering, so much disagreement—they just can't get together on certain issues."

"They're kind of more worried about themselves than they are about the country."

Incumbents and challengers nationwide are trying to accommodate this sour mood. Democrats are presenting themselves as a fresh start—"Isn't it time for a change?" asked an advertisement by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee directed against Senator Jim Talent, Republican of Missouri.

And Republican incumbents are seeking to distance themselves from fellow Republicans in Washington. "I've gone against the president and the Republican leadership when I think they are wrong," Representative Christopher Shays, a Connecticut Republican locked in a tough reelection battle, said in a television advertisement broadcast this week.

The Republicans continue to be seen as the better party to deal with terrorism, but by nowhere near the margin they once enjoyed: it is now 42 percent to 37 percent. When asked which party took the threat of terrorism more seriously, 69 percent said they both did; 22 percent named Republicans, compared with 6 percent who said Democrats.

Voters said Democrats were more likely to tell the truth than Republicans when discussing the war in Iraq and about the actual threat of terrorism. And 59 percent of respondents said Mr. Bush was hiding something when he talked about how things were going in Iraq; an additional 25 percent said he was mostly lying when talking about the war.

Not that Democrats should draw any solace from that: 71 percent of respondents said

Democrats in Congress were hiding something when they talked about how well things were going in Iraq, while 13 percent said they were mostly lying.

Robert Allen, a Democrat from Ventura, Calif., said: "We're in a stalemate right now. They're not getting hardly anything done." He added, "It's time to elect a whole new bunch so they can do something."

#### APPRECIATION FOR U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS

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 am on the floor today to express appreciation for the more than 12,000 U.S. Border Patrol agents who perform an invaluable service to our Nation.

Though support for the U.S. Border Patrol and other law enforcement officers often goes unspoken, the American people and Members of Congress owe our sincere appreciation for these courageous men and women for their dedication to keeping our Nation safe by protecting our borders.

While protecting the United States from an influx of illegal immigration, drugs, counterfeit goods, and terrorists, U.S. Border Patrol agents face high-risk situations and dangerous environments while working on our borders. Often working alone in some of the most remote and dangerous areas of the country, these agents routinely encounter heavily armed human and drug traffickers.

Despite these dangerous conditions, the men and women of the U.S. Border Patrol work tirelessly to protect our Nation's borders, and they deserve the utmost praise for their dedication and bravery.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, two U.S. Border Patrol agents who deserve our appreciation have instead become victims of a grave injustice.

Agents Ramos and Compean were found guilty in a Federal court for wounding a drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our southern border into Texas. These agents now face up to 20 years in Federal prison.

Agent Ramos served the Border Patrol for 9 years and was a former nominee for Border Patrol Agent of the Year. Agent Compean had 5 years of experience as a Border Patrol agent.

These agents never should have been prosecuted for their actions last year. By attempting to apprehend a Mexican drug smuggler, these agents were simply doing their job to protect the American people. These agents should have been commended for their actions, but instead the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted the agents and granted full immunity to the drug smuggler for his testimony against our agents.

The drug smuggler received full medical care in El Paso, Texas, was permitted to return to Mexico, and is now suing the Border Patrol for \$5 million

for violating his civil rights. He is not an American citizen. He is a criminal.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to numerous people inside Texas and outside of Texas regarding this outrage, including the attorney for one of these agents. I have written to the President of the United States, asking him to please look into this matter. I have written two letters to Attorney General Gonzales, asking him to reopen this case for a fuller investigation before these men are sentenced in October of this year. I hope that the American people will agree that this prosecution is an outrageous injustice and that the situation must be investigated.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close by asking my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle to please join us in this and find out why these two agents were prosecuted and will be sent to a Federal prison on October 19.

Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families.

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

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

#### U.S. CONGRESS MUST LEAD ON PEACE

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today, September 21, 2006, the world celebrates International Peace Day. Unfortunately, as we look around the world, we see more unrest and more people living in poverty, and certainly not more genuine peace.

This administration has chosen the road of conflict and war, leaving diplomacy and discussion on the side of the road. The President's cowboy swagger and use of "You're either with us or you're against us" gets us absolutely nowhere.

Mr. Speaker, today, International Peace Day, is the appropriate time for a new direction for our foreign policy and for our country. That is why on Tuesday of next week I will be hosting a third congressional forum on the occupation of Iraq. I am doing this because until the Congress begins real oversight into the tragedies of our occupation in Iraq, forums like these serve as one of the only ways, the only ways to examine our actions.

I am organizing this forum on the cost of our actions in Iraq because President Bush's Iraq policy has been an absolute failure and our Nation will suffer. Our Nation will suffer its effects for years to come. Besides making us

less safe, it has ruined our Nation's credibility in the eyes of the world, and it has made us worse off economically and militarily as well.

On Tuesday we will hear from experts, including Lieutenant General William Odem and former CIA employee and Georgetown professor Dr. Paul Pillar. Additional testimony will come from experts from Save the Children, the National Priorities Project, and a representative from the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

This war, Mr. Speaker, has many unseen costs: the costs to our military and diplomatic standing in the region; the cost to the Iraqi civilians, especially the most innocent victims, the children; the cost to America's working families who see funds being diverted away from important domestic programs to fund the ongoing occupation; and the cost to our brave men and women in service to our country. Almost 2,700 troops have given their lives for this misguided cause.

And the costs to our veterans, which may be the most heartbreaking of all: the underfunding of veterans clinics, the lack of support for those dealing with posttraumatic stress, the families left behind with little benefits or support from the Department of Defense. Veterans have sacrificed for our country. They deserve to receive our Nation's support. We have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, a responsibility to take care of those who sacrifice and defend us during times of war.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against this war. Some of my colleagues voted for it. We disagreed then, but I think we can all agree now our troops need our support, and the best way to support the troops is to bring them home.

Earlier this year I introduced H.R. 5875, a bill to repeal the President's Iraq war powers, because Congress needs to stand up. Congress needs to take back its constitutional responsibilities. And Congress needs to insist that the President, the Commander in Chief, stop this misguided occupation of Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to join me at the forum on Tuesday from 2 to 4 p.m., and I urge you to cosponsor the Iraq War Powers Repeal Act. I also urge you to stand up for our troops by standing up for peace.

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

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

#### COMMEMORATING THE 1-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF HURRICANE RITA

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Louisiana is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, this week southwest Louisiana will pause to commemorate the 1-year anniversary of Hurricane Rita, the third most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history.

Rita was as equally devastating as Hurricane Katrina, causing widespread destruction to our communities and our Nation's critical energy infrastructure. Since then there has been a palpable view among many of my constituents that their story has been forgotten and their needs unknown.

Throughout the past year, I have worked hard to ensure that Rita does not become "the forgotten storm" among Members of this body, and to date Congress has approved unprecedented Federal funding for our recovery. And for this the people of southwest Louisiana are grateful.

But not until you visit the coastal parishes of southwest Louisiana, Vermilion Parish, Calcasieu Parish, and Cameron Parish, can you understand the scope and magnitude of the destruction of Rita and the long road we have to protect our coast and our energy infrastructure from future disaster.

In the year since Rita, I have brought 19 House Members, including Speaker HASTERT, to southwest Louisiana to see these towns and communities and to meet the great residents of my district who were able to ensure a safe and thorough evacuation that did not result in the loss of life as we saw in New Orleans.

All of my colleagues who have joined me in visiting the communities hit hardest by Rita have come away with an increased awareness of the importance of southwest Louisiana to the energy infrastructure of the United States, as well as the need to protect our coastal wetlands and provide a continuous stream of funding to protect our communities.

The eye of Hurricane Rita made landfall in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, bringing with it a storm surge over 15 feet. In the coastal parishes of Vermilion, Cameron, and Calcasieu, the destruction was undescrivable, but no lives were lost. Local officials in southwest Louisiana were commended for managing an orderly evacuation of residents and offering a detailed plan for recovery and rebuilding. In short, the people of southwest Louisiana did, and are doing, everything right.

Amidst the ruin, the one constant was the spirit and determination of the people of southwest Louisiana. The common question from local residents was not, "Where do we go from here?" but rather, "When can we rebuild our homes, our businesses, and our way of life?"

More than any other storm, Rita exposed the critical state of our coastal wetlands and the role they play in supporting the energy infrastructure of the United States. These wetlands serve as a critical buffer against ocean

storms as well as protect industries and cities further inland. Before Rita, the projected land loss in Louisiana was approximately 24 square miles per year, the equivalent of two football fields an hour. After Rita, our coast is even more vulnerable, and some worry a modest category one hurricane could deal an even more destructive blow to our coastal parishes and the energy infrastructure that they support.

During Rita, oil platforms and drilling rigs in the storm's path were forced to shut down and evacuate their workers. This led to the halting of 98 percent of oil and natural gas production in the Gulf of Mexico.

And when the Nation's 12th largest port in Lake Charles was forced to shut down, energy production and distribution were brought a virtual standstill.

Protecting and strengthening our coasts is not only a Louisiana problem, it is an American problem. And it is one that affects American families and businesses that rely on energy we produce in Louisiana and transport throughout this country.

Thousands of oil and gas facilities are concentrated throughout the gulf coast and in southwest Louisiana, meaning that any future storm could have a crippling effect on our Nation's domestic energy production. Over one-third of the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve is stockpiled in Cameron Parish in my district, and soon over 25 percent of our Nation's natural gas supply will run through that parish as well.

Mr. Speaker, often in the past year I am stopped by my colleagues here in the body who ask, how can I help? My answer to them now is very clear. Help us to protect ourselves. This year the House and Senate have already responded to this request by approving legislation that would give Louisiana its fair share of oil and gas revenues produced off our shores. This solution will provide our State with the necessary funding to protect our coastal wetlands and, in turn, the critical energy infrastructure that is so important to our U.S. economy.

The Louisiana congressional delegation is working to ensure a final compromise is presented to President Bush before the end of the this year. Now, it is up to the leadership in this body and in the Senate to bring the bill to conference and to get a compromise to President Bush. The sooner Congress acts, the sooner southwest Louisiana can protect itself from the devastation we saw from Hurricane Rita 1 year ago.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the people of southwest Louisiana never asked for a Federal handout, but rather for a helping hand. For many Americans last year's hurricane season will be remembered by the images of chaos and confusion. For those of us who were there to witness the devastation in southwest Louisiana, the recovery of the people whose lives it forever changed, we come away with a much different story, one that gives us hope, one that shows the resiliency of the people of southwest Louisiana.