

do. I remember staying here in the wee morning hours, 3 hours, when that vote was held open in 2003 so Republican leaders could twist enough arms to win their vote. That is not how democracy is supposed to work, and our rules change would prevent that from ever happening.

We are also going to give Members more time to read bills so that they actually know what they are reading. It should be par for the course to get a bill of a thousand pages and then begin to vote on it. We need to have more time to review that.

Today, Mr. Speaker, democracy returns to the House.

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA ON HONEST LEADERSHIP AND OPEN GOVERNMENT

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, this week with pride the new Democratic House opens this congressional session by bringing ethics reform measures to the House floor that will sever the unhealthy ties between lawmakers and lobbyists.

We made a promise to the American people that we would drain the swamp of unethical behavior here in Washington, and we begin this Congress by living up to that promise by banning travel and gifts from lobbyists, getting tough on special interest earmarks, and ending the abusive processes that have destroyed democracy.

The American people sent us all a message last November. They want us to work for them and not for the special interests. I would hope that our agenda for reform would garner the support of both Democrats and Republicans. We should all be interested in policies that will ensure that the outrageous abuses of power that have taken place over the last couple of years do not continue.

These important reforms are only the beginning.

RULES OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STUPAK). Pursuant to section 4 of House Resolution 5, proceedings will now resume on the resolution (H. Res. 6) adopting the rules of the House of Representatives for the 110th Congress.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed on Thursday, January 4, 2007, the portion of the divided question comprising title II had been disposed of.

Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution 5, the portion of the divided question comprising title III is now debatable for 60 minutes.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

□ 0945

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, here in the first hours of the 110th Congress we rise to restore decorum and civility to what has been from its founding the greatest deliberative institution. In doing so, we open a new chapter in the history of the House of Representatives, one that is dignified.

Mr. Speaker, the American people spoke loud and clear this past November, and I am proud to say that the Democratic majority is responding to that call. This legislation marks a new beginning. The Democratic reform package, H. Res. 6, enacts long overdue congressional reform: restoring an open government, an honest government, an ethical government; and it marks the restoration of the American people's priorities to the people's House. It is my hope that by enacting these changes we will be able to change the tone of how we conduct business in this Chamber and with each other.

I recall a time in the House of Representatives and not too long ago when Members had friends on both sides of the aisle. Our children played together, they got to know each other, they became friends. Our families ate dinner together. We treated each other as friends and colleagues, and debate on the House floor reflected mutual respect even when we disagreed and an understanding that we all have a role to play in the legislative process.

We are here today to say that this sense of civility and decorum is not dead. This institution is too great to permit any tarnish of its honor to become permanent or to allow the slights of yesterday to interfere with our efforts to build a better tomorrow. Civility can return to this great institution with the right style of leadership.

As we turn here and now in the first hours of the 110th Congress, part of that process is making sure that House rules can prevent the abuses of prior Congresses. This is the overarching intent of H. Res. 6. In particular, there are several provisions in title III of that resolution that will begin to restore civility and decorum to the legislative process and which will honor this Chamber's place as the people's House by making us more accountable to the people who sent us here.

The first provision of title III prohibits floor votes from being held open for more than 15 minutes for the sole purpose of changing the outcome of a vote. Voting is a Member's core responsibility and our primary means of giving voice to the view of our constituents. This reform is important and long overdue.

The other two provisions address the handling of conference reports, with the goal to end backroom deals for special interests. In the 110th Congress, conference committees will be con-

ducted in an open and fair manner, and conference reports containing last-minute provisions will not be considered on the House floor.

A Chamber worthy of the title the people's House is one which conducts its business within the people's view. By making this reform package the very first item considered in this Congress, our new leadership is sending a strong message to all of the American people, Democrat, Republican, Independent, that we have heard the message you have sent us, demanding honest and ethical leadership, and we are heeding that call.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by, now since I have the first opportunity to formally see my California colleague here on the floor, to congratulate her and all of the members of the new majority. I have congratulated Ms. SLAUGHTER and of course Ms. PELOSI, and now I join in extending congratulations to Ms. MATSUI for her move into the majority, and to say as I did yesterday that I anxiously look forward to working in a bipartisan way as was said by Speaker PELOSI and Leader BOEHNER here yesterday.

I believe it is absolutely imperative that we meet the demand that was put forth by the American people in the November election. The message that I received from that election was that they want us to work together, they want us to solve their problems. Clearly, there needs to be a clash of ideas which was envisaged by James Madison, and I believe that that is something that we can't forget, because we are not supposed to pursue what I like to call the Rodney King view of the world: can't we all just get along. The fact of the matter is we do need to recognize that there are disparate views and they need to be voiced on this House floor.

Now, the question is, can we in fact do that and at the same time maintain civility? And I think that is what title III is all about here. It is titled "civility" and it is something that I have always prided myself on, and I will say that I am saddened that it is something that has been often lacking in this House.

Frankly, as I have seen the debate take place even yesterday, I was concerned that some of the statements made would indicate a lack of civility, and that is all I am going to say about it. I hope very much that the title "civility" used for this title III is one that is recognized by Members on both sides of the aisle.

Let me get into some of the specifics now, Mr. Speaker, if I might. In February of last year, almost a year ago, Ms. SLAUGHTER, the then-ranking minority member of the Rules Committee, and all of the members of the Rules Committee joined in introducing House Resolution 686. It is a resolution which called for virtually all of the things that my colleague, Ms. MATSUI,