

progress in Iraq now depends on a political solution.

It's time for a new direction in Iraq and a comprehensive shift in our Iraq policy. My legislation will: Bring our troops home within approximately one year; Refocus our assistance on creating jobs for Iraqis, supporting grassroots multi-ethnic civil society, and disarming militias; Authorize more aggressive efforts to punish war profiteering and reconstruction fraud; Require a new comprehensive diplomatic effort—internal, regional, and international—to provide support in stabilizing Iraq and promoting ethnic reconciliation; Strengthen efforts to address the Iraqi refugee crisis.

This is now about making the best of a bad situation; our military is breaking and our presence in Iraq is doing nothing to ease sectarian tensions or promote a democratic future. We must leave Iraq and we are going to do so before it's fixed. It will be painful for everybody: the innocent Iraqi victims who will get caught up in the maelstrom, as well as Americans who will be less safe for years, if not generations, to come.

The final costs of this war are not yet fixed, but we have a chance to influence just how high and how horrible through our actions. At this point, we can only try to make this terrible situation no worse and hope that, at some point, it might become marginally better for both Americans and Iraqis. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and look forward to working with them to advance a comprehensive plan to change the course in Iraq.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

SPEECH OF

HON. TIM MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 22, 2007

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise once again with my colleagues to recognize the students, teachers, faculty and graduates of our nation's Catholic Schools.

As Bishop Donald Wuerl has stated "Catholic schools are a tremendous asset to our Church and our nation." What graduates of Catholic Schools offer to society is not only a commitment to achieving academic excellence but also of service to the community. These are traits I learned at an early age as a student at St. Barnabas Elementary School and Walsh Jesuit High School and I greatly value both my Catholic and public school education.

For instance, 86 schools, along with parishes, youth ministry and CCD programs, raised more than \$300,000 over the last nine years in support of the "Kids Share A Lunch Nutrition Project" for the Pittsburgh diocesan mission in Chimbote, Peru.

This year's theme for Catholic Schools Week (January 28–February 3) is "Catholic Schools: The Good News in Education," and the good news is strong in Pennsylvania. With a 15 to 1 student/teacher ratio, more than 97 percent of high school graduates from Pennsylvania's Catholic Schools (including both Catholic and non-Catholics) went on to a post-secondary education following graduation.

This year, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh celebrate 178 years of quality

education. Pennsylvania alone, has 650 Catholic schools with over 180,951 High School and elementary students. (47,079 High School Students: 133,872 elementary students).

Dr. Robert Paserba, Pittsburgh diocesan superintendent of schools has stated "parents are choosing our schools because they teach strong moral values in a disciplined environment—clearly a recipe for helping all children in our schools achieve their highest potential. As with our schools themselves, our graduates become a source of hope for the world."

I believe Catholic schools do promote social awareness and help make the world a better place to live. I am pleased to commend all those who teach and are students of Catholic schools.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE RETIREMENT OF JUDGE SAM MONK

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I respectfully ask the attention of the House today to pay recognition to Judge Sam Monk who is retiring after 28 years of service. Judge Monk currently presides as Circuit Judge of the Seventh Judicial Circuit in Anniston, Alabama.

Judge Sam Monk graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1975. Prior to law school, Judge Monk served in the United States Army. Judge Monk has worked in both private practice and has served as Presiding Judge for the 7th Judicial Circuit, Circuit Judge for the 7th Judicial Circuit, and as District Judge for Calhoun and Cleburne Counties.

Judge Monk will officially retire on January 15, 2007, but a reception in his honor will be held on January 12, 2007 at the Calhoun County Courthouse.

I salute Judge Monk and congratulate him on his service to the legal field over the past 28 years. I wish him all the best on this important occasion.

ACADEMY NOMINEES FOR 2007

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Madam Speaker, every year, more high school seniors from the 11th Congressional District trade in varsity jackets for Navy pea coats, Air Force flight suits, and Army brass buckles than most other districts in the country. But this is nothing new—our area has repeatedly sent an above average portion of its sons and daughters to the nation's military academies for decades.

This fact should not come as a surprise. The educational excellence of area schools is well known and has long been a magnet for families looking for the best environment in which to raise their children. Our graduates are skilled not only in mathematics, science, and social studies, but also have solid backgrounds in sports, debate teams, and other

extracurricular activities. This diverse upbringing makes military academy recruiters sit up and take note—indeed, many recruiters know our towns and schools by name.

Since the 1830's, Members of Congress have enjoyed meeting, talking with, and nominating these superb young people to our military academies. But how did this process evolve? In 1843, when West Point was the sole academy, Congress ratified the nominating process and became directly involved in the makeup of our military's leadership. This was not an act of an imperial Congress bent on controlling every aspect of Government. Rather, the procedure still used today was, and is, a further check and balance in our democracy. It was originally designed to weaken and divide political coloration in the officer corps, provide geographical balance to our armed services, and to make the officer corps more resilient to unfettered nepotism and handicapped European armies.

In 1854, Representative Gerritt Smith of New York added a new component to the academy nomination process—the academy review board. This was the first time a Member of Congress appointed prominent citizens from his district to screen applicants and assist with the serious duty of nominating candidates for academy admission. Today, I am honored to continue this wise tradition in my service to the 11th Congressional District.

The Academy Review Board is composed of six local citizens, several of whom are distinguished veterans, who have shown exemplary service to New Jersey, to their communities, and to the continued excellence of education in our area. Though from diverse backgrounds and professions, they all share a common dedication that the best qualified and motivated graduates attend our academies. And, as true for most volunteer groups, their service goes largely unnoticed.

I would like to take a moment to recognize these men and women and thank them publicly for participating in this important panel. Being on the Board requires hard work and an objective mind. Members have the responsibility of interviewing upwards of 50 outstanding high school seniors every year in the academy review process.

The nomination process follows a general timetable. High school seniors mail personal information directly to the Military Academy, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, and the Merchant Marine Academy once they become interested in attending. Information includes academic achievement, college entry test scores, and other activities. At this time, they also inform my office of their desire to be nominated.

The academies then assess the applicants, rank them based on the data supplied, and return the files to my office with their notations. In late November, our Academy Review Board interviews all of the applicants over the course of two days. They assess a student's qualifications and analyze character, desire to serve, and other talents that may be hidden on paper.

This year the board interviewed 38 applicants. Nominations included 19 to the Naval Academy, 9 to the Military Academy and 5 to the Air Force Academy—the Coast Guard Academy does not use the Congressional nomination process. The recommendations are then forwarded to the academies by January 31, where admissions staff reviewed files